The Way We Role: Professional Identity-Making in an Academic Library

Pearl Jacobson

Concept

"We do everything"

- Multiple occupational roles
- But how do we define ourselves professionally?

- Is our professional identity shaped by the functions we carry out?
- Or is it shaped by:
  - LIS programs, professional associations, institutional imperatives, personal values?

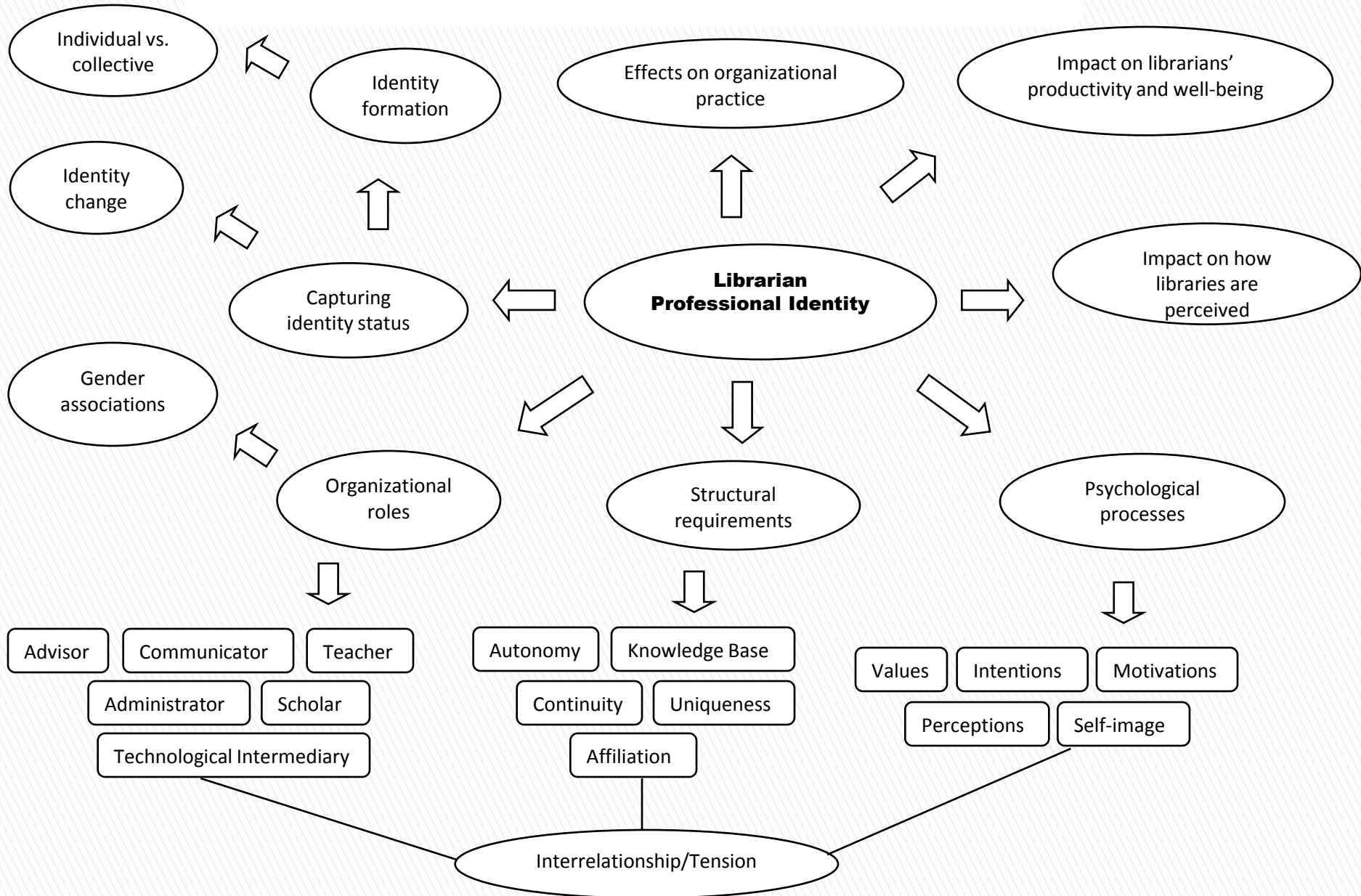# Librarian professional identity in the LIS literature

- Librarian identity
  - Walter (2008): Identities as teachers
  - Watson-Boone (1998): Expressions of self
  - Carson (2002): Labour processes

- Identity in other professions
  - Teachers, managers, academics
- Social psychology
  - Identity theory, identity conflict, work-gender identity, identity and workplace, etc.

Concept mapping

- Relevance of literature to experience in academic libraries

- Also helped:
  - Generate new ideas
  - Draw connections
  - Get a 'big picture' overview
  - Feel confident in the project

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Research questions

1. How do librarians conceive of professional identity with respect to roles, requirements and psychological processes?

2. How and why do professional identities develop? What causes them to change?

3. What is the impact of librarian professional identity on perceptions of the academic library and on professional practice?

Methodology

- Based on James Marcia's "Ego Identity Incomplete Sentences Blank"
- Questionnaire (sentence completion)
- Quantitative survey method

- Allows large participant pool
- Less subjective interpretation

Looking ahead

- Currently – annotated bibliography
- Next step – questionnaire
  - Develop
  - Ethics
  - Sample
  - Distribution
  - Analysis
- Written piece

Selected References

- Walter, S. (2008). Librarians as teachers: A qualitative inquiry into professional identity. *College and Research Libraries*, *69*(1), 51-71.

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Thank you!

Pearl Jacobson

pearl_jacobson@carleton.ca
613.520.2600 x1354