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THE SELF IN VOCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY: OBJECT, SUBJECT, AND PROJECT

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Vocational psychology has embraced the concept of an individual self as a core construct in semblances such as Parsons's (1909) injunction to increase self-knowledge, Super's (1963) enjoinder to implement the self-concept, Betz and Hackett's (1981) encouragement to increase self-efficacy, and Cochran's (1997) edict to invest the self. Despite the centrality of self constructs in theory and practice, vocational psychologists have paid little attention to the linguistic explication of the self, relying instead on its operational definition. This habitual inattention to examining the "self" is a serious oversight because it leaves vocational psychology's view of the self as fundamentally ambiguous. This does not mean that vocational psychology does not have a self; in fact, vocational psychology has multiple selves, at least three, each one relatively distinct and existing in isolation from its other renderings. These different models of the self flow from different epistemologies, each of which shapes a distinct approach to science and practice. To elaborate career theories and advance counseling practice, vocational psychologists at least need to articulate their three main epistemic models of the self, and maybe someday organize the relationships among these models of the self into a nomological network.

In this chapter, I seek to redress vocational psychology's inattention to the self and address the ambiguity of the meaning of self. To begin, I offer a chronological survey of vocational psychology's three main views of human singularity. During succeeding historical eras, different aspects of human singularity interested vocational psychologists, so they developed a new set of terms and concepts to deal with shifts in the meaning of individuality. Over time, vocational psychology developed what Kuhn (2000) referred to as *language communities*, each with its own paradigm for understanding the self and vocational behavior. Because the self is fundamentally ambiguous, adherents to each paradigm describe it with an agreed on language and metaphors. Thus, each paradigm has a textual tradition, or way of talking about the self. As readers shall see, when they talk about individuals, differentialists use the language of personality, developmentalists use the language of personhood, and constructionists use the language of identity.

Given its three paradigms and language communities, my thesis is that vocational psychology has at least three selves: the self as object, the self as subject, and the self as project. The three paradigms differ from each other in their perspectives, presuppositions, and predominant metaphors. Nevertheless, each paradigm presents a reasonable and responsible way of organizing the world and conceptualizing the self. Each paradigm for understanding the self was conceptualized in a different historical era and gives pride of place to different aspects of human singularity. The story of the self begins with the concept of character that sustains moral order in agricultural societies.

CHARACTER

The self during the Victorian age was not individual; it was part of a collective made of people acting as a group. In his essay on character, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1886) went so far as to state, "Character is this moral order seen through the medium of an individual" (p. 6). As part of a collective, people strove to develop a character that coordinated with the local boundedness, cosmic centeredness, and divine constitution of their community. To do so, each person was to strive to develop the very same characteristics: honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness, helpfulness, and thrift.

Communities did not see vocational behavior as arising from an individual's outlook or personal agency. Instead, they believed that character was a response to society's agency. This belief is embedded in the word *character*, which comes from the French *caractere*, meaning a tool for engraving or sculpting. Communities stamped, impressed, and engraved character on its members by using prefigurations in the form of traditional plots, archetypal stories, theological parables, and cultural myths. Thus, a community's prefigured

prototypes penetrated people's raw humanity to sculpt a character shaped by virtuous habits.

These habits changed when modernism moved people from agricultural communities to industrial cities. The dramatic changes that city living wrought in cultural context and interpersonal relationships dismantled the existing social order. Urban centers required a new view of self to replace the Romantic era's view of self as character. Character in the communal sense became untenable in the impersonal mode of urban living. Collectivist connectedness was broken in the move from sacred societies that inhabited people to secular cities that people inhabited. A person who dwelled in a city became part of an anonymous mass of people living private lives.

MODERNISM: FROM SACRED TO SECULAR

The breakdown of a larger order eventually led to new value being placed on an individual and autonomous self. Tocqueville (1969), who coined the term, defined *individualism* as "a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends" (p. 506). Individualism emerged when democracies advanced a society of equals wherein everyone is expected to support her- or himself. In such societies, each person must think of one's self rather than other people. This quest for personal meaning contrasts sharply with the communal imprinting of social meaning. To leave home and establish an independent self, each young person must determine what kind of life is worth living. When they arrived in the city, young people looked for available slots in which to insert their own labor into the economic engine of industry. This modern sense of self brings the freedom for individuals to go where their intelligence and interests take them. The need to know one's own talents and traits, in turn, brings a modern interiority that looks inward for meaning (Taylor, 1989, p. x).

Thomas Carlyle (1833/1896), an early critic of industrialization, understood that "people's creeds, beliefs, and institutions—which are all in tatters because of the enormous advances of modern thought and science—have to be tailored anew to fit the modern era" (p. 109). Carlyle succinctly stated the problem of a young person "getting under way" in industrial society as follows:

To each is given a certain inward talent, a certain outward environment of fortune; to each, by wisest combination of these two, a certain maximum capability. But the hardest problem were ever this first: to find by study of yourself, and the ground you stand on, what your combined inward and outward capability specially is. (p. 92)

While Carlyle accurately stated the problem, Western societies waited 75 years for Parsons to propose a social solution to the problem: namely, that social workers initiate a new profession that in 1909 Parsons called *vocational guidance*.

So, the story of vocational psychology begins with Parsons, who launched the guidance movement as a scientific method to help young people match self to situation. Similar to Carlyle, Parsons emphasized self-knowledge as a basis for choice. Parsons emphasized a unique and autonomous self that, through "true reasoning," could be matched to a fitting occupation. According to Parsons (1909), the vital problem of vocational choice "should be solved in a careful, scientific way with due regard to each person's aptitudes, abilities, ambitions, resources, and limitations, and the relations of these elements to the conditions of success in different industries" (p. 3). The vocational guidance movement founded by Parsons immediately sought to examine the self as a scientific object. In short order, Edward L. Thorndike (1913) defined vocational guidance as "the scientific study of fitting the individual differences of human beings to differences in the work of work" (p. 101).

SELF AS OBJECT: FROM CHARACTER TO PERSONALITY

Parsons and his cohort found their first scientist of vocational guidance in a Harvard University psychology professor named Hugo Münsterberg. Wilhelm Wundt, the founder of psychological science, was disappointed in his student Münsterberg, who insisted on advancing applied psychology and its study of individual differences rather than continuing to develop the pure science of experimental psychology. Today, it seems hard to conceive that psychology discovered "individual differences," yet remember that the goal of agricultural communities was to stamp everyone with the same virtuous character. The rise of a smokestack economy wrought by industrialization resulted in sociological changes that highlighted individual differences. Individuals in a modern society were to become unique, distinctive, and able to stand out in a crowd. Accordingly, from 1890 onward, the science of individual differences grew strong, especially in applied psychology.

The new science of the self was, in due course, to be called *personality psychology*. Gordon Allport is usually credited with initiating the formal discipline of personality psychology. His textbook, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (1937), proved pioneering in that for the first time it defined the topics that the field of personality should cover. Of note, too, in 1937 Ross Stagner published *The Psychology of Personality*, and a year later Henry Murray (1938) published *Explorations in Personality*. Until this period, authors of psychology textbooks about the self highlighted character in their book titles,

culminating in Roback's (1928) monumental volume titled *The Psychology of Character, With a Survey of Temperament*. According to Nicholson (1998), Allport concluded from Roback's book that psychology faced insurmountable problems in trying to focus on character as an object of scientific study. Accordingly, Allport initiated efforts to eliminate *character* from the psychologists' vocabulary and institutionalize the word *personality*.

Personality as a scientific construct was initially conceptualized as an individual's adaptive response to the demands of industrial jobs and urban living. A healthy personality portrayed a *persona*, or mask, that adjusted well to these demands. Adjustment became the central construct in psychology applied in schools, industry, and clinics. What had once been viewed as moral problems were now reconceptualized as scientific questions. Susman (1979) explained that psychology was attracted to personality because it referred to traits of self-representation and it was value-neutral, free of the moral load carried by character. Modernism and its science of applied psychology had now turned fully from character to personality. Carlyle's tailor had now been re-tailored in the cloth of modernity, and the tailor's calling card now advised individuals that they, too, needed a "good fit."

The science of self that is called *personality* views individuals from the observer's vantage point. It represents a form of essentialism that asserts that certain categories have an underlying reality or true nature that one cannot directly observe. This essence gives individuals their personality. This essentialist perspective leads to categorization and the psychology of individual differences. Differential psychology concentrates on categorizing stable traits that objectify and externalize the self. Vocational psychologists refer to traits with nouns, thereby connoting that these essences or variables such as interests are stable over time and consistent across contexts. The descriptive stability of traits provides a secure epistemic base for the predictive validity of aptitude tests and interest inventories. The psychometric approach for objectifying the self matches the stable and consistent object being assessed to known entities such as occupations. This objective measurement produces scores that note affinities and index degree of resemblance. Remember that scores on the Strong Interest Inventory (Strong, 1943) indicate similarity to occupational groups and scores on the Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Convention (RIASEC; Holland, 1997) inventories indicate degree of resemblance to vocational personality types. Reports of aptitude and ability test scores objectify individuals by locating them along a normative continuum.

Vocational psychology's personality perspective on the self as object has followed the typical evolution of a maturing scientific discourse (Ballantyne, 1995): operational definitions, empirical relationships, and theoretical explanations. The work of operational definition was to catalogue and categorize

various aspects of vocational personality by choosing which aspects to study and then constructing tests and inventories to measure those aspects. Thus, Hollingworth (1916) articulated the goals of vocational psychology as specifying the traits required in various types of work so that both the choice of the individual and the selection of the employer would proceed directly once an individual's characteristics were known. Psychologists needed measures of interests, capacities, and aptitudes to match people to positions. So, during the 1920s and 1930s, they concentrated on the empirical study of personality. Pioneer vocational psychologists established influential research programs focused on measuring what would later be called *traits*. Leaders of this measurement movement included Thorndike and Hollingworth at Columbia University, Paterson and Darley at the University of Minnesota, Bingham and Scott at Carnegie Tech, and Strong and Terman at Stanford University. Measurement of individual differences was their enterprise; they had no particular interest in establishing a theory of vocational personality. The major accomplishments of measuring abilities, aptitudes, and interests is comprehensively summarized in three landmark books: *The Vocational Interests of Men and Women* (Strong, 1943), *Minnesota Mechanical Ability Tests* (Paterson, Elliot, Anderson, Toops, & Heidbreder, 1930), and *Appraising Vocational Fitness by Means of Psychological Tests* (Super, 1949).

The work of mapping empirical relationships *within* categories began after World War II, fueled by new statistical techniques such as factor analysis. Rather than concentrating on whether traits existed and which ones were important in the work world, vocational psychologists—led by Guilford (1948) and Darley and Hagenah (1955)—studied how traits relate to each other. Using factor analysis to study personality structure, they established the trait-and-factor model for vocational psychology. During the same period, Roe (1956) mapped the structure of occupations along two dimensions demarcated by eight interest fields and six ability levels.

This work on the structure of interests and the structure of occupations, in due course, led to the theory-construction era. In scientific discourse, theories usually explain interaction among categories. In the instance of vocational psychology, theories explain interactions between personality structure and occupational structure. For example, Holland's (1997) theory of person–environment fit and Lofquist and Dawis's (1969) theory of work adjustment explain how personality traits interact with occupational contexts to produce adjustment outcomes. During the 20th century, the overriding goal of vocational guidance rooted in the personality paradigm for understanding the self as object has been to promote the adjustment outcomes of success, satisfaction, and stability. In the middle of the 20th century, vocational psychologists formulated a second paradigm for understanding human singularity.

SELF AS SUBJECT: FROM PERSONALITY TO PERSONHOOD

Following World War II, psychology joined in the critique of individual adjustment as a societal goal. The most prominent voice within psychology was that of Maslow (1961), who wrote, "Adjusted to what? To a bad culture? To a dominating parent? What shall we think of a well-adjusted slave?" (p. 51). Humanistic psychologists concurred with the European existentialists who saw "the total collapse of all sources of values outside the individual." As Maslow (1961) concluded, "There is no place else to turn but inward, to the self, as the locus of values" (p. 51). But humanistic psychologists in the United States refused to take up the existential pessimism of European psychologists. Instead, these third-force psychologists focused on the democratic promise of normal human development. The core imperatives of humanistic theory—to grow, to become, and to realize full human potential—fit America's post-World War II conception of democracy and the emerging emphasis on human subjectivity. The self in an age of anxiety must be both autonomous and mature, capable of living up to ideals of democratic thought and action.

The belief that the emerging person must trust in her or his own subjective experience led to a shift from vocational guidance to career counseling. Leading this shift from guidance to counseling was Carl Rogers (1951), who advocated the view that the people are competent to direct themselves. As Rogers and his collaborators shifted their attention from the structure of being to the process of becoming, humanistic psychologists highlighted the inherent human capacity for growth, psychological insight, and self-regulation. They asserted that the emerging person must trust in subjective experience. So, humanistic psychology moved from measuring differences in objective personality to fostering development of subjective personhood. Humanists who had an interest in personality psychology became personologists, studying the person as a whole, not as trait parts, and the self as the center of one's own life.

Led by Super, vocational personologists heavily critiqued adjustment, equating it to conformity. Super (1955) proposed moving vocational psychology from an individual-differences, or differential, model focused on stability and adjustment to a developmental model focused on change and maturation. Tyler (1978), in her book on *Individuality*, wrote the following about this paradigm shift: "Perhaps the most fundamental is a shift from reaction to action as the phenomenon to be studied" (p. 2). Borgen (1991) noted that this shift began the move to emphasizing agency rather than the passivity associated with the trait-and-factor approach. He marked this shift as the time when psychologists preferred to view people as actively shaping their lives and careers rather than passively adjusting to external demands.

The developmental paradigm in vocational psychology views self as a subject and calls this sense of personhood a *self-concept*. A person becomes

aware of self through perceptions of the self. Over time these self-percepts acquire meaning and cohere to form a self-concept. So, for Super, a self-concept is a picture of self, that is, a perceived self with accrued meanings. The conceptual meanings usually arise in some role or set of relationships; and, of course, Super concentrated on self-concepts in occupational roles. Super first suggested the importance of self-concept in career development in a 1951 article titled, "Vocational Adjustment: Implementing Self-Concept." His core postulate, that vocational self-concepts interact with work roles to form interests and shape careers, led Super to consider occupational choice as implementing a self-concept, work as a manifestation of selfhood, and vocational development as a continuing process of improving the match between the self and situation. This movement in vocational psychology from objective personality to subjective personhood corresponded well with the spirit of the 1960s as a time during which Gestalt therapists called for increased awareness of the self and humanistic psychologists promoted actualization of the self.

Self as subject followed the same sequence of discursive maturation that had been traversed by self as object. The work of operational definition again concentrated on selecting the characteristics appropriate for self-evaluation. Self-concept researchers began by using the traits already well-established by personality researchers, but instead of objectively measuring traits with tests and inventories, they used the method of subjective self-estimates advocated by Harry Dexter Kitson (1925) in his self-analysis approach to vocational guidance. Kitson (1934) was pessimistic about the predictive efficiency of trait inventories, claiming that 50% of people could succeed in 50% of occupations. So rather than relying on objective tests, he advocated self-analysis of interests and abilities. Of course, trait-and-factor psychologists such as Paterson and Darley (1936) took a human engineering view and believed that tests corrected errors of self-estimate. Research could not settle the issue because self-reports correlated with adjustment outcomes about .50; test scores correlated with the same outcomes about .50; and self-reports and scores correlated about .50 (Williamson, 1965). Objective scores and subjective self-estimates clearly are different perspectives on the self, each with evidence of its own validity. Objective measures are concerned with public norms and resemblances, whereas subjective measures are concerned with private goals and purposes.

The work of mapping relationships among self-estimates focused on the structure of self-concept. In a classic monograph, Super (1963) differentiated the content of self-concepts from their structure. He identified sets of dimensions and metadimensions that mapped this structure. The dimensions were self-esteem, clarity, abstraction, refinement, certainty, stability, and realism. Super concluded, and Nancy Betz (1994) and Douglas Hall (1971)

agreed, that dimensions such as self-esteem and self-efficacy influence how well the process of self-concept implementation may proceed. In contrast to the dimension of self-concepts, the metadimensions refer to the architecture of the self-concept system. Super named the metadimensions structure, scope, harmony, flexibility, idiosyncrasy, and regnancy. In 1980, Super expanded his self-concept theory in asserting a model of life roles in which individuals have multiple self-concepts, each pertaining to a different social role. In her influential theory of career choice circumscription and compromise, Linda Gottfredson (1981) theorized that self-perceptions progress through stages of increasing differentiation, starting with orientation to size and power (3–5 years old), then to sex roles (6–8 years old), next to social values (9–13 years old), and finally arriving at an internal unique self (14+). Gottfredson (1981) defined the self-concept as “one’s view of self” and “the totality of different ways of seeing oneself” (pp. 546–547).

The work on the structure of self-concepts eventually yielded to scientific discourse about theoretical interaction. In the instance of self-concept theory, it has been the interaction between self-concept dimensions and specific situations. The attention to context was articulated in the 1980s by theorists such as Bandura (1982) in his self-efficacy theory and by Markus and Nurius (1986) in their theory of possible selves. They argued that self-concepts are not stable, generalizable, or an average. Instead, they conceptualized the self as multifaceted and composed of numerous images, schemas, and prototypes. The core representations might be viewed as the self. This view of the self is more fully articulated in career theories that contextualize self-concept dimensions, including Betz and Hackett’s (1981) theory of self-efficacy; Douglas Hall’s (1971) description of self-esteem as a central component of career management; Holland’s (1997) inclusion of self-estimates in his self-directed search; and Lent, Brown, and Hackett’s (1994) sociocognitive theory of interests.

In giving pride of place to a subjective self, Super and his collaborators promoted fragmentation of vocational psychology’s research efforts. They repeatedly portrayed the subjective and developmental perspective on the self as the opposite of the objective and individual-differences perspective on the self. For example, they contrasted the propositional logic of trait theory to the narrative logic of life-pattern theory. Moreover, they contrasted vocational guidance using scores from actuarial methods with career counseling using themes from literary methods. Dichotomies do sometimes have an expository place in presenting a new view. Yet when carried to extremes they promote opposition and fragmentation. I consider Super’s (1954) starkly binary portrayals to be rhetorical rather than real. We would have been better served if he had emptied out the extremes and showcased how serious scholars may view the self from two complementary perspectives. Fortunately for the field

of vocational psychology, the epistemic wars rooted in needless dichotomies seems to be resolved as the field has moved from an *either* objective or subjective opposition to a *both* objective and subjective collaboration that encourages multiple perspectives on the self. One direct outcome of this rapprochement is viewing the self as a project that incorporates both an objective personality and a subjective self-concept.

SELF AS PROJECT: FROM PERSONHOOD TO IDENTITY

This epistemic rapprochement reconceptualizes the self in a more social and connected form. The first glimmerings of viewing the relational self as a psychosocial project occurred in feminist thought. In 1968, the Harvard psychologist Naomi Weisstein boldly declared the feminist manifesto as "psychology constructs the female" (p. 2). During the 1970s, feminist psychologists persistently pursued this constructionist insight. The central theme of feminist critiques of vocational psychology during that era was that psychology had mistakenly transposed malleable features of culture into supposedly ironclad facts of nature.

Starting with the proclamation that psychology constructs the female, the social constructionist paradigm views self as a process and calls self-implementation in a social role a project or an identity. Vocational psychologists such as Super (1963) and occupational sociologists such as Gottfredson (1981) had focused on self-concepts rather than self-conceptualizing. Pryor (1985) explained that developmental psychologists who held a subjective perspective on the self had focused on the self in relation to other things, such as interests and occupations, rather than concentrating on defining the self as a structure. Pryor asserted that they became preoccupied with the content of the self or self-concept rather than the self. An alternative to concentrating on the content of the self would be to concentrate on the process by which a self forms, develops, and functions. The distinction between the process of forming a self and the content of that self harkens back to the foundational work of William James.

According to James's (1890) view of self, human beings possess both a self-conceiving *I* and a self-conceptual *me*. James posited that individuals are both subjects who think and the objects of some of those thoughts. For James, the *I* is the subject and the *me* is the object. *I* is the process of being a self, and *me* evolves as an accumulation of self-understandings in the form of linguistic self-constructions appropriated from sociocultural sources. Self-concept denotes conceptual understandings formed by *I*. In the language of contemporary narrative psychology, we could say that the *I* authors *me*. Thus, using the language of William James, we might reframe Pryor's (1985) critique to say

that vocational psychologists have been focused on the content of me rather than on the process of I. However, there was one vocational psychologist who did concentrate on the self as an ego process.

As Super pursued his study of self-concepts, David Tiedeman diverged from that path as he began work on a process theory of self and career in a 1961 paper that included the terms *career consciousness* and *career constructionism*. Whereas Super investigated conceptual understandings of the me, Tiedeman aimed for a more reflective perspective on the I. As noted before, Super saw self as an object, a *me* of attitudes and evaluations. Super's *science of self* focuses on Newtonian parts and traits that were the results of knowing the self. Tiedeman's *philosophy of self* views self as an I of doing and thinking focused on getting to know the self. For Tiedeman, self-concept means process, not state or trait. He viewed the self as the supraordinate organizing principal or systematizing process of the psyche that enables people to symbolize experience into less complex and more workable forms. To indicate the systematizing and organizing process that is I, Tiedeman preferred the term *self-conceptualizing*, using it to denote the process of giving meaning to self-in-experience (Field, Tiedeman, & Kehas, 1963). Systematizing or self-organization creates a globally coherent pattern from initially independent components such as interest, abilities, needs, and values. The self-organization becomes increasingly complex as the whole intermittently reorganizes its parts.

In viewing life as process, Tiedeman wanted individuals to learn that conceptions of self are just that, conceptions for ordering experience and anticipating the future. Tiedeman encouraged counselors to help clients become aware of how they systematize their experiences into self-concepts. He urged vocational psychologists to concentrate on the individual's cultivation of personal structure through self-constructing and self-organizing. Tiedeman wanted clients to become conscious of their own consciousness. In other words, he wanted individuals to understand that building a self-concept and identity was a project of self as a process.

When a self-organized system fits its environment, the individual is adapted or, in person-environment terms, the person is congruent with the position. A stable configuration of the whole, by definition, fits its environment. When the environment changes, requiring further adaptation, the person adjusts to these changes while keeping self-organization intact as much as possible. Thus, the self intermittently rearranges into a more ordered and complex pattern, each pattern attaining a temporary equilibrium before encountering the need for further self-organization. As the self stabilizes in a coherent whole, new properties may emerge. These emergent properties belong to the whole and cannot be reduced to the elements that compose it. Tiedeman conceptualized career as a quality that emerges at more complex and better integrated levels of self-consciousness. Once emerged, career through

downward causation directs and regulates lower level components of vocational behavior. Thus, Tiedeman led vocational psychology, or at least its constructionist branch, to the seminal insight that career or vocational self-consciousness is an emergent property of a self-organizing system that through downward causation imposes direction on vocational behavior.

Language plays a central role in the process of conceptualizing a self, or self-constructing. It is access to language that enables individuals to become conscious of their own consciousness, or self-conscious. This reflexivity enables them to form self-defining conceptions about who they are and narratives about what they do. From this perspective on the self, language is not a means to express thoughts or feelings that have a prior existence. Instead, language is the very site of self-constructing and meaning making. Thoughts exist by virtue of language, and, by extension, language provides words to form a self-concept. Lacking a word, one lacks that concept of self and thus lacks that component of identity. Individuals use language and words to talk their concept of self into existence. Self-concept is not an essence that unfolds into the world, it is a task—a project of the person. Self-constructing does not mean inside out but outside in. In constructing the self, an individual draws meaning from experiencing the social world, which then inhabits the self-concept. Bourdieu (1977) developed the idea of inhabiting the self-concept into the concept of habitus. He sought to avoid the philosophical problems of both objectivism and subjectivism in asserting that objective social structures and schemas become inscribed into the subjective experience of individuals, thereby forming a self-concept and imposing a social identity on it.

SELF-AS-PROCESS FORMS IDENTITY-AS-PROJECT

Experience provides the means and meaning through which individuals self-construct an identity. So, the self-as-process forms an identity, or self-as-project, that is fundamentally interpersonal. We probably should not use the term *self-constructing* because construction of a self is a social constructing of a self. It involves not just individual construction but co-construction through co-active collaboration with the social group and community. We are biological beings immersed in the linguistic and interpersonal practices of a community. The community's sociocultural and linguistic practices serve as sources of the self and indeed they eventually constitute identity.

Identity is an emergent quality, narrated by language, historically situated, socially constituted, and culturally shaped. Identity embeds multiple self-concepts into numerous social roles. A person narratively constructs

an identity or story of self-in-situation by digesting experience and transforming it into meaning. Identity is the content in the story of me that the self-constructing process of I imposes on my past experiences. Identity tells the story of a self in a context. For example, career is the story that I tell about the trail of me's along the path of life. Because identity is a narrative about a self in a role or in a relationship, identity is a psychosocial construct rather than a psychological one such as personality or personhood. Identity resides at the interface between the subjective self and objective interpersonal world. In chronicling the recursive interplay between self and society, identity explains why individuals make the choices that they do and the private meaning that guides these choices. In short, stories explain our self to our self and to other people. Self-defining stories about the vocational tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas an individual has faced from school entry through retirement reveal the essential meaning of career and the dynamics of its construction. Through self-constructing stories, individuals author an identity and construct a career by autobiographically imposing narrative continuity and coherence on their vocational experiences.

Viewing identity as a psychosocial project focuses attention on how the self as process produces identity projects as well as on how the self can reconstruct identity through career intervention. As Tiedeman taught, conceptions of self are just that: conceptions for ordering experience and anticipating the future. Career intervention can help clients become conscious of their own consciousness—or increase their vocational self-consciousness. Typically, these identity interventions use narrative means to increase the integration and narratability of career stories. In narrative counseling for career construction, clients learn that I (self) authors me (identity), and through counseling can reauthor a more vital and livable story of me. In revising identity and career stories (whether through experience or through counseling), the self-as-process repeatedly reorganizes life experiences into narratives with increasing unity, continuity, purpose, and meaning. Thus, the self intermittently rearranges identity into a more ordered and complex pattern, each pattern attaining a temporary equilibrium before encountering a new transition that raises a need for additional self-organization.

CONCLUSION

Returning to the multiple selves of vocational psychology, recall that the field has articulated at least three views of self, with each relatively distinct and existing in isolation from its other renderings. These different models of the self flow from different epistemologies, each of which shapes a distinct

approach to science and practice. The first self replaced character with personality. The self of personality is an object. In this sense, the self is objectified by placing it on a normal curve after measuring its abilities and interests. The self-as-object can also be typed by indexing its resemblance to profiles of occupational groups or RIASEC types (Holland, 1997). The self of personhood is a subject. The individual forms self-concepts by examining her or his own essential subject matter. The task then is to implement that essence in a work role and pursue actualization of the self. The self of identity is a project. The individual constructs a story that explains unity and continuity in the experiences of self in social roles and relationships. The personality object frames interventions of vocational guidance, the personhood subject frames interventions of career counseling, and the identity project frames interventions of life designing.

To clarify its theories and advance its practice, vocational psychology needs to more fully articulate its three main epistemic models of the self and in due course organize their relationships into a nomological network. The current situation has not changed from 1985, when Gottfredson concluded that there had been too little systematic analysis of what constitutes the self and there was little agreement among the different theorists who use the term. Theoretical models of the self remain piecemeal and disorganized. Rather than a further proliferation of new metaphors and models, vocational psychologists need to clarify what they mean by the self and how particular views of self shape career interventions.

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