Bourdieu and Brand-Me:

Exploring the use of Rich Picture method with students in Higher Education in preparing for placement, employability and career management

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ABSTRACT
Neoliberal rationality has led to the marketisation and consumerism of Higher Education with universities central to the development of fit for purpose graduates. Marketing Principles are evident where universities have to sell themselves, students are increasingly viewed as consumers of their products, and yet the students are also responsibilised with the need to manage self-hood and promote themselves to the market place. The digital age provides freedom to explore and promote multiple selves, connecting human-brand narrative and as an agentic human branding tool in the constructing of self.
In order to gain an understanding of how employability is constructed and realised, qualitative one-to-one interviews with students in Higher Education were undertaken and incorporated a 'soft systems' methodology using Rich Pictures (RP) to support the interviews. A Bourdieusian lens was used to explore how 'rules of the game' and 'habitus' resonated with the practice of placement and the ownership of students in shaping their 'career capital' and building 'brand-me' from a student perspective. A structured framework was created to analyse the Rich Pictures which provided a much closer analysis and generation of insights than was initially evident from the one-to-one interviews.
The interviews revealed that the students used very few tools in their 'toolkit' (for example CV, portfolio) in attempting to showcase 'career capital'. However, the RP analysis displayed their sense of understanding of agency and view that to be able to 'Brand-Me', you need to 'Be You' which suggests being agential as producers as well as 'fitting in' with employer expectations.

Content

- Introduction and background to research area
- Marketisation and consumerism in HE
- Employability and digital age
- Students as producers
- Research methodology and method using Rich Pictures
- Initial findings and moving forward

Introduction

TEF Gold

The Queen's Anniversary Prizes For Higher and Further Education 2017

About Me:

- Principal Lecturer- Agri-food Marketing
- Placement Coordinator
- SFHEA
- EdD -Professional Doctorate

Harper Adams University

How did my journey to undertaking Professional Doctorate (EdD) start?

WHAT UNI? STUDENT CHOICE Awards 2018 WINNER JOB PROSPECTS

WHAT UNI? STUDENT CHOICE Awards 2018 WINNER STUDENT SUPPORT

WHAT UNI? STUDENT CHOICE Awards 2018 WINNER COURSES AND LECTURERS

Background: Placement at HAU

- An integral part of every course at HAU- BSc and FdSc.
- ‘Thick’ sandwich – a continuous one-year block of work experience
- Contributes to a professional qualification for some courses

Social media tools on Placement

May be used

- As part of the role in placement
  - To collect research material
  - To launch new ideas and products
  - To communicate with colleagues

- To keep in touch with friends and family

Students and Social media, our view-

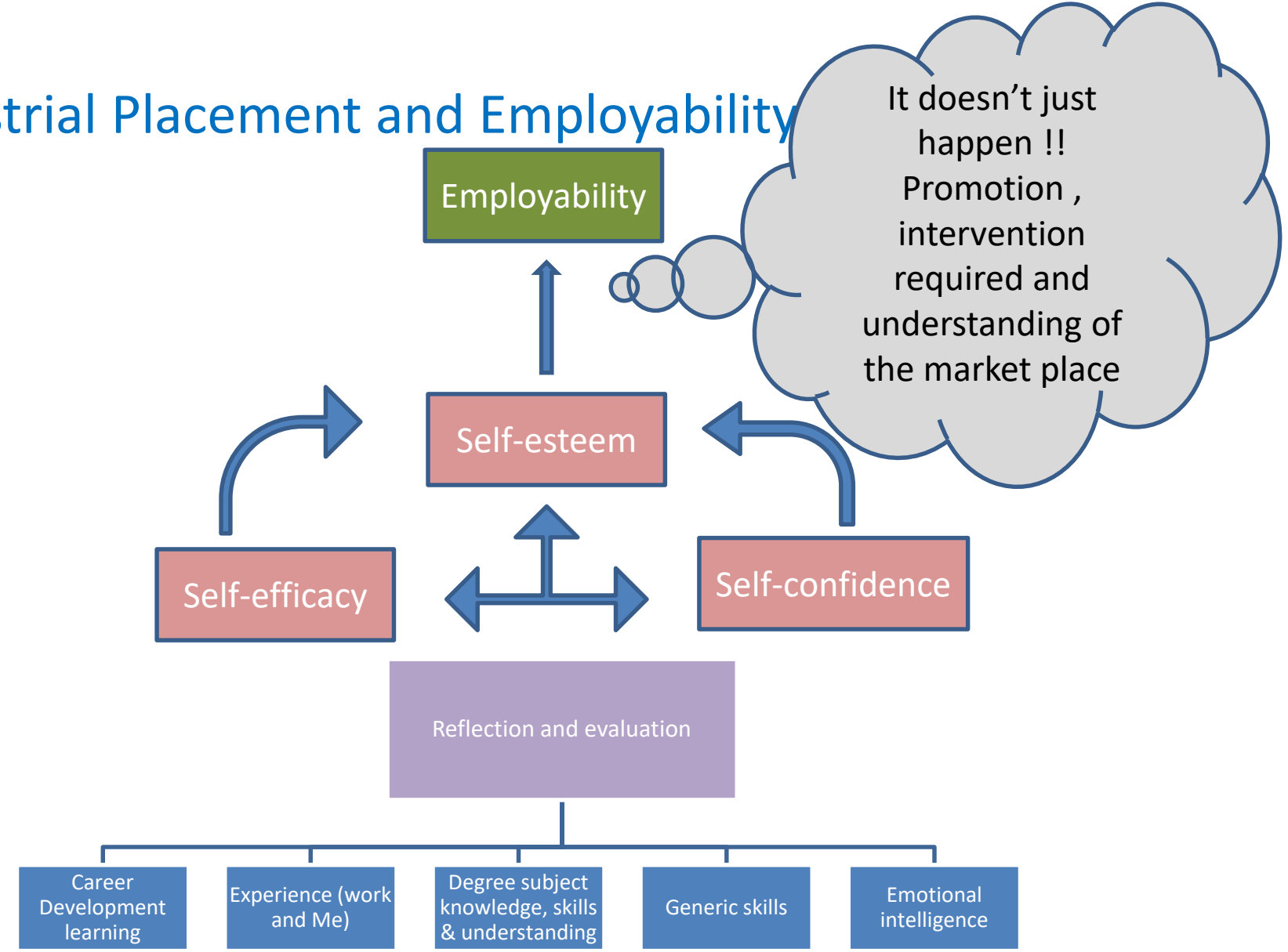
Encouraging a positive culture around social media through the concept of ‘Brand Me’.

Managing your online digital footprint.

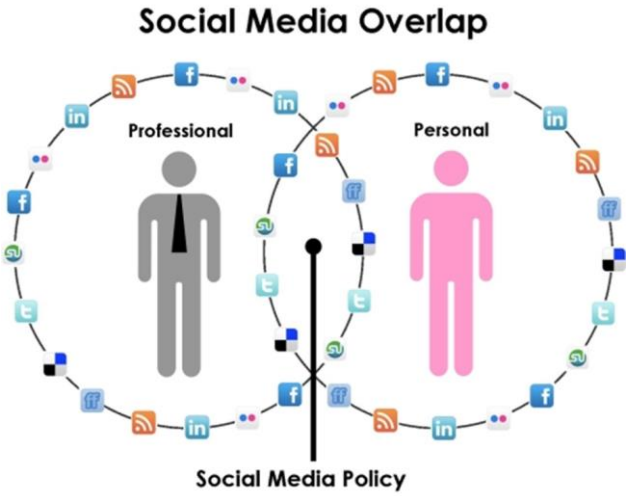
Marketisation and consumerism in HE

- Policy and politics – fit for purpose graduates
- Marketisation of universities
- Commodification of education
- TEF metrics, NSS metrics
- Students as consumers
- Students as producers – commodification of self
- Digital age
- Tensions…?

Industrial Placement and Employability



(Dacre Pool and Sewell, 2007)



Brand Me

Tensions

Opportunity

Context of Paper:

- Relates to the field of student placement and employability with the focus of raising the profile of personal branding with students in periods of transition from student to employee as part of their career trajectory.

- Would promoting the marketisation of 'Brand me' provide a transformational mechanism of symbolic or career capital on the placement career fields of students.
- To 'stand out' and 'fit in'.
  - Being You , inside out, agency
  - Self making identity, Self verification, self authentication, Self hood
  - Inside out
  - Self marketing v Personal branding
  - One brand/ multi brand/ Branding sequence

- Considering Bourdieu – field, habitus and capital
- Applying Principles of Marketing theory

Self marketing and Personal Branding

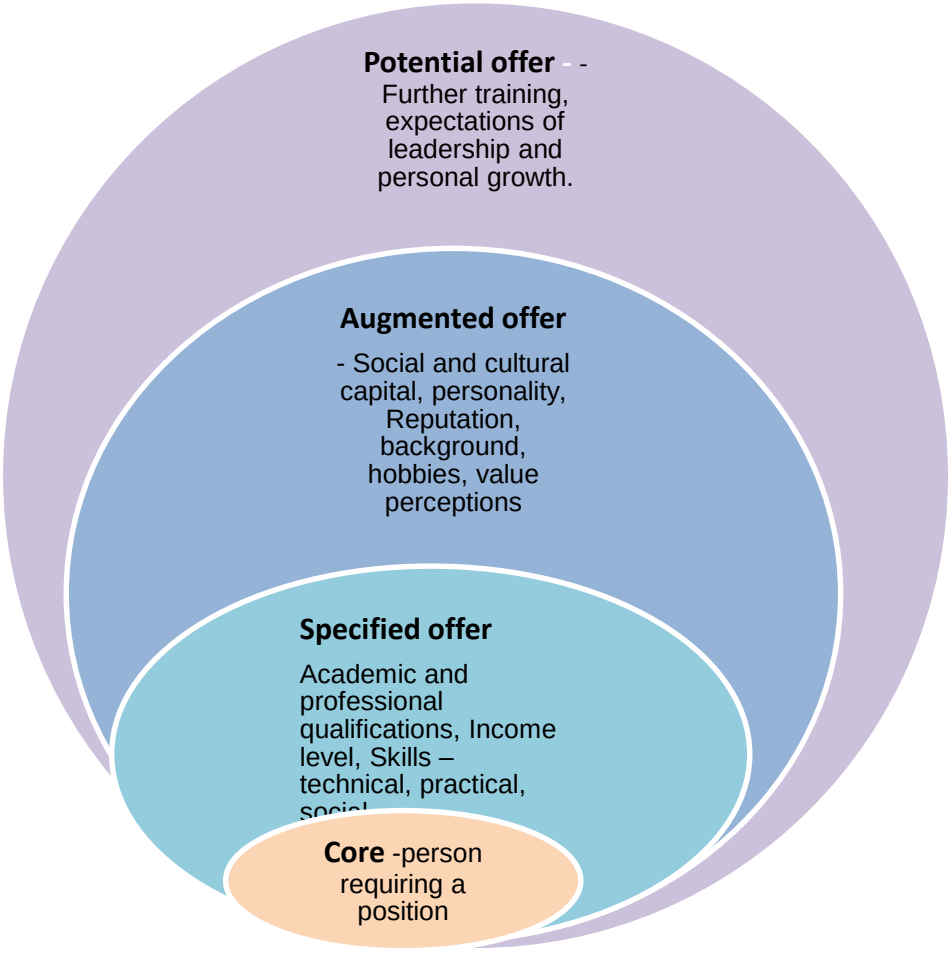
- Self Marketing – set of activities to be known in the market place

- Personal Branding - The concept of Personal Branding first appeared in a paper published in 1997 that was written by Tom Peters and entitled *"The brand called you".*

- It is, in effect, a brand 'promise' that may be defined as *"…a perception held in someone else's mind that must be managed effectively in order to influence how an individual is viewed by others"* (Schawbel, 2010).

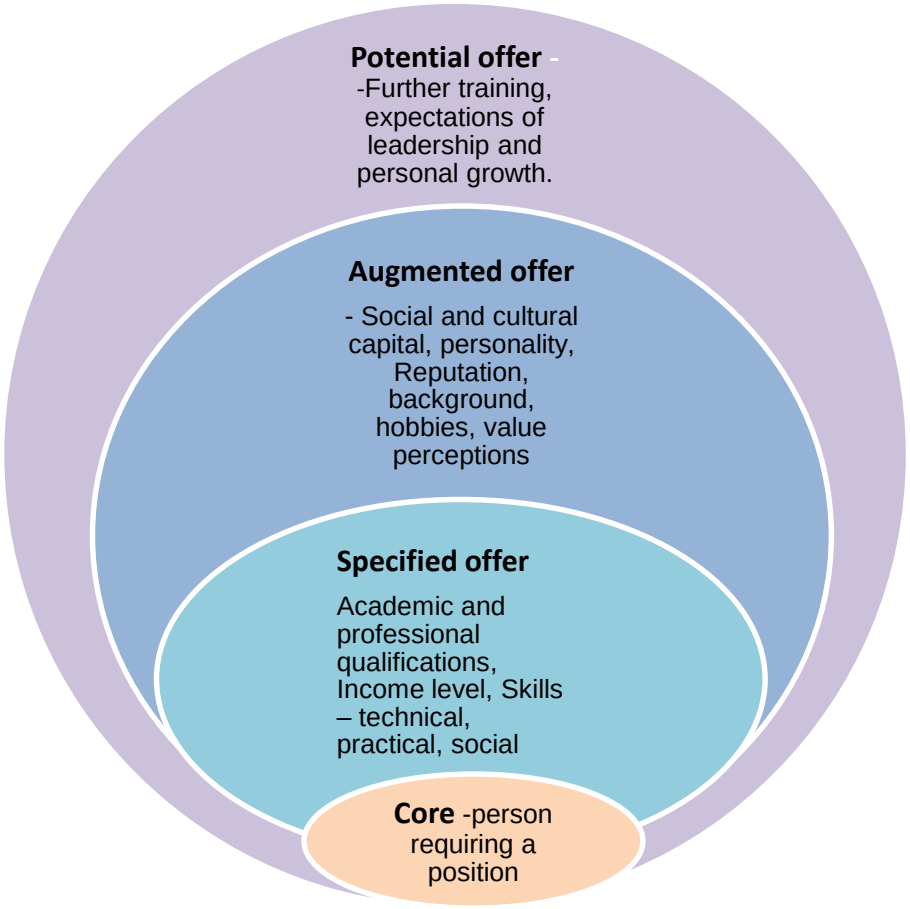
- In this context, everything a person does, how they appear, speak and dress, how they behave, and how they approach and deal with people, sends signals which come together to create an image and shape a personal brand.

A product has many layers; Students as producers



Students as producer

Brand me and Placement/Career trajectory



Expectations, values required for the role

Promotion

Personal brand equity 'Brand Me'

The challenge:
To Stand out and Fit in

Placement Market place

Personal Branding (cont.)

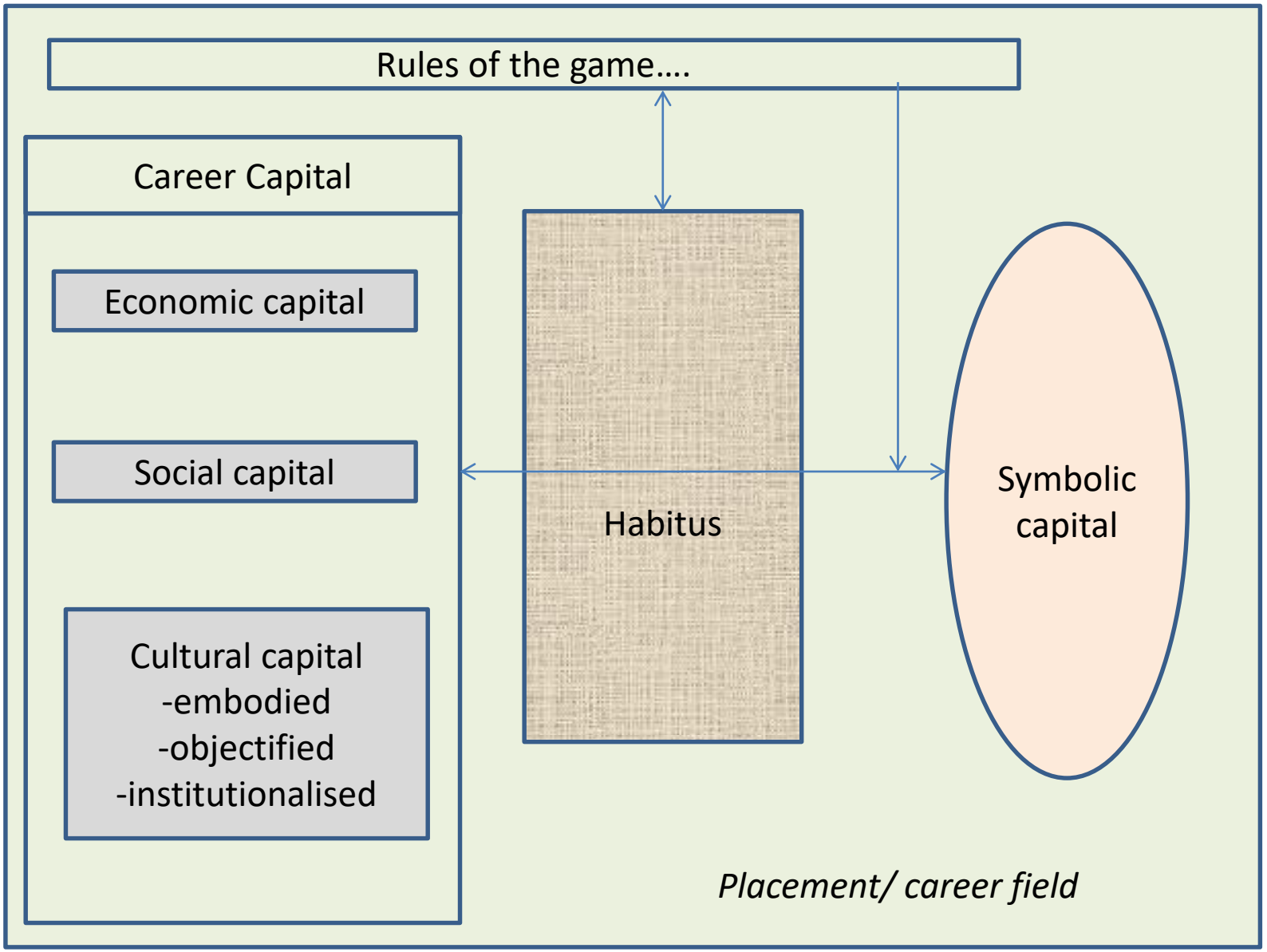
- Some factors that contribute to a Personal Brand are *"controllable"* but others are *"uncontrollable"*.

- However, mistakes and errors that an individual makes will serve to reduce the value of their personal brand equity.

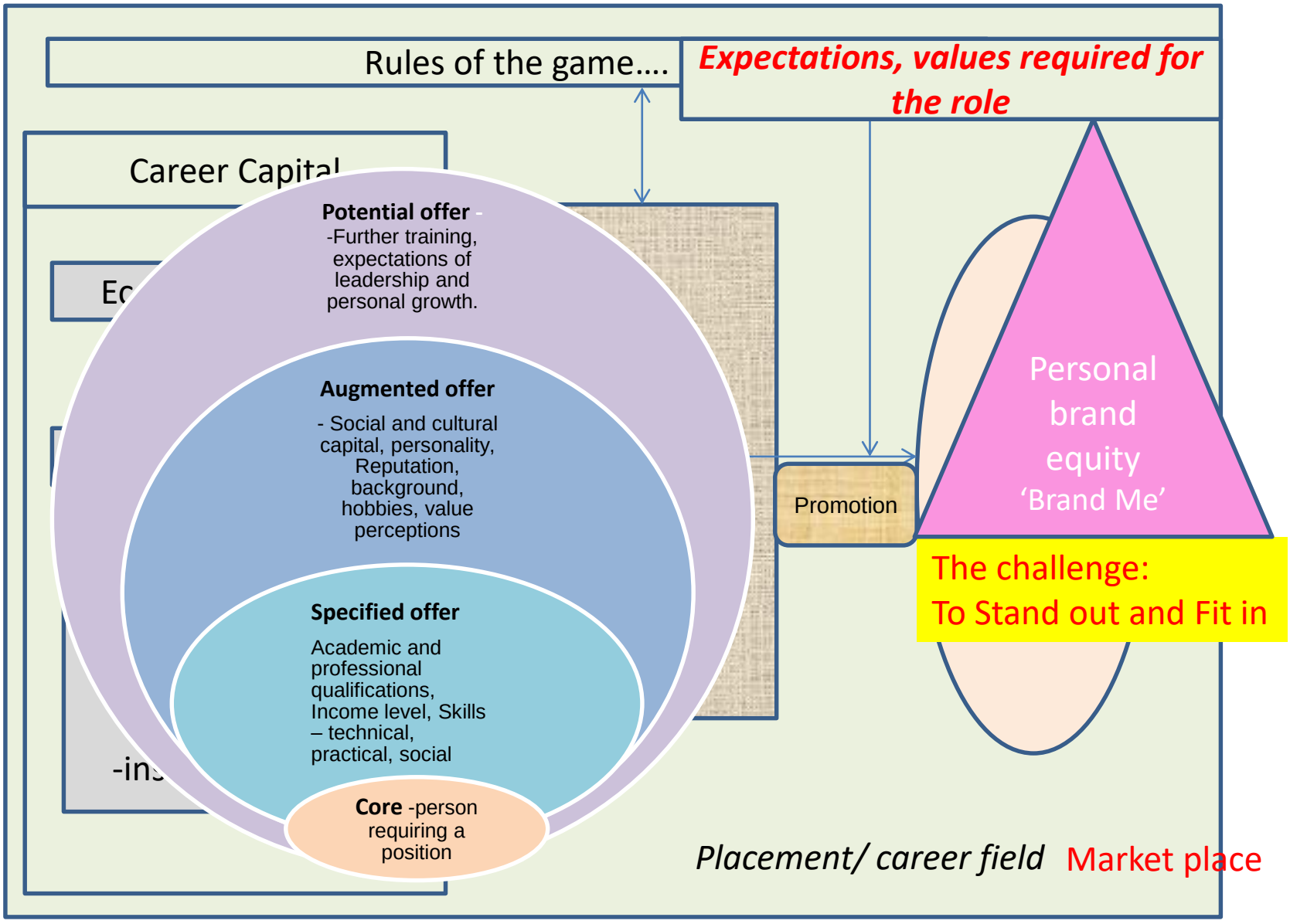
- The perceptual nature of a Personal Brand provides opportunity for abuse but in order for it to be enduring a Personal Brand has to be authentic.

- Brand Me and Be You

Bourdieu and habitus….



Bourdieu and habitus…. *Brand me and Placement/Career trajectory*



Research Objective

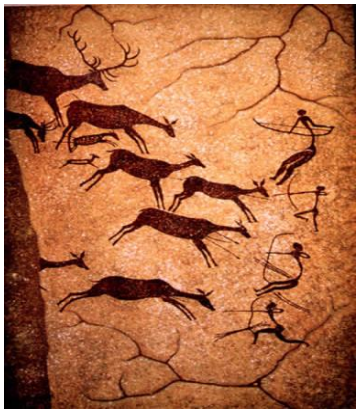
Explore the ownership of students in shaping their personal branding and understand the relationship between ‘habitus’, ‘field’, ‘career capital’ and building ‘brand me’ from a student perspective.

-Qualitative depth interviews six students in year 2 and year 4 (pre and post placement) and using Rich Pictures

Methodology

- Within boundaries of Harper Adams
  - Students – pre and post placement in the agri-food based course area
- Qualitative depth interviews 1:1 depth interviews
- Incorporating ‘soft systems’ methodology with students using Rich Picture method
  - 2 RP tasks undertaken within the 1:1 interview
- Using analytical framework (Carney, 1994) to appraise the RP.

What is a Rich Picture?



- ‘Soft systems’ methodology (Checkland and Scholes, 1990)
- A participatory approach to decision making using pictures which they termed ‘Rich Pictures’, RP as they communicated so much richness by their design and inference
- May convey a message, if not a story
- Considered a narrative in a broad sense
- Aid in communicating data
- Depict spirit and human nature.
- Provide an opportunity for optimal indiscretion whereby individuals will reveal things that would not ordinarily be said.
- Used to gather ideas
- Can then be used further to examine influencing factors, identify causes and in developing ideas or strategies moving forward
- Have transience.

Conventions

1. To help interpret a situation, choose symbols, scenes or images that represent the situation. Use as many colours as necessary and draw the symbols on a large piece of paper.

2. Put in whatever connections you see between your pictorial symbols: avoid producing merely an unconnected set.

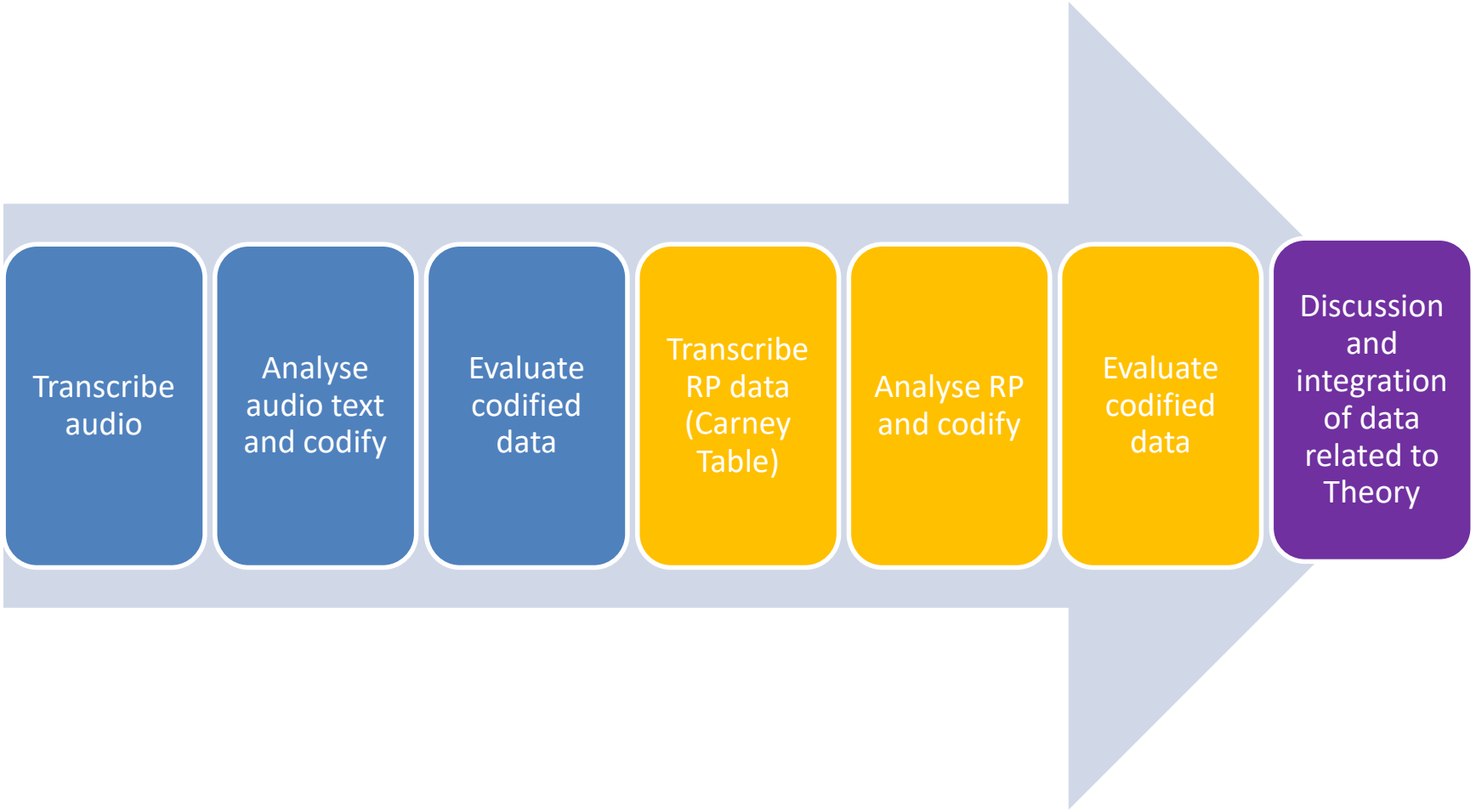
3. Avoid too much writing

4. Fall back on words only where ideas fail you for a sketch that encapsulates your meaning.

5. Place the elements on your sheet wherever your instinct prompts.

6. Finally, include yourself in the picture. Make sure that your roles and relationships in the situation are clear.

Research Process



Frame work used for analysis of Rich Pictures

Table 1 The analytical framework for art as set out by Carney (1994) and how it could apply to Rich Pictures (Bell and Morse, 2012).

Step	Name of step	Notes	Rich Pictures
1	Locate the style	Not the art-historical context and its characteristic features upon which the content of the piece depends	The content of the RP; the problem or system being analysed
2	Descriptive Features and Structures	Note the descriptive features and structures in the piece. For example, the colours, shapes, arrangements, textures, brush strokes and thickness of lines	Content of the RP; the use of colour, shapes, drawings etc.
3	Primary Aesthetic Features	Presence of any representational, expressive and exemplified features.	Are any features dominant in the picture? Perhaps because they are placed more centrally or drawn larger and in bolder lines.
4	Value Features	These encompass aspects of both form and content. For example, the relationships of features in the picture.	Linkages between the elements of the RP; whether the components are isolated or grouped
5	Low-level Interpretation	The meaning or the content of the picture in its basic form	The overall content of the picture; is it narrow in focus or does it encompass many points?
6	High-level Interpretation	Brings together the low-level interpretations along with such things as the artist's oeuvre, declarations made by the artist about the work and the art in an historical context.	Note the points made by the team when presenting the RP during a plenary. Are the points in the RP? How rich is the description given.
7	Critical Judgement	Whether the picture has (or lacks) aesthetic value to a degree and whether the artwork has more (or less) value than another.	Some overall sense of the quality of the RP which emerges from all the above.

Rich Picture Task 1 –

students asked to use the paper and coloured pens to visually address the following question and left to complete the task in their own time, but with interviewer in the room.

- What are the steps you take in preparing for placement and career management
- What is it about you as an individual which may contribute to you securing a placement position or chosen area of work.

Rich Picture Task 2 –

students asked to use the paper and coloured pens to visually address the following question and left to complete the task in their own time, but with interviewer in the room.

If you had to consider yourself as ‘Brand Me’, how would you take this concept forward and promote this.

Findings from using Rich Picture method

1. Group or Individual methods work well
2. Flip chart paper or A3? -A3 easier to manage
3. Coloured pens freely available
4. Care needed to not influence – spontaneity is best – but… prompts are needed at start
5. In one hour long interview 2 drawing tasks is maximum
6. Useful to elicit conversation and tease out further thoughts
7. Richness of pictures? – some students used more words in their picture- but they were still of great value.
8. Acts as an aide memoir alongside audio transcript
9. Adds another level of analysis with field data
10. Provided a reflective stage to the interview and provided a ‘next step’ aspect to consider

Contribution of RP to research data quality

- The Rich Pictures appeared to offer an expression of the inner life or 'soul' of the individual
- The students put great conscious effort into the pictures which highlighted the unconscious during the plenary session and teased out a level of thinking and knowledge which was not evident in the initial verbal questioning.
- The analysis, which emerges in a Rich Picture, showed some transience
- The framework used by Bell and Morse (2012) as an exploratory means in appraising the rich pictures was useful to gain understanding. However, '*Next steps to develop Brand-Me'* could be included in the framework.
- RP adds another level of analysis and the requirement for transcribed notes and substantive content to be analysed and categorised for each individual to disentangle their thoughts tease out higher level understanding.
- The students reflected that they found the RP fun to do, but quite hard.

Findings so far…

- What was evident from the pilot research was that the students used very few tools in their 'toolkit' (other than CV) in attempting to highlight their attributes.

- The pilot research showed a subconscious awareness of the 'rules of the game' and the interrelationship between the habitus and field

- The Rich Picture analysis displayed their sense of understanding of agency and taking ownership of their personality and their view that to be able to 'Brand-Me', you need to 'Be You' which suggests being more agential than 'fitting in' and part of brand equity.

- The blurred lines and tensions in personal and professional use of using social media to be a professional digital citizen and concern over 'digital shadow' has limited student willingness to use social media in a positive proactive way and shape their personal brand.

Findings so far (cont.)…

- Whilst it is not the role of the university to mould students in how to sell themselves as human capital for the market place, there is a role in offering pedagogic support to students in seeking placement and employment.

  - Its success is in providing student agency to develop understanding of how employability is constructed and realised in students' social interactions.
  - Consideration of Brand Me , Personal branding may assist with this and enable students as producers

- There is merit in exploring further the affinity and tensions between the concept of personal brand equity and whether students see themselves as responsible, active agents in the market of employability as producers as well as consumers.

Thank You

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