

SOLSTICE & CLTR Conference 2012

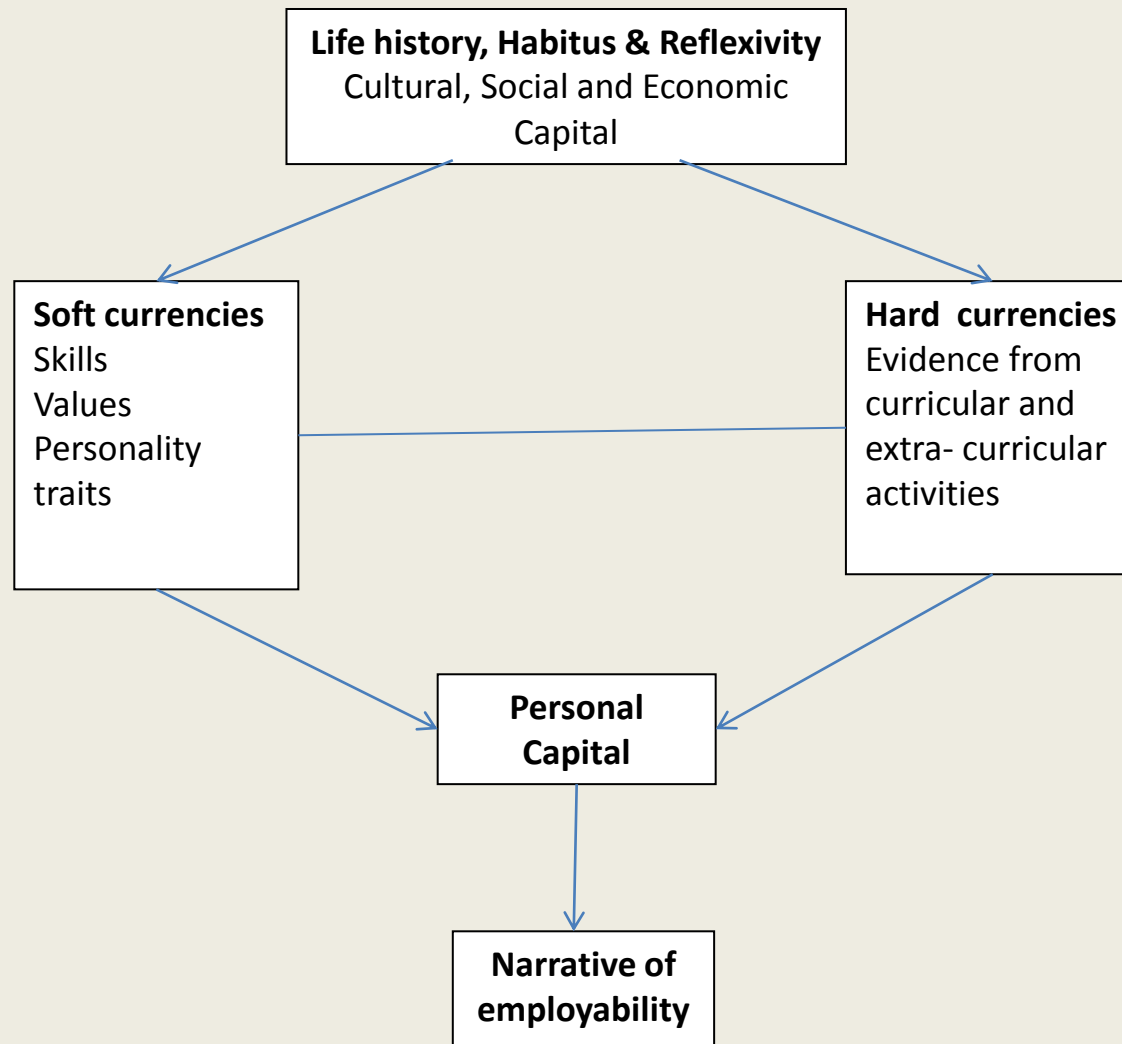
**Edge Hill
University**

Competing in the graduate labour market:
student perspectives on (not) developing their
personal capital

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Introduction: conceptualising the construction of personal capital



Research

- Design
- Characteristics of sample

Student engagement in ECAs

- Part-time working
- Volunteering
- Sporting/cultural activities
- Work placements

Barriers to developing personal capital

- Misconceptions about the graduate labour market
- Lack of a future orientation
- Purist orientation
- Risk aversity
- Conformity to peer and social norms
- Dependency

Misconceptions about the graduate labour market

- ‘Dysfunctional beliefs’ (Gati et al., 1996)
 - I think obviously its nice volunteering but I think people volunteer because they haven't got ANY work experience, that's my perception of it. Because there ARE people, probably not many now, you know, there are people who HAVEN'T worked at all really. It's different for me because I've worked for years before coming to uni, whereas a lot of haven't because they're coming straight from college. I don't want to go and help at an old folk's home, with all due respect. You know I've got better things to do. If that's applicable to your degree then by all means. (C1)
 - I enjoyed it, but I didn't see that would aid me in my CV because it was with children. I suppose it shows you've got drive, but it's not relevant experience. (C4)

Lack of a future orientation

- Working class characteristic?
- Student life-style
 - That's the time I CAN do nothing. I've got until I'm sixty-five to work. I go to the gym, have a night out, do whatever I want. (B21)
 - I thought about doing internships and stuff like that. One of my friends did an internship in London. It was with [names a bank]. He was telling me about that and it sounded really good and I was thinking maybe that's something I'll do. But I thought if I'm doing that would that clash with what I was doing there [in his part-time job]. ... So I suppose I am just a bit comfortable with having a regular income and working somewhere I know and have got used to – I know the job and the people and everything. (B6)

Purist orientation

- Brown and Hesketh (2004) ‘players’ and ‘purists’
 - I think for it to be volunteering without pay it has to be something that REALLY grabs you. (B17)
 - I’d feel uncomfortable making myself look good for others. It’s like I would be putting someone else out of a job who really wants it and me TAKING it off them. (B2)
- Non-traditional students (Thomas and Jones, 2007)
- Male/middle class students (Stevenson and Clegg, 2012)

Risk aversity

- ‘Anticipatory regret’
 - I could do something and it may not even be relevant and then waste all that time. (B8)
- Lack of confidence:
 - I don’t know if I could do this [volunteering]. I’m not that kind of person. You know, would I be good at it sort of thing? It would be good if you could do it with your friends or with your lecturers, kind of thing or something. It’s scary (laughs). (B4)

Conformity to peer and social norms

- You've got all the other students and I can't think of ONE who has done any charity work or any volunteering activities. (B15)
- Looking back now I do wish I'd done at least one industrial placement. There were opportunities over the summer and I think there were opportunities to do a year placement as part of the course. I didn't choose that because obviously I'm getting older and I wanted to get the degree as soon as possible. Another year seemed a bit much really. (C5)

Dependency

- External locus of control
 - I think I should have got into volunteering and stuff but nobody sort of directed me to it and nothing sort of came my way were I thought yes that would be good to do. You know and nobody told me to do it. I think it's just that you don't HAVE to get involved so you don't. (B15)
- Institutional habitus (Crozier and Reay, 2011)

Discussion

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- Differences between the working class and middle class students



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- Similarities between what were predominantly 'upper' working class and 'lower' middle class students
- Reflexivity
- Values
 - Personal
 - Moral
 - Competency

Implications

Unfreezing

- Critically review decision-making
- Lecture input
- Future possible-selves (especially 'feared')

Understanding

- Information
- Case studies/analogical encoding

Reinforcement

- Personal tutoring
- Future possible-selves
- Institutional/departmental culture/support