

‘Vocational designing and career counseling: challenges and new horizons’

“Like a Phoenix rising from the flames”



**Human capital as currency in austere times:
an auto/biographical perspective**

Joanna Oliver

CCPD



The doctoral Study

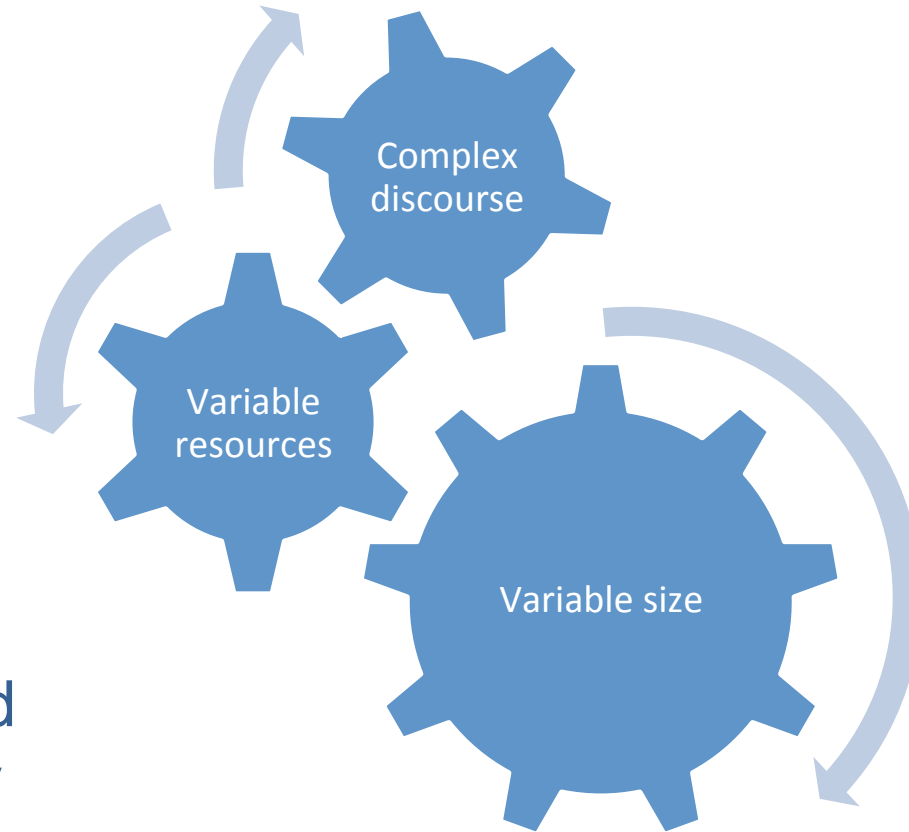
- **Auto/biographical** (Gehart et al, 2007; Kearney, 2003; Meekums, 2008; Merrill and West, 2009; Moustakas, 1990; Reid, 2008 and Stainton Rogers, 2003; West, 1996)
- Collaborative
- Non-prescriptive interviews
- Reflective engagement
- ‘Confessionality’ (hooks, 2004)
- 7 collaborators from a range of non-statutory settings
- Challenging distortion of voices in climate where destination is prioritised over process

The non-statutory sector

- Non-statutory sector are inherently enterprising and creative, having to do ‘more for less’ (Gershon, 2004)
- Funding restrictions and the increase of resource intensive referrals
- Often work in localized areas, within communities and are therefore often in the best position to understand and meet the needs of the local community



The non-statutory sector



Homogenised
yet extremely
diverse



In the UK - promotion of enterprise, innovation and creativity, ‘critical to the UK's future prosperity, our quality of life and future job prospects’ (<http://www.bis.gov.uk/innovation>)

Underpins the ‘Big Society’ agenda, intended to help ‘people to come together to improve their own lives....putting more power in people’s hands – a massive transfer of powerto local communities’

content/big-society-overview).



Non prescriptive interview

‘what do you do
and how did you
get there?’



Collaborators

- **Meet Andrew**
- Community and Youth worker – Charity based – local community
- Worked with children, young people and families for approximately 20 years
- Favours an intuitive, responsive approach
- Not keen on bureaucracy!





Collaborators

- **Meet Sian**
- At a career turning point
- Much of career (spanning 30 years) in social research and community regeneration
- Strong voice – believes that career is about making change and not just ‘doing a job’



Collaborators

- **Meet Louise**
- Director of an Independent Fostering Provider
- Social Worker at heart (her words)
- Perceives statutory (local government authorities) as ‘customers’
- Believes that creativity and compromise is key





Collaborators

- **Meet George**
- Manager in Independent Fostering Provider
- Solution Focused
- Believes his career has been ‘luck’ rather than ‘destined’
- Motto – stand still, go backward





Collaborators

- **Meet Amber**
- Director of an Independent Fostering Provider
- Took a creative route into her current role – evolved with the organisation
- Emotional intelligence is her currency





Collaborators

- ***Meet Ronny***
- Manager of Training provider for children and young person's sector
- Youth worker and careers advisor
- Believes that change is part of the fabric of the sector
- Career relates to own spiritual beliefs, including Universal laws and responsivity





Collaborators

- ***Meet Lina***
- Director of a Charity working with families - local community
- Team of 170 volunteers
- At a turning point, due to funding cuts
- Believes that creativity is resurfacing as key



Evolverment to.....this paper

- The initial findings reassert the importance of considering the whole person in career counseling, in order to understand the most effective way of working with people towards person centred resolution
- All but one of the research collaborators drew on their earlier life experiences as influencing their career trajectory
- The stories highlighted the importance of the personal/professional interplay



....This Paper

- Issues related to power and voice, alongside a belief in ‘freedom of the will’ promoted by Law, 2005, whereby ‘a person must be internally free to realise external freedom’ (2005: 43).
- Significance of life long learning where individuals need ‘to take greater responsibility for preparing themselves for the flexible career’ West (2005:187).





The flexible career

- Chameleonic characteristics (Oliver, 2010) are key as ‘the accrual of skills and knowledge shifts power to the person rather than to the hierarchal position’ (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996:10)
- In all collaborators, a positive relationship with change was evident

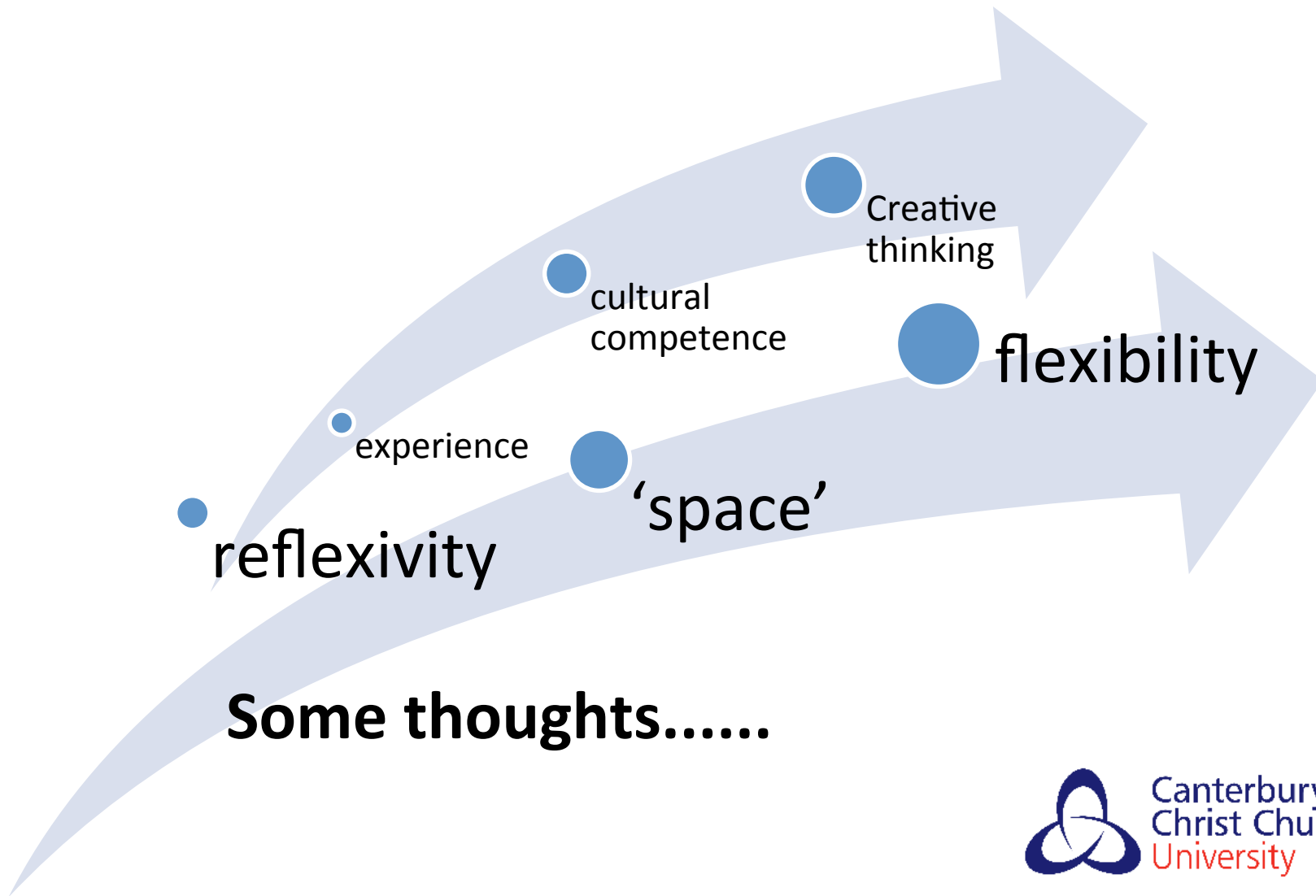


Human Capital

Moving beyond the economist's perspective that amounts to an equation of:



Much broader and deeper than knowledge, skills and abilities in terms of educational investment



Lina and Sian on Human Capital

“Just because you go into the real world, you go into work and you should still be able to challenge things, to change things and to acknowledge ‘is that right that that happens?’ , how could you...what influence could you have, you know, that sort of thing.”



“As a creative person, I wanted to work in a creative environment where I can use all of my skills.”



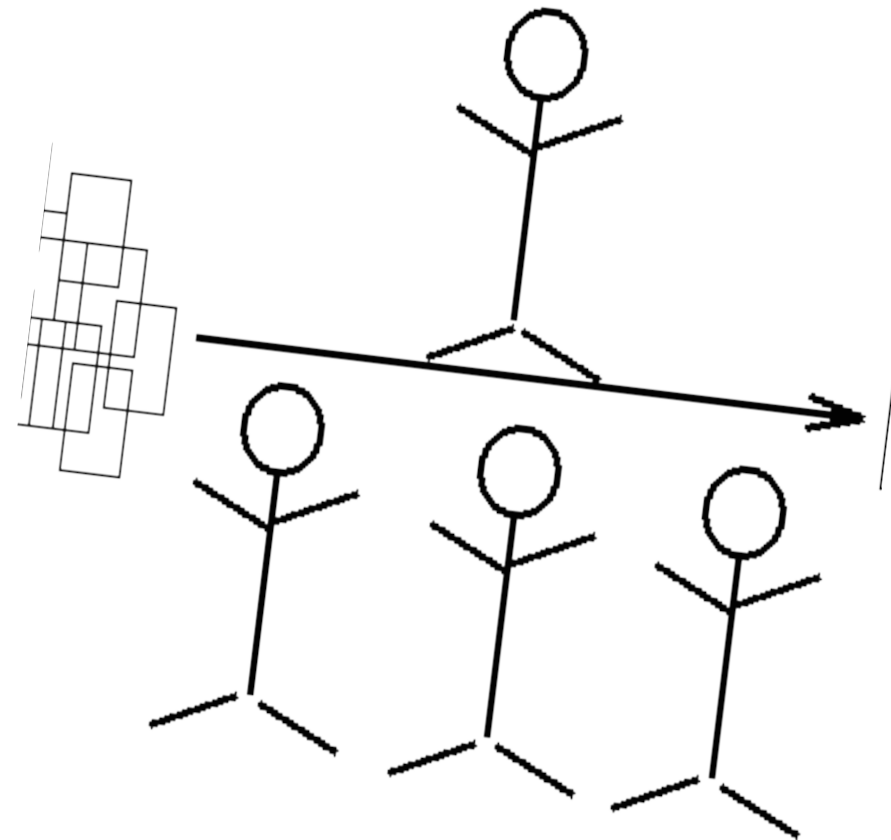
Social Capital

A resource that fuels and is fuelled by human capital

‘Facilitates productive activity’ (Coleman, 1988)

Relational, dynamic – mutually beneficial to parties included in the social environment

Based on trust, obligation, exchange and enablement



Ronny and his approach to work - as a reflection of Coleman's (1988) illustration of the Kahn El Khalili market of Cairo



“The model we use is based on say, street sellers in West Africa. That’s erm, people who hustle on the streets – selling anything in demand at a price that suits the client. It’s not a written model but it is a model that sits at the back of my mind so we would never say no to anybody, or anything....”



Louise on the potential power of social capital



“I think it’s important that we have a ‘bigger body’ that is the collective voice...so that the Local Authorities know where we’re coming from, rather than a little agency saying ‘this is what we think, this is how we feel’ .”

Amber on the impact of absent social capital

“ I think we, as the Independent Sector, could have a louder voice, a clearer voice, if we all got together and said ‘no’but everyone was too scared...there were a few little shouts but its not really a loud enough voice....I don’ t think we have enough representatives to have a strong – collective - voice.”



**George
illustrating
the interplay
between
human and
social capital**



“If people are able to put faith in you, either as an individual, or as an organisation, or as a SW, you can work better together...”

“Good people, in whatever job they do, need personality and common sense.....if you have professional training on top of that, that can only help – because if you’ ve got the training but not the personality and common sense, that’ s not great and I’ ve seen that many times. Some times, some people don’ t get it right in those situations.”



What's important?

- Human capital and social capital are only relevant if they are engaged with, if they are nurtured, if they are utilised. Dormant/ unknown capital is not capital
- Howeverit is potential that can be engaged with
- Let's not forget the 'human' and the 'social'!
The 'returns' are not givens



What's important?

- Salary is less of a priority in the non-statutory sector but money is important if projects are to remain
- Creating reflective spaces
- Acknowledging that many non-statutory workers are entrepreneurs



What's important?

- Remembering resilience
- Remaining hopeful
- Recognising that the future cannot be 'stolen'
– it will unfold anyhow

Thank you

jo.oliver@canterbury.ac.uk

