CHAPTER

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EXTENDING THE METAPHOR OF NARRATIVE TO DIALOGICAL NARRATOR

This chapter is a consideration of the epistemological scope of the social constructionist paradigm in vocational psychology and career development, and the core construct of *narrative*. The term *narrative psychology* (cf. Sarbin, 1986) ostensibly implies a coherent body of theory and attendant literature, however, the literature is far from established or settled with considerable diversity across epistemological positions (Smith & Sparkes, 2006), no definition of its paradigmatic composition as focus of enquiry (Hoshmand, 2005), nor an agreed understanding of its core construct, narrative (Collin, 2007; Hoshmand, 2005; Polkinghorne, 1988). To what extent a putative agreement on narrative as a construct impacts upon theorising and research in the career development field has not been clearly addressed in the literature.

This chapter has two main aims. First, this chapter is an acknowledgement of the need for a socially constructed consensus and agreement on the form, function, and, moreover, the processes of the core construct narrative, as it pertains to research into career development. Second, this chapter is an acknowledgement of the diversity of theoretical perspectives that may underpin research into narrative. Accordingly, the chapter includes an alternative perspective on narrative. Recent scholarship has argued for the relevance of dialogical self theory (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992) to career and learning (Winters, Meijers, Lengelle, & Baert, 2012), along with other works aimed at achieving some level of conceptual integration with theories of career development (McIlveen, 2007c; McIlveen & Patton, 2007a). Dialogical self theory is presented as an alternative theoretical framework to address the form, function, and process of career narrative.

What is Narrative?

This chapter was written in light of a critical moment that involved a reviewer's feedback on a manuscript in which the theories and practices of narrative career counselling were overviewed (McIlveen & Patton, 2007b). Essentially, the reviewer's commentary amounted to a request to define narrative career counselling in terms of theory. With some reservation, Patton and I tentatively presented the following:

> Narrative career counselling emphasises subjectivity and meaning. It aims to facilitate self-reflection and elaboration of self-concepts toward an enhanced self-understanding which is subjectively and contextually truthful. It entails a collaborative process in which the client is supported in creating an open-ended personal story that holistically accounts for his or her life and career, and enables the person to make meaningfully informed career-decisions and actions. (p.228)

The distinguishing feature of this statement is the notion of narrative (given as an open-ended personal story); yet, a critical eye would see that this statement may very well apply to other forms of client-centred counselling. Indeed, our reservations were based on a view, at that time, that the theory and practices of narrative career counselling were relatively inchoate and thus not ready to be operationally defined in a specific way. Although the reviewer's comments were directed at a definition of narrative career counselling, it is reasonable to ask a similar question of narrative and its operational meaning within the field.

Counselling practice tends to outpace the empirical articulation of theory, and recent innovative counselling models demonstrate progress in this regard (e.g., Collin & Guichard, 2011; Maree, 2007; McMahon & Watson, 2011; Savickas, 2011a, 2011b). However, it should not be assumed that models of narrative counselling process, and there are a good few (McIlveen & Patton, 2007b), are the same as theoretical models that describe how individuals psychologically engage in the process of the authoring, editing, and telling of their narratives to self and others, and in doing so iteratively generating career identity. Put another way: the theory of career, as if it were a narrative, is not the same as the theory of narrative career counselling. The two may inform one another, but they are distinct areas of theoretical and professional knowing. Seen from a completely different perspective, the crux of this problem might be put analogously as: The theory of personality typology is not the same as the theory of psychometric measurement; they inform one another, yet they are different fields of enquiry and practice.

The Metaphor: Career as Narrative

The metaphorical approach to theorising (cf. Bruner, 1986) career development has been productive with regard to its generating alternative theoretical perspectives on career as if it were a narrative. Mignot (2004) suggested that career is a personal and social phenomenon that involves a shared language system, and asserted "in order to encapsulate the irreducible hermeneutic characteristic of career, a non-linear form of representation is required" (p. 468). Mignot posited *metaphor* as the appropriate form of non-linear representation. Mignot did not limit the term metaphor to the linguistic, poetic device; instead he expanded it to include visual forms; and more broadly described consciousness itself as a metaphor of reality—an analogue. His exposition of metaphor in the process of constructing identity and career highlighted the distinction between metaphor's capacity to define and confine the construction of reality.

The metaphor of narrative or story is central to the major theoretical frameworks that have social constructionism as their paradigmatic foundation (e.g., the Systems Theory Framework (STF), Patton & McMahon, 2006; career construction theory, Savickas, 2005; contextual-action theory, Young, Valach, & Collin, 2002). Take the career construction theory as an example:

> Career as a story provides a holding environment. Story holds feelings, comprehends experience, contains anxiety, and secures space for exploration. Stories make our lives coherent and continuous. Story serves as a container for meaning and a continuity of being. To the extent that the life story holds us, we can master developmental tasks, vocational transitions, and occupational traumas. During these changes, career as story functions to give stability and to shape emotional experience. The life story allows the individual to meet uncertainties of transition with comforts recalled from the past so as to envision a future and entertain possibilities. It enables one to experience chaos and disorder and appreciate them as necessary precursor to change, the next chapter of life. The story orients an individual to the new events and digests these numerous experiences into a short story that can be understood and manipulated. This allows the individuals to express and examine their experiences and then make choices about how to proceed (Savickas, 2009, p. 204).

Through this metaphorical formulation, career may be understood as if it were a story (cf. Inkson, 2007), as an autobiographical (subjectively authored) or biographical (objectively authored) rendering of life, learning and work. Polkinghorne (1988) claimed that story and narrative were equivalent in meaning. For convenience sake, narrative is used as the preferred term hereafter.

The Rise of Narrative

In order to estimate the volume of publications pertaining to narrative in the career development field, in 2011 I conducted a limited search of the abstracts given in peer-reviewed journal articles listed in the database *PsychInfo* on the EBSCOhost platform. This scan of the *PsychInfo* database was restricted to the publications in English language within the period 1986–2010. 1986 was selected as the first year as it was the year in which Collin and Young (1986) published a paper that outlined new perspectives that became germane to the articulation of social constructionism: ecological/systems approach; biographical approach; hermeneutical approach. Almost two decades later, the same scholars co-edited a special issue of the *Journal of Vocational Behavior* that focused upon constructivism and social constructionism (Young & Collin, 2004). Indeed, no scholarly treatment of social constructionism in vocational psychology would be complete without reference to their seminal contribution in the literature in 1986; thus, it was chosen as the base year for this scan of the literature. The terms *story* or *narrative* were used along with *career* (i.e., the Boolean search logic of story OR narrative AND career). To obtain a baseline figure of all peer-reviewed publications I firstly searched with no classification codes (i.e., all). The search was then limited to the following classification codes: 3580 Education/Vocational Counseling & Student Services; 3600 Industrial & Organizational Psychology; and 3610 Occupational Interests & Guidance. The results of the searches are shown in Table 1. It should be noted that some articles may be listed with more than one classification code, thus some degree of error in frequency should be assumed.

Table 1. Frequency of Publications Listed in PsychInfo with Narrative *or* Story *and* Career *as Search Terms*

Classification Code	Years				
	1986–1990	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2005	2006–2010
All	501	1128	2122	4227	7456
3580	0	5	7	17	31
3600	0	4	12	26	78
3610	0	5	11	22	44

Note. All = no classification code used to restrict search; 3580 = Educational/Vocational Counseling & Student Services; 3600 Industrial & Organizational Psychology; 3610 = Occupational Interests & Guidance.

With no classification code (i.e., all), the data reveal an approximate doubling in the frequency of articles for each five-year period. With more than 15 000 articles published with narrative or story in the abstracts over the past two decades, it is evidently clear that narrative is very much in the mainstream of psychology. The number of articles listed within the career development classification codes has markedly increased over the past two decades, albeit on a much smaller scale. Notwithstanding error in the frequencies due to cross-classification of articles, the rise and rise in the number of articles given in the table are a rough indication of the growth of narrative in the career development field.

Recall the reviewer's comments on a definition of narrative career counselling. If all of the articles identified in the aforementioned search were read side-by-side, would a consistently understood meaning of narrative be evident? Presumably, there would be differences. Perhaps a discourse analytic study of the literature would provide an answer to the question.

In any case, narrative is a metaphor, and metaphor has the capacity to enable description of a phenomenon, establish boundaries to delimit conceptualisation of the phenomenon as distinct from other phenomena, and enable communication between scholars.

For any social science, taken-for-granted assumptions are not ideal as they can influence socially-mediated dialogue among scholars and their understanding one another as to how the phenomenon of research is construed and researched. Has the vocational psychological theory of career as narrative progressed sufficiently to present an agreed operational definition that enables rigorous research, which expresses the qualities of methodologies consistent with the social constructionist paradigm, and correspondence between the major career frameworks?[i]

For me, at least, doubt remains as to whether there is consensus on the meaning of narrative as it appears in the discourse of vocational psychology and career development. Much of the literature variously describes the qualities and purpose of career narrative (i.e., its form and function), whereas there is very little attention given to the attendant psychological processes that underpin narrative (i.e., authoring, editing, telling, and acting). The term *consensus* is used quite deliberately here. Unlike positivist or post-positivist psychology which takes an epistemological position that psychological phenomena are entities with qualities that are amenable to psychological measurement, social constructionism holds that phenomena are formulated by communities for use within communities. In this case, the community includes scholars and practitioners who use the term narrative in their discourses. Coming to some kind of consensus does not imply permanence, as it must be assumed that the meaning of socially constructed phenomena will evolve as much as the community which generates and uses the construct in discourse evolves. Consensus suggests that there is open and critical dialogue, and agreement among members of a community, and social constructionism requires that there is reflexivity in the process of reaching consensus: that there is awareness of the process of knowing as a community. Notwithstanding past dialogue expressed in publications and conferences, it may be too soon to claim that the communities of scholars and practitioners have actively come to an agreement on the term narrative.

The next section of this chapter covers the extant literature that may inform dialogue within the communities of scholars and practitioners, in such a way that members of the communities clearly agree and understand one another when the term is used, and how it may be operationalised in research.

Structure of Narrative

Consistent with the precepts of social constructionism, narratives do not occur in isolation from their social contexts (Bruner, 2004; Murray, 2003). Indeed, narrative can be conceived of as a linguistic structure that is socially-mediated (Russell & Wandrei, 1996). It is informative, therefore, to consider narrative from the perspective of other social science disciplines, such as the anthropology:

> Across cultures, narrative emerges early in communicative development and is a fundamental means of making sense of experience. Narrative and self are inseparable in that narrative is simultaneously born out of experience and gives shape to experience. Narrative activity provides tellers with an opportunity to impose order on otherwise disconnected events, and to create continuity between past, present, and the imagined worlds. Narrative also interfaces self and society, constituting a crucial resource for socializing emotions, attitudes, and identities (Ochs & Capps, 1996, p. 19).

From this perspective, primacy is granted to language and its forms of discourse, grammar, words, and conventions as the grist of narrative and its role in identity. This proposition echoes the seminal sociological work of Berger and Luckmann (1966).

Features of narrative include: (a) its role in the organisation and interpretation of events and bringing order to disorder; (b) attributions of agency and causal links; (c) a

beginning, middle and end; and (d) a way of constructing self as distinct from others and across time (Murray, 2003; Russell & Wandrei, 1996). Narrative can be viewed as a process of meaning making and also as a product (i.e., storying and story) (Bujold, 2004). Polkinghorne (1988) attributed the following characteristics to narrative:

> Narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join every day actions and events into episodic units. It provides framework for understanding the past events of one's life and for planning future actions (p. 11).

Narratives are organised into personally meaningful accounts embedded across time and bound together by a plot reflective of generic forms that cultures provide, in a process described as *emplotment* (Jarvinen, 2004; Ricoeur, 1992). Plots entail consistent characteristics or signatures across a person's life, and thus provide a psychological construct through which to understand the person over time; as distinct from specific characters, places and events (Ochberg, 1988).

Given the predominance of Savickas' (2005) career construction theory, and that its core notion of life themes is associated with the work of McAdams (1995, 1996), it is useful to expound McAdams's review of the structure and function of narrative and life stories in some detail. McAdams suggested that life story is a contextually bound psychosocial construction that includes facts (e.g., birth, hair colour) and imaginative renderings of oneself over the three phases of time (i.e., past, present, future) in a coherent narrative. Integration is the primary function of the life story. A coherent narrative consolidates life events and circumstances and meaningfully connects them across time. Though the analogy of a story is useful, the notion of a fixed story, as if printed on the pages of a book, is eschewed on the basis that a narrative approach assumes that reinterpretation and re-writing can occur; so an event in the past or an expectation of the future may take on a new meaning.

McAdams (1993, 1996) proposed six features of life stories: *narrative tone*, *imagery*, *theme*, *ideological setting*, *nuclear episodes*, *imagoes*, and the *endings*, as a generativity script. Narrative tone is the affective or attitudinal gist of the story (e.g., romantic, angry, hopeless, optimistic). Imagery can be used to convey the desired meaning and this may involve sensory imagery (e.g., smells, sounds) or linguistic devices (e.g., metaphor, simile). Themes describe the goal-directedness of a narrative and often involve the individual achieving success in some endeavour (i.e., agency) and submitting to some greater entity (i.e., communion). Ideological settings pertain to the religious, political, and ethical beliefs and values that are imbued into the individual's narratives. Nuclear episodes are significant points in the narrative (e.g., highs, lows, ends, beginnings, turns). McAdams suggested that individuals could use nuclear episodes as crucial proof for self-constructed veracity of their narrative. Imagoes are idealised personifications subsumed into the greater narrative (e.g., good boy, working class kid, the teacher, the clown, the peacemaker). Endings paradoxically serve to continue the story by constructing a bridge of continuation on to the next chapter or imaginably on to immortality.

McAdams (1996) proposed that an individual's narrative could be evaluated using six standards of a "good life-story" (p. 315): *coherence*, *openness*, *credibility*, *differentiation*, *reconciliation*, *generative integration*. Coherence refers to a story's internal veracity and of its making sense according to its own terms. Openness refers to flexibility for future possibilities and the leaving open of a number of potential story lines. Credibility is the balance between fact and fiction, empirical experience and narrative interpretation. In other words, the construction process must be based upon renderings of verifiable experience; that is "we construct representations of reality, but we do not construct reality itself" (Savickas, 2005, p. 43). The notion of differentiation suggests that over time, a person's story should

become more complex, and rich in detail and intricate facets. With this complexity come contradiction and challenge. A sound story should involve the reconciliation of these sometimes competing threads and the acceptance of compromise when faced with a multiplicity of choice. As with story endings, generative integration refers to the process of bringing higher order meaning to a story as a life or a phase of a life approaches its termination.

Narrative and Personal Identity

Past psychological theorists (e.g., William James, Sigmund Freud, Henry Murray, and Erik Erikson) used narrative in their scholarship (Barresi & Juckes, 1997), Similarly, Gordon Allport's pioneering work demonstrated the use of narrative, idiographic methods to understand individual persons (Runyan, 1983). George Kelly's (1955) *Psychology of Personal Constructs* is also a significant theory with respect to language within the process of a person constructing his/her identity. Narrative, as a construct for personality research, received greater focus in the 1980s (McAdams & Olson, 2010). All of this is to say that narrative may be relatively new to the career development field, but it is more than familiar to other branches of psychology that subsume personality and identity as their subjects.

To again borrow from insights from another intellectual discipline that has long addressed narrative and identity (viz., philosophy), Nietzsche (1878/1994, p. 238) wrote "however far man may extend himself with his knowledge, however objective he may appear to himself – ultimately he reaps nothing but his own biography." Ricoeur (1992) proposed an ontological solution for the problematic relationship between language and identity, using personal narrative as the connective fabric of his position. According to Ricoeur's philosophy, self-understanding comes through the telling and listening of personal narrative; a cyclical process of simultaneously reflecting and shaping identity (Jarvinen, 2004). Ricoeur (1992) argued against the Cartesian notion of mind as independent from body and world. For Ricoeur, the self is physically embodied as one and the same as "selfhood"; people *are bodies* and *possess bodies* simultaneously in space and time. This distinction is important for understanding the relationship between actions of the body and language as action and subsequently, narrative as the vehicle for living selfhood over a lifetime (Ricoeur, 1989, 1992). Moreover, a person has the capacity, through discourse, to identify his/her self as distinct from others and engage in action of their personal narrative (Ricoeur, 1992). All of this is not an isolated process of the individual. The person is intrinsically part of their social and discursive milieu; and Ricoeur suggests that culture provides the individual with ready-made plots that aid understanding of the world (Jarvinen, 2004).

Narratives are not necessarily neat and tidy renderings; they are complex with many constitutive recollections and interpretations. Events, personal action, past, present and future as the key constituents of narrative, and it is their nexus in narrative that produces meaning and ongoing construction of self (Polkinghorne, 1990). Polkinghorne differentiated narratives from simple historical recounting or chronicling of life events; which per se does not provide a synthesis toward personal meaning. McAdams (1996) argued that a good life story should be a collection of multiple stories that allow for a range of potential future pathways for identity construction. Murray (2003) also suggested that individuals differentially choose which elements to hang together in the process of constructing their narratives. It is this fragmented nature of narratives and differential choice that distinguishes how an individual may contribute to the authoring and editing of his/her own story.

Two important assumptions of social constructionism are that (a) mental functions operate symbolically, and that (b) symbol systems are acquired socially (Harre, 2000). Harre suggested that individuality from the social constructionist frame is based upon embodiment and upon mastery of first-person and second-person grammar. Accordingly, language can be

seen to play a vital role in the formation of identity. Thus, unlike the essentialist notion of self, from the perspective of social constructionism, career and self are embedded in context and culture, produced in discourse, and constructed in narrative as an active process (Collin & Guichard, 2011). In this way, cultural and discursive perspectives of career and self (Stead, 2004; Stead & Bakker, 2010) require consideration of narrative as a linguistic entity.

In summary, there is quite a deal of literature on the form and function of narrative (i.e., what it is and what it does for a person). Put succinctly, narrative identity is "an internalized and evolving life story that a person begins to develop in late adolescence to provide life with meaning and purpose." (McAdams & Olson, 2010, p. 527). Individuals develop their career identities as narrative (i.e., a product) and through narrative (i.e., as a process); they adopt and adapt culturally given identity forms present in their discursive contexts; their narratives are subject to the power and influence of relations and culture; yet, their narratives are flexible and open-ended, as they can amend their personalised narrative over time, at different developmental stages, and in response to different circumstances and conditions.

Career Narrative as Process

All of this implies that career identity is formed within a matrix of social, cultural, and relational influences (cf. STF, Patton & McMahon, 2006). Describing the structural features of narrative (e.g., plot, narrative tone, and imagoes) can provide the conceptual tools for research into narrative as a product, however the complexity of the psychological dynamic of narrative as a process is beyond their capacity to be informative, as they too are static concepts. In reviewing the research into narrative process, McAdams and Olson (2010) highlighted notions of *causal coherence* and *autobiographical reasoning*, both of which describe how individuals draw causative conclusions within their narratives. Nonetheless, there remain questions of how, psychologically, do individuals generate narrative in their social worlds (i.e., not just internal cognitive processes); such as: How psychologically do individuals generate plots as a way of making sense of their past, present, and future? How psychologically are imagos incorporated into narratives as socially endorsed character roles? These, and many others, are questions germane to the conduct of social constructionist research into career and narrative identity.

Recently, scholars have demonstrated the utility of research methods that operationalise social constructionism and capture the dynamics of narrative in process, namely, discourse analysis (Stead & Bakker, 2010), the action-project method (Young, Valach, & Domene, 2005), and autoethnography (McIlveen, 2007b). Innovations such as these are vital for the articulation of social constructionism as a paradigm, because they may advance as research methodologies that are consistent with the criteria for trustworthiness of qualitative research (cf. Morrow, 2005), particularly in terms of understanding of meaning (as in discourse analysis) and mutual construction of meaning between research, participants, and co-researcher (as in action-project method), and researcher reflexivity (as in autoethnography). Furthermore, Collin (2007) recommended adapting the methods of narratology to advance research in the career development field.

For sure, a diversity of psychological models and methods is required at this early stage in the evolution of social constructionist approaches to career development. Toward that end, the next section overviews the theory of dialogical self (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, et al., 1992) and its potential for modelling how individuals generate and edit narrative involving self and others, both real and imagined.

A Dialogical Model of Narrative Processing

A dialogical perspective takes into view the process of conversation. A radical conception of narrative indicates that the nexus between the speaking of an autobiographical narrative and a life is so enmeshed that they eventually become one another in a reflexive process: "In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives" (Bruner, 2004, p. 694) [original italics]. With reference to the choosing of elements from the an individual's past, identity can be influenced by the telling and retelling of memories in conversation with others (Pasupathi, 2001). This form of co-construction, as dialogue between self and others, is conceived of as an outcome of not merely the speaker telling his or her story, but social and interpersonal triadic complex of the speaker and the listener in context. In this interactive complex the interlocutor listening has the capacity to influence the recall of memories and the presentation of those recollections. This emphasises that dialogue with oneself (internally) and others (interpersonally) is involved in the construction of meaning of past, present, and anticipated events in the short-term, and identity over a lifetime (cf. Guichard, 2005).

Cultural and linguistic processes guide the telling of autobiographic narratives and exert influence upon how an individual perceives, remembers, and articulates his or her narrative. Thus, individuals are born into myriad discourses, from family to culture, which they must negotiate with and use to determine truth (Rosen, 1996). This presumption is consistent with the notion that identity an entirely mental, cognitive construction (inside a person's head), but a socially-mediated construction based upon discourses in which the person is ineluctably inhered (Campbell & Ungar, 2004; Guichard, 2005). Construction of identity is thus delimited to the discursive context of the individual. Contextualisation of narrative and identity in this way concentrates thinking upon conversations through which identity can be established and changed through social process (Campbell & Ungar, 2004; Saari, 1996).

According to dialogical self theory (Hermans & Hermans-Konopka, 2010; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, et al., 1992), there is no discrete, singular, unitary self that is separate from the outside world (i.e., the so-called Cartesian self). Consistent with the James (1890/1952) conception of *I* (an organising, overseeing, author) and *Me* (the known embodiment of a self that acts), dialogical self recognises the proprietary extension from what is me to mine (i.e., I as son, I as father, my friend, my mother), and thus holds that self necessarily extends beyond an internal embodiment of a unitary self.

Distinct from the notion of having just one organising I with attendant multiple selves (cf. Markus & Nurius, 1986), dialogical self theory holds that individuals may generate more than one I in a psychological landscape, *positioned* in time (i.e., I in the past, present and imagined future) and space (i.e., I here-and-now, then-and-there). Furthermore, as if in a polyphonic novel, at any given position, I may have its own authorial capacity to imaginatively generate its Mes and others with different and unique characteristics and voices, quite distinct from those Mes and others generated at another I-position. Thus, identity is composed of multiple voices, rather than a single voice. From any given I-position, a cast of others and their dialogue with one another may be imagined and live out as if real.

Most importantly, *I-positions* may engage in dialogue with one another; thus evident in the multiple voices of I. They may disagree with one another, be critical, and even contradictory. For example, the I-position of son may very well imagine talking with the I-position of father, and then engage in imagined conversations with oneself across those two positions, each with very different voices, values, responsibilities, interpersonal dynamics, and histories. Just as an actual father and son may disagree with one another in a dyadic relation, there may be intrapsychic disagreement between father and son when taken as I-positions.

All of this makes for a complex matrix of I-positions with their own authorial capacity to create a different perspectives and narratives accordingly. Thus, according to dialogical self theory, self may be conceptualised as:

> ...a dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I-positions. In this conception, the I has the capability of moving from one spatial position to another in accordance with changes in situation and time. The I fluctuates among different and even opposed positions, and has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established. The voices function like interacting characters in a story, involved in a process of question and answer, agreement and disagreement. All of them have a story to tell about their own experiences from their own stance. As different voices, these characters exchange information about their respective Me's, resulting in a complex, narratively structured self (Hermans, 2003, p. 203).

All of the I-positions and the concomitant dialogue amongst them may be conceptualised as a *society of mind* (Hermans, 2002a).

Although sub-vocal, "inner speech" or "self-talk" is represented in dialogical self theory as a medium of communication with self and others—actual and imagined—dialogical self is not an abstraction of the cognitive, constructivist variety. Dialogical self cannot be understood in isolation from the culture and history that imbue an individual, for they are the constitutive of the discursive forms that give rise to self that is intrinsically socialised. Dialogical self is constructed in the language, norms, values, conventions, and occupational *identity forms* (Guichard, 2005) and *anthologies* (McAdams & Olson, 2010) given in society. "Culture, therefore, provides each person with an extensive anthology of stories from which the person may draw in the authoring of narrative identity" (McAdams & Olson, 2010, p. 527). Thus, the *other*, is necessarily incorporated into dialogical self as the other is inherent to sub-vocal conversations and interactions with others, actual and imagined. Actual, past conversations with others may be rehearsed sub-vocally after they originally transpired, and they can be relived, edited, and affectively felt as if real. Likewise, imagined conversations with others may be just as affectively authentic. In this way, the other is in the phenomenological world of dialogical self; thus, there is no psychological division between the inner and outer.

With regard to narrative as metaphor, dialogical self theory proffers an imaginative complex of a metaphor within a metaphor within a metaphor: *authors* of *narratives* within a *society of mind*. Within this society of mind, narratives are authored, edited, felt, told, re-told, enacted, and re-acted with others, actual and imagined, who are in the self—a plural society, a cacophony of voices brought into coherence though dialogical relations with one another.

Dialogical Self and Career

I-positions may be taken up as personality traits or occupational perspectives (e.g., the classical Holland typologies, such as I as realistic person, corresponding with I as social person; I as mechanic or I as teacher,). Although occupational identity may be discrete (i.e., a person is usually qualified in one occupation, such as mechanic or teacher), however personal traits are not necessarily discrete (e.g., in the Holland typology a person may have high realistic scores and relatively lower social scores, but whatever the measurement scale may be there is some psychological quantum of both traits evident within any given person). Interactions between I-positions taken on the basis of personality traits can thus provide for a dialogical space in which a person can compare and contrast aspects of him or herself in relation to the other within (e.g., other I-positions) and the other—actual or imagined—present in the social world.

Following the extension of self from I, me, and mine, an I-position may claim proprietorial rights over what is mine in the world of work (e.g., my career, my job, my colleagues, my workplace). Each different I-position may independently claim different aspects of mine, and those claims may be propitious and beneficial when and where they correspond with one another, or a source of conflict and turmoil when they come into competition with another I-position. For example, the resource of time is precious, and time is so often a source of torment when the worlds of work and family bump into one another. In an ideal situation, I as professional might engage in dialogue with I as parent or I as partner to find a pragmatic resolution to the competition for the precious resource.

Just as occupational status may vary according to culture, so too will the dialogue associated with an I-position that is determined as an occupation (e.g., I as artist). The talk, imagery, expectations, and social relations associated with a particular type of work. For example, taking an I-position of artist may have completely different connotations in an agricultural community in which manual labour and productivity toward sustenance and income is valorised. Social mores may moderate the how dialogical self experiences the I-position of artist in relation to others in society, and therefore in relations to other I positions in dialogue with self and others, actual and imagined. It is therefore impossible to understand dialogical self without recourse to its existence extended into the social world comprised of cultures and others, actual and imagined.

Methods of Enquiry

Methods for assessing dialogical self in research and counselling include the Self-confrontation Method (Hermans, 1987, 1988, 1999; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Rijks, & Kempen, 1993; Lyddon, Yowell, & Hermans, 2006) and the Personal Position Repertoire (Hermans, 2001, 2002b, 2003; Hermans & Hermans-Jansen, 2004), the Personality Web (Raggatt, 2000), the Assimilation Model (Osatuke, Gray, Glick, Stiles, & Barkham, 2004; Stiles, Osatuke, Glick, & Mackay, 2004) and Dialogical Sequence Analysis (Leiman, 2004), and, specifically for career development, My Career Chapter (McIlveen, 2006, 2007a; McIlveen & Patton, 2010; McIlveen, Patton, & Hoare, 2007, 2008). The Self-confrontation Method, Personal Position Repertoire, and My Career Chapter draw upon a repertory grid approach (Kelly, 1955) as a way of distinguishing between I-positions; they also engage individuals in a process of autobiographical narration.

As the only method devoted to career development, My Career Chapter also draws upon the STF (Patton & McMahon, 2006) to establish possible internal and external influences as possible I-positions that may contribute to the narrative that is written and subsequently spoken aloud to self and to another. It also includes a process of self-editing through which the individual engages in dialogue with himself or herself five-years in the past, as a way of reflecting upon self in the present.

All of the aforementioned methods lend themselves to application in research into the processing of narrative from the perspective of dialogical self theory. Also, it is feasible to consider how they might be combined with other research methods that address narrative process, for the example the self-confrontation method that is used for the contextual action-project method (Young, et al., 2005). Such research might explore how individuals (e.g., parent and adolescent; spouses) engage in the project of career decision-making through the action-project approach, while explicating their respective I-positions and dialogue with self and the other as a way of co-constructing a dialogical space together.

Other innovations included in such methodological combinations might be the use of digital recordings, perhaps on common personal devices such as iPhones, to capture real time self-talk and talk with others for later reflections and discussions with others, including the researcher. This is no more complicated than any other type of diarising and recording, but it

offers the immediacy of data capture that is not possible with the relatively slower forms of recording such as hand-writing. Self-texting or texting others upon the immediate occasion of a thought similarly offers a way of recording sub-vocal thinking. Social media tools (e.g., Facebook) may also provide a data collection platform in which multiple sources of dialogue with self and others are corralled as sources of data for analysis. Participants in such research could be instructed on particular methods of data collection (e.g., recording the thoughts or words spoken that emanate from the voice of a particular I–position, or the dialogue between two I-positions or others, actual and imagined).

Conclusion

This chapter raised a question over the meaning of the term narrative. To what extent do the communities of scholars and practitioners who use the term narrative agree upon its form, function, and process? The chapter included a selection of literature that addresses form and function of narrative, and demonstrated significant progress in this regard. Indeed, the literature leads one to a startling conclusion: Figuratively put, narrative is the stuff of being; life would be meaningless without it. Despite narrative being constitutive of being itself, the literature it not so clear on the process of how narrative is constructed. Metaphorically, career as narrative expresses the paradoxical duality of an electron which can be thought of as a particle or a wave. At any point in time, career can be a known as a narrative auto/biographically reported; yet, as a narrative, career is fluid, in a state of constant flux due to its composition by multiple authors, in an ever-changing discourse, and in interaction with others whose career is likewise narratively composed. Momentarily capturing the dynamics of that elusive phenomenon requires in-depth scholarship and research conducted by scholars and practitioners who understand one another. Dialogical self theory has conceptual scope to understand narrative as a socially-mediated construction; as one that is authored, edited, told, felt, and acted with others, actual and imagined.

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[i] For an eminently clear description of the constructivist/social constructionist, critical/interpretivist, and positivist/post-positivist paradigms and their epistemological assumptions refer to the paper by (Ponterotto, 2005) and for an application of this approach see the chapter in this book by Young and Papadiuk.