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 Parson's (1909) injunction to increase self-knowledge, Super's (1963) enjoinment 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, with 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 need at least 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 its meaning. To begin this work, I survey vocational psychology's three main views of human singularity. My surview of vocational psychology's three selves follows a chronological outline. 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 upon language and metaphors. Thus, each paradigm has a textual tradition or way of talking about the self. As we 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, or modes of understanding, 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. Thus, the products of this scholarly work gain clarity when viewed against their context, especially the dominant ideology of the age. The story of the self begins with the emergence of individualism as a central feature of modernity. The idea of an individual self emerged in industrial cities to replace the concept of character that had sustained moral order in agricultural societies.

Character

Since 1909, psychologists in Western societies have viewed the self as the major formative power in shaping vocational behavior. Scholars of the 19th century took a different view. The self during the Victorian Age was not individual; it was part of a collective made of people acting as a group. Emerson (1886) in his 1844 essay on character went so far as to state

that “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. Many descriptions of good character exist, yet for purposes herein it can be described by six core characteristics: honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness, helpfulness, and thrift. Individuals were to learn the honesty required not to cheat, lie, or steal. They needed the responsibility of self-disciple to control their own behavior and to be accountable for its consequences. With regard to interpersonal relationships, good character included respect for other people as shown by polite manners, tolerance for individual differences, and participation in community affairs. Communities expected individuals to develop a sense of fairness to follow the rules and obey authority. If other people needed assistance, one should be helpful and share resources with them. And finally, each individual should display thrift in conserving their economic resources. The good character composed by these virtues of honesty, responsibility, respect, fairness, helpfulness, and citizenship showed itself in performance of duty-- duty to self, duty to others, and duty to the state.

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. This active and purposeful foreshadowing suggested by antecedent images what people should become. For example, myths imagine beforehand what a person should be like. 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.

Modernism: From Sacred to Secular

The 19th century movement named "modernism" by Pope Pius X in 1907 was not a single system, but a way of thinking that raised questions that could not be easily answered by traditional belief systems. As part of his vigorous condemnation against the "synthesis of all heresies," Pope Pius X ordered that during ordination all priests take the *Sacrorum antistitum* (1910), an oath against modernism. Anti-modernists attributed the decay of communities to technology, instrumental reason, and city living. They argued against the modern cultural enterprise because it was founded on the domination of nature, primacy of method, and sovereignty of the individual. Anti-modernists did not want social sciences to replace folkloric stories, theological parables, and mythological archetypes as a way to understand life Nevertheless, industrialization and urbanization prompted questions that traditional explanatory systems did not address and could not answer.

Despite the best efforts of anti-modernists, the transformation from agricultural collectivism to industrial individualism accelerated with the movement of workers from farms and villages to the city. 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. Wallace Stevens (1990, p. 185) succinctly explained how modernism emptied life of its collective meaning when he wrote

in *Opus Posthumous*: “The world about us would be desolate except for the world within us.” The sound of the turn toward modernism can be heard in the Janus-faced ambivalence and orchestrated chaos of Mahler’s *Ninth Symphony* premièred in 1909 or seen in Picasso’s cubistic paintings that experimented with structure, collage, and distortion beginning in 1907 with *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*.

The breakdown of a larger order eventually led to new value being placed on an individual and autonomous self. Tocqueville coined the term “individualism’ in his book on American Democracy (Borgmann, 1992). Tocqueville (1969) viewed individualism as a complement to the modern project. Tocqueville defined individualism, not as self-assertion, but 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). Tocqueville believed that monarchies and religions continually reinforced an individual's responsibilities to other people. They were to be aware of others and embed self in the collective. Individualism emerged when democracies advanced a society of equals wherein each person must support himself, and thus must think of himself rather than other people (Murphy, 2007). This is what Tocqueville (1969) meant by disengagement from society at large.

> I see an innumerable multitude of men, alike and equal, constantly circling around in pursuit of the petty and banal pleasures with which they glut their souls. Each of them withdrawn into himself, is almost unaware of the fate of the rest. Mankind, for him, consists in his children and his personal friends. As for the rest of his fellow citizens, they are near enough, but he does not notice them. He

> touches them but feels nothing. He exists in and for himself, and
>
> though he still may have a family, one can at least say that he has not
>
> got a fatherland (p. 692).

In a society of equals, wherein everyone is expected to support herself or himself, each person must think of one's self rather than other people (Murphy, 2007). This quest for personal meaning contrasts sharply with the communal imprinting of social meaning. Each young person must leave home and establish an independent self, as the Puritans had done in leaving home and coming to America. Each person, in "leaving home," 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 (1832), 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." He 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
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> 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 which in 1908 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. But Parsons called for looking inward at a separate self, not outward at a communal character. Parsons emphasized an 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). In the words of Donald. G. Paterson, “guidance occurs when science touches the individual.”

Self as Object: From Character to Personality

Parsons and his cohort found their first scientist of vocational guidance in a Harvard University psychology professor name Hugo Munsterberg. Wilhelm Wundt, the father of psychological science, was disappointed in his student Munsterberg 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 for us 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 pursue the good life through autonomy, self-exploration, and commitment to productive work (Taylor, 1989, p. 305). A person was 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, fueled by influential publications such as Galton's (1892) *Finger Prints*, Dewey's (1930) *Individualism: Old and New*, and Thorndike's (1911) *Individuality*.

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. He was the first "trait psychologist", having titled his dissertation (1922) *An Experimental Study of the Traits of Personality*. Two year later, Allport taught the first course on personality offered in the United Stated. Presented at Harvard University, the course was titled *Personality: Its Psychological and Social Aspects*. His textbook, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (1937), also proved pioneering in that for the first time it defined the topics that the field of personality should cover. Of noted too, in 1937, Ross Stagner at The University of Akron published a book entitled *The Psychology of Personality* and a year later Henry Murray published his influential *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 entitled *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 an object of scientific study. Accordingly, Allport initiated efforts to eliminate "character" from the psychologists'

vocabulary and institutionalize the word "personality." Allport (1937), in the preface to his personality textbooks wrote,

> "As a rule, science regards the individual as a mere bothersome accident. Psychology, too, ordinarily treats him as something to be brushed aside so the main business of accounting for the uniformity of events can get under way. …new movement within psychological science has been gradually grown up. It attempts …to depict and account for the manifest individuality of mind. This new movement has come to be known as the psychology of personality" (p. vii).

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. In the words of Virginia Woolf (1924), "On or abound December 1910, human nature changed." Vocational psychologists such as Hollingsworth and Patterson published influential books debunking character analysis by phrenology, palmistry, and astrology. In 1922, Hollingworth supplemented his 1916 book entitled V*ocational Psychology* with a book on *Judging Human Character* in which he reviewed in detail the invalidity of character analysis techniques such as those used by Lysander Richards (1881) and Parsons (1909). Similar to Hollingworth (1916) before him,

Paterson conducted research—one study for example appeared in the first volume of the *Journal of Personnel Research* (Paterson & Ludgate, 1922) -- and wrote a book (Paterson, 1930) to advance the scientific approach to guidance and selection and to debunk the psuedoscience of characterology. *Physique and Intellect* showed the lack of relation between physical traits and intellectual abilities. As a profession, psychology turned from character analysis to personality assessment with tests and inventories. Carlyle's tailor had now been retailored in the clothe 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 psychologist describe these traits with nouns, thereby connoting that these essences or variables such as interests are stable over time and consistent across contexts. Consistency of traits across context promotes confidence in describing the individual's "reputation" (Hogan, 1991). 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* indicate similarity to occupational groups, scores on RIASEC inventories indicate degree of resemblance to vocational personality types, and scores

on Kuder's person matching form indicate resemblance to specific individuals. 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 evolved through a predictable sequence of positions during the 20th century. This science of the vocational personality followed the typical evolution of a maturing scientific discourse (Ballantyne, 1995, Ilyenkov, 1982). This evolution involves three stages of discursive maturation are: operational definitions, empirical relationships, and theoretical explanations.

The work of operational definition was to catalogue and categorize, or list and group, various aspects of vocational personality by choosing which aspects to study and then constructing tests and inventories to measure those aspects. The choice of which traits to study was driven by market forces, not scholarship intrinsic to the subject matter (Danziger, 1990). 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 individuals characteristics were known. Measures of interests, capacities, and aptitudes were need if psychologists were to engage in the practice of matching men to jobs, or what we now prefer to call matching people to positions. So, during the 1920s and 1930s, vocational personality researchers 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: *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 *between* 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' (1984) theory of work adjustment explain how personality traits interact with occupational contexts to produce adjustment outcomes. These theories of adjustment operationally define the critical outcomes as vocational success, job satisfaction, and occupational stability. 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 these adjustment outcomes. 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, if not led, 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 WWII 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 counseling, first non-directive counseling, then client-centered counseling, and now person-centered counseling. The major figure in leading this shift from guidance to counseling was Carl Rogers (1951) who advocated the view that the people are competent to direct themselves. According to Rogers (1954),

> "the individual has within himself the capacity, latent if not evident, to understand those aspects of himself and of his life which are causing him dissatisfaction, anxiety, or pain and the capacity and the tendency to reorganize himself and his

> relationship to life in the direction of self-actualization and maturity in such a way as to bring a greater degree of internal comfort." (p. iv)

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. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "personhood" means one's self as the center of one's life. As psychological concept, personhood connotes those qualities of a person that confer distinct individuality. Humanists who had an interest in personality psychology became personologists, studying the person as a whole not as trait parts.

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." For Super (1963), self means "what a person is" (p. 17). A person becomes aware of self through perceptions of the self or self-percepts. 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. Self-concept should not be confused with self-esteem, which is an affective evaluation of one's conceptualization of one's own self. Super first suggested the importance of self-concept in career development in a 1949 talk at Fort Collins, Colorado which he published in 1951 as an article entitled *Vocational Adjustment: Implementing Self-Concept*. Super's self-concept theory sprung from Carter's (1940) and Bordin's (1943) insight that vocational interests reflect the dynamic interaction between a vocational self-concept and occupational stereotypes. This 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 psychologist 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 concern with private goals and purposes. In the end, Super decided to elicit self-concepts with personological methods, primarily adjective checklists and a *Biographical Inventory*.

The work of mapping relationships focused on 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 meta-dimensions 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 meta-dimensions refer to the architecture of the self-concept system. Super named the meta-dimensions as 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 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 to 8 years old), next to social values (9-13 years old), and finally arriving at an internal unique self (14+). Gottfredson (1981, pp. 546-547) defined the self-concept as "one's view of self" and "the totality of different ways of seeing oneself." The definitions of self-concept offered by Super and by L. Godfrettson resemble Holland's definition of vocational identity. For the RIASEC theory of vocational personality types, Holland, D. Gottfredson, and Power (1980, p. 1191) defined vocational identity as "the possession of a clear and stable picture of one's goals, interests, personality, and talents."

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, and 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 (194) sociocognitive theory of interests.

Unfortunately 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 starkly binary portrayals to be rhetorical rather than real. We would have been better served if he had emptied out the extremes and just 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 that articulated Betty Freidan's influential insight about the self in psychology. Freidan astutely observed that Maslow's list of self-actualizing individuals included no women. Freidan (1963, chapter 13) blamed "the forfeited self" for the empty and purposeless lives experienced by too many (middle-class) women who ignored the need to realize their full potential. In 1968, the Harvard psychologist Naomi Weisstein boldly declared the feminist manifesto as "psychology constructs the female." During the 1970s, feminist psychologists persistently pursued this constructionist insight. The central theme of feminist critiques of

vocational psychology during that era was psychology had mistakenly transposed malleable features of culture into supposedly ironclad facts of nature. Nancy Chodrow (1978), for example, illustrated the construction of gender identity as a social process.

Carol Hanish ushered in the era of identity politics in a brief essay entitled “The Personal is Political” in the Redstockings pamphlet collection called Feminist Revolution (February, 1969, pp. 204-205). She explained that personal problems are political problems, and there are no personal solutions. For Hanish, politics meant power relations not government office. Identity politics refers to understanding the constellation of ideas that constitute individuality-- gender, age, race, class, and sexual orientation— and deconstructing the structure of social and political inequality. Identity politics offered a way of tying individual experience of gender, age, race, class, and sexual orientation to social context (Herman, 1995). The central proposition remains the idea that individual psychological problems result primarily from the social environment, not the person’s intrapsychic make-up. Vocational psychologists heard this message echoed and elaborated in Linda Forrest and Nancy Mikolaitis’ (1986) article on the relational component of identity in career development, Mary Sue Richardson’s (1993) article on a new location for counseling psychology, and Nadya Fouad and Michael Brown’s (2000) chapter on differential status identity.

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 Linda 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 rather than

concentrating on defining the self as a structure. In particular, Carter (1940), Bordin (1943), and Super (1963) concentrated on the self in relation to interests and occupations. 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 seminal work of William James.

Since James published a chapter entitled "The Consciousness of the Self" in his 1890 book *Principles of Psychology*, his theory of a dualistic self has been a mainstay of psychology. According to James' 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. The I consists of mental processes that observe and cohere the me. In comparison to the I, the me is the empirical or known self. I is the process of being a self while 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. While the I or ego can know the empirical self or me, it is unable to observe itself. According to the vocational psychologists Law, Meijers, and Wijers (2002), the I is subjective, active, and knowing whereas the me is objective, passive, and known. 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." While 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 o f 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. Similar to Carl Jung, Tiedeman believed that the self is the supraordinate organizing principal of the psyche (Hopcke, 1989, p. 95). Thus, Tiedeman considered self-concepts to be a systematizing process that enables people to symbolize experience into less complex and more workable forms. Tiedeman adopted this systems idea from physics, believing that self-organization reflects the inherent creativity of autonomous human beings adapting to changing environments.

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 though 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 in tact 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. As Tiedeman (1964) succinctly concluded, “career is guided thought that lends direction to a person’s vocational behavior” (p. 18). The element of thought in this definition draws attention to language.

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 provide 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 upon 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. Actually 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 (Taylor, 1989) 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 tells 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.

Stories compose the substance of identity. Individuals create their identities in the stories that they tell about their lives—stories about self in situations. Story-telling crystallizes what they think of themselves as they articulate their patterns and progress. Their stories impose meaning and purpose on events and experiences that may otherwise be viewed as random. The stories explain the past, orient them to the present, and guide them as the move into the future. They identify and name the values by which an individual lives and through which she or he preserves life. Thus identity stories reveal the person's constitutive concerns and locate the individual in the social space of values that matter. This makes the life story that is identity an ethical and aesthetic project. In chronicling the recursive interplay between self and society, identity explain 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.

In vocational psychology, this view of career as story has led to a social constructionist perspective on career (Savickas, 2005) and a narrative perspective on career counseling (Cochran, 1997). From a social constructionist viewpoint, career may be considered an

interpretive construct built by a working person (Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996). Thus, career denotes a moving perspective that imposes personal meaning on past memories, present experiences, and future aspirations by weaving them into a pattern that portrays a life theme. 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. The self-constructing stories, or career, typically narrate the experiences of a separate autonomous person who across time pursues a consistent line of action in the student and work roles. Career construction theory (Savickas, 2005), simply stated, holds that individuals build their careers by imposing meaning on vocational behavior.

Career construction theory asserts that individuals author the identity by autobiographically imposing narrative continuity and coherence on the vocational self's remembered past, experienced present, and anticipated future. The narrative explains both stability and change as cojoint processes that are warp and woof in the loom of life. Together they weave complex, ambiguous, and baffling experiences into a meaningful tapestry of a life that matters. Thus, fidelity and flexibility are complementary contributors to the self fluidity and narrative fluency that constitute identity and its projects.

Viewing identity as a psychosocial project focuses attention not just on how the self as process produces identity projects; it also focuses attention 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 (Maree, 2007). In narrative counseling for career

construction, clients learn that I (self) authors me (identity), and through counseling can re-author a more vital and livable story of me.

A key idea in narrative counseling for career construction is autobiographical agency or what Alheit and Daussien (1999) have described as biographicity. As individuals encounter changes in work roles, they may rely on their identity stories to bridge the transition. Using autobiographical reasoning enables them to make sense of new experiences and eventually master the vocational development tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas. If their life story or identity cannot comprehend the new experiences, then they must revise the story. 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. This self-reconstructing strives to maintain a coherent, meaningful, and integrated story that meets present needs. 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 further self-organization.

Career construction theory advances a method for life-design counseling that broadens the concentration on work roles to life roles. It follows Richardson's (1993) idea of fostering human development through work and relationships, not just career development. The method begins with an identity interview that incorporates vocational psychology's three perspectives on the self (Savickas, 2009). In a sequence of seven questions it elicits the material needed to assist clients to author a narrative about their self-concept (subject), who they resemble (object), and their life script (project). The counseling goal is to increase clients' ability to narrate their stories, and then use this autobiographical narrative to cope with the work transition they face. By clarifying the story of what is at stake and how clients intend to use or revise their identities,

the process of self-conscious reflection enhances clients' ability to make new meaning and commit to new actions that matter to them.

Conclusion

As it begins, so it goes. Returning to the beginning of this story of vocational psychology's multiple selves, the reader may recall that the field has articulated at least three views of self, with 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. The fist 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. 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 Linda Gottfredson concluded that there has been too little systematic analysis of what constitutes the self and there is 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. Instead of further epistemic argument, the field of vocational psychology needs ideas such as those advance by Bordieau who strove to formulate innovative constructs, such as habitus, to overcome the either/or thinking of objectivism and subjectivism. Maybe the epistemology of social constructionism can provide a framework for the integration and appreciation of multiple perspectives on the self, with each perspective deepening meaning and improving practice.

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