

Designing New Possibilities: Trauma-Informed Life Design with Culturally Responsive AI-Generated Scenarios for Higher Education

Kelly Cooney, Christina Harnett, Patrick Brugh
Johns Hopkins University
USA

Abstract

This paper presents a conceptual model for integrating life design principles with AI-generated, culturally adaptive scenarios to reframe limiting beliefs in higher education contexts. Drawing on a workshop with university staff, faculty, and students, we demonstrate how artificial intelligence—specifically large language models—can identify perceptual, emotional, and cultural blocks that impede growth, while supporting reflective and creative problem-solving at scale. The workshop adopted a trauma-informed framework to foster psychological safety, enabling participants to explore personal and systemic constraints through grounding exercises, collaborative reframing, and AI-driven simulations. Rather than relying on generic prompts, culturally inclusive metaphors and scenarios were used to honor diverse lived experiences and avoid reinforcing dominant cultural assumptions. Core activities included identifying persistent frustrations and aspirations, reframing complex challenges into actionable steps, and co-creating adaptive AI scenarios. While this paper does not present empirical outcomes, it offers a scalable, ethically sensitive approach for educators, technologists, and organizational leaders seeking to democratize access to reflective tools and foster inclusive development. By integrating design thinking, digital innovation, and psychological insight, this model contributes to ongoing conversations about digital well-being, ethical AI, and the cultivation of agency and adaptability in digitally mediated environments. Ultimately, reframing limiting beliefs is both a personal and collective journey—one that can be meaningfully supported by evolving AI tools attuned to the people and cultures they serve.

1. Introduction

Digital technologies are transforming how people approach work, education, and personal growth [1]. Among these, artificial intelligence (AI), has emerged as a powerful catalyst in life design, offering new ways to recognize and reframe limiting beliefs, the internal narrative that can restrict adaptation, imagination, and meaningful action. These beliefs, often rooted in past experiences of failure, exclusion, or trauma, may be invisible to others but profoundly

shape one's decisions and aspirations. Using AI as a tool to generate personalized, culturally adaptive scenarios may help individuals identify and reframe limiting beliefs—barriers traditionally difficult to address at scale

Life design [2], as a theoretical and practical model, draws on principles from design thinking, and is a creative, human-centered problem-solving methodology that focuses on radical collaboration, experimentation and iteration. It encourages individuals to view their life paths as creative, evolving constructs rather than linear or predetermined paths [3]. Core practices include curiosity, reframing, radical collaboration, mindfulness of practice, and a bias toward action that includes prototyping and iterating. Unlike traditional career planning, life design emphasizes meaning, adaptability, and experimentation [4]. In our workshop, life design was introduced as a generative mindset that empowers individuals to ask:

“What else might be possible?”

and

“How might I move forward even when constraints remain?”

The integration of AI into life design represents a paradigm shift: it enables the delivery of nuanced, culturally sensitive support at scale, addressing both the personal and systemic dimensions of growth. Recent studies highlight AI's potential to democratize access to reflective tools and personalized growth opportunities, especially in coaching and educational contexts [1], [3], [5]. However, this potential also raises important ethical and cultural considerations [5].

To foster the cognitive and emotional readiness necessary for this reflective work, the workshop, *AI Meets Life Design: Crafting Pathways in Global Education*, began with a trauma-informed framework. Participants engaged in grounding exercises designed to help them “center” themselves and recognize how stress and past experiences might influence their attention, creativity, and openness to change. This preparatory phase was not therapeutic but provided

language and structure to approach life design with curiosity and psychological safety, honoring the complexity of each participant's lived experience, particularly for those navigating personal trauma, burnout, or systemic inequity. Figure 1.

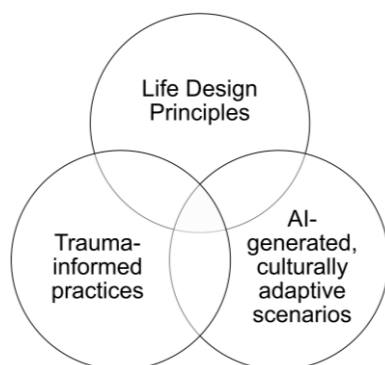


Figure 1. Integrating life design, trauma-informed practice, and generative AI in education

The conceptual model illustrated in Figure 1 shows the intersection of three key domains, Life Design Principles, Trauma-Informed Practices, and AI-Generated Culturally Adaptive Scenarios, used to support reflective practice, identity development, and inclusive growth in educational settings.

Participants in the workshop engaged with AI-generated scenarios that were intentionally designed to provide culturally adaptive and scalable life design access. Recent research demonstrates the potential of combining AI with in-person facilitation to support culturally responsive education in both resource-rich and resource-limited contexts [6]. AI-generated prompts, personas, and reframing questions enabled participants to explore scenarios that reflected their lived experiences or those of diverse individuals [3]. These simulations allowed participants to reflect on perceptual, emotional, and cultural blocks to growth, while supporting the development of creative solutions to limiting beliefs [7].

Research shows that decision-making patterns in digital environments often mirror those in real life, suggesting that interventions in these spaces can meaningfully influence personal development [8]. For example, a participant might reframe the belief “I can’t pursue a leadership role without a degree” into the question “How might I lead from where I am while continuing my education?” Intentional attention to cultural nuances and ethical considerations are necessary when employing AI in generative work related to reframing. With proper deliberation, AI can provide a platform to develop generative mindset opportunities and broaden access to reflective tools which traditionally require human guidance.

Recognizing the importance of cultural nuance and ethical sensitivity, the workshop avoided generic AI prompts, which can inadvertently reflect dominant

cultural assumptions. To address this, the workshop emphasized the use of universal human metaphors, common in higher education such as the need for faculty to create engaging course materials, students needing to prepare for an exam, staff feeling unseen. These metaphors served as culturally inclusive starting points for discussing personal responsibility, relational dynamics, and everyday challenges that transcend socioeconomic and geographic boundaries.

This paper does not present empirical findings, it offers a conceptual model for scholars, technologists, and educators interested in fostering inclusive, adaptable, and psychologically safe development in digitally mediated environments. By integrating design thinking, digital innovation, and psychological insight, it contributes to ongoing conversations about digital well-being, ethical AI, and inclusive human development. Ultimately, addressing limiting beliefs is both a personal and collective journey that can be supported by evolving tools and models attuned to the people and cultures they serve.

2. Theoretical Foundations

The overview of the theoretical foundations is discussed in sub-section 2.1. to 2.3.

2.1. Life Design Theory

Life design theory [4] offers a multidimensional framework for navigating complexity and uncertainty in both personal and professional domains. In an era defined by rapid technological, social, and economic change, traditional models of career development—often based on matching individuals to fixed roles—no longer suffice. Instead, life design invites individuals to approach their lives as evolving design challenges, where meaning and direction are continually evolving [9].

Life design allows the individual to reframe decisions as opportunities for creative exploration rather than as definitive, one-time choices and provide a framework for making life choices that are personally meaningful and socially responsive. Key design thinking principles including coherence, viability, feasibility, and desirability serve as evaluative filters for life choices. A coherent life aligns values and actions; viability and feasibility ensure that imagined futures are achievable and sustainable; desirability ensures emotional resonance and personal meaning.

What sets life design apart from traditional career counseling is its focus on agency, adaptability, and open-ended exploration. Rather than prescribing predetermined paths, it supports individuals in authoring their own evolving stories, while accommodating diverse identities, life stages, and cultural backgrounds. This flexibility is especially vital in digital and global contexts, where career

trajectories are increasingly non-linear and identities are shaped by shifting sociotechnical landscapes.

By equipping individuals with tools to reframe constraints and prototype new possibilities, life design fosters resilience and creativity. It enables people to develop plans that allow them to move forward even when faced with uncertainty or disruption, making it a particularly relevant model for the digital age.

2.2. Limiting Beliefs and Cognitive Blocks

Central to the life design process is the identification and reframing of limiting beliefs, those internalized narratives that restrict movement, creativity, or self-efficacy. These beliefs can arise from personal history, social conditioning, or institutional messaging, and often operate beneath conscious awareness, shaping both behavior and aspiration.

Limiting beliefs manifest in various forms, including self-doubt ("I'm not qualified"), categorical judgments ("People like me aren't taken seriously"), or sweeping generalizations ("If I fail once, I'll never succeed"). They can be classified into cognitive blocks such as described in Table 1 [11]:

Table 1. Cognitive blocks and their effects

Cognitive Block	Effect
Perceptual Block	Seeing only one way to view a situation
Emotional Block	Feelings that cloud judgement or action
Cultural Block	Social norms that limit personal exploration.
Environmental Block	External conditions that limit choices
Intellectual Blocks	Mental models that restrict creativity.
Expressive Blocks	The inability to articulate ideas or desires clearly

Table 1 presents six types of cognitive blocks: Perceptual, Emotional, Cultural, Environmental, Intellectual, and Expressive. Each block is paired with a description of its effect on an individual's ability to reflect, adapt, or act. The table is used in the workshop to help participants recognize internal and external constraints that may hinder personal growth or decision-making.

The entrenchment of limiting beliefs is often compounded by chronic stress or trauma, which can impair attention, reduce cognitive flexibility, and foster fixed mindsets. In digitally saturated environments where algorithmic reinforcement and social comparison are ever-present, these beliefs may become even more deeply rooted.

Meaningful reframing of limiting beliefs requires

practices that foster emotional regulation, cognitive openness, and psychological safety. Digital simulations and AI-driven scenarios can provide safe, experimental spaces for identifying and challenging these beliefs [8].

2.3. Trauma and Psychological Stress

Understanding the psychological dynamics of limiting beliefs requires attention to the roles of stress, chronic stress and trauma and their impacts on the individual especially in the area of cognitive flexibility. An individual's perception of stress and stressors themselves is shaped by individual, systemic, cultural, and institutional forces [10]. Stress may lead to negative thoughts, rumination, and excessive worry which impedes cognitive functioning involved in creativity and decision-making. Stress narrows one's focus and impairs attention.

Cognitive flexibility may be thought of as one's ability to adapt behavior to demands in a changing environment or as an ability to inhibit old information while exploring new information. An inability to consider new information may lead an individual to remain locked in old habits and beliefs long past the point where they were beneficial while suppressing new insights and imaginings [11].

In addition to reduced cognitive flexibility, chronic stress can impair attention and increase impulsivity, all of which make reflective life design more difficult. Individual, systemic, or historical trauma can further compound these effects, leading to patterns of withdrawal and/or fixed mindsets. In digital environments, where individuals are exposed to constant comparison and algorithmic reinforcement, these patterns may become even more entrenched.

It is important to distinguish between trauma-aware life design and therapeutic intervention. While life design is not a substitute for therapy, trauma-informed practices can foster psychological safety, emotional regulation, and cognitive openness, thereby supporting participants' capacity for reflection and growth.

By integrating trauma-aware practices, life design frameworks can create inclusive, supportive environments where participants feel safe to examine and challenge internalized constraints [7]. This is particularly crucial for individuals navigating systemic inequity, burnout or personal adversity. The trauma-informed lens may enhance the effectiveness of life design, making it accessible and meaningful for a wider range of participants.

3. Trauma Informed Life Design Principles

In addition to daily hassles and stressors that we

all face, some people carry the burden of trauma effects due to significant stressors such as the global pandemic, early childhood adversity, geopolitical crises, personal losses, etc. [13] Van der Kolk has termed trauma as the “tyranny of the past” which interferes with an individual’s ability to attend to new as well as familiar situations. [14] Given that trauma is ubiquitous in our modern world [10] and these lived experiences are a part of life [15], it is important to situate a Life Design session within best practices that create a calm, positive, inclusive and psychologically safe environment for all learners. The purpose here is to create a safe place for “suspending disbelief and surmounting cognitive barriers” to imagine a different view of what is possible for one’s life. Even in the absence of trauma, these principles may create an environment where everyone has an opportunity to envision flourishing.

3.1. Situating the Life Design Exploration: Integrating Relaxation and Trauma-Informed Principles

Given life design is a person-centered, strengths-based exercise and that stress can impede the ability to reimagine one’s life, it is vital to establish an environment that permits individuals to actively engage in this process. The goal is to create a welcoming, inclusive, and psychologically safe atmosphere for participants. Practices that undergo such a learning environment are drawn from multiple areas to include higher education [16] and workplaces [17].

Table 2 details 6 guiding principles for a trauma-informed approach, specifically adapted for the training environment. [17] It is the responsibility of the facilitator to actively manage these principles and convert them into “best practices” for engagement while building an atmosphere of positivity. By using these principles to create a trauma-informed training, all participants should benefit from the positive, relaxed atmosphere in exploring life design possibilities.

Table 2. Trauma-informed training

Guiding Principle	Impact in Practice
Safety	Participants experience a sense of physical and psychological safety in interactions which is accompanied by a willingness to take risks
Trustworthiness and Transparency	Activities are explained and conducted with fairness and respect to build and maintain trust among participants
Peer Support	Peer support and mutual self-help are fostered as anchors for creating a sense of safety and hope, establishing trust, enhancing

	collaboration, and utilizing lived experience to promote exploration
Collaboration and Mutuality	Importance is placed on partnering/sharing with others and leveling power differences between facilitators and participants to engender open dialogue and exchange
Empowerment – Voice and Choice	Focus on the uniqueness and value of the individual with respect for personal strengths and experiences that are foundational to change
Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues	Recognition of, and respect for, lived experience as shaping perspectives and choices while moving beyond stereotypes and biases to facilitate participant’s reconsideration of perspectives

Table 2 summarizes key principles of trauma-informed training and their intended effects on participants, highlighting how these principles foster safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and inclusivity within the training environment.

To effectively implement trauma-informed principles in training environments, it is important to adopt practical strategies that support each guiding principle. Table 3 outlines suggested approaches for fostering safety, trust, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and inclusivity. These strategies are intended to create a supportive atmosphere where all participants feel valued, respected, and able to engage fully in the learning process.

Table 3: Strategies to foster trauma-informed principles in training

Guiding Principles	Suggested Strategies
Welcome Message	Clearly state expectations and emphasize that all voices and experiences are welcome.
Trust and Transparency	Show appreciation for contributions and use active listening to reflect and validate participants’ perspectives.
Promote a Climate of Psychological Safety	Encourage risk-taking and open, creative thinking.
Foster Collaboration and Mutuality	Address and reduce power imbalances within the group.
Foster Empowerment, Voice and Choice	Recognize and value each learner’s strengths and lived experiences.
Be Mindful of Individual Differences	Acknowledge diverse backgrounds and readiness for change; allow participants to engage at their own pace.

In Table 3, we present practical strategies aligned with trauma-informed guiding principles to enhance training environments. It offers actionable approaches

to promote safety, trust, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and inclusivity, thereby facilitating a supportive and effective learning experience.

4. Workshop Structure and Design

This workshop explored how life design principles—especially the reframing of limiting beliefs—can be integrated with AI-generated prompts to foster reflection and agency in higher education. Rather than an empirical intervention, the session introduced conceptual tools, encouraged collaborative engagement, and identified questions for future research at the intersection of identity, design, and digital society. The structure of the workshop is shown in Figure 2.

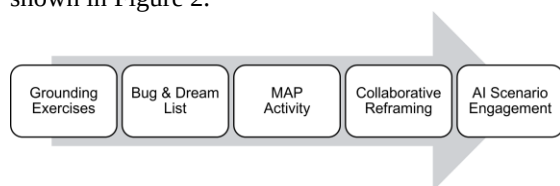


Figure 2. Workshop flow for reframing limiting beliefs through life design and AI

Figure 2 illustrates the five-stage process used in the workshop: (1) Grounding Exercises to foster psychological safety and presence; (2) Bug and Dream List to surface frustrations and aspirations; (3) Minimal Actionable Problem (MAP) Activity to reframe complex challenges into manageable steps; (4) Collaborative Reframing to encourage peer insight and mutual support; and (5) AI Scenario Engagement to explore culturally adaptive, AI-generated simulations that support reflective practice and identity exploration.

The workshop emphasized psychological readiness, participatory reflection, and scenario modeling with AI. It promoted agency, co-creation, and iterative learning through the use of decision-making simulations and case studies. Research shows that generative AI's impact on critical thinking is maximized when content is culturally adaptive and responsive to diverse learners' lived realities [18].

4.1 Participation Guidelines

At the outset, participants were invited into a shared learning environment grounded in three core values: presence, curiosity, and kindness.

- Presence encouraged attention and intentionality, being mentally available to engage deeply with personal questions and to listen openly to others.
- Curiosity fostered exploration over judgement, particularly in surfacing limiting beliefs that often go unexamined.

- Kindness served as a communal ethic, inviting participants to hold their own and others' stories with care and respect.

The listed values provide ethical guideposts that are essential for creating a psychologically safe environment. Research in trauma-informed pedagogy and coaching suggests that individuals are more likely to reflect honestly and engage creatively when they feel emotionally safe, seen, and valued [19]. Although the workshop was not therapeutic, it adopted trauma-aware language and structure to support openness and reduce the cognitive load associated with self-assessment or vulnerability. This emphasis on safety was particularly important given the diversity of roles (staff, faculty, students) and lived experiences in the university setting [4].

4.2 Core Activities

The workshop's core activities were designed to help participants identify limiting beliefs, reduce cognitive overwhelm, and reframe perceived constraints through dialogue and design thinking. Activities were both conceptual and experimental, inviting participants to engage with theory through simple, adaptable practices, and are described in Table 4.

Table 4. Reflective activities for addressing higher education challenges

Activity	Description
Bug and Dream Lists [13], [20], [21]	Participants identified persistent frustrations ("bugs") and aspirations ("dreams"), surfacing contextual and narrative blocks.
Minimal Actionable Problem (MAP) [4]	Participants reframed complex issues into small, actionable steps, shifting from overwhelm to agency.[4]
Collaborative Reframing	Peers exchanged and reframed each other's challenges, modeling radical collaboration and mutual insight.
AI-Generated Scenarios	Using culturally adaptive AI prompts, participants engaged with digital simulations of common higher education challenges, practicing the identification and reframing of limiting beliefs in a safe, experimental space.

Table 4 presents a set of structured activities used in a workshop setting to support reflection, agency, and problem-solving in higher education contexts. Each activity is designed to help participants surface limiting beliefs, reframe challenges, and engage in collaborative or AI-supported exploration. The descriptions clarify the purpose and method of each activity, emphasizing psychological safety, cultural responsiveness, and iterative learning.

Collectively, these activities illustrate how life design, digital tools, and trauma-informed framing can scaffold culturally responsive, scalable [22], and emotionally accessible reflection and identity exploration [7], [8], [23]. Recent research affirms that culturally sensitive AI prompts can foster critical thinking and engagement, while cautioning against reinforcing dominant assumptions [18], [22].

Although outcomes were not measured, the workshop offers a conceptual model for future study and application in educational and organizational contexts. Central to this approach was the use of AI-generated scenarios: participants not only engaged with culturally adaptive prompts, but were also encouraged to co-create their own prompts and scenarios, drawing on principles of cultural exchange and global connection [7]. This process facilitated empathy and understanding across differences, helping participants to identify and reframe limiting beliefs rooted in both personal and cultural narratives [24].

Through participatory design and the integration of AI-generated scenarios, the workshop demonstrated how reflective tools can be made more accessible and culturally responsive. The approach fostered agency, creative problem-solving, and a sense of shared purpose among participants. It also demonstrated the potential for AI to support inclusive, adaptable, and psychologically safe development in higher education and beyond. This conceptual model points toward new directions for research and practice in inclusive, adaptive, and psychologically safe learning environments.

5. The Role of AI in Reframing

The integration of artificial intelligence into the reframing process represents a significant evolution in life design practice. While traditional approaches to reframing limiting beliefs rely on human facilitation and self-reflection, AI offers the potential to identify, challenge, and reimagine internal narratives at scale. In the context of higher education and organizational development, AI's capacity to generate culturally adaptive prompts and scenarios can democratize access to reflective tools, making the process of reframing more inclusive and responsive to diverse lived experiences.

AI's role in reframing is twofold: it supports the identification of limiting beliefs and scaffolds the process of generating alternative narratives. In the workshop, large language models were used to create prompts, personas, and scenarios that emulated participants' real-world challenges [23]. These AI-generated scenarios provided a psychologically safe space for individuals to experiment with new perspectives, free from social risks that can accompany vulnerability in group settings.

For example, when a participant encountered a scenario about feeling unseen in a staff role, the AI could prompt reflection on the underlying belief ("My contributions don't matter here") and offer reframing questions ("How might I make my work more visible, or seek feedback from allies?") This process helped participants recognize the difference between fixed narratives and actionable opportunities [22].

Table 5. Culturally adaptive AI prompts by participant role for limiting beliefs

Participant Role	Western Cultural View	Eastern Cultural View
Student Limiting belief: <i>I don't feel like I fit in at this university—maybe I don't belong here.</i>	I'm struggling with the feeling that I don't fit in at my university. Can you offer several ways to reframe this belief that emphasize my individuality, strengths, and potential contributions to the community?	I feel like I don't belong at my university and worry I'm not meeting my family's or community's expectations. Can you suggest multiple culturally respectful ways to reframe this belief that balance personal growth with honoring collective values?
Staff Limiting belief: <i>Leadership doesn't seem to recognize the impact of my work.</i>	I feel like my contributions at work are going unnoticed by leadership. Can you suggest several ways to reframe this belief that focus on self-advocacy, professional value, and personal agency?	I feel like my work isn't being recognized by leadership, but I'm concerned that speaking up might be seen as self-centered or disrespectful. Can you offer multiple culturally respectful ways to reframe this belief that emphasizes team contribution and relational harmony?
Faculty Limiting belief: <i>My students are disengaged and not interested in my course.</i>	My students seem disengaged and uninterested in my course. Can you suggest several ways to reframe this belief that focuses on innovation, student-centered learning, and adapting my teaching methods?	My students appear disengaged, but I'm unsure how to interpret their silence without disrupting cultural norms. Can you offer multiple respectful ways to reframe this belief that considers indirect communication and traditional classroom dynamics?

Table 5 introduces some of the ways that AI-generated scenarios can be adapted by altering the cultural context of the prompt.

Table 5 presents examples of how AI-generated prompts were adapted to reflect the lived experiences of students, staff, and faculty across two cultural

contexts: Western and Eastern. Each prompt is tailored to support reflective practice and identity development in a culturally responsive manner. Further work could be done to represent additional cultural contexts.

The effectiveness of reframing is contingent of the cultural sensitivity and ethical design of its prompts. Generic or unexamined AI content may inadvertently reinforce dominant cultural norms such as individualism, competition, or linear success that do not resonate across all populations and may even exacerbate feelings of exclusion for marginalized groups. To address this, the workshop prioritized the use of universal metaphors and culturally adaptive language, ensuring that AI-generated scenarios reflected the diversity of the participants' backgrounds and experiences [19].

Recent research emphasizes that generative AI can foster critical thinking and reflective engagement in multicultural settings, but only when prompts are crafted with intentionality and awareness of cultural nuance. The workshop's approach anticipated these considerations, both in the design of AI scenarios and in the facilitation of participant co-creation, where individuals were encouraged to adapt prompts to their own contexts.

AI's ability to support reframing at scale creates new possibilities for both individual and collective growth. By allowing individuals to explore and challenge their limiting beliefs in a psychologically safe culturally responsive environment, AI can help individuals move from a sense of constraint to one of agency and experimentation. This workshop demonstrated that, when thoughtfully implemented, AI-generated scenarios can facilitate empathy, understanding, and the reframing of beliefs rooted in both personal and cultural narratives.

While the workshop was not designed to measure outcomes empirically, it offers a conceptual model for how AI might be leveraged to support reflective practice in broader educational and organizational contexts. The workshop demonstrated that, when guided by trauma-informed and culturally adaptive principles, can serve as a co-creative partner in the ongoing work of life design-helping individuals and groups to imagine new possibilities and navigate complexity with greater resilience.

6. Applications Across Cultures and Contexts

As digital tools and AI-driven models become increasingly integrated into reflective practices, understanding how these approaches translate across cultural contexts is essential. The global reach of higher education means that any conceptual model for life design must be adaptable, inclusive, and sensitive to diverse realities of its users.

The workshop's use of AI-generated, culturally adaptive scenarios was designed with cross-cultural application in mind. Rather than relying on generic prompts, facilitators intentionally crafted scenarios and metaphors that could resonate across a spectrum of backgrounds and experiences. Universal themes—such as navigating uncertainty, seeking recognition, or balancing personal and collective goals—served as entry points for reflection, while participants were encouraged to adapt or co-create prompts that reflected their own cultural narratives.

This approach was informed by research indicating that AI's effectiveness in supporting critical thinking and reflection depends on the cultural relevance of its content. By emphasizing participant agency and co-creation, the workshop model allowed for the emergence of contextually meaningful scenarios, reducing the risk of imposing dominant cultural norms or inadvertently marginalizing non-dominant perspectives.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in ensuring true cultural responsiveness. AI models, trained predominantly on data from certain regions or languages, may still reflect implicit biases or assumptions. The workshop addressed this by inviting participants to critique, adapt, or reject prompts that did not align with their lived experience, positioning AI as a tool for dialogue rather than a prescriptive authority [6].

Additionally, the trauma-informed framework was adapted to acknowledge that experiences of stress, adversity, and resilience are shaped by cultural, historical, and systemic factors. Facilitators encouraged participants to reflect on how cultural narratives influence their own limiting beliefs and to consider how collective histories of exclusion or empowerment might shape responses to AI-generated scenarios.

The cross-cultural adaptability of this model offers several implications for practice and research. First, it highlights the importance of designing AI-supported reflective tools that are not only technically robust but also culturally and contextually attuned. Second, it demonstrates that co-creation and participant agency are key to ensuring relevance and psychological safety in multicultural settings. Finally, it suggests that future iterations of this model should prioritize ongoing dialogue with users from diverse backgrounds, integrating feedback to continually refine both the technology and the facilitation process.

By centering cultural nuance and adaptability, the workshop model contributes to the development of reflective practices that are both scalable and deeply rooted in the lived realities of global communities. As AI continues to shape educational and organizational landscapes, such approaches will be critical for fostering inclusive, resilient, and creative responses to complexity and change.

7. Conclusions

In this paper we explored the intersection of life design, trauma-informed practice, and AI-generated cultural scenarios as a conceptual model for fostering reflection, agency, and adaptability in higher education and beyond. By integrating design thinking with digital innovation, the workshop model demonstrates how technology can be leveraged to identify and reframe limiting beliefs in ways that are culturally responsive, scalable, and psychologically safe.

7.1 Synthesis and Key Insights: Implications for Digital Society

The workshop illustrated that when AI is thoughtfully designed, paying careful attention to cultural nuance, ethical boundaries, and participant agency, it can serve as a powerful co-creative partner in reflective practice [1]. The use of universal metaphors and participant-driven scenario creation ensured that the process remained inclusive and relevant across diverse backgrounds. Trauma-informed framing further supported psychological safety, enabling participants to engage deeply with personal and collective narratives.

The theoretical nature of the workshop offers a flexible model for how AI-supportive life design can be adapted for different cultural and institutional contexts. The activities and principles described here provide a foundation for future research and practice, emphasizing the importance of ongoing adaptation, user feedback, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

One of the most significant implications for digital society is a reimagining of AI's role in personal growth and learning. Beyond automation and personalization, this model positions AI as a partner in narrative reconstruction—helping users reframe disempowering stories, identify actionable insights, and envision new life trajectories. This reframing is especially valuable in education and organizations, where individuals often face internalized constraints, chronic stress, or institutional barriers. By prompting reflection and offering alternative perspectives, AI can enhance digital well-being by supporting agency, identity, and emotional coherence.

However, these opportunities bring ethical and design responsibilities. For AI to serve as a co-creative tool, it must be developed with attention to cultural context, trauma awareness, and power dynamics. Experiences from multicultural classrooms reveal both the promise and the challenges of using AI to foster inclusive reflection. Poorly designed prompts risk reinforcing dominant norms or overlooking systemic contributors to personal struggle. This underscores the need for ongoing, interdisciplinary collaboration among educators, technologists, psychologists, and community leaders to co-create

tools that are as adaptive and inclusive as the people who use them.

The workshop also raises broader questions about democratizing access to growth-oriented resources. Traditional coaching and counseling services are often costly and culturally narrow. An AI system grounded in life design principles could offer scalable, low-barrier pathways to reflection and planning—especially for under-resourced communities. This reframes digital infrastructure not just as a marketplace of apps, but as a site of social investment.

Ultimately, integrating reframing, narrative inquiry, and AI signals a shift in digital society from mere optimization to meaning making. As users engage with increasingly intelligent systems, the core question becomes not just “What’s the fastest way?” but “Who am I becoming as I use this?” [24] The model presented here offers a response—one that embraces complexity, centers dignity, and recognizes reflection as essential to human flourishing in the digital age.

7.2 Future Research Directions

While this paper presents a conceptual model integrating life design theory, trauma-informed framing, and AI-assisted reflection, it also identifies several critical areas for further study. These areas span psychological, technological, and cultural dimensions of digital self-development and invite both qualitative and design-based inquiry.

Evaluating the Efficacy of AI-Assisted Reframing

Further research is needed to assess how effectively AI-generated prompts support individuals in identifying and reframing limiting beliefs. Studies could explore how different populations—students, staff, faculty, or community learners—engage with AI-generated scenarios and whether this engagement leads to shifts in perceived agency, mindset, or action. Key methods might include pre/post reflection surveys, interviews, and behavioral tracking within digital life design platforms.

Cultural Adaptation of Life Design AI Tools

As argued throughout this paper, culturally congruent prompts are essential for resonance and impact. A key research question is how AI tools can be tailored to reflect the values, metaphors, and lived experiences of different cultural groups without falling into essentialism or stereotypes. Comparative studies across institutions, language groups, and regional settings could provide insight into what forms of metaphor and framing are most effective for different audiences.

The Role of Trauma-Informed Framing in Digital Reflection

While trauma-informed principles were used as a theoretical foundation to prepare participants for reframing exercises, more empirical work is needed to understand their role in digital settings. Future research might examine whether trauma-informed preparatory practices-such as grounding exercises or values clarification-enhance users' openness to AI-generated reframing or influence retention in longer-term digital coaching programs.

Addressing these questions will be essential for advancing the responsible, inclusive, and effective use of AI in life design and digital self-development.

Our model affirms that meaningful self-development requires more than access to information; it requires safety, relevance, and a sense of possibility. AI's role is not to replace human insight, but to scaffold curiosity, prompt new narratives, and democratize reflective support.

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