

Career counselling aimed at inclusion: the Qualitative Career Interview for formerly imprisoned persons (FIPs).

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Retracing our roots:

Cultivating the Future of Career Guidance and Counseling

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Context

Recent US statistics indicate that more than 600,000 people are released yearly from state and federal prisons and 9 million from municipal or county jails (Flynn, 2022). Within three years, two-thirds of persons with imprisonment experience are rearrested, with more than 50% reincarcerated; up to 89% of formerly incarcerated persons (FIPs) who are re-arrested are unemployed (Benecchi, 2021).

Striking differences between formerly incarcerated persons (FIPs) and not: i.e., 60% of FIPs struggle with unemployment (Wang & Bertram, 2022) (the unemployment rate for US general population = 3.7%; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). The unemployment rate for FIPs is 5x higher than for non-FIPs (Flynn, 2022).

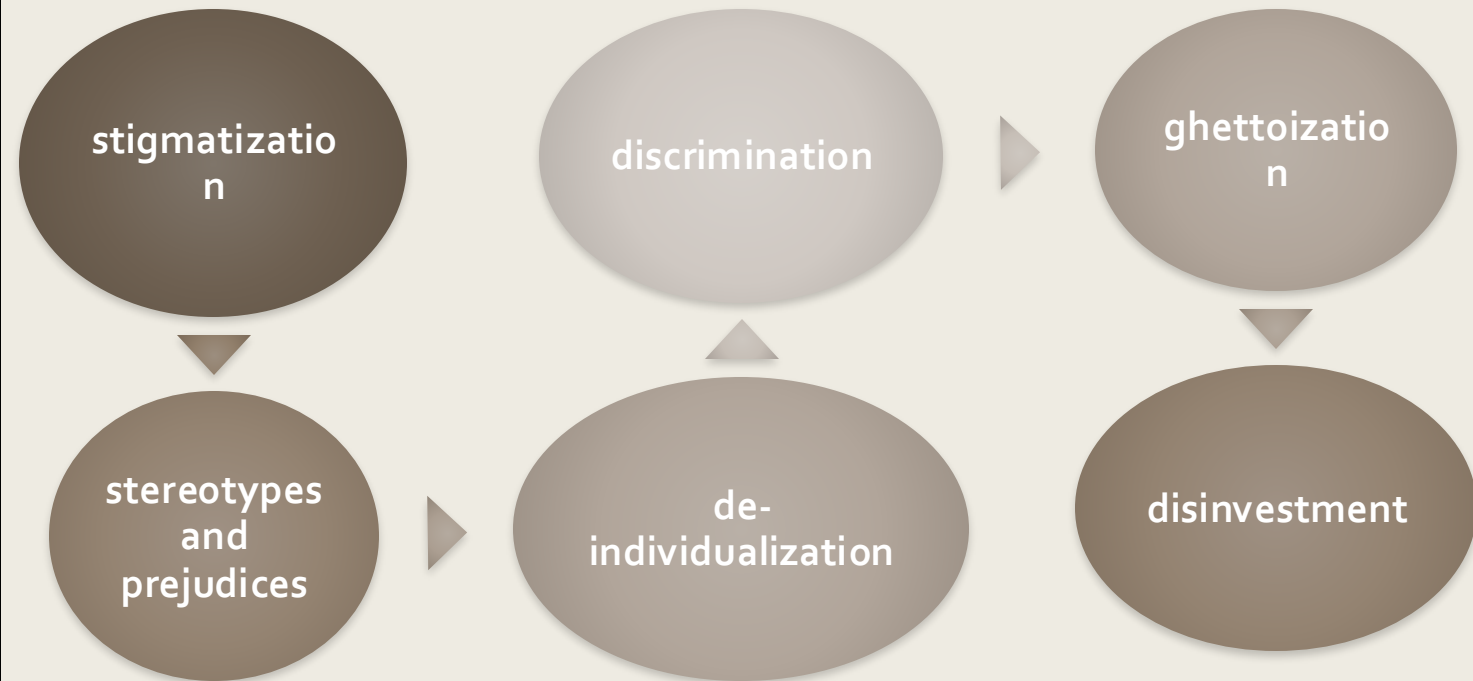
The low employment and activity rates of ex-offenders suggest that significant barriers exist for FIPs to access the labour market (Flynn, 2022).

Employment is a primary inclusion factor.

Over two-thirds of the persons released are rearrested within three years, and half are reincarcerated.



Context: further threats



The role of vocational guidance and career counselling

Vocational guidance and Career counselling must activate a sense-making process regarding its social mission



Social and ethical **values**.

Attention to conditions of greater **vulnerability**.

Caring for people and for life contexts (Solberg & Ali, 2017).

Accept and carry forward the indications of the guidelines proposed by the **2030 Agenda for sustainable development**.

Make efforts towards building an **inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet**.

Group discussion: Threats and challenges

In groups of 4-5

Imagine and discuss possible specific challenges and threats in career counselling/guidance for both FIPs or persons in prison and career counsellors (10 minutes)

After, share your reflections with the class (10 minutes)





Career counselling with persons in prison

Having a criminal record represents a disadvantageous condition in people's social and work adaptation (*Thompson & Cummings, 2010*):

- people with experience of imprisonment have to deal with social stigma, both implicit and explicit (Petersilia, 2001);
- stigma encompasses both formal and informal aspects, where the former denotes the restrictive provisions instituted within laws or regulations, while the latter refers to the impact of former incarceration on the evaluation of individuals by employers, landlords, and other relevant parties (Goger, Harding, & Henderson, 2021).

The motivations that led to criminality can be traced back to histories and experiences that are entirely personal and not generalisable:

- they require a highly idiographic approach in their detection and analysis.
- it is necessary to adopt a methodological model that, starting from the personal story, can allow persons in prison to tell and reconstruct their own personal and career stories, giving space to fears, concerns, barriers – real or perceived –, and influences, past, present, and imagined for the future.
- pay attention to the context

Setting

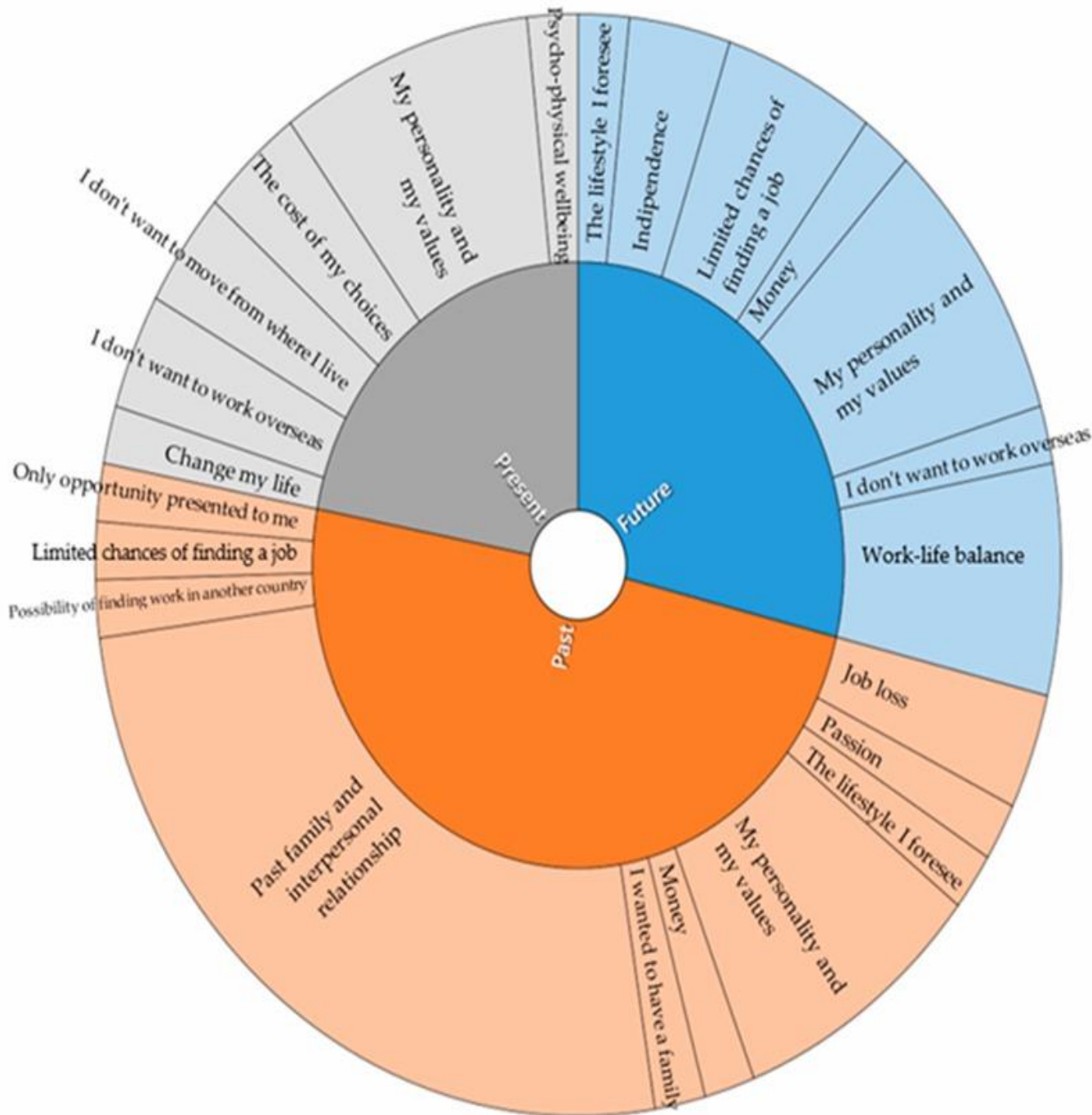
- difficulties in managing spaces, times, and access to prison
- career counsellor's mindset

Group discussion

In groups of 4-5

Analyse the assigned story of a person in prison, trying to answer the list of questions provided in the worksheet (20 minutes)





- ✓ Narrow, past-oriented time perspective.
- ✓ The descriptions of the future are limited to a generic outlook, and no specific goals emerge from the narratives.
- ✓ Stagnant time perspective for the current situation: time perspective is not actively oriented towards the future but is considered a persistent consequence of a negative past.

It has been suggested that time perspective in general (*e.g.*, Carstensen, 2006) and a balanced time perspective in particular (*e.g.*, Boniwell, Osin, Linley, & Ivanchenko, 2010) play a powerful role in many psychological outcomes, as mental health, interpersonal relationships, sense of self, and addictive behaviors.

Time perspective refers to a relatively stable individual difference variable in which individuals express a preferred mode of temporal focus.

A **Balanced Time Perspective (BTP)** is the orientation to more than one temporal focus in a flexible way, potentially enhancing wellbeing and facilitating problem solving.

Time perspective



Outcomes of Balanced Time Perspective

Focusing both on the past and future can have **very positive outcomes**: accessing positive memories of our past can enhance **happiness**, increase **self-esteem**, bolster our **sense of purpose and meaning in life**, and potentially contribute to longevity (see Webster et al., 2010, for review).

Similarly, Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) have found that a future-time perspective can be associated with many adaptive outcomes, including **optimism**, **internal locus of control**, **achievement orientation**, and **delay of gratification**.

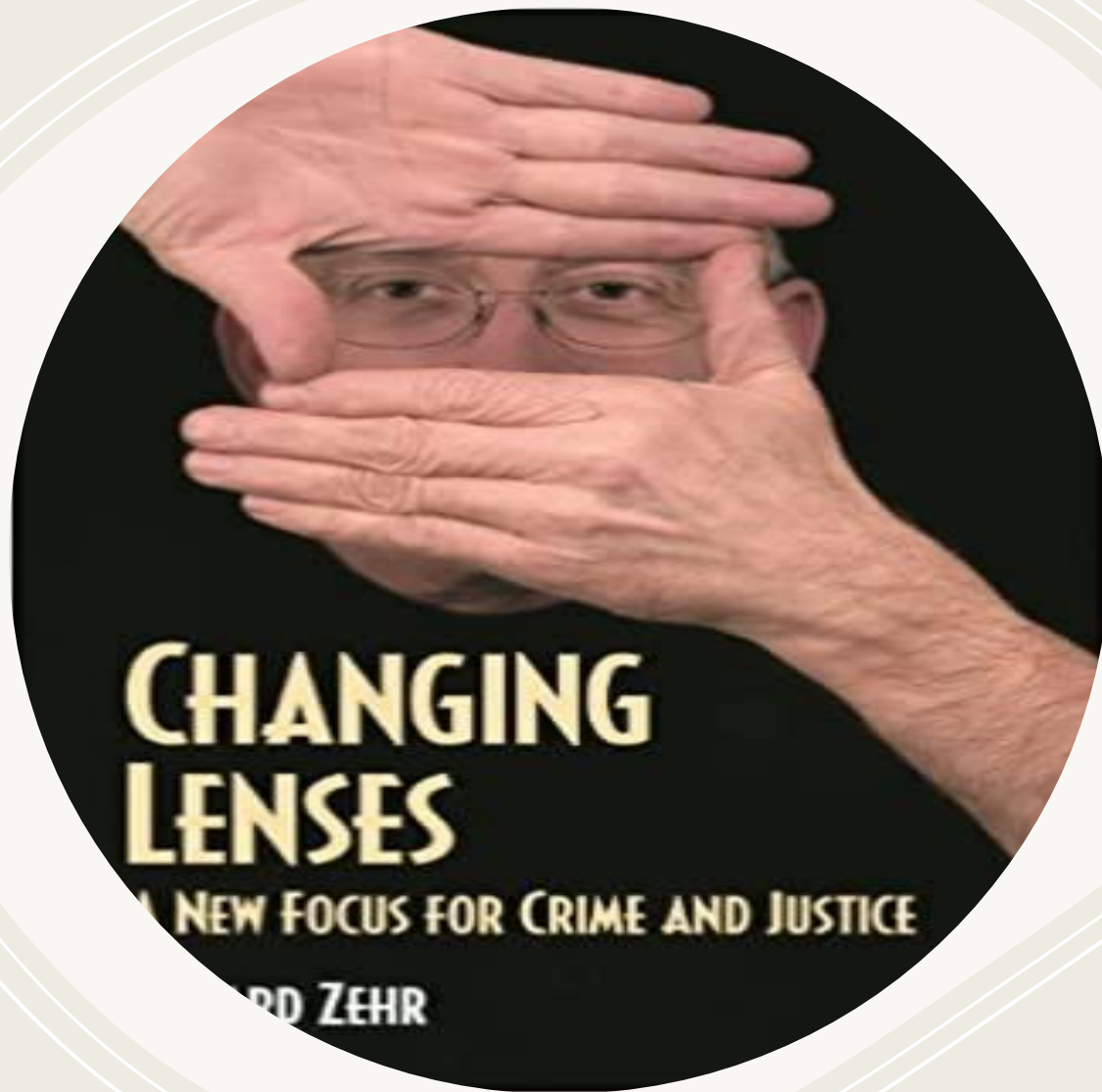
Such psychological benefits occur separately for a positive past and future orientation and for a joint or balanced time perspective (Webster & Ma, 2013).





Methodological approaches to career counselling with persons in prison

- Need to consider the **dynamic interaction between cultural, contextual, and psychosocial factors** in the process of life design to support career human agency among diverse populations (*Sultana, 2022*).
- **Constructivist (and storied) approaches** (*Savickas, 2015*) could be particularly effective and powerful, especially for those clients or in those situations where standardisation is not helpful because it would mean losing relevant information related to uniqueness.
- Based on qualitative procedures, constructivist approaches increase the potential for comprehending the 'other', working actively with the clients through the **dynamic process of construction, reconstruction, and co-construction of personal life stories**.



Two different visions *(Zehr, 2002)*

Criminal justice

Crime is a violation of **law and state**.

Violations create **guilt**

Justice requires the state to determine **guilt and impose punishment**

Focus: **the authors get what they deserve**

Respond to the past.

Restorative justice

Crime is a violation of **persons and relationships**

Violations create **obligations**

Justice involves the victim, perpetrator, and community members in a **commitment to make things right**

Focus: victims' **needs** and perpetrator's **responsibility** to **repair the damage**

Build the future

The algebra of suffering: - x - = +



*"All stories contain truth.
The problem is their truth is incomplete."*
Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."
Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

"Those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives, the power to retell it, rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts."

Salman Rushdie





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