“Breaking through the morass” - Narratives of resistance and persuasion by individuals in creative economy careers

SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY
2018 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
7 & 8 MARCH 2018
NELSON MANDELA BAY STADIUM, PORT ELIZABETH, SOUTH AFRICA

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Emerging interest in careers & qualitative research in management & social sciences

Introduction

• Work has become central to modern day working lives, resulting in some classifying it as a calling (Duffy, Dik & Steger 2011).

• Individuals in such a context derive a sense of purpose of meaningfulness from their work (Dik & Duffy 2009).

• However, in developing countries such as South Africa, the experience of work, including career issues, are noted to be complex (Chinyamurindi 2012) particularly amongst previously disadvantaged groups (Chinyamurindi 2016a).

• Calls exist for empirical work exploring the career development processes of groups that do not receive much empirical focus within the extant literature.
Creative Economy

- Calls exist for empirical work exploring the career development processes of groups that do not receive much empirical focus within the extant literature.
- One such group are those individuals working in the creative economy.
- These individuals often face challenges in negotiating not just their creative energies to society but also in seeking economic rent using their talents and abilities.
- Further, little is known about the intersection of factors such as structural constraints on such processes especially within developing countries such as South Africa.
Research Aim:

• The purpose of this paper is to explore the career development processes of individuals working within the creative economy in South Africa.
Research Question:

• What are the career development processes of individuals working within the creative economy in South Africa? How do these manifest within a social-setting?
• **Ecological Model of Career Development (EMCD)** (Cook, Heppner & O’Brian 2002) that considers the career development processes of women and minority groups in their lifespan.

• **Career construction theory (CCT)** (Savickas 2005) is adopted in giving an understanding of the issue that career agents (in this case women middle managers) place on their careers in a changing environmental context (Pheko 2014).
Method

• Qualitative Approach.
• Arguments around sense-making (Chinyamurindi, 2012, 2016a, b, c).
• Semi-structured interviews.
• 20 creative artists in East London.
• Interviews ranged from 1 hour to 2 hours.
• Ethical clearance obtained from participating university.
• Informed consent from participants
Analytical Technique

Three levels of meaning-making

- Level 1 was helpful in developing a good understanding of the career development experience of each story. This was done by re-reading each interview and listening to audio recordings. This process allowed for the identification of ‘markers’ in the stories (McCormack, 2000, p. 221) and answered questions about each interview, such as ‘what kind of story is this?’ (Thomhill, Clare, & May, 2004, p. 188).

- Level 2 was achieved through classifying responses from participants into meaningful categories (Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996).

- Finally, in Level 3, the researcher analysed the content of the gathered narrative accounts and themes (McCormack, 2000). This was done by identifying themes and using quotes based on consistencies across participant stories (Rhodes, 2000).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Highest Qualification</th>
<th>Years Work Experience</th>
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Strategies to ensure data integrity

• Pre-testing of interview guide.
• Content and face validity with experts.
• Audio recordings (with permission).
• Field notes
• Transcriptions within 24 hours.
• Coding in QSR Nvivo
• Participants mailed back transcriptions to check for accuracy.
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<th>Initial Codes</th>
<th>Illustrating Quotes</th>
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| Structural constraints that individuals in the creative industry face affecting their career development | 1. Creative economy careers as “pseudo-careers”  
2. Legitimization of creative economy careers.  
3. Lack of support in the creative economy | “the one question I hate after I tell people I am an artist is – OK – so tell us what exactly do you? As if being an artist is not a career path.” P7  
“Everyday is a struggle and I gotta roll on – the challenge of seeking legitimacy around my persona and my calling.” P5  
“I really think if we had support as artists who have the potential to contribute people would us differently and economies would improve. Imagine our province as a mecca of creativity.” P17 |
| Resistance narrative                  | 1. Resisting career conscription  
2. Resisting mediocrity                                                          | “Many of my artist friends have had to resist being forced into careers they don’t like – the journey is not easy.”  
“To be taken seriously, resist mediocrity.” P15  
“I ended loosing support from family who wanted me to be an account. That was ten years ago. Now the biggest fans I have are those who created this resistance.” P11 |
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| Persuasion Narrative          | 1. Self-persuasion  
                                 2. Persuasion with significant others | “I was my best fan, the only person who can persuade myself that I can do this despite the resistance.”  
                                                                 |                                                                                       |
|                               |                                                   | “When my family began to see the changes, the gigs, appointments and newspaper features. It was the persuasion we needed.” |
|                               |                                                   | “You must put your family and community first. They support you work but are not your work. Sometimes people just need to see what you do that’s all.” |

P19  
P4  
P13
Discussion

• Findings support previous work illustrating present structural complexities affecting career development (Chinyamurindi, 2016).

• Uniquely, this is illustrated within creative economy careers.

• Interestingly, the challenges at play, as illustrated in this study, have more to do with the experience of resistance and managing personal relationships with others especially in the community and dealing with structural constraints manifest from a society that is in flux.
Contribution

• Study pays credence to the issues that creative economy agents face within a South African context.

• The empirical prioritisation in understanding the issues of a sample group often excluded in lieu of empirical studies that pay credence to mostly other sample groups.

• Identifying problems but also provides an evidence-based understanding of how creative economy actors deal with the identified issues.
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