



MONASH University

**Being/becoming an academic: Spatio-temporal experiences of
precarious employment and wellbeing**

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Abstract

Precarious employment is a structural feature of work at the contemporary Western university which is troubling given that employment insecurity is known to negatively affect the health and wellbeing of employees. This qualitative multi-case study research focuses on young peoples' lived experience of wellbeing as precarious academic employees. Findings are generated from three rounds of in-depth interviews with ten casual or fixed-term academics under the age of thirty, working at Monash University in Australia. The theoretical framework for the thesis is underpinned by a social-ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and informed by concepts drawn from the work of Giddens (1984) (notably structuration, ontological security, space and time) and Coser (1967) (the greedy institution).

This research demonstrates how structural aspects of work intersect with the participants' agentic understandings and enactments of being/becoming academics. Spatially, participants negotiated precariousness in their day-to-day experience, living and working under conditions that threatened their identities and constructions of an ongoing professional self. An empirically derived typology highlights the ways participants enacted being/becoming academics through everyday identity-forming practices in relation to the structures of the greedy institution. The typology shows how participants' actions were prescribed by the structural norms and values of their working context, and illustrates the importance of ontological security to a sense of wellbeing and self-cohesiveness.

In terms of temporality, participants experienced what was conceptualised as a 'continuous present' whereby their anticipated futures appeared to be colonised by the present and always out of reach. In this continuous present, participants existed in the present and lacked the feelings of ontological security required to move into the future or make future commitments. Participants engaged with future-orientation strategies to cope with their experience of the continuous present, a state which compromised their sense of being agentic decision-makers.

This research contributes to knowledge by offering an in-depth, socialised account of how precarious employment influences the lived experiences and wellbeing of a

distinctive group of young workers. Specifically, it advances knowledge about the spatial and temporal dynamics that are generative of employees' experiences of, and responses to, identity threats. The typology extends understandings of how the recursive actions of multiple actors lead to legitimated social practices which shape precarious work practices and norms. The empirically derived future-orientations and conceptualisation of a continuous present, extends understandings of how precarious employment affects wellbeing across space-time boundaries. This research highlights the experiences of the precarious workers who participated in the study and ends with recommendations for change to support the wellbeing of present and future precarious employees.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Signature: 

Print Name: Kate Bone

Date: 3rd February 2017

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my partner Matt McClymont
whose kindness and great sense of humour
makes me feel happy and lucky
every day.



...and to our three rescue dogs.

Acknowledgements

*“Such a rich chapter it had been, when one came to look back on it all!
With illustrations so numerous and so very highly coloured!”*
From *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis presents the findings of a qualitative study about the lived experiences and wellbeing of young people working precariously in academia. This introductory chapter provides the background to my study, the research questions, working definitions and the thesis structure. The significance of this work and the need for the current study will be justified. I begin by providing contextual information to set the scene for the study, highlighting the prevalence of precarious work in general and within the higher education sector in Australia in particular, and will then go on to identify the distinctive research problem that this research addresses. Throughout these sections key terms central to this thesis will be defined: precarious employment, young workers and wellbeing. After giving this foreground to the thesis the research questions that guide the project are presented. In the last sections of this chapter an overview of each of the subsequent chapters is provided, thus summarising the content and structure of the thesis.

1.1. Background to the research

This thesis addresses the significant topic of precarious employment and wellbeing (Caldbick, Labonte, Mohindra, & Ruckert, 2014; Facey & Eakin, 2010; Green & Leeves, 2013). Precarious employment stems from globalisation as organisations mobilise what is often termed “flexible” labour practices to increase global competitiveness (Caldbick et al., 2014, p. 23). The neoliberal practice of eroding employment security is part of a trend to “informalize and contract out the labour function” (Standing, 2012, p. 592), a trend which has affected many advanced economies (International Labour Organization, 2015). Multiple terms are used to describe employment associated with these changes to the labour market and to employment arrangements, including:

casual, contract, contingent, flexible, temporary, non-standard, atypical, freelance, self-employed, irregular, vulnerable, part-time, informal, uncertain, transient, gig, zero-hour, precarious and insecure (see for example: Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2016a; Campbell & Price, 2016; May, Peetz, & Strachan, 2013; Quinlan, 2011; Wilson, 2013). The term 'precarious' has been adopted as a preferred terminology by sociologists in the area (Caldbeck et al., 2014; Kalleberg, 2009; Standing, 2011; Wilson & Ebert, 2013).

1.2. Context

Employment marked by insecurity is a common feature of the labour market in Australia and the workers who are affected by this may experience "...inferior rights, entitlements, and job security" contributing to "more and more household debt" (Australian Council of Trade Unions [ACTU], 2012, p. 3). In 2012 four million (40%) of Australian workers were employed as either casuals, short-term contractors, labour hire, or "independent" contractors (ACTU, 2012, p. 4). Latest figures show that in 2015, over two million Australian workers (24%) did not have access to leave entitlements, such as maternity, sick or holiday leave (ABS, 2016a). Also, the country has an unemployment rate of 5.7% and underemployment rate of 8.5% (with this disproportionately affecting women and young people) (ABS, 2016b). The broader context of Australia, within which these trends occur, is important as it sets the scene for this study.

Insecure work is not a recent phenomenon and as Quinlan (2013) found, phrases such as 'employment that is precarious' or 'precarious employment' were used regularly from the early nineteenth century until the 1930s where the phrases appeared in

Australian newspapers and House of Commons debates in the United Kingdom. This shows a long socio-historical lineage of precarious employment in Australia.

The era of precarious employment now is marked by trends towards neo-liberal practices marked by the undermining of worker protections characterised by “a decline in standard work, trade union membership and collective bargaining” (Wilson, 2013, p. 4). In 1939, as a response to the Great Depression, the Keynesian economic model revolutionised Australia by emphasising the mobilisation of resources and other Keynesian insights in a bid to avoid experiencing the economic depression again (Millmow, 2015). Post World War II Australia entered “an era of sustained expansion, with all sectors experiencing growth” and with this came increasing government intervention in regards to the economy (ABS, 1988, np). The Australian Government’s emphasis on macro policies were pronounced including efforts towards specific goals such as “full employment, growth and economic development” (Bureau of Industry Economics, 2012, np). Alongside this, the period that followed saw an increase in trade unionism, bargaining power of workers and industrial relation strategies (Quinlan, 2013).

Ironically, these more recent milestones have been superseded by neoliberalism which, as a trend from the 1970s onwards, has emphasised privatisation, flexibilisation and liberal markets that have undermined many of these protective policies and entitlements (Wilson, 2013). In Australia this neoliberal ideology has received long standing support from the right-wing Liberal Party which emerged from the ‘Institute of Public Affairs’ and is still one of the biggest critics of unionism, and a frontrunner for flexibilisation and liberalism (Liberal Victoria, 2016; Lloyd, 2012). The neoliberal economic model emphasises market competitiveness as the backbone of growth and development in the modern world. Standing (2011, p.1) suggests that this will “allow

market principles to permeate all aspects of life... transferring risks and insecurity onto workers and their families”. This critique of neoliberalism feeds into conceptions of precarious employment in the field.

1.2.1. Defining ‘precarious employment’ in this study

For the purposes of this study I define precarious employment as “employment that is uncertain, unpredictable, and risky from the point of view of the worker” (Kalleberg, 2009, p.2). This working definition is somewhat vague in acknowledgement of Campbell and Price’s (2016, p.316) assertion that “workers are engaged in precarious work, but the experience and the potential impact are likely to differ in complex but socially patterned ways”. This definition reflects the commonly mentioned features of precarious employment, such as: insecurity, vulnerability, discontinuity, limited access to benefits, unstable earnings, low level of regulatory protection, low reciprocity, and marginality (Benach & Muntaner, 2007; Campbell & Price, 2016; Facey & Eakin, 2010). When I discuss ‘precarious employment’ at the university in this study I am referring to ‘casual’ and ‘fixed-term’ contracts which reflect the objective features of the participants’ employment (shown in Table 1.). Greater detail on the concept of precariousness, and the link often made between precarious work and precarious lives, is presented in Chapter Two (Buchtemann & Quack, 1990; Chomsky, 2011; Campbell & Price, 2016).

1.3. Precarious employment and wellbeing

Many studies link precarious employment to health outcomes evidenced by individualised physical and psychological states as key indicators. Such as: suicidal ideation and attempts (Min, Park, Hwang, & Min, 2015); decreased self-reported health levels (Bambra, Lunau, Van der Wel, Eikemo, & Dragano, 2014, p. 113); mental

health outcomes (Moscone, Tosetti, & Vittadini, 2016; Richardson, Lester, & Zhang, 2012); and injury rates and psychological wellbeing (Schweder, Quinlan, Bohle, Lamm, & Ang, 2015). Studies do not always paint a negative picture of the relationship between health and job security (the complexity of this relationship is discussed further in the literature review). However, generally, the field highlights negative outcomes associated with precarious work. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (2012), summarised this in their contention that precarious workers are more vulnerable to accepting health and safety concerns, exploitation, and risks of injuries and illness associated with precarious employment, largely due to their fear of job loss.

Notions surrounding 'choice', and the effects of a combination of social factors contribute to lived experiences of work and these come to the fore in offering more holistic perspectives of how wellbeing is affected by employment status (Campbell & Price, 2016; Buchtemann & Quack, 1990; Guest, Oakley, Clinton, & Budjanovcanin, 2006). The voluntary versus involuntary nature of precarious work is central to the debate surrounding how insecure forms of employment relate to wellbeing (Furlong & Kelly, 2005). For example, when employees are deliberately engaged in precarious employment (Keuskamp, Mackenzie, Ziersch, & Baum, 2013) they tend to feel more "contented" (Moss, White, & McGann, 2011, p. 80) and find their situation more sustainable over time due to being less negatively affected in terms of their wellbeing (Lewchuk, Clarke, & de Wolff, 2011, p. 185). The opposite is related to instances where employees are reluctantly engaged in precarious employment. In these cases "reluctant" employees experience stress, feelings of insecurity, pressure, lack of control and a sense of limited freedom (Moss, White, & McGann, 2012, p. 80). Further, this can result in feelings of "hate" towards the terms of their employment (Pocock, Prosser, & Bridge, 2004, p. 9). These factors and the lack of a "secure work-based

identity” (Standing, 2011, p. 9) can threaten a sense of self-coherency and social status (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Wieland, 2010).

This literature suggests that investigating peoples’ complex social experiences offers a more nuanced picture of how precarious work relates to wellbeing (Campbell & Price, 2016). As such, while there is a tendency among researchers to “attempt to measure states rather than processes” (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, 2010, p. 24), it is important to divert from this propensity to (re)produce static, deductive studies relating to the measurement of health. Rather, a turn towards examining the complex social processes involved in an exploration of the ongoing, lived experience of wellbeing is required. I respond to this in my thesis by utilising a qualitative methodology underpinned by a socially oriented theoretical perspective that will now be presented.

1.4. Theoretical framework for the study

Turning to the social, this research introduces a social-ecological approach to exploring wellbeing (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1999, 2000; Stokols, 1992, 2000; Stokols, Lejano, & Hipp, 2013). Alongside this, Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration and key concept of ontological security are central to the thesis because they offer a theoretical framework to consider the way agency and structure contribute to recursive social processes related to precarious work and wellbeing. I have resisted defining wellbeing in this study as I decided to let the data speak to how wellbeing was conceptualised by participants. I chose to focus on the ‘being’ aspect of the wellbeing concept and thus let the ontological experiences of participants define wellbeing in this study. This is closely linked to the early social-ecological orientation of the study and to a more socially informed model with the use of Giddens’ (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) work in

the analysis, both orientations of which support the sociological nature of this thesis (Johnson, 2008).

1.4.1. Social-ecological approaches to wellbeing

Originally emerging from the Chicago School of Human Ecology in the 1990s, social ecology explores the “confluent action of material and social systems working together” (Lejano & Stokols, 2013, p. 1). Bronfenbrenner’s (1999) bioecological model proposes a social-ecological approach to examining lived experience by paying attention to the intersection between individual and contextual factors. The focus here is on systems (micro through to macro) which breaks the boundaries between work and life and situates people as experiencing life in context (Stokols et al., 2013). Also, this model features a ‘chronosystem’ which adds a temporal dimension to conceptualising wellbeing as a process (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Although deemed a systems theory approach, it must be noted that the social-ecological dimension of the bioecological model is different from more traditional systems theory approaches used in the management field because it refers to un-bounded, dynamic social systems (see, Mele, Pels, & Polese, 2010). Johnson (2008, p. 12) explains that it is possible to see “sociologically significant connections between different levels of the social world” through this type of thinking.

To begin with I adopted the bioecological model as a guiding framework for my research design in the early stages of my thesis and adapted Bronfenbrenner’s (1999) model to my topic (Bone, 2015). However, in reviewing the data I required something that provided a clear sociological framework for analysis and in line with my perspective, the work of Giddens (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) was the most relevant.

1.4.2. Giddens

To give the bioecological model greater theoretical purchase and explanatory power once I was analysing my data, I turned to Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration. The bioecological model and the theory of structuration are consistent in that they explain the interactions between people/agents and contexts/structure in the creation of social life and they both also pay attention to spatio-temporal practices (this is explained further in the literature review, see Chapter Two). Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration provided a theoretical vocabulary of power to enable deeper understanding of social action. Structuration refers to how recursive social practices contribute to the (re)production (or transformation) of social structures which only exist due to the actions of agents (Johnson, 2008). I also used Coser's (1967) conceptualisation of the 'greedy institution' to explore the relationship between employees and their workplaces and to consider how the university reproduces its power and elicits compliance from precarious workers. Therefore, the use of Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) work and the metaphor of the 'greedy institution' (Coser, 1967) provides a clear entry point in examining wellbeing as a fundamental social process whereby structures and agents intersect to create the lived social experience of precarious employment.

Giddens' (1991a) concept of ontological security has proven to be particularly useful in articulating wellbeing beyond the limitations and assumptions found in the literature. In particular, the notion of ontological security is central in that it links notions of temporality, identity, and the constancy of social and material environments of action (Giddens, 1991a, p. 93). Due to the insecure nature of precarious work, and links between feelings of security and wellbeing, the concept of ontological security is used

as a powerful concept through which to explore the lived, ongoing experiences of precarious work and wellbeing as concurrent processes.

1.5. Precarious employment at the contemporary university

No jobs/professions are exempt from precarious employment which is prevalent in white-collar, professional jobs, traditionally seen as “safe” (Chan & Tweedie, 2015; Kalleberg, 2009, p. 8). The higher education sector has experienced much change due to its relationship to the knowledge economy (Kenway, Bullen, Fahey, & Robb, 2006) where knowledge is conflated with “national economic prowess” resulting in a “host of market-driven trends within the sector” (Bagley & Portnoi, 2014, p. 5). This had fed into the widespread use of precarious labour within higher education institutions which is now a structural feature of work at contemporary universities (Brown, Lauder, & Ashton, 2011; May, Peetz, & Strachan, 2013; National Tertiary Education Union [NTEU], 2015) and this trend has received global attention (Bauman & Donskis, 2013; Hall & Bowles, 2016; Ryan, Burgess, Connell, & Groen, 2013; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). A number of authors have emphasised the commercialisation of higher education institutions and the research/industry link and have addressed how this process has directly affected the employment conditions of academics who face increasingly precarious working contracts (Bryson, 2004; Gilbert, 2013; Kinman, Jones, & Kinman, 2006; & Shelton et al., 2001). Although exact numbers and figures of precariously employed academics are often unobtainable, due to high staff turnover and incomplete record keeping (Rothengatter & Hil, 2013), the figures supplied are alarming.

In 2015, Australia’s universities employed nearly 119,000 people on a permanent or fixed-term contract and 85,000 people on a casual basis, mostly in teaching-only

academic roles (Norton & Cakitaki, 2016). Evans (2016, p. 18) reports that 64% of staff working in Australian universities are employed “on an insecure basis” and explains:

Job security has been in decline in Australian universities since at least the early 1990s. Casual employment has risen by around 94 per cent since 1996, such that few would disagree with the claim that a majority of teaching hours are now delivered by low-paid insecure casual employees. Fixed term contract employment has grown significantly during the same period. Barely one-third of employees in higher education now have ongoing employment (Evans, 2016, p. 18).

This trend and these figures are not uniquely Australian. In the United Kingdom, 36% of academic staff work on fixed-term contracts (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2014). In the United States of America, non-tenure track staff, referred to as ‘contingent faculty’, account for 76% of all teaching appointments (American Association of University Professors, 2015). In New Zealand, job security within the higher education sector also appears to be deteriorating as one in six employees report currently working in an insecure, casual or fixed-term position (Tertiary Education Union, 2013) and many experience low levels of perceived job security and pervasive fears of restructuring and redundancies (Bentley, McLeod, & Teo, 2014).

The increasing use of precarious workers at universities is due to financial pressures and the uncertain nature of revenue streams within the higher education system (Sullivan, 2014, p. 11). With extensive changes to the higher education sector in recent years there has been an increasing reliance on ‘sessional’ (casual teaching academics) and contract staff leading to precarious employment and its related impact on

employee experience (May et al., 2013, NTEU, 2015; Ryan et al., 2013). This situation and the statistics cited above underpin critiques about the lack of morality in universities offering costly education to people who will have limited opportunities for secure, if any, employment post-graduation (Standing, 2011). For example, PhD students who have dedicated years of their lives to their studies are confronted with professional prospects that can be unrewarding, unsustainable and disappointing because “the very institutions charged with training new scholars to lead universities into the next century have developed employment practices that make the sustainable scholarly career an increasingly elusive dream” (Gilbert, 2013, p.37). This can cause wellbeing issues associated with experiences of frustration, stress, insecure identity formation, and disillusionment (Archer, 2008; Gottschalk & McEachern, 2010; May et al., 2013).

1.5.1. Monash University

Monash University, as the setting for this study, makes use of precarious employment arrangements (Andrews et al., 2016). Like most Australian Universities, three modes of employment for staff predominate at Monash, these are: continuing (tenured/permanent), fixed-term, and casual (although adjunct and independent contractors also engage in work at the university) (Andrews et al., 2016; Monash University, 2017a). The figure below shows key differences between casual, fixed term, and tenured employment conditions:

Table 1. Differences between contract types at Monash University

Tenured	Fixed-term	Casual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing position (after probation) • Full sick, maternity and holiday leave entitlements • Highest superannuation rate at 17% • Typically full-time • More likely both teaching and research focussed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set salary and hours • Set employment timeframe • Access to leave entitlements (sick, holiday, maternity) • Superannuation rates vary between 9.5-17% • Can be full-time or part-time • More likely research-only focussed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid hourly rate • No guaranteed or set hours • No leave entitlements (sick, holiday, maternity) • Minimum superannuation rate at 9.5% • Typically part-time • More likely teaching-only focussed

Note: Compiled from Andrews et al. (2016), Jamieson (2014), May et al. (2013), and Monash University (2017a).

Many people are employed on fixed-term and casual contracts at Monash. In 2014 Monash reported that 46.5% of their staff were classified as continuing (tenured/permanent), 38.6% as fixed-term and 14.7% casual (NTEU, 2016). However, these figures were based on full-time equivalent hours (FTE). The FTE categorisation can be deceptive in its representation of hours rather than the actual numbers of people employed in each employment classification. Accounting for the actual numbers of employees, the NTEU's (2016) data showed that in 2014, 46% of staff at Monash were casual (NTEU, 2016) and 24% were on fixed term contracts (Latham, 2015). These figures, accounting for actual numbers of people employed precariously, are troubling when considering the wellbeing effects reported by university staff who are employed on fixed-term and casual contracts (May et al., 2013, NTEU, 2015; Ryan et al., 2013). Monash offers support for staff wellbeing through more superficial

services, rather than addressing damaging wellbeing policies and employment practices.

As an employer, Monash offers staff an award winning *Wellbeing @ Monash Program* (Occupational Health & Safety, 2016). This wellbeing policy statement claims: “The University aims to lead by example by creating a workplace culture and environment that values, supports and promotes programs and policies that improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of employees” (Occupational Health & Safety, 2013, np). This policy document places emphasis on the application of the *Staff Wellbeing and Activity Program* (SWAP) in implementing policy objectives. The program provides opportunities for staff to engage in physical activities, mindfulness seminars and nutrition and health information sessions that are low-cost and targeted at all ages and fitness levels with the aim to improve wellbeing, productivity and morale (Occupational Health & Safety, 2016). Alongside this the University offers employees counselling services in the form of an *Employee Assistance Program* and also cites other benefits of working at Monash such as salary packaging, access to facilities, leave entitlements, competitive salaries and work-life balance (Monash University, 2015). Given this ostensible interest in wellbeing, it is counter-productive that the university engages in precarious employment practices that are known to have detrimental effects on the wellbeing of university workers (May et al., 2013, NTEU, 2015; Ryan et al., 2013) and are the basis of a national union campaign to protect worker rights (Campbell, 2010; NTEU, 2015).

1.6. Young academic workers

Without wanting to minimise the experiences of precarious employment among older workers or academics, young precariously employed academics have been selected as the focus of this study. In the early conceptualisation of this study my interest in young workers was fuelled by invasive negative media portrayals of young people in society who were characterised as narcissistic (Squires, 2013; Smith, 2012), living in an “age of entitlement” (Hockey, 2012, np) and renamed “Generation Me” (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance, 2010, p. 1117). I found these negative representations to be at odds with reality when I looked to more reputable sources of literature, and reflected on my own experience. For example, I found that it is difficult for many young people starting out in the workforce to get jobs with youth unemployment in Australia more than four times higher than the national average, resulting in poverty among young people (Australian Council of Social Services, 2013). Also, when young people do get a job they are often overqualified as “there is often a misalignment between the skills many young people have and the jobs they take up or that are available to them: they are overqualified for their jobs” (Foundation for Young Australians, 2013, p.7). This process has largely arisen from the global proliferation of educated and skilled workers which poses a problem in that widening access to higher education can lower the value of certain credentials, as many qualified applicants compete for jobs (Brown et al., 2011).

Alongside factors of exclusion and marginalisation in relation to unpredictable work patterns, I discovered that multiple spheres of young peoples’ lives are negatively affected by precarious employment (Woodman, 2013). Employment is important to the construction of identity and engagement (McGann, 2012) and when working life is

unfulfilling or disappointing this can lead to frustration, anger and low self-esteem (May et al., 2013; McGann, Moss, & White, 2012; Standing, 2011). McGann (2012) argues that people only see themselves as meaningful agents if they are involved in shaping the world around them, including through work. This presents an issue within a context where there are limited opportunities for young educated Australians to participate in work as “while educational attainment and achievement has been increasing, so have youth unemployment, underemployment, labour underutilisation and rates of casual employment among young people” (Foundation for Young Australians, 2013, p.5). These structural issues influence the experiences of young workers (Furlong & Kelly, 2005).

This is not exclusively an issue for young people, however, youth and labour market scholars have drawn attention to modern work arrangements where “the current landscape of work is increasingly dominated by flexible, casual, precarious and insecure patterns of employment” (Cuervo, Crofts, & Wyn, 2013, p. 7) which disproportionately affects young people (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016; Australian Council of Trade Unions, 2012). This makes all young people susceptible to the health and wellbeing influences associated with precarious employment as Furlong and Kelly (2005, p. 209) emphasise:

A key issue... is to explore the distinction between *flexibility* and *precarity*. The two processes can look the same in terms of patterns of labour market movement and therefore can lead us to assume a non-existent commonality of experience. In fact what we have is a classic social division, in which the nature and character of *choice* is intensely problematic, and is structured by patterns of social disadvantage. So that for many young people their choices, in terms of economic activity

and labour market participation, are profoundly influenced by the complex relationships between social class, gender, ethnicity, and geography (Furlong & Kelly, 2005, p.209 – original italics).

Social divisions and inequalities are compounded by the changes facing young people as they “find themselves competing in precarious markets that offer a complicated mix of opportunities, expectations and pressures to perform that are new” (Wilson & Ebert, 2013, p. 273). It is imperative to explore how these trends influence the wellbeing of young people.

Macro structural features of the labour market, and issues of inequality, bring contemporary social issues facing young people to light. As such, amidst myths of entitlement, there are also many sympathisers who claim that younger generations are becoming the first in more than 80 years to experience a decline in work, wealth and wellbeing (Rayner, 2016). This is because debt, joblessness, globalisation, demographics, and rising house prices have affected the incomes and prospects of young people globally, “resulting in unprecedented inequality between generations” (Barr & Malik, 2016). Australia is especially marked by “a rapidly growing wealth divide between generations” (Wilkins, 2016a, np). The purpose of highlighting these media portrayals and studies relating to inequality experienced by young people is not to position youth as victims, but rather to acknowledge the fact that there are obviously some serious structural wellbeing threats facing this population.

As well as being prompted to explore the lived experiences of young people as they negotiate contemporary macro-social trends, my interest in this topic is also underpinned by my own positionality as a young academic in Australia. Like Archer (2008, p. 401), my purpose in focussing on younger academics: “relates to their

position as both a relatively under-explored group within the literature and as the next generation of academics...” Academia is characterised by an aging workforce and the future of the academy heavily relies on the presence of young new academics and the roles they will play in the years to come (Group of Eight Australia, 2014; Hugo & Morriss, 2010; Kinman et al., 2006). Young people represent an interesting cohort because they are at the start of their careers and may be entering the academic workforce with different career expectations to older generations (Treuren & Anderson, 2010). Also, young academics are in a privileged profession, which provides a unique angle through which to explore youth perceptions and expectations surrounding employment (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012). The voices of young people have been particularly sidelined from research methodologies leaving room for more subject-centred approaches (Besen-Cassino, 2008). Woodman and Wyn (2015, p. 1408) argue that “interrogating questions about change and continuity is a key task for youth researchers” and within this an important contribution is “tracing the way changes and (continued) inequalities are entwined” (Woodman & Wyn, 2015, p. 1408). This posits an interesting angle to explore the experiences and perspectives of young people entering the academic profession through precarious pathways and to make links between their unique experiences as precarious workers and wellbeing.

1.6.1. Defining ‘young’ in this study

For the purposes of this study, the term ‘young’ refers to people aged 18-30 years (the participant group). Youth is generally considered to refer to people aged 15-24 years, however, because the notion of youth is often understood in terms of transitions from childhood to adulthood, its definition is “more fluid than other fixed age-groups” (United Nations, 2014, np). I define young people as those under 30 in this project as youth to adulthood transitions are incremental, rather than distinct, resulting in unclear divisions

between categorisations (Wyn, 2009, 2014). Markers of adulthood are changing and there is a tension between doing things earlier but also entering the world with debt and thus being held in a state of dependence (Foundation for Young Australians, 2013).

The reason for extending the definition of 'young' in this research to 30 years accounts for the many years of study required to gain postgraduate qualifications, and reflects the fact that although precarious academic employees tend to be younger than their more permanent colleagues, their median age is 36 years (May et al., 2013, p. 262). This exemplifies that even young academics working in the higher education sector are 'old' when compared to other industries (May et al., 2013).

1.7. Research questions

Given the prominence of precarious work globally, alongside specific links to the higher education sector, the vulnerability of young people to these practices, and associations to wellbeing, the primary research question was formulated as follows:

- How do young academics experience precarious employment and how does this relate to their wellbeing?

The aim of this project is to investigate how young academics working at Monash experience precarious employment as 'fixed-term' or 'casual' workers and how this related to their wellbeing. As an inductive study, no hypotheses were formulated. The imperative to underpin the study with a sociological perspective was vitally linked to my aim to extend knowledge regarding the lived experiences of young precarious academic workers and contribute to sociological conceptions of wellbeing. As such, the following secondary research questions were formulated:

- How do the participants conceptualise wellbeing?
- What do participants understand about their place in academia and career paths?
- Is precarious employment sustainable for participants long-term (when considering influences of this employment on wellbeing)?

1.8. Chapter summaries

This thesis is comprised of a literature review, methodology chapter, two findings and discussion chapters and a conclusion.

1.8.1. Literature Review

My literature review chapter is structured in two parts. The first part reviews the literature relating to precarious work and wellbeing generally. It then funnels down to focus on precarious work and wellbeing in the higher education sector, and then precarious work and the wellbeing of young people. This first part of the literature review highlights that there are too few studies that explore wellbeing as a social process and too many focussing on individualised, static and measured states of wellbeing (or rather, health) in relation to precarious work. I articulate my distinct research problem in terms of the need for a shift away from understandings of wellbeing through a purely medicalised lens, or a psychological conception, by viewing it as a socially situated concept. This leads to the second section of the chapter where I present the theoretical framework for this thesis. Here I present the social-ecological approach underpinning the design of the project and Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) key concepts as they relate to the analysis of data. I highlight the compatibility between these two sociologically-oriented theoretical frameworks.

1.8.2. Methodology and research design

In this chapter I introduce and justify the research design with reference to my research paradigm and methodology. The study is positioned within a social constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Silverman & Marvasti, 2008) and a qualitative multiple case study design was used in order to gain maximum depth, richness and understanding of the research topic (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Stake, 2006). In this chapter I outline my carefully planned participant selection method, using a pre-participation screening tool. Each phase of data collection is described together with the analysis that was carried out using multiple data collection methods, including pilot interviewing, a pre-interview survey, and three rounds of interviews with each participant. The chapter ends by identifying limitations and evaluating of the quality of the study in relation to the concepts of trustworthiness and ethics.

1.8.3. Findings and discussion chapters

The two findings and discussion chapters are linked using Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) theory of structuration and the concept of ontological security as well as Coser's (1967) metaphor of the greedy institution. The spatial and temporal aspects of the analysis were empirically derived and this is how the chapters are separated. The first chapter highlights spatial elements of the relationship between precarious employment and wellbeing, and the second temporal, reflecting Giddens' (1984, p. 2) emphasis not on "the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality" but on "social practices ordered across space and time".

1.8.3.1. Spatial aspects of precarious work – being/becoming an academic

In this chapter I discuss how participants experience precarious work by focussing on their being and becoming academics through day-to-day practice. Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration is used to analyse how institutional structures of the university,

and the agency of the participants, work in combination to create social practices surrounding precarious academic employment. I analyse these social practices, and notions of power, by utilising Coser's (1967) theory of the 'greedy institution' which is introduced in this chapter. I highlight how participants sought to learn the "rules" of academia and to act recursively in ways that they felt increased their chances of gaining/maintaining a stable academic identity (Giddens, 1984, p. 20). However, their access to knowledge about how to act in their being/becoming academics was highly prescribed which limited their agentic choices. I propose an empirically derived typology comprising three 'types' that represent three modes of being/becoming an academic: *giving*, *resisting*, and being *insulated*. This typology links ontological security to new conceptions of wellbeing that highlight the ongoing identity work involved in the creation of academic selves. The analysis leads back to Giddens's (1984) notion of social reproduction cycles as the complicit actions of these 'types' are interrogated showing that the participants were often too willing to succumb to the pressures of the greedy institution.

1.8.3.2. Temporal aspects of precarious work and future-orientations

This chapter highlights the long-term implications of precarious employment and continues drawing upon the work of Giddens (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) and Coser (1967) but also includes the work of Bauman (2012) and Adam (1995, 2003a, 2003b, 2010) as she offers a useful vocabulary of temporality to the analysis. Highlighting ontological security again, this chapter begins by showing the incongruence between precarious work (uncertain, unstable and liquid) and the participants' personal life goals such as settling down, starting a family, buying a house and other such plans that require longer-term commitment and solidity. The discussion highlights how participants struggle to reconcile the disjuncture between precariousness as a

disruption to ontological security, and their life plans that require ontological security. In this way, the greedy institution metaphor can be extended in temporal terms vis-à-vis the futures of the research participants.

Future-orientation classifications of *removing*, *resigning*, and *recreating* the self are proposed as they emerged from the data. These orientations relate to the identity work that participants engage in. The analytical synthesis of the chapter considers the role of ontological security again as the participants reflexively monitor the maintenance of continuity in their work and personal lives. Adam's (2010) conceptions of the future assist in the theorising of a 'continuous present', a notion I conceptualised to refer to the participants' deferring and sacrificing of life plans in the hope for an imaginary future.

1.8.4. Conclusion

The concluding chapter synthesises the research findings and highlights the contribution to new knowledge. Practical implications are presented alongside recommendations directed towards universities, employees, unions and policy makers. Future directions discussed.

1.9. Conclusion

In this chapter the importance of this study about young academics, precarious work and wellbeing is foregrounded. This topic is situated within the field of sociology and management studies and key literature debates and definitions from the literature which have informed my development of the research questions are provided. The chapter overviews give a summary of the subsequent chapters, starting with the literature review which follows.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This review of the literature, mainly from the fields of sociology and management, reveals how precarious work has been linked to notions of wellbeing. I begin by framing general conceptions from the field of how precarious employment operates within contemporary society. The review highlights the different ways that scholars conceive of wellbeing in relation to precarious employment; on the one hand as a composite concept to health related to medical and measurable states and on the other as a complex social experience related to notions of choice, recognition, identity, agency and social structures. Following this, the way more specific groups have been affected by precarious employment, including academics and young people, is examined. This narrower focus illuminates wellbeing issues brought forward in the research literature about certain professions and age groups who are experiencing the proliferation of precarious work. A synthesis of the literature presented in the review leads to the identification of a research problem which this research will address. I present my core research questions as these relate to my imperative to respond to the research problem identified and explore wellbeing and precarious employment as a complex social experience. The review ends with a presentation of the theoretical framework that supports this sociologically oriented study, highlighting the applicability of a social-ecological approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and the use of Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration, and related concepts, to do this.

2.1. The rise of precarious employment in the West and the 'precariat'

Various scholars have identified and discussed the trend towards precarious employment as a result of globalisation (Chomsky, 2011; Kalleberg, 2009). According to Kalleberg (2009) the term precarity is often associated with European history whereby workers felt increasingly devalued and powerless in a struggle for welfare in a system run by business interests. Kalleberg (2009, p. 15) explains how European workers became “increasingly vulnerable to the labor market and began to organize around the concept of precarity as they faced living and working without stability or a safety net” (Kalleberg, 2009, p.15). Noam Chomsky (2011, np) claims that the term precariat was coined by radical Italian labour activists in honour of May Day: “an international workers’ holiday, bound up with the bitter 19th-century struggle of American workers for an eight-hour day”. At that time the word precarity was replaced with precariat in reference to the “precarious proletariat” thought to make up the core labour force, a group “suffering from the programs of deunionization, flexibilization and deregulation that are part of the assault on labor throughout the world” (Chomsky, 2011, np). In the last few years, the supplementary term ‘precariat’ has become both widely used and critiqued in the sociology of work literature (Breman, 2013; Munck, 2013).

The term ‘precariat’ has been popularised by a British economist who uses the term to refer to an emergent social class (Standing, 2011, 2012). Standing (2011, 2012) is critical of the increasing infiltration of precarious employment, and insecure lifestyles generally, which he links to identity insecurity, lack of time control and workfare social policies. Standing (2011) conceptualises the precariat as a new class in the making

and he defines this group primarily by their employment status as he explains: “the precariat live through a series of casual, short-term, or temporary jobs, have none of the forms of labour security that the working class and the salariat acquired in the welfare-state era, and have relatively low and insecure earnings” (Standing, 2012, p.590). As well as these characteristics, Standing (2012) describes how the precariat are further defined by their lack of “a sense of belonging to a self-sustaining community grounded in a profession or craft” as well as their lack of “a ‘shadow of the future’ hovering over their deliberations and dealings with others, who may be here today and gone tomorrow, in a series of passing relationships” (Standing, 2012, p.590). Overarching these characteristics is the idea that the precariat are often defined by their denizen, rather than citizen, status. Standing (p.2012, p.590) states that a denizen is “somebody who has a more limited range of rights, and weaker entitlement to them, than the citizen”. This relates to the argument proposed by Skoczylas and Mrozowicki (2012, p.589) that the rise of precariat “involves the partial or full denial of civil, political and social rights”. The notion of the precariat highlights how various contextual factors influence both individual, and group experience of precarious employment, as these relate to wellbeing in terms of rights and security.

Standing’s (2011) popularisation of the notion of the precariat, and ideas surrounding dual labour markets and employment-bound class divisions, has not been without critique (Doogan, 2015; Fevre, 2007; Vosko, 2009). Doogan (2015, p. 45) claims that “the notion of precarity is itself precarious” because it fluctuates between notions of work/life, structural/subjective, work-related issues and broader market conditions. Indeed, precarious employment, as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, is commonly linked to unique aspects of the labour market, social security, vulnerability and other social and individual characteristics of any given context (Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013). In

this way, notions surrounding precarious work can appear to be without boundaries. Doogan (2015, p. 45) further claims that the precariat discourse has created an invasive and all-encompassing ideology which perpetuates fear and disempowers audiences who internalise and accept “the weakening of labour’s bargaining position by an exaggeration of employment insecurity or job instability”. Doogan (2001, 2015) bases his arguments on a disjuncture between perceptions of precarious employment, represented as an increasingly prevalent phenomenon, and statistical evidence of precarious employment in Europe, which he claims paints a somewhat contradictory picture.

Both Doogan (2015) and Fevre (2007) concentrate their arguments on the broader societal concepts of precariousness that recognise “the ideological as well as the structural aspects of labour market change” (Doogan, 2015, p. 58) as they debunk some claims relating to the extent and nature of contemporary precariousness. They expand Standing’s (2011) conceptions of the precariat beyond a focus on employment and labour market dualism (and minority experiences) and shift towards the more invasive mood of austerity where a sense of insecurity has been transmitted to the majority of workers (Doogan, 2015). This shifts the focus of precariousness away from select marginalised groups and considers that “the commonality of the experience of the recession suggests that the prospects of class bifurcation, expressed in the idea of the precariat, are diminished” (Doogan, 2015, p. 56). According to Byrne (2016, p. 875) this reconfigured focus on precariousness poses a strong critique to post-Marxist positions. In this vein, Fevre (2007) critiques the way that social theorists have attested to growing levels of employment insecurity, often without empirical evidence, creating an ideology of “dystopian nightmares” (Fevre, 2007, p. 517).

Arnold and Bongiovi (2013) provide a detailed review of some core perspectives and conceptualisations of precarious work as presented by influential social theorists in the literature. As terminology and ideas surrounding precarious employment and neoliberal trends are now mainstream, critiques highlight how the emergence of populist terms and ideologies surrounding employment can alter the way theorists and society conceive of, and position themselves, in the social structure (Doogan, 2015; Fevre, 2007; Vosko, 2009). Despite these concerns, Standing's (2011, 2012) ideas are relevant to the study and his work has illuminated the phenomenon of contemporary precarious employment to a wide audience. Acknowledging the concerns, it is clear that notions of precarious work, precarity, the precariat and precariousness reflect a complex state of affairs and diversity of perspectives among scholars.

2.2. Precarious work and wellbeing

In the literature it is the negative aspects of precarious employment in relation to health, not wellbeing, that is often highlighted (Benach & Muntaner, 2007; Kim et al., 2012). Where the term 'wellbeing' is used it is often assumed to be synonymous with health (Keuskamp et al., 2013). Individualised physical or psychological states are the focus of such studies whereby precarious employment is linked to medical conditions such as injuries and mental health (Moscone et al., 2016, Schweder et al., 2015). For example, precarious employment has been linked to suicidal ideation and attempts (Min et al., 2015). Decreased self-reported health levels have been found to be related to temporary work across 27 European Countries (Bambra et al., 2014). Inoue, Nishikitani, Tsurugano and Yano (2011) conducted a review of the research focussing on comparing the health of precarious workers with non-precarious workers. Of the 68 articles included in their review it was found that precarious employment was

associated with higher prevalence of occupational injuries, mortality and low levels of mental health (Inoue et al., 2011). An emphasis on precarious employment as a precipitator of “psychosocial health hazards” is common (McGann et al., 2012, p. 112). A recent nation-wide Australian survey, conducted for Medibank (a leading Australian health insurer), supports these studies as it found a strong correlation between mental health issues, such as anxiety, stress, and depression, and job insecurity (Roy Morgan Research, 2016).

The prevalence of these health-focussed studies have led Clougherty, Souza and Cullen (2010, p. 116) to claim:

... while the demonstration of adverse health and safety conditions and work culture associated with these jobs must be viewed more as process than outcome measure, the importance of these factors to deteriorating health and mortality suggests that such links will become manifest, perhaps justifying the use of the term “precarious”, preferred by many investigators, to describe these job-types.

The research focus is commonly on pathways and mechanisms through which precarious employment affects health in an epidemiological sense (Benach, Vives, Tarafa, Delclos, & Muntaner, 2016). Aspects such as job satisfaction (Van Aerden, Puig-Barrachina, Bosmans, & Vanroelen, 2016) and financial security (Green & Leeves, 2013) have also received attention in this domain.

In a critique of this literature, it is no surprise that Campbell and Price (2016) found that many scholars provide individualised accounts of precarious employment and wellbeing by focussing on the diversity of individual experiences in relation to personal attributes. The authors challenge this individualistic approach as it “presumes that

perceptions, attitudes, work orientations and subjective identities can be regarded as the prime movers behind human agency” (Campbell & Price, 2016, p. 317). The importance of control, power, choice, agency and structure are highlighted in studies investigating precarious employment and wellbeing. Calbrick et al. (2014, p.3) argue that employee “choices” associated with precarious work impact the wellbeing implications of insecure employment arrangements.

Often the wellbeing effects associated with precarious work are precipitated by the way in which workers conceptualise their position and feel able to determine their place in the labour market (Guest et al., 2006). Here, it is also important to note that it is risky to place too much emphasis on universal benefits and superiority associated with the standard employment relationship (characterised by set working times, continuity and stability) (Vosko, 2009). As Vosko (2009) points out, this can reflect an outdated, androcentric, assumption: “The notion of standard working time, and the normative lifecourse it assumed, was always deeply gendered... it supported the dualistic conception of time integral to the male breadwinner/ female caregiver contract” (p.7). Not everybody can enjoy the assumed benefits associated with full-time, continuous work. The voluntary versus involuntary nature of certain work is central to the debate surrounding insecure forms of employment and wellbeing (Furlong & Kelly, 2005).

Researchers of a study of the wellbeing of rural workers in Victoria, Australia, interviewed 72 rural workers consisting of casual employees, independent contractors, fixed-term contract employees, and permanent “irregular” workers (Moss et al., 2011, p.vi). The researchers identified that many of their participants were reluctantly in precarious employment. In these cases participants were reliant on precarious work or were employed in industries or occupations where competition for employment was

high. In these cases stress and a sense of limited freedom and social participation prevailed. The authors contend that “the threat of job loss looms large for these reluctant casuals, who feel under constant pressure to perform and who struggle to exert any control over their work scheduling” (Moss et al., 2011, p. 80). This situation relates to the argument that as precarious workers fear losing their jobs, they are also less likely to “raise health and safety concerns, accept poor conditions and exploitation, and face greater risks of injuries and illness” (ACTU, 2012, p. 20). These findings link to common conceptualisations in the literature that low reciprocity, uncertainty, discontinuity and marginality are core concepts that characterise precarious employment (Facey & Eakin, 2010). As such, it is not only the ability for workers to choose whether they engage in certain work arrangements or not, but also their experience once in precarious employment which contributes to their wellbeing.

Related to this is how other aspects of an employees’ life can affect their experiences of precariousness. The multifarious nature of the lived experience of precarious employment and wellbeing is drawn-out in studies which show a more neutral or positive association between precarious employment and wellbeing (Guest et al., 2006; Schweder et al., 2015). This is because such studies highlight the difference in wellbeing experiences when employees choose to engage with less secure forms of employment due to being buffered against the negative effects of this experience as a result of having access to alternate forms of financial and social support (Buchtemann & Quack, 1990). These people might be referred to as “contented casuals” (Moss et al., 2011, p. 80), “deliberate casuals” (Keuskamp et al., 2013) or workers in “sustainable, less permanent employment” (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p. 185). In these cases, the term precarious is not necessarily appropriate (Lewchuk et al.,

2011) as participants might be highly sought-after in their profession and able to pick and choose how they engage with the labour market (Guest et al., 2006).

For example, Keuskamp et al.'s (2013) qualitative Australian study of 32 casual workers found that casual work actively enhanced and protected the health and wellbeing of a majority of participants. The authors found this was because "access to capital and a buoyant labour market underpinned workers' agency in Australia, enabling some to gain health and well-being benefits from nonstandard employment" (Keuskamp et al., 2013, p.620). Wellbeing was not defined in the study but was rather used as a composite term for health. Both concepts were used as constructs to reflect participants' self-reported perceptions on their health and wellbeing as precarious workers (Keuskamp et al., 2013).

In a similar finding, Moss et al. (2011) explain that workers who positively experience precarious work arrangements either have skills that are in high demand, are seeking part-time work as supplementary household income, or enjoy the benefits of managing workloads and balancing between work with other life commitments. Accordingly, these "contented casuals do not experience their employment arrangement as stressful or view it as an impediment to their freedom" because their work arrangement "helps them to achieve important life goals" (Moss et al., 2011, p. 80). In this sense the wellbeing implications of certain work arrangements are linked to the resources of the employee and their ability to determine what is more important to their life and how work might support this. As such, precarious employment can have positive or negative influences on employees' sense of agency as it can act as a limiting or enabling factor contributing to their lived experience of precarious work.

Lewchuk et al.'s (2011) conceptualisation of sustainable versus unsustainable forms of employment emphasises these subtle differences. The authors identified six key features that reflect an unsustainable precarious employment situation for a worker: 1) dissatisfied with employment; 2) desire for permanent employment but inability to secure it; 3) low and unstable earnings; 4) few employment and social security benefits; 5) lack of support; and 6) lack of control or power over employment conditions (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p. 233). Again, it is clear that the ability of workers to control their working situation, and the contextual factors surrounding their work, are central to segregating out the negative/unsustainable aspects of precarious employment from the positive/sustainable aspects. In this way both structural and agentic factors play a part in shaping the experience of precarious employment.

In addition to these broad negative characteristics of unsustainable work conditions identified by Lewchuk et al. (2011), McGann (2012) identified more subtle and personal factors contributing to a negative experience of precarious work. McGann (2012) found that 'recognition' was not easily attained by precarious workers because they experienced: 1) exclusion from skills training and professional development; 2) employment uncertainty that then affected their wider life ambitions and goals; 3) being perceived and treated as inferior to their permanent counterparts; and 4) being unable to socialise and form collegial friendships with co-workers due to being perceived as intermittent workers and as threats to permanent employees' job security (McGann, 2012; McGann et al., 2012; Moss et al., 2011). McGann (2012, p. 12) highlights how identity is tied-up in the experience of precarious work because work plays an important role "as a vehicle for the development of subjectivity". This is explained as follows:

Subjectivity is the consciousness of ourselves as self-efficacious agents capable of shaping the world around us... it is through practical and social self-realisation (or recognition) that we come to firmly grasp our identity as agents who not only live the world but who also are capable of shaping it (McGann, 2012, p.2).

This speaks to how precarious employment can shape identity constructions as people seek to understand their social experiences as related to not only structural factors, but also the role they can play as agents. Brown and Coupland (2015) investigated how threats to workers' identities are experienced by those who experience employment insecurity. In their case study of an English professional Rugby League Football club, involving interviews with 47 personnel, they explored how elite rugby players responded to identity threats by appropriating certain aspects of these threats into their personal identity narratives. Identity threat can be defined as "*experiences appraised as indicating potential harm to the value, meanings, or enactment of an identity*" (Petriglieri, 2011, p. 644 – original italics). As such, identity is an important facet of the experience of work because it relates to how individuals can experience a sense of self (or indeed threats to this) through experiences and enactments in the workplace (Alvesson, 2010). Brown and Coupland (2015, p. 1318) found that the participants of their study adopted identity threats associated with their employment as "resources for identity work on desired selves". In this way the participants appropriated threats related to insecurity and turned these threats into identity-forming assets. This analysis highlights how identity work can shape experiences of precarious employment.

Identity work is related to peoples' desire to create a positive and sustained self-image which is often supported through constructing "a sense of coherence and

distinctiveness” (Alvesson, 2010, p. 201). From this perspective precarious employment, as an activity often defined by its fragmented nature, can pose some issues to workers’ sense of self coherency. This leads Alvesson (2010, p. 201) to argue that in complex and fragmented contexts, identity work may be “more or less ongoing or be a theme of engagement during crises or transitions”. This is because transitions and disruptions to a persons’ life can cause a disjointed sense of identity and threaten continuous narratives. In these cases, participants might need to take control of their sense of self by engaging in identity work to develop desirable identities (Brown & Coupland, 2015). As insecurity is an important feature of precarious work, and also an issue for identity, this literature adds an interesting perspective through which to examine the lived experience of precarious work.

When insecurity becomes an issue facing workers, they are faced with the challenges associated with maintaining a sense of coherence in the face of fragility, fragmentation and impermanence (Alvesson, 2010). Wieland (2010, p. 523) argues that “the motives that drive identity work are socially constructed, discursively emerging in the communities in which identity workers live and work, and thus not natural desires inherent in all individuals”. This emphasises the importance of considering how workers view themselves, in relation to their social position, when they are involved in precarious work. Identity constructions, and a sense of agency in determining self-perceptions in the workplace, can inform a persons’ experiences of insecurity and wellbeing. When workers are not able to adopt identity threats into self-reinforcing narratives, or their identity work does not succeed in strengthening their sense of self-coherency, then the outcome can be more unpleasant and negatively related to wellbeing.

Keuskamp et al. (2013, p. 622) found that some of their participants were “constrained casuals” who reported a preference for permanent work and claimed to feel disempowered, unable to shape their working contract conditions, limited by their industries such as hospitality and retail, and also limited by childcare responsibilities in their employment (Keuskamp et al., 2013). These factors highlight the important role that external structures play in influencing the perceived choices and identities of workers (Keuskamp et al., 2013). Choices are influenced by the context and structural conditions of workers and reflects the importance of peoples’ sense of agency in being able to determine their preferred working conditions. However, the level of agency that workers experience can be difficult to ascertain as Moulaison (2004) highlighted in her study where she found that the concept of work choices are often a façade for mothers who make their ‘decisions’ based on external pressures to care for their families. As such, it is important to explore the deeper reasons why people are engaged in precarious employment arrangements in order to understand what factors influence employment decisions and the degree to which they have genuine ‘choices’ with regard to their employment options.

Central to the notion of generating a complex picture of lived experience are studies that explore how employees are supported (or not) by the broader social structures surrounding their employment. Kim et al.’s (2012) systematic review focusses on the role of national-level welfare in mediating the relationship between employment type and health outcomes in Scandinavian, Bismarckian, Southern European, Anglo-Saxon, Eastern European, and East Asian countries. The 104 studies presented in the review focus on ‘job insecurity’ or ‘precarious employment’ and the implications for workers’ health. The authors, provide a cross-national review of the literature and claim that “Two decades of scholarship on precarious employment arrangements have not

generated precise conclusions on the relationship between precarious employment and health” (Kim et al., 2012, p. 100). The authors found that links between precarious employment and job insecurity to health were heterogeneous and as such “have made it impossible to attain unequivocal conclusions” (Kim et al., 2012, p. 103). However, the authors found that welfare state regimes may mediate the health consequences of precarious workers as Scandinavian studies reported less adverse health consequences of precarious employment. The authors attributed these findings to the egalitarian welfare state that operates within Scandinavian countries and relates to the ‘flexicurity’ model (Kim et al., 2012).

The flexicurity model, first implemented in the 1990s in Denmark, refers to the balancing of flexibility models and social security (Schmidt, 2005; Viebrock & Clasen, 2009). The ‘flexi’ in flexicurity refers to flexibility, seen as beneficial to organisations as the ease of hiring and firing employees in response to market states allows business to thrive in the globalised, competitive market place. The ‘curity’ aspect plays on the word security which refers to the social welfare support that can be provided to the unemployed in a bid to maintain a balance between globalised business success and social security (Viebrock & Clasen, 2009). The term can also refer to the phenomenon whereby workers are supported to participate in consistent work (employment security) across their working life, as opposed to being steadily employed in one job (job security) (Green & Leeves, 2013).

Bambra et al. (2014, p. 113), in their study of welfare states and general health in Europe, found no evidence that the Scandinavian welfare regime (known for its flexicurity model) protected against “the adverse health effects of poor working conditions”. This is an important finding that challenges the contention by Green and Leeves (2013) that while the importance of job security is evident across studies, a

focus on “the possible benefits of a flexicurity model for manpower policy” is required to move forward (Green & Leeves, 2013, p. 136-7). As such, it appears that studies exploring structural influences on employee wellbeing lack the ability to derive precise conclusions about precarious employment and something more is required.

The broader context of national welfare and population health is important because often the health and wellbeing effects of precarious employment extend beyond the immediate workplace and start to change societal values and health practices. For example, findings suggest that precarious workers access health services less frequently and do not take as much leave as their more permanent counterparts (Inoue et al., 2011). This indicates a change in the way that employees take care of themselves when health issues arise which can influence societal norms surrounding wellbeing. Clearly, taking into consideration the context within which employees are placed matters but depth in understanding peoples’ actions and experiences are also required.

Structural factors are important when exploring the complex relationship between precarious work and notions of agency and choice on the part of the worker. Wyn (2006) claims that conceptualisations of connections between “the individual and the community” fail to recognise systemic social relationships such as poverty and disadvantage as these structural issues are replaced by the neo-liberal undertone in a vocabulary of “choice” and “individual characteristics (e.g. employability)” (Wyn, 2006, p. 224). Notions of ‘choice’ should not be taken for granted and it should not be assumed that the choices of workers reflect their real-life desires and experiences, rather than being a façade for deep structural inequalities. This critique is not to suggest that individuals do not have agency. As Giddens (1984) explains, individuals

have agency which is enacted through social structures that are continually recreated by people when they express themselves as social actors. He explains:

To be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons (including lying about them). But terms such as 'purpose' or 'intention', 'reason', 'motive' and so on have to be treated with caution, since their usage in the philosophical literature has very often been associated with a hermeneutical voluntarism, and because they extricate human action from the contextuality of time-space (Giddens, 1984, p. 3).

The relationship between structural factors and individual experiences are inextricably interlinked reflecting the fact that relations of power must be considered when examining the socially constructed concept of 'choice' (Kroon & Paauwe, 2014). Agency is a key concept in this literature as participant choices and constraints are central to concepts surrounding precarious work and wellbeing. In my research it will be of central importance to consider how participants conceive of, and experience, precarious employment in relation to their own personal goals and decision-making capabilities.

Overall, these studies highlight that there is no clear relationship between precarious employment and wellbeing because a combination of structural and agentic factors are important to this equation. It is therefore important to choose terminology carefully as the word 'precarious' is clearly linked to negative wellbeing implications and a lack of agency (Lewchuk et al., 2011). One lens through which to explore the relationship between social conditions, personal experience and agency, is through the literature

on identity. Ylijoki (2010, 371) argues that “identity is characterized by fragmentation, non-linearity and discontinuity”. This mirrors some of the features considered to be the markers of precariousness. In their study of business school academics, Knights and Clarke (2014, p. 335) theorise the concepts of identity and insecurity as “conditions and consequences of one another rather than being monocausally related”. In this way, identity can be related to precarious employment by considering how insecurity might impact constructions of the self, and how notions of the self may connect to precarious employment experiences. This provides a strong analytical lens through which to interpret the data and gain a more rounded perspective on how experiences of precarious employment are co-constructed through an employees’ subjective perceptions of self in precarious employment, and the intersection of this subjectivity with more structural social issues. This is where the agent/structure divide can be reconciled.

From this literature it can be understood that a researcher must not presume a pre-determined correlation between experiences of precarious employment and wellbeing and to rather let participants’ contribute to a picture of their complex lived experiences. This means realising that both agentic and structural factors influence the ongoing lived experience of precarious work. Campbell and Price (2016, p. 326) support this contention as they argue that “the temptation to leap freely from precarious work to precarious workers (or precarious lives) should be resisted”. It is necessary to find out the reasons and resources that workers have in order to understand the power they hold in regard to their employment situation, and to discover how they perceive their situation. Only then can the precarious nature of work, and lives, be determined.

2.2.1. Connecting precarious employment to precarious lives

Standing (2011) considers that the difference between levels of labour security are vital in understanding precariousness and he refers to seven forms of labour security as shown in the following table:

Table 2. Seven forms of labour security

Form of labour security	Features
Labour market security	Adequate income-earning opportunities; at the macro-level, this is epitomised by a government commitment to full employment.
Employment security	Protection against arbitrary dismissal, regulations on hiring and firing, imposition of costs on employers for failing to adhere to rules and so on.
Job security	Ability and opportunity to retain a niche in employment, plus barriers to skill dilution, and opportunities for 'upward' mobility in terms of status and income.
Work security	Protection against accidents and illness at work.
Skill reproduction security	Opportunity to gain skills, through apprenticeships, employment training and so on, as well as opportunity to make use of competencies
Income security	Assurance of an adequate stable income
Representation security	Possessing a collective voice in the labour market

Note: Adapted from Standing (2011, p.10).

These categories reflect the multiple layers of security that contribute to experiences of precariousness. Campbell and Price (2016) also delineate precariousness not only in terms of labour relations and structures but in relation to many aspects of social life. They draw from the extant literature to define five levels of precariousness:

Table 3. Levels and hierarchy of precariousness

Levels of precariousness	Features
Precariousness in employment	Objective job characteristics that reflect insecurity, such as a low level of regulatory protection, low wages, high employment insecurity and a low level of employee control over wages, hours and working conditions
Precarious work	Waged work exhibiting several dimensions of precariousness
Precarious workers	Precariousness in employment is seen as having a strong and pervasive impact, dispersing insecurity through the lives of the workers.
Precariat	A class-in-the-making emerging from the ranks of precarious workers
Prearity	A generalised set of social conditions and an associated sense of insecurity, experienced by precarious workers but extending to other domains of social life such as housing, welfare provision and personal relationships

Note: Adapted from Campbell and Price (2016, p.315-6).

Campbell and Price (2016, p.316) argue that it is important to disentangle these categories and hierarchies of precariousness because each level suggests a difference in the extent to which precariousness of work effects are “transmitted to the worker”. They suggest taking into account the lived experience of precarious employment that encompasses both structural objective features of employment (such as employment contract type, access to leave benefits, labour market trends) as well as the implications of these structural features of employment for the lives of workers (sense of insecurity, housing options, effect on personal relationships).

The terms ‘precariat’ and ‘prearity’ are used in the literature to reflect the “increasingly precarious existence of working people” particularly of specific marginalised groups, namely women, young people and migrants (Chomsky, 2011, np). This means that certain groups are often more prone to experiencing precarious lives, rather than only experiencing precarious work conditions. This is reflected in findings that women, for example, are more vulnerable to the negative effects of precarious employment

(Moulaison, 2004), including suffering more damaging health consequences in their lives (Menéndez, Benach, Muntaner, Amable, & O'Campo, 2007).

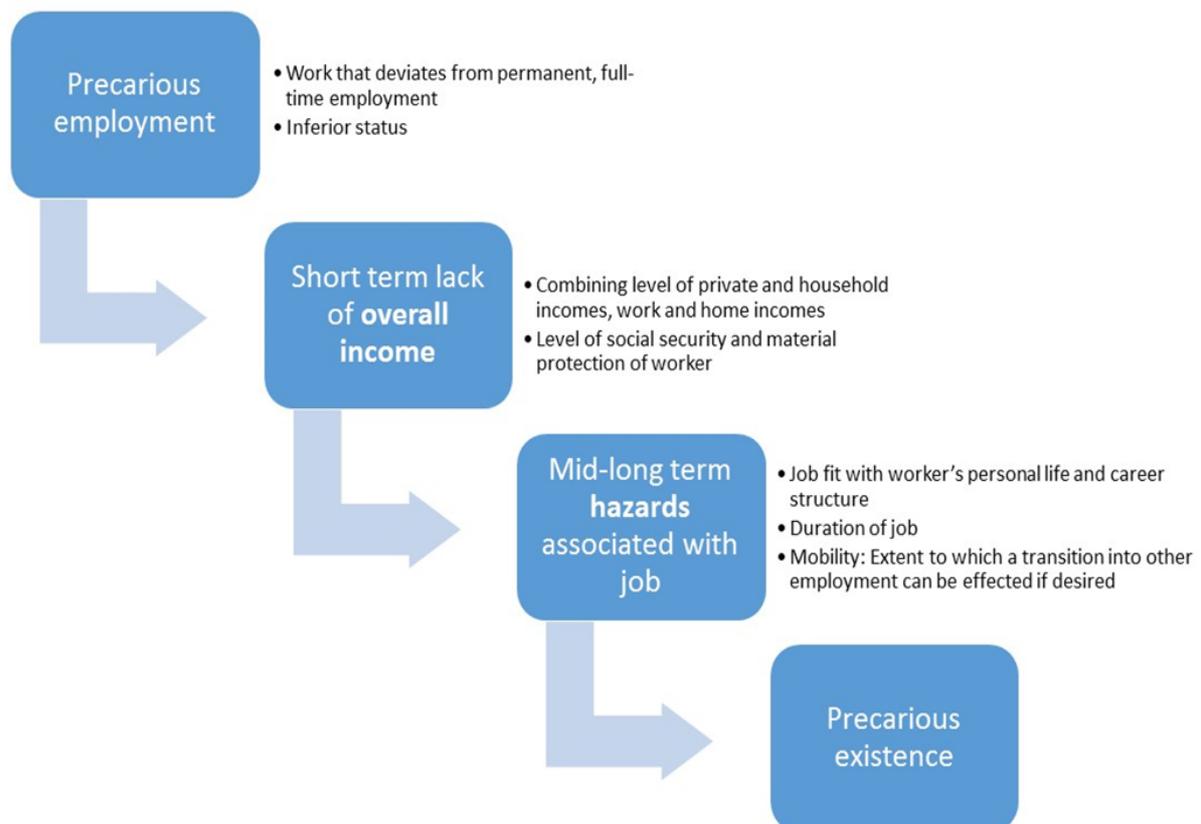
The distinction between precarious employment and a precarious existence is not a new one, although it is often overlooked (Campbell & Price, 2016). Buchtemann and Quack (1990) made this distinction by identifying what constitutes a 'precarious existence' taking into account short and long-term effects of precarious employment. These authors argued that, in the short term, "the degree of social security and material protection of workers is to a large extent determined by their overall income situation" reflecting both income from paid employment and combined household income as contributing to the experience of a precarious existence (Buchtemann & Quack, 1990, p.321). In their view precariousness can be determined by investigating the actual "hazards" associated with the job and the fit between this job and the worker's life and career structure in the medium and long term (Buchtemann & Quack, 1990, p. 321). The duration of the employment contract and possibility of transitioning to a more permanent or full-time position if desired is also a consideration (Buchtemann & Quack, 1990).

There are ongoing debates concerning the function of precarious employment and whether this work might be considered to act as a 'bridge' or a 'trap' for employees (Buchtemann & Quack, 1989; Natti, 1993; Gash, 2008; Watson, 2013; Fuller & Stecy-Hildebrandt, 2015). The 'bridge' or 'trap' analogy questions the relationship between casualised or part-time labour and permanent, full-time employment and also the relationship between unemployment and employment (Buchtemann & Quack, 1989; Natti, 1993; Gash, 2008; Watson, 2013; Fuller & Stecy-Hildebrandt, 2015). Natti (1993) argued that temporary employment might be considered a 'trap' when it is connected to unemployment, is involuntary, and offers few opportunities for moving into

permanent employment. It can be considered a 'bridge' when the employee is able to transition from unemployment to employment or from part-time, casual or fixed-term employment to a permanent, full-time position (Natti, 1993). Central to this analogy are issues surrounding mobility and power as workers' ability to realise their desires in terms of transitions from certain modes of employment (or unemployment) into others is key.

The following figure illustrates factors that contribute to a complete picture of the relationship between precarious employment and a precarious existence using Buchtemann and Quack's (1990) ideas:

Figure 1. Factors contributing to a precarious existence



Note: Adapted from Buchtemann and Quack (1990, p. 321).

Buchtemann and Quack (1990, p. 321) concluded that a direct correlation does not necessarily link precarious employment to a precarious existence and therefore “a broader framework of analysis is required”. In this vein, Benach and Muntaner (2007, p. 227) describe precarious employment as “a multidimensional construct defined according to four dimensions”, namely: continuity (temporality); vulnerability (powerlessness); protection (limited benefits); and income (low level of earnings). These dimensions suggest a rounded account of precarious employment/precariousness but these features are not always present and as Chan and Tweedie (2015) point out: highly skilled, educated, and well-paid professionals are also subject to precarious employment.

The intricacies highlighted in the literature emphasize the importance of considering the negative and positive influences of precarious work in order to “recreate a healthy work relationship within non-standard employment forms” (Caldbeck et al., 2014, p.5). This means not always assuming that precarious work is negative, but rather trying to understand how it operates and what conditions this creates for workers. A refined account of the issues facing employees is needed in order to move beyond polarising binaries and weak associations and it is necessary to engage with sociological frameworks that identify the larger extent of precariousness and its effects. It is essential to consider the broader structures that influence the mobility of workers and their ability to dictate their employment conditions (both objective and subjective). This relates to their sense of agency in precarious employment. Meaning is constructed, and reconstructed, in an ongoing process of interaction which embeds people within the social system of their work (Fitzmaurice, 2013). Contextualisation requires considering the specific industry or profession within which precarious employment

operates (Gottschalk & McEachern, 2010; Kimber, 2003). In this research attention will be paid to the higher education sector and employment in the university.

2.3. Precarious employment in higher education

The global higher education sector is a competitive industry that is now market-driven resulting in “increased privatization, strategic interaction between higher education and industry, and more managerial forms of governance” (Bagley & Portnoi, 2014, p. 5). A number of authors have emphasised the commercialisation and massification of higher education institutions which reflect how educational institutions are now heavily affected by industry funding and a desire to increase student numbers as both are a source of important revenue streams, which have directly affected the employment conditions of academics who face increasingly precarious working contracts (Beck, 2000, Bryson, 2004; Gilbert, 2013; Kenway et al., 2006; Kinman et al., 2006; May et al., 2013; Shelton et al., 2001). Scholars argue that this is related to the transition from “a work society to a knowledge society” (Beck, 2000, p.1) as “manual rather than manual production has become the mainstay of capitalism; the knowledge economy rather than the industrial economy is its cornerstone” (Kenway et al., 2006, p.1). Bryson (2004) reviews the literature regarding higher education and refers to the changes seen within these institutions. The key themes identified are: “changing forms of control, fragmentation and work deregulation/intensification (akin to deskilling)” (Bryson, 2004, p. 41). It has been argued that the politicised knowledge economy is driving education down a narrow path that threatens the freedom of research while fulfilling capitalist goals (Gilbert, 2013; Brown et al., 2011). This has resulted in a knowledge economy discourse “haunted by its own contradictions” as “the apparently solid foundations of the knowledge economy’s certainty begins to waver once its proclaimed relationship to the knowledge society is interrogated” (Kenway et al., 2006,

p. 27). Critiques of university managerialism also emphasise the changing positions and roles that academics are expected to assume when confronted with continual processes of evaluation and monitoring in their work (Leišytė, 2016; Schapper & Mayson, 2005; Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013).

2.3.1. Precarious academic employment and wellbeing

Australian scholars have explained that neo-liberal employment policies utilised by universities reflect the way in which precarious employment is used as a 'buffer' against unpredictable global markets and policies. The multiple economic-driven changes affecting universities changes the experiences of academic workers who often experience more pressures in their work (Olssen, 2016). This presents wellbeing consequences for university staff who are more subject to precarious work conditions and the accompanying experiences of marginalisation and exclusion (Chomsky, 2011; Ryan et al., 2013; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Precarious academic workers often highlight the negative experiences of precarious work as they report: social exclusion, not being heard, not having a proactive role in the workplace, feeling frustrated, lacking power and agency, being seen as unimportant and marginalised, lacking recognition for their efforts at work, and generally feeling like an outsider who co-workers and supervisors do not respect or appreciate (see for example: Junor, 2004; Kimber, 2003; May et al., 2013; Nadolny & Ryan, 2013; NTEU, 2012). Slay and Smith (2011, p. 87) note that "membership in a profession influences self-definition and shapes how others think about an individual". In this study, the academic profession will be considered in all its uniqueness in terms of how this shapes the experiences of precarious employment for participants and what this means for their wellbeing and identity.

Kimber (2003, p. 41) made an early compelling case that the academic workforce could be divided into a "tenured core with security and good conditions" and the

“tenuous periphery with insecurity and poor conditions”. This work was based on a critical engagement highlighting the changing nature of academic work and its effects on employees and the profession as a whole (Kimber, 2003). The results of this review compelled Kimber (2003, p. 41) to argue that insecure employment in academia “threatens to divide the academic profession in two with casual workers being relegated to an ‘underclass’ that experiences a high level of job insecurity, low wages and poor working conditions”. This conceptualisation has underpinned much of the ensuing literature on this topic within the global context which has sought to differentiate between the experiences of permanent/tenured staff and those on more precarious employment contracts (such as ‘casual’ or ‘fixed-term’ contracts). Junor (2004) conducted an Australian survey which received nearly 3,000 respondents. Included in the participant pool were 2,494 casual academic and general staff, 195 academic and general staff on contracts of less than a year, and a control group of 197 continuing staff or staff on longer fixed-term contracts. This research covered five main areas of interest: 1) employment duration and regularity, 2) tasks/roles, pay and conditions, 3) other income and time commitments, 4) satisfaction, preferences and aspirations, and 5) demographic characteristics. (Junor, 2004, p. 283). This study provided the perspectives of precarious academic employees about their working situation and the author summarised the findings by stating that “The strongest message conveyed by survey respondents was their desire for a voice, respect and inclusion” (Junor, 2004, p.302). The notion of voice as an aspect of qualitative research is important in this thesis.

Over ten years later the *National Tertiary Education Union* (NTEU, 2012; 2015) has extensively explored staff experiences of casual and fixed-term employment within the higher education sector in Australia through multiple focussed surveys. The NTEU has

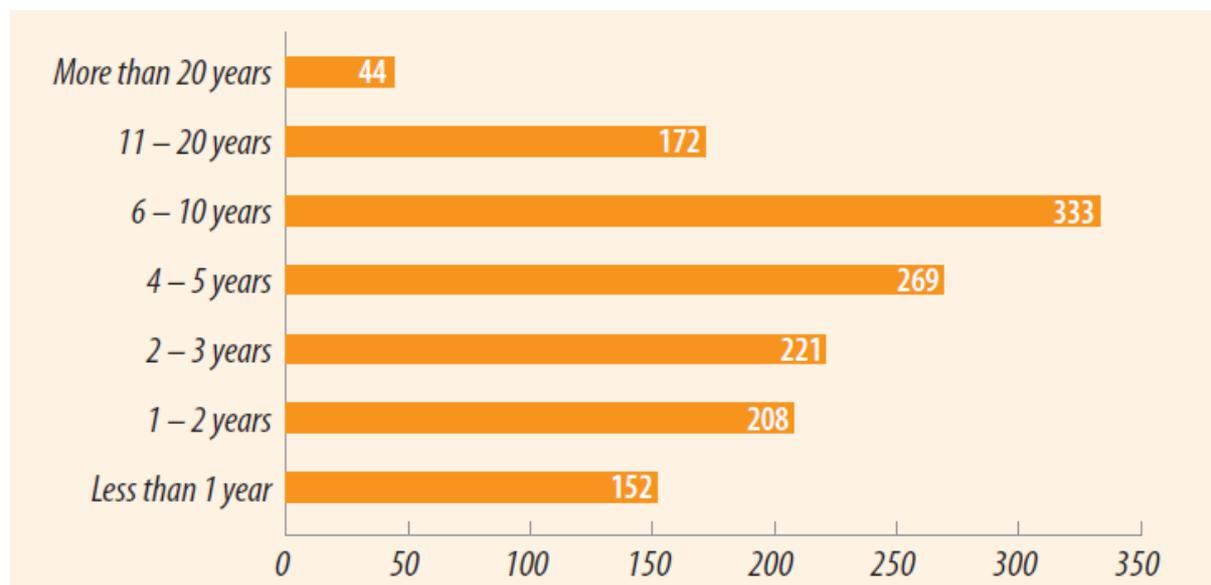
over 28,000 members from every Australian university (NTEU, 2017). One of their surveys focussed on casually employed academic employees and achieved 1,243 survey responses in Australia making it one of the largest research projects of its kind. The survey addressed similar variables to those of Junor's (2004) study. Significant findings include: 1) many casual academic employees work more than one job to make their income, 2) most casual academics "aspire to a permanent, full time academic career", 3) a majority of respondents cited working hours they were not paid for, and 4) participants predominantly indicated that they did not have "access to the resources necessary to do their job properly" (NTEU, 2012, p.3). In Australia, where this study was conducted, casual academics account for 50% of the teaching load (Ryan et al., 2013). This focus on academics who work in the higher education sector is important as such employees come under unique pressures associated with publishing and obtaining grants crucial to their career success.

These dismal findings that reflect the low conditions associated with precarious academic work, prompted research by Nadolny and Ryan (2013) who examined the casual academic employee experience in relation to casual McDonalds staff experiences (Nadolny & Ryan, 2013). The authors analysed their survey and interview findings from an Australian university in comparison to research findings from another author who researched McDonalds' casual employees in Australia. At the outset of this publication it is stated that "populist labels such as McDonaldization, and its corollaries McUniversity and McJobs, distract us from deeper analysis of the tensions between higher education institutions and commercial imperatives" (Nadolny & Ryan, 2013, p.2). The research found that the two groups of workers experienced employment so differently that they had very little in common and thus Nadolny and Ryan (2013) achieved their objective to debunk the applicability of the

McDonaldisation thesis to higher education. However, in conducting this analysis the publication ironically failed to offer the deeper analysis that the authors identified as being neglected in the field.

The NTEU focuses on the more serious side of precarious employment by considering how trends towards employment insecurity specifically influence the academic profession (assuming the uniqueness of this experience for highly educated and skilled workers). A more recent addition to their growing body of research is *The State of the Uni Survey Report 3: Fixed Term Employment* (NTEU, 2015) which draws on responses from 1,440 staff who identified as being employed on fixed term contracts across the university sector. Key findings were that of the fixed-term participants, half reported being on contracts of 12 months duration or less and nearly 7% reported having been on these short-term contracts for 11 years or more (NTEU, 2016, p. 25). These findings suggests that precarious employment contracts are not used because the positions do not exist over time as the work is often ongoing and the same employee can be hired for extended periods of time. Important to the NTEU's contribution to the field is how the union includes fixed-term employees in their characterisations of precarious work. There is a noticeable absence of studies referring to the experiences of fixed-term academic employees because the focus is usually on casual workers. Research addressing the lived experience of fixed-term workers would add to this literature base, particularly given their often long-term engagement with precarious work (illustrated in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Duration of being continuously employed on fixed-term contracts (without breaks of greater than three months)



Note: Reprinted from NTEU (2016, p. 25).

This survey provides a very informative backdrop into the prevalence of certain types of employment within the Australian higher education sector and solidifies why precariously employed academics often experience frustration given the length of time they work under conditions of uncertainty (Gottschalk & McEachern, 2010; May et al., 2013). May et al. (2013) collected data from over 3000 casual academic staff from 19 universities in Australia and developed the 'frustrated academic index'. This index reflects how despite wanting to be employed as permanent academics in five years time, many academics thought this unlikely. Instead they envision themselves positioned in one of the following four scenarios: 1) employed as a sessional/casual academic, 2) employed outside of the university sector, 3) retired/not working, or 4) other (May et al., 2013, p.271).

This frustrated and pessimistic view, held by over half of respondents, suggests that precarious employment within academia operates as a secondary labour market

rather than part of a pathway to a permanent academic career because precarious work does not appear to act as a bridge to more permanent academic employment (May et al., 2013, p.271). This lack of transition contributes to stress and “disillusionment” as academic workers can feel “naïve and duped” having thought that their qualifications and engagement with precarious academic work would lead to precarious employment, only to realise these expectations are not met (Gottschalk & McEachern, 2010, p. 45).

These studies show that many academic employees work precariously in Australian universities, with the desire that this will ‘pay off’ and result in a transition into more permanent work. This indicates that the academic career is an attractive long-term career proposition as many people withstand subordinate working conditions in the hope of transitioning into more secure employment in academia (Gottschalk & McEachern, 2010; May et al., 2013).

The experiences of early career researchers (ECRs) are important in contributing to this picture of transition and frustration as they begin climbing the illusive ladder of the academic career path. Ultimately, not providing ECRs with permanent employment obstructs their abilities to contribute fully and independently to the academic profession as they are often obstructed from experiencing a well-rounded academic employee experience encompassing teaching and research (Laudel & Glaser, 2008). ECRs also face exploitation due to feelings of powerlessness in saying no to senior academics. Ryan et al. (2013) conducted a mixed-methods study involving a survey and focus groups and interviews with 40 casual academics and seven heads of school and administrative staff at an Australian university. They reported that one of their casual employee participants claimed that “full-time professors give their marking to us PhD students but without pay and we’re afraid to say no, especially the international

students” (Ryan et al., 2013, p.170). Also, a manager admitted that sessional academics were treated as “slave labour” and there was a lack of responsibility within schools to account for these insecure workers (Ryan et al., 2013, p.170-1). Two PhD students in America have voiced these types of concerns in American universities (Johnson & McCarthy, 2000).

The academic profession is interesting in that the institutional context is very hierarchical and situates precariously employed young/early career academics within the domain of “apprentice” (Johnson & McCarthy, 2000, p. 110). Many academics are positioned as “aspirants”, meaning they wish their future-self to have the status and prestige of being a full academic (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 344). This suggests that academics are often involved in a process of ‘becoming’ whereby they are shaped and moulded into their profession and develop a professional identity. Fitzmaurice (2013, p. 614) suggests that in academia there is “considerable emotional and intellectual work involved in this endeavour”. The profession is highly competitive and requires employees to excel in a number of directions including teaching and research (Angervall, 2016). Not only this, but there is a huge level of investment that goes into an academic career due to the time it takes to achieve the qualification levels required, and work experience deemed necessary, in order to gain “the esteem and recognition so important to the academic” (Kogan, 2000, p. 201). These studies affirm that academics are highly involved in their work, the context of which is important in shaping their ongoing experiences of the profession and their place within it.

Overall the findings reported in the research provide a fairly pessimistic account of the employment practices and structures that construct precarious employment. However there is literature that challenges these pessimistic perspectives by calling for a more action-centred focus on resistance. Gilbert’s (2013, p. 38) claims that all academics

are capable and intelligent agents and as such should use their abilities to change normative social practices prevalent in universities:

While such discussions have served to bring the crisis of academic employment to a broader audience, they have tended to lack any substantive engagement with the possibility of changing the dire circumstances in which members of the rising generation of university professors find themselves.

Gilbert (2013) asserts in this theoretical article that it is important to position academic workers as active citizens, rather than passive and disempowered people. The higher education sector is highly unionised within the United States of America, as it is in Australia, and Gilbert (2013, p. 38) argues that because of this it is possible to envision “systemic change”. This is a relevant point when considering the critical perspective offered by Crimmins (2016) who, like Gilbert (2013), suggests that academics should challenge negative representations of precarious academics and seek more advocate-orientated positions. From a unique viewpoint generated from her arts-informed narrative inquiry research centred on the lived experience of six women working as casual academics in Australian universities, Crimmins (2016) points out that the discourse surrounding casual academics is offensive. She claims that publications often refer to precarious academic workers as being less effective teachers who are detrimental to student retention and threatening to all academics and high-quality tertiary education. Crimmins (2016, p. 46-7) found that “within this discourse casual academics are used as representative of a systemic strategy or ‘problem’” and this, she argues, “serves to subjectify casual academics and perpetuate their anonymity, invisibility and lack of presence in the discourses within which they are the central

focus". This contributes to a stigmatisation of academic staff who do not conform to the permanent, full-time model.

Overall, much of the literature highlights the institutional factors relating to academic work and factors that 'cause' precarious employment. In contrast, some studies promote the agency of academic workers as actors contributing to the construction of social practices within universities. This latter agentic approach offers an active, rather than passive, vantage point. The 'causes' approach is limited and disempowering; it is important to consider the agency of academics and the possibility for change.

2.4. Young people and precarious employment

In this section attention is given to the way precarious employment affects young people. The consequences of precarious employment for different age cohorts has been identified as an important matter that requires further investigation (Standing, 2011; Woodman, 2013; Wyn, 2009). Woodman (2013, p. 429) noted that "The experience of younger employees has so far been relatively marginalised in sociological research investigating changing temporal structures of work, despite the decline in regular work patterns potentially impacting younger workers more than any others". There are many middle-aged precarious workers (Sheen, 2011), however, precarious employment disproportionately affects youth. In member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015, p. 137) an average of 43% of temporary workers are aged 15-29 which is significant when considering that "compared with permanent workers, temporary workers face substantial wage penalties, earnings instability and slower wage growth". It has been found that "young Australians are not optimistic about their economic prospects and express feeling less valued by government and society" (Goldin, Patel, & Perry, 2014).

This poses extreme concern for the future of the nation, encompassing both present and future generations. In a country where suicide is the leading cause of death for young people (Brown, 2014) their wellbeing is a societal issue that needs addressing.

Employment is important to the construction of identity and engagement (McGann, 2012) and when working life is unfulfilling or disappointing this can lead to frustration, anger and low self-esteem (May et al., 2013; McGann et al., 2012; Standing, 2011). McGann (2012) argues that people only see themselves as meaningful agents if they are involved in shaping the world around them; social self-realisation can occur when a person's work is recognised by others and ideas of the self are transformed into a realised actuality. The relationship between young peoples' identity formation and wellbeing is compounded by the changes facing young people as they "find themselves competing in precarious markets that offer a complicated mix of opportunities, expectations and pressures to perform that are new" (Wilson & Ebert, 2013, p. 273). This is not to position youth as victims but rather to acknowledge the fact that there are obviously some serious issues threatening the wellbeing of young people in Australia and a necessity to understand the dynamics and experiences of young people.

Wellbeing and identity are crucial in understanding how to support young people as "wellbeing has a heightened significance in a world in which uncertainty predominates and identities are (of necessity) a work in progress" (Wyn, 2009, p.47). As such, it is necessary to continue to refine some of the complexities of young peoples' experiences in maintaining a focus on the diversity of experience and subjectivity (Wyn, 2009). It has been recognised that although job security and wellbeing have been on the research agenda for some time now, these efforts have not "generated precise conclusions" (Kim et al., 2012, p.101). McGann et al. (2012, p.113) call for more

research exploring the nuances between wellbeing and precarious work by focussing on various industries and groups of workers and by particularly exploring how expectations influence perspectives of precarious work. It is important to contextualise the experiences of young people within the environment of changing social conditions, such as increasing precarious employment, that are known to impact multiple spheres of young peoples' lives (Woodman, 2013). This posits an interesting angle from which to explore the perspectives of young people entering the precarious academic workforce and to make some links between their work experiences and wellbeing.

The age and stage of workers was found to be a key factor in Keuskamp and colleagues' (2013) study of casual workers. From a variety of industries, voluntarily casual workers tended to be older and had already accumulated wealth (or were benefiting from their spouse's employment) when compared to the younger participants who were workers concerned with home ownership and stability. This highlights how different age groups require different things from their employment (Keuskamp et al., 2013). In the academic employment sector precarious employees also tend to be younger than their more permanent colleagues (May et al., 2013; NTEU, 2016). Academia is characterised by an aging workforce and the future of the academy heavily relies on the presence of young new academics and the roles they will play in the years to come (Group of Eight Australia, 2014; Hugo & Morriss, 2010; Kinman et al., 2006). These studies suggest a correlation between employment status and age with young people being overrepresented in precarious employment across multiple contexts. The findings demonstrate that it is necessary to understand what different age cohorts wish to gain from their employment (Keuskamp et al., 2013).

Often, precarious employment is thought to act as an entry-point into more secure participation in the labour market, however this is often misleading (OECD, 2015). An

Australian study by Watson (2013) involved looking at the labour market destinations of casual workers over time using 2001-2009 data from the *Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia* (Wilkins, 2016b) survey. The findings reflected some of the contentious issues that casual employment presents to younger workers but also some contradictions. It was found that an increase in the employees' age reduced the prospects of securing permanent employment as the likelihood of continued casual employment or joblessness increased (Watson, 2013, p. 21). However, contradictorily, the years an employee spent in paid employment were found to lead to increased positive employment outcomes, as the author explains: "Increasing age leads to worse outcomes, more years in paid employment lead to better outcomes, and increased levels of educational qualification have only a modest link to better outcomes" (Watson, 2013, p. 6). These three features and key findings link to the idea of human capital: age and time usually represent experience in human capital terms and educational attainment is also a feature of human capital (Watson, 2013).

In Australia it is difficult for many young people starting out in the workforce to get a 'good' (high status, rewarding) full-time job that matches their qualification level (Foundation for Young Australians, 2013). This is not a uniquely Australian phenomenon as, for example, graduate over-qualification is also a problem across Europe and particularly in the United Kingdom where nearly 60% of graduates work in non-graduate jobs (Holmes & Mayhew, 2015). It has been argued that there needs to be a re-conceptualisation of casual labour markets and recognition that "they exist as a secondary labour market in their own right, with their own dynamics and their own internal system of regulation" (Watson, 2013, p. 22). The ability of people to navigate their way in and out of the casual labour market and to control the outcomes of

precarious employment appears to be complex and age specific (Keuskamp et al., 2013; Watson, 2013).

Young peoples' experiences at work are interesting because they are at the start of their careers and may be entering the workforce with different career expectations from older generations (Treuren & Anderson, 2010). It has been noted that there are gaps in the international literature relating to the understanding of youth perceptions and expectations surrounding employment (Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012) and that the voices of young people have been especially sidelined leaving space for the development of subject-centred studies to respond to this gap (Besen-Cassino, 2008). These trends relate to an index report produced by the *Centre for Strategic and International Studies* in collaboration with the *International Youth Foundation* which claims that "Youth comprise a quarter of the world's population, but remain an underutilized source of innovation, energy, and enthusiasm in global efforts to achieve and promote the increased wellbeing of all" (Goldin et al., 2014, p.ix). Combined, this literature reflects the perspectives of scholars who perceive that young people are not only excluded from participation in society but also from research concerning their experiences in the workforce. Young people are traditionally conceptualised as being in a transitional phase towards future adulthood, and therefore not worthy of full consideration in the present (Wyn, 2009, p. 12).

2.4.1. Youth transitions

The concept of a transition phase and dichotomies between 'youth' and 'adulthood' has been critiqued, particularly within the contemporary Australian context (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; Furlong & Kelly, 2005; Furlong, Woodman & Wyn, 2011; Wyn, 2006, 2009, 2014). Wyn (2006, p. 237) critiques assumptions and generalisations that youth are

'failing' to make transitions into adulthood and rather argues that "young people are engaging with adult responsibilities and experiences incrementally, early in their lives. Instead of entering the adulthood experienced by their parents, the post-1970 generation is more likely to be entering a 'new adulthood' earlier". Wyn (2006, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014), along with her co-researchers (Crofts, Cuervo, Wyn, Smith & Woodman, 2015; Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; Woodman & Wyn, 2013, 2015), bases this assumption on significant longitudinal research in Australia. This conception of 'new adulthood' stems from research findings that younger generations (commonly referred to as X and Y) tend to expect an unstable pathway through the job market and as a result strive to be flexible and mobile so that they may build meaning in life through personal relationships instead of reliance on an insecure career or occupation (Crofts et al., 2015). As such, these participants have been found to incrementally engage with adult practices earlier than previous generations (Wyn, 2009).

It is argued that the "youth transition" perspective follows "a narrative of deficit (delayed transitions) as the connections between education and employment inevitably take a long time to become firm" (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014, p. 912-913). Also, young workers face the risks of a precarious youth labour market and "changed expectations in the transitions from youthful dependence to adult independence" which has made the very idea of "stable, linear transitions intensely problematic" (Furlong & Kelly, 2005, p. 208). According to Wyn (2009, p. 2) conceptualisations of an emergent 'new adulthood' contrasts with earlier views which proposed that "the period of youth has become an 'extended' phase of life, before eventually settling into the traditional, or perhaps expected, pattern of 'adult' life: secure job, marriage, children and buying one's own home". It is acknowledged that there are broader structural challenges affecting these transitions when, for example, young people are made to be dependent on others as

they are often unable to find work which affects their ability to move out of home, buy a house and generally be self-sufficient and engaged citizens (Foundation of Young Australians, 2013). Young peoples' life challenges are linked to structural issues, such as unaffordable housing due to the property market boom, which means many young people are unable to buy their first home now or in the foreseeable future (Bleby, 2014).

The changing labour market presents risks that make “the very idea of stable, linear transitions intensely problematic for large sections of the youth population – with a range of profound consequences for young people, families, communities and the nation” (Furlong & Kelly, 2005, p. 209). This can make decision-making difficult as “uncertainty and unpredictability of future work opportunities” make it hard for young people to plan their career pathways (Kalleberg, 2009, p.10). All of these experiences of individual uncertainty influence young peoples' experiences of wellbeing and sense of identity as they navigate and engage with structural social changes (Furlong & Kelly, 2005; Standing, 2011).

2.4.2. Controversies

It has been argued that as a result of some of the current challenges facing young people there has been “a systemic proletarianisation of the entire youth population in many countries, raising again materialist concerns and the issue of youth-as-class” (Côté, 2014, p. 527). Côté (2014, p. 527) theorises a “revival of the political-economy-of-youth perspective” by demonstrating certain class-relations between youth and adults such as reduced earning power and education-to-work prospects. He views youth as “a class set against adults” (Côté, 2014, p. 533) and using international research to support his claims, argues that in the past social divisions such as gender

were more dominant in terms of segregating groups of workers into two camps however now age is the dividing factor that segregates cohorts of workers. He explains:

...whereas in the past young male workers may have had more in common with older males workers with respect to their earning power (i.e., legitimation as workers deserving a living wage), with the same comparison applying to older-younger females, the gender division is being replaced by the age division, signalling the increasing importance of age as a basis for socioeconomic distinctions (Côté, 2014, p. 532).

Côté (2014) continues to explain the positionality of young people in relation to their parents and other adults and seeks to expose structures that result in embedded inequalities relating to the socioeconomic status of certain groups. He critiques some of the ideas presented by Wyn and Woodman (2006) as he argues that a focus on subjectivities or psychological states “can normalise exploitive situations, while valorising compensatory, coping behaviours among the young... the young are unaware of their manipulation and disadvantaged position in the political economy” (Côté, 2014, p. 538). Rather preferring a political-economy perspective that draws attention to the problem of the “manufacture of consent in the creation of false consciousness”, Côté (2014, p. 538) considers the subjective approach to cover-up exploitation and shift a focus towards dealing with exploitation while positioning it as “normal”.

Like Côté (2014), France and Roberts (2015, p. 216) also prefer a centralised focus on “class” and have critiqued the body of work by Wyn and Woodman in their suggestion that “‘social generational theory’ is emerging as a new orthodoxy in the study of youth”. The authors suggest that other analyses offer a more thorough

understanding of how social change and processes remain stable, such as how class and gender relationships impact on the choices and decisions young people make (France & Roberts, 2015, p. 226).

Competing dominant perspectives in the youth studies literature need to be considered when designing a research project so that one's own research paradigm and overarching sociological perspectives are made clear, and can be defended, within a controversial field. Woodman and Wyn (2015, p. 1402) have defended their position in the face of these criticisms and maintain:

...social change and new risks are not facades behind which more real, and longstanding, forms of inequality are hidden, but are central to the way inequalities, including but not only by class, gender and race, are made in the conditions facing emerging generations of young people.

This contention suggests that structural aspects of contemporary social life contribute to the emergence and maintenance of new and old forms of inequality.

A contrasting argument centred on popular consumer culture is that “the postmodern adult is by now characterized by an unprecedented *infantilist nature*” as capitalism has driven the emergence of the “*infantilist adult*” who is driven by nostalgia and consumer culture to re-live youthful pursuits (Bernardini, 2014, p. 40 – original italics). This view is in stark contrast to the transition perspectives such as that offered by Gitelson and McDermott (2006) who reviewed the literature and, embedded within their psychological disciplines, focussed on the goal of adulthood which positions youth in terms of the failed transitions, vulnerabilities and lack of development. When focussing on transitions it is argued that conceptualisations of youth become static and based on a time before rather than emphasising change and “the subject positions of ‘their

times” which relate to resources available and the context within which young people navigate their lives (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014, p. 912).

At the heart of these debates, and of relevance to this thesis, is where emphasis is placed in terms of agency and structure. The more structural theorists consider that many things happen to young people who can often be perceived as passive recipients of structured experience. Youth scholars who focus on more reflexive accounts of how young people negotiate structural features of the labour market emphasise the role of agency and the co-construction of social experience. This is a much more active perspective that positions young people with resources capable of shaping structural conditions, although of course the structural aspects, particularly when exacerbating inequality, are always limiting and must be acknowledged.

2.4.3. Life patterns

Conceptions of what youth means, and how young people are represented, have come from a major Australian longitudinal research project called *Life Patterns* (Crofts et al., 2015; Wyn, 2006, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014) which follows patterns in young people’s lives over time in order to understand holistically “the ways in which two generations of young Australians are responding to our rapidly changing world” (Crofts et al., 2015, p. 3). This mixed methods research is designed using quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and presents case studies of participants. The project follows two generations of Australians in two cohorts. The first cohort draws from a database of 2000 participants who left secondary school in 1991 (Generation X) and the second cohort includes nearly 4000 participants who left secondary school in 2006 (Generation Y). Over time these numbers have lessened but are still significant; ten years later (in 2015), there were 591 participants responding to the annual survey from

cohort two. Cohort one has been surveyed every two years (since the year 2000) and interviews have been conducted with a subset of 20-40 participants every third year. Cohort two has been surveyed annually and interviews with a subset of 30-50 participants are conducted every second year.

The ongoing objective of this project is to explore the pathways of young Australians including their experiences in education and the labour market and also to discover the participants' personal relationships, attitudes to life, concerns, and health and wellbeing (Crofts et al., 2015). The researchers emphasise the diversity of experience that this research approach has illuminated and portray a unique picture of young people that diverts from the "stereotypes" of "smooth transitions from education to work" and challenges "the narcissistic or complacent generation often described in the media or by politicians" (Crofts et al., 2015, p. 3). The *Life Patterns* study addresses the gap in research that includes young people as participants and acknowledges subjectivities, that Wyn (2009, p. xii) has identified as lacking, in the following excerpt:

In many respects, understanding the diverse needs of young people is hampered by the tendency of health research to focus on producing large-scale studies that yield aggregate data that gives very little insight into diversity. There is a relative dearth of research on the ways in which wellbeing is managed and experienced at the local level by young people.

This is reflected in literature on youth transitions such as a study by Golsch (2003) who examined employment flexibility in Spain and its impact on transitions to adulthood through large quantitative data sets. In this study data were collated from recurrent surveys of nearly 18,000 participants and measures used to reflect

'transitions' were: labour market entry, first marriage, and, first parenthood (Golsch, 2003). This type of study is useful to identify large trends but excludes the voices of participants and does not have the depth and diversity that is required to understand how "changing social relations have a direct impact on young people's subjectivities" (Wyn, 2009, p. 3).

Life Patterns addresses this gap by offering case studies of individual participants in an Australian context. As it is longitudinal research the concepts of change and fluidity have been incorporated into the study design. A key feature of this research is that it is designed to follow patterns in young people's lives over time so that rather than a "static glimpse" this research develops "a more dynamic picture of young people's lives" (Crofts et al., 2015, p. 3). This multiple phase and longitudinal data-collection approach has been identified as being important when researching young people so as to provide more than "a single snapshot in time" (Crofts et al., 2015, p. 3). A more dynamic, ongoing approach provides opportunities to emphasise how identities and wellbeing are continual processes. The use of case study has provided illustrations of the unique subjectivities of participants and insights relating to their lived experiences.

2.5. Identifying the research problem

This literature review so far has highlighted the importance of developing rounded and social accounts of how precarious employment influences the wellbeing of young academic workers. I have highlighted how static approaches to researching employment and wellbeing are limited in that they often do not capture lived experience. Likewise, medical and individualised conceptions of wellbeing do not emphasise how structures mediate this lived experience and how wellbeing can be related to complex processes such as identity formation. As such, to highlight the

research problem identified in the literature review thus far, Campbell and Price (2016, p. 326) state that:

The literature continues to struggle with the implications of precarious work (or poor job quality) for individual workers... The impact of precarious work demands careful conceptualisation and empirical research, to analyse both the particular form of precarious work and the differences among individual workers that stem from social location and contextual conditions.

Campbell and Price's (2016) contention is that individual, contextual and social factors should be considered in conjunction with one another to reach sound theoretical and empirical explanations. This reasoning is supported by Dale and Burrell (2014, p. 160) who argue that the very notion of wellbeing adopted by organisations can be critiqued because of its' narrow focus:

...whilst an individual may well feel pleasure and satisfaction in their employment, this alone does not make for wellness as an embodied being... The individual experience of embodiment must be analysed within the collective dimensions of organization and occupation.

It is the intersection between agents and structure that is required to propel conceptualisations of wellbeing beyond the realm of organisational objectives or individualised states into conceptualisations of an ontology of wellbeing in relation to social processes.

2.5.1. Research questions

The following core research question conceptualises precarious employment as a lived social-ecological experience related to wellbeing in complex social ways:

- How do young academics experience precarious employment and how does this relate to their wellbeing?

The inductive nature of this question provides scope to ascertain new meanings and understandings associated with participants' experiences of precarious work. The idea of relating these experiences to wellbeing (not health) reflects my imperative to underpin the study with a sociological perspective which provides scope to explore numerous agentic and structural features. This provides room for conceiving of sociological conceptions of wellbeing, shifting from the more psychological or epidemiological fields. The following secondary research questions also reflect this motivation:

- How do the participants conceptualise wellbeing?
- What do participants understand about their place in academia and career paths?
- Is precarious employment sustainable for participants long-term (when considering influences of this employment on wellbeing)?

These questions create space for the evaluation of how personal wellbeing is constructed, in relation to ideas surrounding identity and ongoing social processes. There is also concern for the ongoing, continuous nature of wellbeing which I am conceiving of as a dynamic experience, rather than a static state. In the following sections of this literature review I discuss literature relating to the way I responded to answering the research questions.

2.5.2. Social ecology and wellbeing

To respond to these research questions in the early stages of the study I turned to social-ecological approaches. The seminal work of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1999, 2000) and expansion of his ideas by Stokols (1992, 2000) and Stokols, Lejano and Hipp (2013) emphasise the way in which workplace issues go beyond the working site itself and extend to family, community and broader societal domains. The way these external domains influence the worker and their experiences is important. This relates to the work-life literature (see for example Hochschild, 1997; Future Work Centre, 2015; Hoffman & Cowan, 2010). The social-ecological model has also recently been used by Pocock, Williams, and Skinner (2012, p. 391) to propose a shift away from “an individualistic approach to the reconciliation of work, home and community life by locating analysis in a larger social and political context”.

Originally placed within the field of human development, social-ecological theory has been used by researchers from various disciplines to analyse peoples’ relationships in and with particular contexts. For example, in recent years the scope for the use of social-ecological approaches have ranged from applications in sport psychology (Krebs, 2009) to social marketing communications (Lindridge, MacGaskill, Ginch, Eadie, & Holme, 2013). The approach has also been used to analyse resilience to natural disasters in the context of climate change (Boon, Cottrell, King, Stevenson, & Millar, 2012) and to reviewing the literature on psychosocial and mental health interventions intended to address mental health needs of children affected by war (Betancourt, Meyers-Ohki, Charrow, & Tol, 2013). The ecological approach is not static but rather depends on what is going on at any one moment from individual

factors through to cultural shifts and as such it is a popular model within the social sciences (Bronfenbrenner, 2000; Johnson, 2008).

Contemporary literature supports social-ecological perspectives as being ideal for research conceptualisations in the field of workplace wellbeing (Karanika-Murray & Weyman, 2013; Quintiliani, Poulsen, & Sorensen, 2010). The bioecological model, as one such approach, echoes the seminal work of key sociological theorist such as C. Wright Mills (1959, p. 8) who made the important distinction between “troubles” and “issues”. According to Mills (1959) ‘troubles’ are seen as individual problems, located within the character of the person and their immediate surroundings. ‘Issues’ extend beyond the individual and their environment and reflect broader trends, interactions and the structure of society and historical life.

The bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) provides a holistic approach to understanding the experiences of workers from micro (individual) through to macro (contextual/structural) elements and takes into consideration both issues and troubles (Johnson, 2008). This model supports a sociological understanding of the modern world as liquid and fluid (Bauman, 2012) because it features a ‘chronosystem’ which emphasises change over time. The chronosystem was added to the ‘bioecological model’ at a later date and is a distinguishing feature of Bronfenbrenner’s (1999) social-ecological approach. This evolution of the model stemmed from understandings that life and life situations are not static but rather change over time and this creates chaos that “interrupts and undermines the formation and stability of relationships and activities” (Bronfenbrenner, 2000, p. 133). The bioecological model appeared to be an ideal framework to guide the research. In this thesis, for reasons of clarity and

consistency, the term ‘social-ecological’ is used to encompass ecological systems theory, the bioecological model, and socio-ecological approaches.

The bioecological model, used as a guiding framework for this research, is underpinned by the perspective that multiple individual and contextual layers contribute to social experience. These layers are referred to as the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro-, and chronosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). The following table briefly outlines the conceptualisations of each of the layers that surround the individual, taking definitions from Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1999) and applying explanations to illustrate the applicability of these concepts to the topic of this thesis:

Table 4. Layers of the bioecological model defined and explained

Layer	Definition	Explanation
Micro	Activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).	Settings that are directly experienced by the employee such as the workplace, home, community. Psychosocial elements underline these environments (e.g. colleagues, family, and friends). These are experiential spaces comprising objective and perceived properties (e.g. actual layout and design of office space open-plan and perceptions of this environment as, for example, sociable or noisy).
Meso	Interrelations among two or more settings in which the employee actively participates. It is a “system of microsystems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25).	Work, home, the community, and other social domains overlap creating a chain-of-influence effect. The mesosystem is where an analysis of these overlapping and interrelated domains of an employees’ life can occur (e.g. the employee takes their work home or meets with a colleague for dinner outside of work).
Exo	Settings that do not involve the employee as an active participant “but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting” containing the	There are multiple policies and organisations dedicated to workplace issues and employment. These impact upon the experience of the worker as overarching influences on the employees’ environment and work

	employee (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25).	conditions (e.g. unions, fair work policies and workers' rights).
Macro	"Consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26).	Macrosystems refer to broader cultural ideologies and systems that overarch society: government, capitalism, economic systems, and politics (e.g. we are a society that values wealth and material goods – a function of work is that it enables financial affluence through wages which then enables mass consumption).
Chrono	The importance of "space through time" in understanding contexts (Bronfenbrenner, 1999, p. 20).	Contexts are continuously changing, nothing is static. Contexts are dynamic and time-space specific (e.g. workers are subject to promotions and redundancies, different projects come up at work, supervisors change).

Note: Compiled from the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979,1999).

As all of the systems highlighted in the table above show, this type of systems thinking is very useful for conceptualisations relating to work and wellbeing because it enhances "awareness of how the different levels of the social world are interrelated" (Johnson, 2008, p. 12). In this way the model provides the ability to see "sociologically significant connections between different levels of the social world" which in turn increases our understanding, and consciousness, beyond "implicit theories of everyday common sense" (Johnson, 2008, p. 12). Considering the multiple links relating wellbeing to context/structure and agency, presented in this literature review so far, this bioecological model provides an ideal platform through which to conceive of how to examine the complex social landscape of precarious work and wellbeing. The social-ecological approach is highly relevant in being able to address work-related wellbeing research because of the way lived experience is conceived of being embedded within social processes. The main limitation of this model rests in its lack of critical sociological explanatory power in terms of analysing research data. As such,

I found during my data analysis that a composite theory was required to give this model greater theoretical purchase in answering the research questions.

2.6. Theoretical conceptualisation: Structuration

Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration provides a strong sociological grounding through which social practices can be analysed and therefore offers an ideal theoretical perspective for responding to the research questions. The theory of structuration brings a similar emphasis as the bioecological model: both are consistent in that they explain the interactions between people/agents and contexts/structure in the creation of social life, and they both also pay attention to spatio-temporal practices. The theory of structuration also provides a theoretical vocabulary of power to enable understanding of social action.

Structuration refers to a process "involving human beings' ongoing actions as they occur through the flow of time" (Johnson, 2008, p. 460) and the theory asserts that social structures only exist as they are "manifested in individuals' actions and interactions" (Johnson, 2008, p. 460). As such, structure does not exist outside repeated actions by multiple actors (Kroon & Paauwe, 2014, p. 21). Giddens (1984) conceives of agency as the ability for an individual to "act otherwise" (Giddens, 1984, p. 15) in terms of being able to work against the pre-existing state of affairs and be capable of making a difference. He conceives of structure as the social rules and resources that allow the "binding" of "time-space in social systems" (Giddens, 1984, p. 18). These structural properties "make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space" which lends them "'systemic' form" (Giddens, 1984, p. 18). Central to his theory of structuration is that agency and structure are inseparable as agents (re)produce social structures through their actions

and this process is called the duality of structure. Agents draw upon rules and resources in the production and reproduction of social action and this is a means of system reproduction (Giddens, 1984). Agents are embedded within the social system and structure is not external to individuals and therefore actions are the result of social processes, while at the same time these actions (re)create social processes. Neither agency nor structure can be viewed independently as they work together in the flow of time and space to recursively (re)create social processes. This is the process of structuration.

The Giddensian perspective assisted in the development of an analysis of precarious work and wellbeing by considering how academic structures surrounding precarious work constrains and enables the actions of employees who are active participants in the production of their social experience of work and wellbeing. Giddens (1991a, p. 176) suggests that “power is the means of getting things done” which means that power has both enabling and constraining qualities. Linked to agency, power is the ability to act with the ability to make a difference, in a transformative capacity (Giddens, 1984). Giddens (1991a, p. 176) notes that “unless constraints render people incapable of resisting, such as being rendered physically helpless by others, then agents have the capacity to exercise power and agency”. He calls this the engagement of the “dialectic of control” (Giddens, 1991a, p. 176). This positions employees as co-creators of their precarious work and wellbeing experience.

Giddens (1991a, p. 176) argues that “all other sanctions, no matter how oppressive and comprehensive they may be, demand some kind of acquiescence from those subject to them” which means that people often reluctantly accept normative social orders without resisting. It is interesting to consider how this relates to experiences in higher education as there are a number of interesting factors that can contribute to the

formation of social structures. Giddens (1991a) importantly conceives of agents as always having a level of power in shaping the social world, although they can often be limited in their capacity to act in ways contrary to the norms. As such, wellbeing can be considered a social experience influenced by norms and values held in different societal contexts, such as the workplace. These normative structures then inform peoples' understandings and actions as they reflexively monitor the "character of the ongoing flow of social life" (Giddens, 1984, p. 4). This is the basis of system reproduction as "thought and action are constantly refracted back upon one another" and as such, ongoing knowledge about social life and informs "how to go on" (Giddens, 1991a, p. 39). This reflexivity relates to why people act in the way that they do.

When agents reflexively monitor their actions and structural context, they are able to make choices about how to act. Even though these choices and actions are influenced by the structural and contextual factors, "the structural properties of social systems do not act, or 'act on', anyone like forces of nature to 'compel' him or her to behave in a particular way" (Giddens, 1991a, p. 182). These ideas outline how structures can influence, but not wholly control, the enactments and experiences of an employee. This means that understanding of workers' ongoing experiences of precarious work is required to understand how structures of this employment shape personal experience and action.

Giddens' (1991a) concept of ontological security can help explain why in many cases people act in ways they find familiar and normal. Ontological security refers to "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens, 1991a, p. 93). Ontological security is linked to notions of identity as it refers to feelings of security, trust, and sense of familiarity and the reliability of interactions across time

and space. In this way, ontological security is linked to the psychological significance of routines which “provide a structuring medium for the continuity of life across different contexts of action” (Giddens, 1994, p. 101). In this sense, agents are influenced by their experiences of security and confidence in the continuity of social life. This poses an entry point through which to examine wellbeing and precarious employment: through links to identity in an exploration of ontological security.

Giddens’ (1994, p. 80) conception of identity is about the creation of “constancy across time” which links the past to the future and individual to wider social systems. In this way there is a sense of stability in Giddens’ (1994) conception of identity as he refers to a person’s ability to “*keep a particular narrative going*” (Giddens, 1991, p. 54, cited in Brown & Coupland, 2015, p. 1316 – Giddens’ italics). As such, Giddens (1991a) contends that identity is related to reflexivity in that it depends on a person’s beliefs about their self and biography. In this way, precarious employment might be considered a threat to identity thus resulting in negative wellbeing experiences related to the fragility and vulnerability of self (Alvesson, 2010) and disruption to a sense of an ideal and coherent self (Wieland, 2010).

These Giddensian concepts relate to how coherency, stability, and security are underpinned by social practices produced across “time-space” (Giddens, 1991a, p. 15). In his work, Giddens (1984, p. 35-36) claims that recursive social practices stretch time and space through the social reproduction of day-to-day life (Giddens, 1984, p. 35-36). This underpinning conceptualisation of how life experiences and structural formations are the result of structuration processes highlights the importance of examining social life as an ongoing, lived experience spanning across contexts and timeframes. This underpins how precarious employment and wellbeing can be

conceptualised in relation to recursive, reproductive social practices that reflect both agency and structures across time-space.

Giddens' (1984) very specific theorising of structuration, and also the sociological nature of his work, highlights the complexities of social practices and the power relations operating in day-to-day life. His ideas deepen the dimensions offered by the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 2000). Although Giddens (1984, p. 140) notes that he does not employ the terms "macro" and "micro" in his writing, this is only because he does not wish to suggest that the two are separate or that one takes precedence over the other in terms of sociological study. Giddens' (1984, p. 163) critiques certain systems approaches where emphasis on physical systems or biological formations highlight "closure" of societies across time and space". Due to the social-ecological nature of the bioecological model, and the chronosystem, these issues are not a feature of Bronfenbrenner's (2000) social-ecological systems approach.

2.6.1. Meshing a social-ecological approach with the theory of structuration

Like Giddens (1984), Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1999, 2000) saw that both individual/agentive and contextual/structural elements were important. Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1999, 2000) stressed the reciprocity of the relationship between a person and their context in co-creating the social world, and this contention echoes Giddens' (1984) notions of the duality of structure and structuration. Similarly, Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1999, 2000) conceived of influence in a similar way to Giddens' (1984) notion of power in that the broader social systems of the bioecological model are seen to impact upon an individual, however rather than rendering people powerless, Bronfenbrenner (1979) saw that the individual could similarly influence social systems. Central to these conceptions are the way in which recursive social processes construct

structures/systems. In relation to Giddens' (1991a) conception of time-space, Bronfenbrenner's (2000) chronosystem traces change across time and context. Giddens (1984) theory of structuration, and related concepts, underpin my main theoretical framework for the study while the social-ecological approach adds a broader theoretical terrain.

The important characteristics of Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) work, described above, account for why he has been chosen as the preferred theorist to add analytical insight and strength to the thesis. Foucault (1995) could have been used as an alternate theorist in this thesis. His work on the discipline of the body is particularly relevant to wellbeing research. Foucault (1995, p. 138) describes the 'docile body' as one that is created through discipline; a body that is subjected and practiced. The docile body is one that holds economic utility value and is obedient in a way that does not threaten political power and control (Foucault, 1995). In this way, the 'docile body' metaphor is underpinned by notions of all-encompassing power and a level of servitude on the part of the individual. As such, Foucault's (1995) work does not offer the space for examining agency and reflexivity in the way Giddens' (1984, 1991a) does because individuals are posited with much less power in relation to the construction of social practices. However, this is not irreconcilable and Giddens (1984, p. 16) notes that Foucault sees power as "above all a property of society or the social community", in a way that is related to specific features of his concept of the duality of structure. As such, the work of these two theorists need not be mutually exclusive but can be complimentary.

2.7. Conclusion

This literature review has illuminated a direction for research that is socially orientated, contextual, and linked to notions of agency, structure, ontological security, identity and power. I have problematised existent literature bases that focus on static, individualised and medical accounts of precarious workers' experiences of wellbeing and identified an entry-point for contributing to new ideas to the field through a sociological, in-depth study. Young academics in precarious employment have been identified as a group who have been multifariously affected by neo-liberal employment trends which affect experiences of precarious work and wellbeing. This group will be examined in the thesis. In order to contribute to new understandings of how agentic and structural factors contribute to the lived experience of precarious work, I identified an ideal theoretical base for my research. The combination of a social-ecological approach and Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) theory of structuration, and related ideas, provides the theoretical conceptualisation and analytical power required to compel conceptions of precarious work and wellbeing into the realm of the social. In the following chapters of my thesis I examine how precarious work and wellbeing are constructed as recursive social practices contributing to the ongoing, lived experience of participants.

Chapter Three: Methodology

In this chapter the methodology is presented and justified with the research design and modes of data collection, analysis and evaluation used in this thesis. In the first sections of the chapter I explain how the study was conceived and designed according to a constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), social-ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1999) and multi-case qualitative methodology (Stake, 2006). In the second half of the chapter the way data were collected and analysed is outlined with a methodological description of each phase of this ongoing, iterative and cyclical process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Denzin (2017) and Tracy's (2010) conceptualisations of excellent and critical qualitative research underpinned the actions taken to ensure the quality of the research. In the final sections of this chapter limitations of the study and ethical considerations are presented. To begin, I highlight the overarching paradigm that has guided this research.

3.1. Social constructivist paradigm

This research is underpinned by a social constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This paradigm is defined by the following assertions: 1) there are multiple ways of being in the world and therefore multiple realities (interpretivist ontology); 2) knowledge is dependent upon subjectivity and therefore understandings are recursively created, not inherent (subjectivist epistemology) and; 3) the best way in which to carry out research is within naturalistic real-world settings (naturalistic methodological techniques) (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.13). Many studies which use Giddens' (1984) work do so with these overarching characteristics in mind (see for example: Hoffman & Cowan, 2010; Kroon & Paauwe, 2014). Structuration theory

posits that “social reality develops in interaction” and in this way it provides the ground for social constructivism (Zehfuss, 2003, p. 12). Jackson and Sørensen (2007, p. 163) argue that because structuration leads to “a less rigid and more dynamic view of the relationship between structure and actors”, the theory is a pillar of constructivist approaches.

Ultimately, of interest in constructivist research is how meaning and experience is derived within certain contexts, not assuming that taken for granted notions represent facts or realities for all (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008, p.136-137). Researcher positionality is central to studies using this approach whereby the researcher’s “moral and political position... in processes of analysis and interpretation” is often deemed important in terms of research transparency (Dunne, Pryor & Yates, 2005, p. 84-87). Constructivism places importance on experiences of participants and considers their perspectives valuable and credible within the social world, thus lending itself to qualitative approaches.

3.1.1. Qualitative research

Qualitative research can be simply defined as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.3). This reflects the human aspect of qualitative research where researchers are people - not machines – and as such are not impartial to the research topic, data collection or writing-up of the research findings. The very desire to study this topic comes from my own personal experiences and interest in the negotiation of academic careers, uncertainty and wellbeing. This is reflective of the idea that qualitative inquiry focuses on “meaning in context” and requires a researcher who is able to gather and interpret subtle and underlying meanings (Merriam, 2009, p. 2). In this way the researcher might be conceptualised

as an artist who, to be good at their art needs to be highly skilled at interpretation of different contexts and subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This includes providing deep and analytical qualitative descriptions (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006) which are important for examining complex social processes.

It is of benefit that I am an “insider” to the world of precarious academic employment so that I come to the research with knowledge of the higher education system, student-life and working conditions (Costley, Elliott & Gibbs, 2010, p. 1). Some of my concerns for the higher education system, and workers within it, have spurred my desire to research this topic. Denzin (2010) claims that “inquiry has always been and will always be a moral, political, value-laden enterprise. We seek only a politics of hopes, models of social justice to lead us forward” (Denzin, 2010, p. 424-225). This research is contextual and provides in-depth accounts of the participants’ experiences with the hope that this will illuminate important social issues with the potential to create positive change (Dunne et al., 2005).

3.1.2. A social-ecological approach

In the literature review phase of this thesis, attention was drawn to my awareness of the applicability of Bronfenbrenner’s (2000) bioecological model (see Chapter Two). I adopted the bioecological model as a guiding framework for my research design as it contrasted with many of the static and bounded approaches to wellbeing that emerged in the literature (Stokols, 2000). As such I adapted Bronfenbrenner’s (1999) model to my research topic (see Appendix A). This model enabled me to conceptualise the social landscape of my topic because despite visually looking like an individual-centred model, the social-ecological approach is based on the interconnectivity between people and context (Pocock et al., 2012). The bioecological model lends itself to a social constructivist paradigm as it is fluid and adaptable to different contexts thus

creating the opportunity for multiple realities and interpretations (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Also the focus can be on multiple levels which links to Giddens' (1984) work about how structure and agency work in combination, rather than as separate entities. In order to find out how this works in terms of lived experience the use of a case study research design was used to define boundaries relating to the study, to affirm lived experience, and maintain focus on the phenomenon of interest (Stake, 2006).

3.2. Research design: Multi-case study

Case study research design is holistic, meaning that "it seeks to describe the whole of the case as well as the relationships of the parts to the case" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 154). This is ideal when considering that the strengths of structuration theory and social-ecological approaches are expressed in their ability to generate contextual analyses of social processes (Giddens, 1984; Pocock et al., 2012). Case study design requires the researcher to thoroughly understand each case under in-depth study (David and Sutton, 2004, p.111) which involves investigating "a real-life phenomenon in a real life context" (Yin, 2008, p.18).

Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 301) uses the definition of case study as: "an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment". Discussing this definition and the boundaries surrounding what comprises a case study Flyvbjerg (2011) claims that case study research guides the choice of what is to be studied and the unit of analysis can be studied in multiple ways depending on the researcher. For example "the individual unit" may be studied qualitatively, quantitatively, analytically, hermeneutically or by mixed-methods (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). This is a perspective shared by Merriam (2009) and Stake (2006). In contrast, Yin (2012) conceptualises case study as a method, orientated towards a more positivist mixed-methods approach. According to Yazan (2015), Yin

offers a structured approach to case study research as a method in and of itself and suggests a forward-planning approach by developing and following a clear set of guidelines. Conceptualisations of case study in this thesis align most closely with Stake (2006) and Merriam's (2009, 2015) interpretations of case study as a methodology - meaning there are multiple ways to study the case.

3.2.1. Strengths and key features of the case study approach

A case study approach offers three specific features that make the approach relevant to this study. These refer to the nature of case study being: particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic (Merriam, 2009). Particularistic refers to the precise nature of the case and the specificity of focus which, according to Merriam (2009, p. 43), "makes it an especially good design for practical problems". As such, this approach lends itself to the real-world issue of precarious employment in academia, an increasingly common and troubling phenomenon (Ryan et al., 2013). The descriptive element results in a "thick" description which is created from including a number of variables and portraying their interaction over a period of time thus generating "holistic, lifelike, rounded, and exploratory" studies (Merriam, 2009, p. 44). As is discussed in the method section below, multiple interviews were carried out to explore many variables over time contributing to the construction of cases. The case study approach places emphasis on "detail, richness, completeness, and variance – that is, depth" (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301) and focuses on "holistic description and explanation" (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). Thick description is central to the dissemination of the research findings as to effectively convey the outcome of the case study the audience must be able to discern "what the case study's activity is and what its effects seem to be" (Stake, 2006, p. 4). Merriam (2009) claims that the heuristic element central to a case study method refers to the ability to generate complex knowledge, thereby extending understanding about

the subject matter. Stake (2006, p. 3) describes this attribute as the technical element of a case method where the researcher must “generate a picture of the case and then produce a portrayal of the case for others to see”.

3.2.2. Bounded systems

Merriam (2009, p. 40) offers a definition of case study as “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system”. This bounded system defines what is to be studied, the case, and the boundaries around this unit of analysis that means one can “fence in” their unit of analysis (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). In this respect each of the ten participants of this study are considered to be a case as they each constitute a “bounded system” in their own right (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). It is necessary to create boundaries in case study research as only a few elements can be studied thoroughly and therefore the case “has an inside and an outside” (Stake, 2006, p. 3). Some of the outside features contribute to an understanding and consideration of the context of the cases and sometimes it is difficult to clearly define “where the case ends and where its environment begins” (Stake, 2006, p. 3).

It would be possible to consider the case in this research to be the group of participants, as they are bounded by their age and employment as precarious academic employees at Monash University. However, a multiple case study approach has been selected over this option. Ten participants have been included in this study and each is considered a case. The unit of analysis are each of the ten cases and these multiple cases are important as they belong to the collection of cases which are “categorically bound together” (Stake, 2006, p. 6). In order to gain depth in the study and be able to generate holistic understanding of the cases, it is recommended that a maximum of ten cases are included in any one multi-case study and that these cases are carefully selected to reflect the objectives of the study (Stake, 2006). The purposive sampling

method used in this research will be described later under the 'participants' section. Stake (2006, p. 4-9) calls the collection of multiple cases that are "members of a group or examples of a phenomenon" a "quintain" (Stake, 2006, p. 4). This is described in the following excerpt:

Multicase research starts with the quintain. To understand it better, we study some of its single cases – its sites of manifestations. But it is the quintain we seek to understand. We study what is similar and different about the cases in order to understand the quintain better (Stake, 2006, p. 6).

The word 'quintain' refers to the overall interest of the study which in this thesis is young people's experiences of precarious employment and wellbeing. The participants contribute to an overall understanding of the phenomenon under study and I developed the richness of each case, and therefore increased the depth of the study, by collecting multiple data sets over time. This adds a longitudinal aspect to the study:

Longitudinal research is research in which (a) data are collected for each item or variable for two or more distinct time periods; (b) the subjects or cases analysed are the same or at least comparable from one period to the next; and (c) the analysis involves some comparison of data between or among periods (Menard, 2002, p. 2).

While this definition of longitudinal research indeed reflects the data and analytical methods adopted in this project, and characterisation was not my intention. I designed the study according to Stakes' (2006) conception of multiple case study and

accordingly I conducted multiple interviews to deepen understanding of the quintain in relation to each case.

In the construction of the case it is necessary for the researcher to decide “what gets to count as case and what becomes context to the case” (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). The case studies of this research were all embedded within Australian society, the higher education profession, and the institution of Monash University more specifically. They also belonged to a socially constructed demographic category referred to as ‘young people’ (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014). The following table defines the boundaries of the unit of analysis in my thesis in more detail and draws attention to what is being studied as part of the multiple cases and what falls into the realm of context (Flyvbjerg, 2011):

Table 5: Cases and context highlighting boundaries of analysis

Cases (x 10)	Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participants’ experiences of their employment as described in interviews and surveys. • The nature of the participants’ employment such as their work arrangements including the types of contracts under which they are employed and the job tasks they are assigned (self-reported). • The participants’ perspectives of work-related matters. • Facets of the participants’ lives that directly relate to the experience and nature of their employment. • Participant conceptualisations of wellbeing and the intersection between their subjective wellbeing and their employment as “interrelated” constructs (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). • Information about participants’ employment contract type, student status, age and gender. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian culture and society. • Academia and the higher education system in Australia and globally. • Monash University and the structures surrounding employment at this workplace. • Publications and policies that relate to young workers, precarious employment, higher education and the intersection of these sub-groups (e.g. federal/state policies, union publications).

These boundaries acknowledge that each case is “a complex entity located in its own situation” and through qualitative research “the examination of experience in these situations” is explored (Stake, 2006, p. 12). As outlined in the table above the boundaries in this research project emphasise experiential knowledge and the interrelationship between complex phenomena, such as precarious employment experiences and wellbeing. Attending to interrelationships increases familiarity and complexity of the research topic (Stake, 2006). This search for depth, complexity and experiential knowledge underlines a qualitative case-study research approach (David & Sutton, 2004).

3.3. Participants: Selection and recruitment of the cases

Participants were recruited through advertisements disseminated via a number of outlets: 1) the Monash Memo (a general newsletter emailed to all staff and students), 2) Monash Postgraduate Association newsletter and website (a post-graduate student organisation), 3) the National Tertiary Education Union newsletter (emailed to Monash union members), and 4) posters placed around the University (various locations and Australian campuses). These recruitment advertisements invited interested people to contact the researcher if interested in the study (see Appendix B). Upon first contact the interested potential participant was sent the pre-participation screening tool (see Appendix C).

The cases in this research were purposively selected so that participants were “tailored” to the study by providing opportunities for building variety and creating opportunities for “intensive study” (Stake, 2006, p. 24). It was decided before recruitment that participants would be selected to be cases in this research based on certain criteria deemed to be important in investigating the quintain (Stake, 2006).

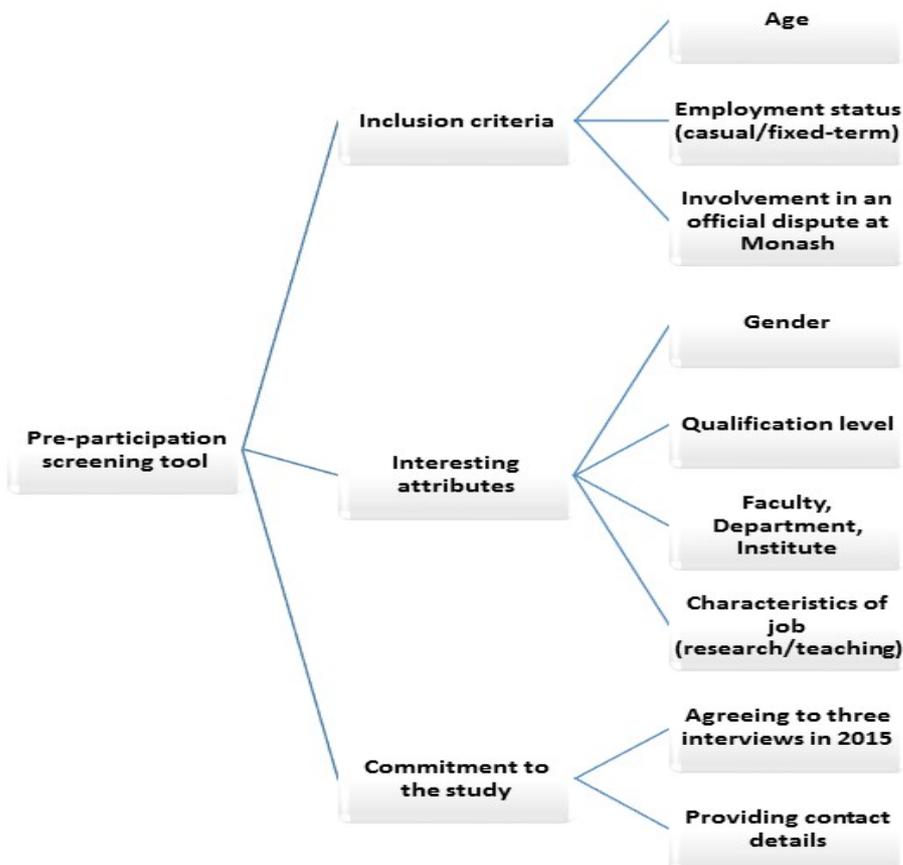
The case selection techniques aligned with the multiple case study design described by Stake (2006) who argues that there are three main criteria for selecting cases: 1) relevance to the quintain, 2) ability to provide diversity across contexts, 3) opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts (Stake, 2006). In terms of relevance to the quintain it was deemed a requirement that the participants be 30-years-old or less and employed by Monash University as academic staff either on a fixed-term or casual employment contract at the time of recruitment. Monash University is openly identified as the site where this research took place, as was approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). In relation to diversity, a balanced pool of male and female participants was preferred and it was desirable to have participants from across different Faculties and with different job characteristics (e.g. 'research only', 'teaching only' or 'research and teaching' combined). To respond to the third criterion about opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts, potential participants were asked to commit to being involved in the research project which involved a pre-interview survey and three interviews over the course of a year (2015).

It was decided that participants in an official dispute with the University would be excluded from participating. This was an ethical precaution to minimise potential discomfort or harm to participants during the data collection process, acknowledging that people in dispute with Monash might have been particularly sensitive to the material being covered in the interviews. Also, it was deemed appropriate to exclude friends of the researcher. Many close friends offered to participate however it was explained that this would not be appropriate for the study and instead they might be able to help in other ways such as through pilot interviewing (discussed later in this chapter).

3.3.1. Pre-participation screening tool

This selection criteria information was outlined in a one page pre-participation screening tool which was sent to potential participants who had expressed interest in the research by contacting me. The screening tool was used to establish whether participants met the inclusion criteria for the study and to gather information about participant attributes to ensure diversity (e.g. not all from the same Faculty or all in 'teaching only' positions). This tool was a time-saver as it allowed me to ascertain the participants' willingness to commit to three interviews across the year. This was important to ensure the study could gain the complex and contextual data required to form a case study (Stake, 2006). The following diagram depicts the features of this pre-participation screening tool (the original appears in Appendix C):

Figure 3. Pre-participation screening tool characteristics



3.3.2. The cases

The first ten participants to return the pre-participation screening form fit the criteria outlined above. All the respondents were 30 years of age or under, employed by Monash as academic staff on casual or fixed-term contracts, from a number of Faculties, and were involved in various teaching and/or research roles. Alongside this, five men and five women were included making an overall ideal composite of participants. To add to the diversity, some of the participants were also students and the range of qualifications among participants differed greatly from having Bachelor's degrees to PhDs. All selected cases were invited to participate via email and sent an explanatory statement and consent form. People who made contact after the participants had been selected were asked if they would agree to be on a back-up list in the event that any of the selected participants dropped out of the study. A number of people agreed to this however no participants left the study so this group were thanked for their interest and their participation went no further. The total retention rate of participants was 100% which enabled high-quality and meaningful data to be gathered and highlights the benefits of using the pre-participation screening tool.

Upon return of their consent forms the participants were sent a pre-interview survey. This survey was used to gather background information about the participants before the first interview took place. Key information gathered from this survey is shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Key characteristics of participants

	Age	Contract type	Gender	Job Characteristics	Job title	Full or part time	Total time employed at Monash	Student status	Highest qualification
Mike	25-30	Fixed-term (1 year)	M	Research only	Research Assistant	Part time	1 year	Student	Masters
Will	25-30	Fixed-term (3 years?)	M	Teaching only	Lecturer	Full time	2.5 years	Student	Masters
Logan	25-30	Fixed-term (1 year)	M	Research and teaching	Assistant Lecturer	Full time	5 weeks	Not student	PhD
Max	20-25	Casual	M	Teaching only	Teaching Associate	Part time	1 year	Student	Bachelors
Charlie	20-25	Casual	M	Research only	Research Assistant	Part time	2 years	Student	Post-graduate diploma
Ruby	25-30	Fixed-term (1 year) Casual	F	Research and teaching)	Assistant Lecturer	More than full time combined	5 years	Student (on intermission)	Masters
Olivia	25-30	Fixed-term (1 year)	F	Research only	Research Assistant	Full time	3 years	Not student	Bachelors(hons)
Tanya	25-30	Fixed-term (1year)	F	Research only	Research officer	Full time	6 months	Not student	Bachelors
Mia	25-30	Fixed-term (1 year)	F	Research Only	Research Assistant	Part-time	6 months	Student	Bachelors (hons)
Jasmine	25-30	Casual	F	Teaching only	Teaching Associate	Part time	6 years	Not student	PhD

The Faculties within which the participants were employed are not being published in order to protect participants' identity. However, overall the participants worked in eight different faculties or research groups at the university and across Monash University's four campus locations in Australia.

As well as the information displayed in Table 6, it was interesting to note that eight of the participants lived their whole lives in Australia and the remaining two participants were overseas born and had lived in Australia for twelve and six years respectively. Eight of the participants were in rental accommodation, one participant owned a home and another lived with her parents. Seven participants were in partnered relationships (three of these married), and the remaining three were single. None of the participants had children or were primary caregivers. Of those who disclosed their household income, this varied from less than \$20,000 to \$80,000 Australian dollars per annum. Declaring annual income was presented as an optional question so participants could choose to answer or not. Respondents sometimes indicated that their income was too

variable to calculate or decided not to respond or to give a vague answer. Of all the participants two were members of the National Tertiary Education Union and one wanted to join.

Because precarious employment contracts are relatively short-term, I anticipated that there would be a great change in the participants' circumstances throughout the data collection phase. I imagined having to travel to different workplaces or interviewing via Skype as participants changed their jobs. However, this was not necessary because many of the participants' contracts were renewed during the year and all remained working at Monash for the data collection period. Minor changes occurred but generally this baseline information remained relevant throughout the year.

3.4. Methods

In this section I explain the data collection methods, analysis and evaluation by chronologically moving through each of the phases as they occurred. I present my pilot interviewing techniques, explain my use of a pre-interview survey, and then detail each of the three rounds of data collection and analyses in order. I finish by reflecting on the quality of the research methods I adopted and highlight ethical considerations.

This study is comprised of multiple sources of data collected in 2015. The analysis of data was ongoing and iterative from the beginning of the data collection phase of the study (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Stake, 2006). The richness of each case was developed by collecting the following data sets: a pre-interview survey, three interviews and three sets of researcher generated reflexive notes after each interview. Each round of interviews and subsequent analyses informed the next round of interviews. Analysis at every stage was rigorous, ongoing and personalised to each case as outlined in the following sections.

3.4.1. Pilot interviewing and checking

The first interview round was piloted with two PhD student researchers who met the selection criteria, but were not participants (due to their friendship with me). The pilot interview provided insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the interview schedule (Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley, & Graham, 2001). The pilot interviewees provided feedback on the tone and ease of the interview process. In the subsequent interview rounds written or verbal feedback was provided to me from at least two academic researchers who were asked in each instance to check for any leading or ambiguous questions. The interview schedules were amended accordingly in response to this ongoing feedback process.

3.4.2. Pre-interview survey

The participants were sent pre-interview surveys by email and their responses were used to inform the first interview for each participant and also to prompt their thinking about workplace issues and wellbeing. The survey asked participants to provide additional demographic details compared to the screening tool, such as housing arrangements, family set-up, caregiver status, perceived social support, and length of time living in Australia. This provided additional and in-depth information about the participants which contributed to the construction of the cases (Stake, 2006). The survey also asked participants to conceptualise wellbeing according to their personal definition and to indicate what affected their wellbeing the most and the level of wellbeing they felt they were currently experiencing. In relation to work, the survey included questions relating to the nature of the participant's employment, their student status and the length of time they had been employed at Monash. This survey also prompted participants to write down how they described their employment status and their preferred terminology referring to their employment (e.g. casual, flexible, contract)

as well as indicating any governmental policies they knew of that were in-place to protect them at work. The pre-interview survey appears in the appendices (see Appendix D).

3.4.2.1. Staff engagement survey

Following these qualitative questions were 27 items taken from the *Monash University Staff Engagement Survey 2014* (Monash University, 2016a). This is an anonymous survey distributed to Monash staff regularly which proposes to gather feedback about the experiences of those working at Monash to help the university understand “where we are tracking well, and where we need to prioritise and plan for key improvements” (Monash University, 2016a, np). It was noted that this survey excludes casual, honorary and adjunct staff from participating and as such it was decided that participants of this research would be given the opportunity to answer some questions offered by this survey to ascertain information relating to their thoughts and experiences at Monash (and potentially compare these to the formal survey responses). Overall these survey questions were the least effective data collection method because while all participants responded to the questions, upon elaboration of their responses in the first interview it became clear that the questions were ambiguous and participants were uncertain as to how to respond to them. As such these survey responses have not been analysed due to their unreliability. This realisation further confirmed the need to address this research through qualitative methods that allow participants to express their perceptions and describe experiences in their own words with multiple avenues for clarification and discussion (Denzin, 2017). Interviewing also has the distinct advantage of allowing the researcher to “listen” to participant responses and follow-up on interesting points or clarify ambiguous questions at the time (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 361).

3.4.3. The three interview rounds

In order to gain a deep understanding of the experiences of participants it was decided that a multiple semi-structured interview approach would be most appropriate. All ten participants were interviewed face-to-face on three occasions throughout the year of 2015 with approximately three-four months between each interview (e.g. approximately March, July, November). When I present participant quotes in this thesis I indicate which interview the quote came from by following all quotes with the name of the participant followed by the interview number. For example, 'Jasmine1' indicates that the quote came from Jasmine's first interview transcript, 'Max2' indicates that the quote came from Max's second interview etc. All interviews, which were audio recorded, took place in quiet, private and neutral locations at Monash campuses most conveniently located to participants. The three general versions of the interview schedules are included in Appendix E of this thesis. These general schedules do not include individualised questions and also does not show the amendments made to interview schedules as interviews were carried out across participants and refinements made.

In his preferred definition of case study research Flyvbjerg (2011, p. 301) refers to "developmental factors" meaning that while the case is viewed as a whole, an understanding of the case "typically evolves in time, often as a string of concrete and interrelated events". Having multiple interviews at different times in the year enabled the analysis of the evolution of the cases. Another benefit was that participants come to know me which appeared to make them more comfortable during the interview. For example, I noted in my post-interview notes that in the second and third interviews participants appeared to be more relaxed in demeanour and also more reflexive when describing their situations and experiences. The interviews were thought-provoking for

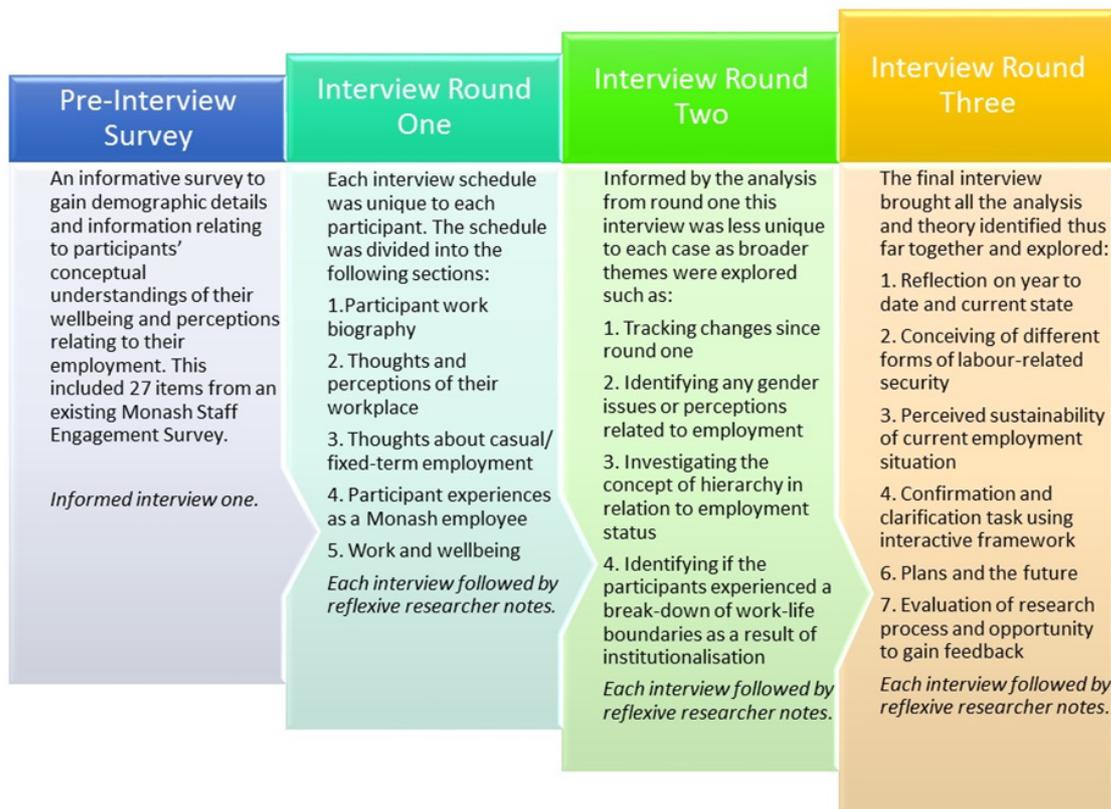
some participants, for example a participant stated in the second interview that "...these weren't really things that I thought about that much... after doing the interview I began looking into it and seeing what, you know, rights that I had in regards to this sort of work". Another participant used the interview dates as timeframes within which to achieve goals to discuss in the next interview. The multiple interview approach thus increased the rigour and depth of the study while also being beneficial for participants.

The interviews took between 30 and 120 minutes each depending on the participant and interview round. The first round of interviews were significantly longer in time than the second round of interviews which were typically the shortest interview round of the three. The third round was somewhere in-between in terms of interview length. The interview schedules were different each round as the initial data analysis of each round informed the next (see data analysis section below). Each schedule comprised of "initial questions" to gain background information and pave the way for "more probing questions" which formed "the core of the research" as they provided interviewees with an opportunity to "share experiences from which meaning may be derived" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 365).

Follow-up questions and member checking were also a common feature of the interviews as participants were encouraged to "verify or expand" using prompts during the interview sessions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 366). These verification questions were a particular feature of interview three, the final interview, where it was deemed crucial to ensure that "the interviewer understands the information correctly and that the interviewee has been given ample opportunity to share important information and perspectives" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 366). Member-checking is a useful technique for the "triangulation" of analysis (Stake, 2006, p. 77). The

following diagram depicts the methods used at each stage of data collection and topics addressed throughout the research process:

Table 7. Research process and data collection stages



3.5. Data collection and analysis

3.5.1. Round one

In the first round the interview questions were developed with the bioecological model in mind (Bone, 2015; Bronfenbrenner, 1999). The interview schedule covered a range of topics from individual biographical information through to contextual questions and lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. Each interview started with a re-cap of the study as per the explanatory statement sent to participants. Assurances were made that I would make efforts to protect the identity of participants and they were reminded that their Faculty, Department or School would not be identified in any publications and a

pseudonym used at all times. Participants were told that the objective of the interview was to hear their views and experiences and that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions that would be asked. I also said that if a question made them feel uncomfortable, they could choose not to respond. Respondents were assured they could terminate the interview at any time.

The interview schedule followed a logical flow addressing each topic area systematically. The main headings and brief explanations below directed the interview, for both researcher and participant, and these illustrate how the questions were organised in logical groups and how I guided the interview:

Section 1 – Firstly, I'd like to find out how you got here (biography)...

Section 2 – I now have a number of questions about your thoughts and perceptions of your workplace...

Section 3: The following questions relate to what you think about (casual or fixed-term) employment...

Section 4: Now to discuss some of your experiences as an employee...

Section 5: This last set of questions specifically relate to your wellbeing, please take your time answering these questions and provide as much detail as you feel comfortable...

Each interview in the first round also included participant-specific questions relating to information provided in the pre-interview survey. For example, 'In the pre-interview survey you indicated that... can you elaborate on why you responded in that way?' These were scattered throughout the interview as they related to the schedule sections.

3.5.1.1. Evolution of the interview schedule

As is common in qualitative research the interview schedule was not fixed or static but changed to accommodate improvements as and when was necessary. Savin-Baden and Major (2013, p. 370) point out that “ongoing question development is part of the flexible and iterative process of data collection, ongoing analysis and feedback”. In my research notes I highlighted the issues I encountered and these notes informed subsequent changes to the interview schedule. The biggest issue was time. The interviews were taking too long and the questions on wellbeing (a key interest of the research) was positioned at the end of the interview schedule. This caused me some stress as I became hyper-aware of the time during interviewing and fearful that there would not be enough time to address these wellbeing questions in-depth due to time constraints. Some of the earlier questions (sections one to four) elicited more descriptive responses from participants and while these descriptions were important I was ultimately trying to gain insights into experiences of wellbeing. It was decided that a more emotive and personal interview was desired instead of a descriptive, more distanced interview. This scheduling of questions from more descriptive, “linear” questions that make the participant comfortable leading into more complex questions to generate “in-depth data” is part of the process of forming “strong interview questions” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 364).

3.5.1.2. Round one data analysis

The interviews from round one produced an abundance of data resulting in a complex data set to navigate due to the comprehensive nature of the interview schedule. To gain an overall understanding of the data initially, the data were analysed across the cases which was unusual when considering multiple case study analysis (Stake, 2006). However, this overall approach was used to ascertain a general feel for the data and

I took a thorough approach to data analysis and organisation at multiple steps. I resisted getting stuck on any checklist proposed to guide the qualitative research method of analysis and rather stayed truthful to my objective, to uncover the voices of participants and formulate understanding of their experiences (Denzin, 2017). Denzin (2009, p. 149) notes that checklists (for example highlighting confirmability, credibility etc.) are characteristic of “old-fashioned, postpositivism, applying a soft quantitative grid (confirmability, hypotheses, credibility) to qualitative research”. This prescriptive approach was resisted and numerous ways to analyse the data were considered and I explored multiple thematic analysis methods according to what was required to uncover core themes (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Stake, 2006). These multiple thematic analyses steps are outlined in the table below:

Table 8. Multiple data analysis steps

Analysis technique	Description
Thematically identifying 'chunks' of data	Four transcripts were thematically coded on the computer using the highlighter function. It became obvious early-on that rich data had indeed been gathered and analysis would need to be thorough and detailed. The highlighter function was not enabling a satisfactory analysis as 1) the Word document features did not provide enough colours to match all the themes that were emerging, 2) the highlighting method did not allow coding one piece of data into two (or more) themes, and 3) it became too complicated to keep track of colours and themes. This initial step illuminated some core ideas present in the data (see Appendix F).
Mind-map	A mind-map was employed to organise themes and ideas that arose throughout the rest of the transcripts. This was again a 'messy' process but some clearly defined themes were identified in the process and this was a less intense way of managing initial ideas about the data without getting stuck on too many intricacies such as select examples or quotes (see Appendix G).
Coding	In a process of checking and re-checking the data one transcript was selected to code in detail and it was analysed over a number of weeks. Charmaz (2015, p. 1611) describes how coding is “a pivotal strategy for students to increase the analytic power of their work”. Ruby’s transcript was the longest and the most complicated from my perspective. As such, this interview was analysed in multiple

	<p>ways to ensure that initial analysis techniques were capturing the true essence of the interviews and data was being utilised in a way that was truthful.</p> <p>In conjunction with two other researchers Ruby's transcript was read and deciphered line-by-line in a process of "open-coding" which resulted in 16 pages of bullet points from a 27 page transcript (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 422). These bullet points were then (literally) cut-up into paper strips and glued to sheets of paper which were labelled with various themes as they emerged (see Appendix H) and this was a form of "axial coding" (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 242). The process involved much consultation, discussion and deliberation on thematic organisation with other researchers. The resulting themes were similar to the initial 'highlighter' coding and the 'mind-map' which was reassuring. By this stage there were clearly some dominant themes in the data that had emerged from three different rigorous analysis techniques (and in consultation with other researchers). Overall this coding technique was not adopted to analyse data across all the cases due to it being a rather "mechanical" method of analysis that did not yield as much creativity (nor diversity of themes) as the other techniques used (such as thematic analysis and mind-mapping) (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 720). Another approach was required.</p>
<p>Relating themes to the bioecological model</p>	<p>The next step was to see how the themes identified in all analysis techniques to date related to the bioecological model. The model was drawn and then themes placed onto the model as a way to relate themes to contextual factors. Data was dissected using the model and circles were drawn to represent the different aspects of the system (e.g. microsystem, exosystem, chronosystem etc.) then data was placed within these circles. Lines were drawn between the circles to represent the interconnected nature of the themes across the system as a whole as, for example, the broad theme 'life plans' was considered to be individual, as well as related to the micro- and chrono-systems (see Appendix I). This is because 'life plans' are a very personal issue (individual) but they often related to plans with friends and family (microsystem) and were often described in terms of time-frames (chronosystem).</p>
<p>NVivo</p>	<p>Finally, the use of NVivo helped to "manage and document the research process more effectively" in a way that did not "constrain or conceal the fluid and often serendipitous nature" of a qualitative researcher's work (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012, p. 819). This was largely because I had already analysed the data using multiple techniques before turning to this software. The nodes and sub-nodes (NVivo terminology for 'themes') were devised from the multiple data analysis techniques already used, however as any new themes emerged in the data these were added so that analysis was always exploratory and inductive (see Appendix J). All ten interviews were analysed in Nvivo prior to the second interview.</p>

3.5.2. Round two

The interview schedule for round two was not as unique to each participant as the first as personalised interview schedules were not deemed necessary at this stage. Comparisons between participants were sought and therefore a level of uniformity among subject matter was desirable. Interviews for this round were shorter, lasting between 30 minutes and an hour each. The second interview schedule did not change as much as in the first round as there were not as many time pressures and the questions were more focussed upon certain areas and topics rather than being more broad and exploratory (see Appendix E).

The interview schedule was developed from themes that emerged from the previous round of interviews and also included questions surrounding issues that required further exploration: 1) how gender dynamics operated within the university and whether gender factored into the experience and perceptions of precarious employees, 2) whether participants were aware of hierarchical structures operating with the university between employees of differing employment status (e.g. 'casual' or 'fixed-term' in comparison to 'ongoing/tenured' staff (informed by Kimber, 2003 and May et al., 2013), 3) how the concept of 'institutionalisation' fit with the participants' experiences or work. The 'institutionalisation' questions were initially informed by a theme from round one that prompted me to engage with Goffman's (1961) theorising of the total institution, however after my analysis of the second interview transcripts I turned towards Coser's (1967) metaphor for the greedy institution.

3.5.2.1. Round two data analysis

The analysis of the second round of interviewing involved trawling for themes and the responses specifically related to the questions about university structures were

particularly interesting. As a result, it was decided that this subject matter would be explored further. During this analysis the theory of the 'greedy institution' (Coser, 1967), and a recent paper by Sullivan (2014) relating this theory to the university workplace, were discovered and found to be valuable resources in exploring some of the data in a process of meaning-making (Stake, 2006). Much analysis and writing relating to the 'greedy institution' theory occurred within the few months between round two and three. In this phase an analytically derived typology was conceptualised. In a creative process of data trawling and note taking the participants were compared for similarities and differences and then grouped into "types" (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 341). This typology was further explored in the third round of interviewing.

3.5.3. Round three

The third round of interviewing acted as a review interview for the entire year. This interview offered opportunities for participants to reflect on their year and to hear about some of the data analysis I had conducted, and provide openings for participants to confirm the analysis or add clarifications or explanations as required (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). This interactive third interview was devised in order to increase the trustworthiness of the study by confirming the accuracy of my portrayal of the participant voices and meanings (Denzin, 2017). The questions for this final interview were also informed by literature such as Standing's (2011) seven forms of labour security which were examined by a set of questions. A number of questions addressed participant thoughts on the sustainability of their employment status and their plans for the following year and this directly related to the chronosystem (Bone, 2015; Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

As well as this, participants were asked to offer their thoughts on my typology. In this process participants were not asked to deal with theory, but rather with how I

developed the “types” and where they felt situated in this typology (Knights & Clarke, 2014). Participants were given a highlighter pen and asked to mark a sheet of paper provided to them. The paper presented statements reflecting ways of enacting being an academic (derived from the data), and participants were asked to indicate which enactments most reflected their experiences. Comment on their reasons for selecting certain statements on the list that they felt reflected their situation were encouraged. I also explained where I had placed them within the typology based on their data to date. This was an honest and transparent way to relay to participants some of the data analysis and provide an opportunity for in-put (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). The full interview schedule appears in Appendix E complete with hand-outs.

3.5.3.1. Round three data analysis

The third interview transcripts were analysed creating participant case profiles to ensure that key features of the data directly related to my research question were identified (Stake, 2006). The objective was to bring all the data together and create case overviews and a cross-case analysis with a sharp focus on the quintain (Stake, 2006). This final analysis was thematic and holistic, looking at all aspects of each case and searching across cases for patterns and significant social issues to bring forward in the write-up (Denzin, 2017; Guest et al., 2012; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013).

Once I had all three rounds of interview data I began to draw-out diversity and similarities across the cases and used Giddens’ (1984) theory of structuration to engage with a more theoretically-informed analysis. I identified a number of key concepts from his work which helped me to generate rich analysis about the experiences of participants and how these were informed by recursive social practices that were reproduced over time in relation to the structures of their work (Giddens, 1984). Using the theory of structuration as a lens, I considered how knowledge about

work practices was produced in the participants' work environments and how participants' understandings about normative and valued academic enactments informed their reproductive social actions (Giddens, 1984). Also, the concept of ontological security provided a particularly useful way to conceive of how participants' experiences were related to wellbeing.

Engagement with Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) concepts helped me to consider the analytical divide between the participants' spatio-temporal experiences which prompted my consideration of the long-term effects and implications of precarious work for the participants. These concepts sharpened my development of the typology related to Coser's (1967) greedy institution metaphor (relating to 'spatial' experience). As Alvesson (2010, p. 196) points out "a typology is not without mixed blessings, but makes it easier to remember and consider alternative reference points for thinking". These reference points help in the portrayal of complex data.

Working with Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) ideas also assisted in my development of three analytically derived future-orientation classifications (relating to 'temporal' experience). Devising future-orientations in the analysis of data assisted the presentation of research findings in a way that represented the lived experience of participants (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 375). These analytical techniques were used as heuristic devices to accessibly portray "complex nuances" in the findings (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 341). Engaging with Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration and other core concepts (ontological security, reflexivity, identity, power) enabled me to sharpen my analysis and construct my findings with a strong sociological base.

3.6. Quality of the research

The interview data was analysed using widely accepted, rigorous techniques (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). A healthy balance between theoretical engagement and empirical research was achieved, as shown in the ways in which theory was applied to the data collection and analysis processes (MacLure, 2011, p. 998). Themes emerged through the data and in turn these themes prompted engagement with certain theories and fields of literature that were valuable in adding meaning to the research findings. My research does attend to the “Big-Tent” criteria for evaluating excellent qualitative research proposed by Tracy (2010), such as rich rigor, sincerity, and credibility. However, as noted earlier, I resist conforming to a postpositivist checklist (Denzin, 2009) in the evaluation of my research and rather value its quality based around the ability to engage in ethical work and create a positive difference (Denzin, 2017). These moral criteria can only be evaluated in relation to the final product of my work and influence it might have to policy and the real-world, in conjunction with attending to moral and ethical considerations associated with producing trustworthy and conscientious research (Denzin, 2017). The steps taken to ensure the latter moral standing of my research will now be outlined.

3.6.1. Researcher reflexivity: Post-interview notes

An important feature of clarifying and managing impressions was captured in the reflexive post-interview notes (Creswell, 2013). After every interview post-interview notes were written-up and these reflections included comment on aspects that stood-out from the interview, the overall feel of the interview, themes that were dominant or unique, as well as thoughts on the process. This created time to be aware of feedback. For example, evaluating the effectiveness of particular questions, the flow of the interview and identifying whether amendments/improvements were required.

Dominant themes and threads that were impressionistic from the interview were noted down and often the first stage of analysis started here by relating comments to literature or theories or by highlighting unique features of the case or interview to further develop in the analysis. The overall mood and feel of the interview was noted as a way of providing more context to the transcribed words of the participants. Impressions were monitored through the use of these notes as feelings and thoughts associated with the interviews were written down in a way that was un-filtered and raw. This reflexivity enabled a heightened awareness of feelings associated with certain participants and their interview responses so that these might be uncovered in later analyses to provide a broader, more holistic picture of the data (Creswell, 2013).

Part of this reflexivity involved being aware of my position as a peer to the participants with insider status to the participant group (Costley et al., 2010). This meant monitoring the focus on participant experiences, rather than my own views or experiences or dominant perspectives in the field. I felt a sense of obligation to represent the participants in a way that was honest and to serve my peer-group well in this regard. This is the reason why I carried out such extensive member checking and also continually asked myself “am I serving my participants well and being honest?” In the end, being a peer (same age, same stage) to the participants actually increased the trustworthiness of the study as many of the participants felt they could talk openly and honestly during the interviews. Three participants even stated that they would not have participated in the study had it been conducted by a more senior academic researcher.

As well as feeling this level of mutual understanding and trust associated by being interviewed by a peer, the participants conveyed a general level of comfort and ease associated with the interviews. Participants used the words “relaxing”, “comfortable”, “helpful” and “easy” to describe their interview experiences and nearly all of them said

the research was interesting and helped them to reflect on their own situation and realise they were not alone in their situation.

Likewise, my involvement in this research has changed my perspectives about the state of precarious academic work and wellbeing and has made me feel less alone in my position as a young researcher. Indeed, along with many of the participants of the study, I became increasingly critical of the higher education sector's use of precarious employment. This is the type of awareness which Denzin (2017) suggests is an essential indicator of critical and contemporary qualitative research because self-awareness and self-change denotes the beginning of broader social change.

3.6.2. Member checking

Part of increasing this awareness stemmed from the process of member checking employed during interview three. I checked the data analysis to date by relaying my analysis onto participants and asking for their comment and feedback as “participants can be engaged in checking interpretations of the data, in seeking alternate interpretations, and in exploring their implications” (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 72). This meant that a lot of emphasis was placed on participant voice. Punch and Oancea (2014, p. 72) describe how sometimes it can be tempting for researchers to take on the role of activism, advocacy or support and as such it is necessary to “maintain a balance between rigour in research and care for the participants and their setting”. There was no boundary crossing in this regard although I have had to work hard to resist allowing old stereotypes to influence my analysis. Indeed, throughout my PhD experience it has been evident that most people have an opinion about precarious employment, especially within the higher education sector. Much of my professional contact has been with academics who have often shared their perspectives with me on this topic leading me to realise that researchers need to be conscious of pervasive

ideologies surrounding their research topic and protective of their research so that these do not dictate the research findings. Emphasis on focussing on what the participant's perspectives were, the "participants' meaning" rather than the perspectives of the researcher (Creswell, 2013, p. 47), is a key aspect of ethical qualitative research (Denzin, 2017).

3.6.3. Limitations

This study is both strengthened and limited by the case study design I chose to employ as my methodology. The multiple case study design, following the tradition of Stake (2006), allows for the examination of the phenomenon under question, the "quintain", by viewing the cases as instrumental to answering the research question. This means that the cases are viewed in combination to one another, and the research objective, rather than having stand-alone status. Another way of conducting this research might have been to select fewer cases and view each participant as a self-contained case. In this scenario, data would have been collected from multiple sources such as interviews with the participant, their workplace supervisors, family members, or managerial members of the university such as heads of department or chancellors. I might have also analysed university reports or documentation in order to understand the case better. Instead of this, I focussed on each participant as part of the collection of cases helping me to answer the research questions. There are strengths and weaknesses of both options. Perhaps more rounded accounts of precarious employment, and the structures of this, might have been enhanced by interviewing university management or those supervisors of precarious employees. However, this would have required many less cases and presented ethical challenges in terms of identifying participants.

3.7. Ethics

A low-risk ethics application detailing this study was approved by MUHREC (see Appendix K for approval letter) and all research was carried out according to the Committee's strict guidelines regarding confidentiality, informed consent, and storage of data. Certain questions and themes that were considered to be potentially distressing to participants were clearly outlined in the explanatory statement so that participants could make an informed judgement about whether or not to participate in the study. This was to avoid negatively surprising participants and to provide an avenue for participants to withdraw early from the project if they deemed the topic too sensitive for them. Only one participant became distressed during the first interview upon disclosing an experience of being sexually harassed at the university. The interview was stopped and the participant was given the contact details of counselling services and encouraged to seek support if necessary. This data was also removed from the analysis due to its sensitive nature and the fact that the incident occurred prior to the participants' engagement in precarious work at the university. Under the advice of supervisors, I contacted this participant on a number of occasions after the interview to reiterate services available and show concern for her wellbeing. The participant, after a break, wanted to continue with the interview and finished the interview and carried on to complete all three interviews.

At all stages of the research the people involved were conceptualised as 'participants' meaning "a person who takes part in something" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2016). Woodhead and Faulkner (2008, p.19) point out the increasing regulation of ethical guidelines in research whereby participants are no longer referred to objectively as 'subjects' and are better characterised by the term 'participant'. Instead of being an

object of scientific experimentation, those taking part in research should be treated with respect and therefore informed consent and confidentiality must be granted and avoidance of deception and harm is essential for ethical research (Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008, p.19). Also, respect must be paid to participants and their perspectives in the dissemination process so that the data reflects what the participants have reported to the researcher (David & Sutton, 2004, p.28).

The participants were invited at various stages to take part in the research by: 1) being sent their transcripts and given two weeks to make changes to them, 2) being interviewed on multiple occasions to enable multiple opportunities to convey their thoughts (and reflect upon these) and, 3) having an interactive phase in the third interview where participants were invited to check and clarify their data and my reading of it. After one interview from round three I reflected upon this technique which appeared to be a success. The reflexive notes read:

I feel that after I gave Olivia the pen and she had the paper in front of her she became much more authoritative and was really able to clarify things and speak her mind and reflect as well. I guess because it was about her experiences, her data and her voice – there was a sense of ownership in this section of the interview that was very insightful and enjoyable as a researcher. Things became clear (post-interview notes).

In my mind, as a qualitative researcher, this method of consultation and further discussion with the participants was respectful as it increased the opportunity for participants to voice their perspectives and make sure they were being represented in a way that was truthful and thus meaningful in the research (Denzin, 2017). It was at this final stage of interviewing that participants became aware of the level of analysis

that had already occurred using their research data and the amount of information they had disclosed during the three interviews. A number of participants commented on this and asked for reassurance with regards to concealing their identity.

Throughout the research the biggest ethical issue faced by me was protecting the identity of participants. Due to the sensitivity of participants disclosing information about their employment at the university it was necessary to take extra precautions to protect the identity of participants. I did this by never disclosing the Faculty each participant worked within and by making sure not to portray too much specific information about a participant in a single description plus eliminating details deemed too identifying from the data. I also had to resist pressure from the university to disclose the names of participants for financial reimbursement purposes. As I provided each of the participants with \$20 at the end of each interview (as approved by MUHREC) the university asked that I collect participant names/signatures to reflect that they received the money. I got around the issue by signing a statutory declaration myself instead. I also often saw participants around the university and when I did I smiled and said 'hello' but avoided getting into conversations with participants in case this made them feel vulnerable to being exposed as a participant.

3.8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research is guided by a multi-case research methodology (Stake, 2006) underpinned by the paradigm of social constructivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) and a social-ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). These methodological features have informed the qualitative methods used to carry out the research which have included the careful selection of participants/cases, pilot interviewing, a pre-interview survey and three rounds of interviewing with each of the ten participants. The

consecutive stages of data collection and analysis have been described step-by-step and this process was ongoing, informative, iterative and cyclical (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). Various measures were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study in a bid to research ethically and with moral endeavours in mind (Denzin, 2017). Key ethical considerations have surrounded the protection of participants and include protecting participant data from misrepresentation and taking strict measures to conceal participant identity.

Chapter Four: Spatial aspects of precarious work - being/becoming an academic

In this chapter I analyse the participants' lived experience of precarious work and wellbeing by focussing on how they made sense of their 'becoming' academics in the context of work at Monash. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first explores ways in which participants made sense of their experiences by coming to understand normative and valued ways of being an academic. The knowledge that participants accessed provided them with a lived structure (norms, roles, culture) through which they enacted their identities and experiences as normative everyday actions and practices. This in turn shaped and constrained their experiences, possibilities and identities. This section makes use of Giddens (1984, p. 30) explanation that participants make sense of their actions by drawing on "stocks of knowledge" and through their "reflexive interpretation of the world" (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014, p. 237). In the second part of the chapter I show how participants draw on the stocks of knowledge available to them to guide their enactments of being and becoming academics and highlight how exploitation within the university operates as a legitimate practice; this is explored through engagement with the metaphor of Coser's (1967) 'greedy institution'. In the third section the analysis is synthesised and an empirically derived typology, comprising three 'types', presents different lived experiences within the greedy institution. The typology is a useful explanatory tool because the three 'types' refer to the ways participants enacted being/becoming academics in a process of co-constructing academic work practices and preferred identities. This builds theory regarding the way participants engage in identity work through enactments of institutional compliance as a prescribed strategy to mitigate identity threats and build ontological security.

Structuration is used in the chapter to address various processes of meaning making, legitimation, and negotiations of power, that contribute to how participants are shaped in their experiences of becoming academics (Giddens', 1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994). The reflexive and recursive nature of agency and structure is apparent when participants act reflexively in relation to the information that comes to them within the institutional structures of the university. This recursive action justifies and verifies the legitimacy of certain structures that limits their agency. Coser's (1967) metaphor of the

greedy institution is used in the analysis to provide insight into how the university legitimates rules that contribute to participants' normative understandings and enactments. A greedy institution seeks to take more and more time away from the individual in order to control the person's energy and devotion to activities associated with the institution (in this case, Monash). In this way, it demands "total allegiance" from its members by seeking out three key things: commitment, time and energy (Coser, 1967, p.198). Throughout the chapter, I highlight how the institutional structures of Monash could be greedy, and how lived experience of the greedy institution was legitimated through normalised understandings of what it meant to work at Monash/in academia. As I indicate later in the chapter, participants were also the creators of the structures that limited them in the university context.

I relate these legitimation processes, and the recursive social practices of participants, to Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) concept of ontology security, in conjunction with notions surrounding identity work and identity threats (Brown & Coupland, 2015; Collinson, 2003; Fitzmaurice, 2013; McCabe, 2011; Wieland, 2010). I make connections throughout the chapter that explain how participants 'learn' to be academics through the lived experience of a precarious work which influences their identity constructions and feelings of ontological security. These key theories and concepts related to each other in their analytical power. They explain how social practices, related to being/becoming an academic, are constructed through relations of power and recursive action that affect wellbeing. For example, I highlight how the participants closely relate their identity constructions and feelings of ontological security to academic work. Ontological security refers to "the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action" (Giddens, 1991a, p. 93). In this way, ontological security is linked to notions of identity as it refers to feelings of security, trust, sense of familiarity, and the reliability of interactions across time and space. I draw attention to instances when the participants' identity narratives and ontological security were disrupted due to their perceived vulnerability as precarious workers, who could be excluded from employment at Monash.

A complex picture of the lived experience of wellbeing is presented throughout the chapter, and at the end of the chapter the analysis in this regard is synthesised. Overall the chapter highlights how participants experienced two main types of wellbeing

threats. The first stemmed from a fear of being excluded from work at Monash, and this was closely related to their identity constructions and desire for ontological security. All participants were negatively affected by precarious employment in this way. The second wellbeing threat was associated with the, sometimes overwhelming, effect of continuing work at Monash. This negatively affected the participants who were being heavily exploited and felt burnt-out and anxious as a result of their day-to-day working lives. Often these wellbeing experiences worked in complex ways to highlight the interrelatedness between participants' wellbeing, identity constructions, and feelings of security and trust.

Due to the heterogeneous nature of work at the university, with various faculties, departments and schools, references to 'the university' or 'the institution' in this chapter should be read with caution. The organisational culture of the workplaces of each participant was different depending on their supervisor and department. Some generalisations of 'the institution' create an ideology that the university is a cohesive whole whereas arguably the homogenous 'institution' does not exist in this way. Therefore, the phrase 'greedy institution' might more appropriately be used to refer to specific work contexts within the university thus acknowledging diversity, as well as being a metaphor for understanding how work experience within the university is shaped, and (re)shaped through recursive actions.

In this chapter I place more focus on some participants more than others, namely Jasmine and Will. The reason for this is because Jasmine and Will represent more extreme cases which provides rich information about how young academics experience precarious employment, and its effects on wellbeing. In this way, their cases are most useful in terms of answering the research question. Flyvbjerg (2006, p. 229) argues:

...extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied...it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur.

The cases of central focus in this chapter are used as rich examples of the phenomenon under study and as such facilitate an engaging analysis and deep

contribution to new knowledge (Brown & Coupland, 2015, p. 1319). This aligns with Stake's (2006) contention that in case study research it is important to continually consider what needs to be known and thought about in order to draw-out relevant information that answers the research question.

To begin the chapter, ways of learning and knowing will be discussed as these conceptions highlight how participants constructed their experiences of becoming academics.

4.1. Part 1: Learning about academic norms and values

...an overall trend in academia is that people are saying it's not that secure and a lot of reform should happen before it sort of matches the investment that students put in to get to that position (Charlie1).

Participants were located in a knowledge-rich environment where they accessed formal and informal information about the rules and resources contributing to their lived experience of precarious work. They constructed understandings of what being an academic entailed from informal avenues: speaking with friends, colleagues, supervisors, listening to presentations from leaders in the field, reading emails and seeing media coverage of academic employment issues, as well as observing normative social practices in the workplace. Giddens (1984, p. 6) describes how people rationalise their actions through a "theoretical understanding" of what they are doing and why. This is linked to the reflexive monitoring of action as agents consider the intentions of their actions and are usually "able to explain most of what they do" (Giddens, 1984, p. 7). Charlie's quote above refers to what "*people are saying*" and suggests common narratives that surround academic employment insecurity. This type of understanding contributed to the participants' theoretical understanding of the nature of academic work as being risky, uncertain and often disappointing. Participants often compared the extent of precarious work in academia with other employment in order to highlight and legitimise the unusual characteristics of the academic career pathway:

You're going to get a lot more perks and a lot more pay [in industry], you get a lot more and better conditions everything like that you learn to get in an industrial job and you're going to get a better career path, a better

defined career path. There's, you know, there's a lot of things that you forgo by having an academic career (Logan1).

Logan did not refer to the source of this information but rather implied that it was common knowledge that academia did not offer a predictable career trajectory or as many perks as other industries. Mia also acknowledged this when she said “*I think there is a lot of fear of working in academia and what it involves*” (Mia1). These participants were referring to the structural properties of academic work whereby they perceived academia to be inherently insecure, non-linear and uncertain, with the effect of contributing to a lived experience of insecurity, fear, and anxiety. Knowledge was derived from a combination of discursive interactions and personal experience that contributed to understandings of “normative regulation” (Giddens, 1984, p. 32). All participants described the pitfalls of academia to be embedded within the normative characteristics of academic employment, such as precariousness, lack of recognition, and over-commitment on behalf of the worker.

Participant understandings were reinforced by their actual working conditions at Monash that were normalised through the University’s practices and policies relating to casual and fixed-term work. On a structural level this relates to Giddens’ contention that “structure is not ‘external’ to individuals: as memory traces, and as instantiated in social practices, it is in a certain sense more ‘internal’ than exterior to their activities...” (Giddens, 1984, p. 26). Giddens (1984) refers to the way in which agents’ knowledgeability about legitimate social practices influences their actions which then in turn (re)creates the structures of society. For example, Logan’s knowledgeability about the pay, conditions and career-path that academia offers, provided him with a normative frame of reference on which he could base his actions. Logan, with this knowledge, could choose to stay in academia and “*forgo*” certain things, or might have alternatively decided to leave based on his understanding of these pitfalls. He did not leave because in contradiction to his statement, Logan had actually worked in a number of industry jobs where his job security was even less stable than his current academic appointment. Also, he constructed his identity around being a researcher and desired continuity in this narrative. As a fixed-term employee, he felt he could maintain this sense of ontological security for the length of the contract, which was more than he could say for the string of casual jobs he had previously experienced. In

this sense, his current post was marginally more secure and it supported his personal identity narrative and feelings of ontological security in the short term.

4.1.1. Seeking solace

Jasmine sought most of her support from friends, other Early Career Researchers (ECRs), and her sister (also an ECR). She learned how to be and become an academic by regularly communicating with her peers and by sharing experiences related to academic practices. This was a form of collective support and their discussions reinforced the veracity of their experiences which further legitimated the embeddedness of precarious employment in academia. She was part of an ECR group that regularly met and she said they “*moaned*” and “*complained*” about their experiences as young academics:

...talking to my friends and people in the ECR group it is that communal moaning kind of thing, which is cathartic and helpful in that respect. But it is not going anywhere, we are all complaining about the same things we face, we just complain about it because we have got to tell it to someone who can understand... this [being interviewed] is far more helpful, sort of being able to think through, I guess, sort of the instinctive complaints we have and actually go, well, what are the real effects of it and is it worth it. Because it does make you think about, not only what you are doing and what you are putting into the job but that reassessing kind of thing. Am I really, is it worth what I am doing, you know? I guess the questions that you pose around wellbeing and you know the impact on different aspects of life and stuff like that. It does, you can sort of, even as you are complaining about the same problem, you can cover up what the impacts and effects on you. I found it quite useful talking to you about it and thinking about it (Jasmine3)

Highlighted in this quote is how Jasmine differentiated between habitual practices of complaining with peers, to serious reflexive thought processes where she asked herself serious questions, such as: “*Is it worth what I am doing?*” This suggests that Jasmine had limited opportunities to review and re-evaluate her position as a precarious academic, suggesting that her capabilities to reflexivity monitor her action

were restricted. Without reflexivity, it is difficult to act in ways contrary to normative social practices (Giddens, 1984). Probing and reflexive questions, Giddens (1991b) argues, are central when living in late modernity due to the plurality of options available to individuals and necessity to make self-reflexive choices. However, participants often felt stifled and unable to make certain choices in the face of disadvantage and diminished feelings of wellbeing. This led to their covering-up the impact and effects of working within an institution that was greedy because their time and energy was consumed.

Decisions and actions are embedded in normative practices that shape interactions and limit knowledge about choices. Participants gained understandings about how to make choices and act through their social interactions with other academics (Giddens, 1984). The solidarity and cohesion that these closed-circuit relationships foster are explained by Johnson (2008, p. 255):

The highest level of solidarity and identification might be expected in communities with extensive social relations that are limited mostly to fellow members. Thus members of a residential community, a religious organization, a local social club or professional organization, or any other type of group will exhibit higher cohesion if their close relationships are mostly with one another.

Jasmine found meetings with other ECRs, whom she identified with in the way Johnson (2008) describes, as being different to gatherings she had with senior academics. The meetings with the ECRs contributed to her sense of ontological security as she was able to establish a level of continuity and trust in the group of which she felt a part. She did not have the same level of social cohesion with senior academics. Jasmine said she often went drinking with her supervisors and that this was where *“you learn all kinds of things”* (Jasmine3). These things related to departmental budgetary concerns, plans to hire within the department, and listening to senior academics complain about senior management at the university. This information was not a supportive network, but was rather an event where knowledge was gleaned. Jasmine questioned the reliability of this information, as she said *“they [senior academics] are happy to say that when they are having a few drinks”* (Jasmine3). This showed a certain level of distrust of senior academics that was not

present when she described the conversations she had with ECRs. According to Johnson (2008, p. 255) this is because bounded relationships increase “community identification” and Jasmine identified much more with the ECRs than the senior academics. The ECRs shared common experiences and this legitimised her position and feelings of ontological security. Jasmine understood the hierarchical nature of employment status differentials at the university, and these hierarchical relationships will now be discussed.

4.1.2. Tearoom talk: Hierarchical reinforcement

Will described a process whereby his identity narrative of being an academic, and the ontological security associated with keeping this narrative going, often felt threatened as a result of interactions that signified his low status and vulnerability at the university. Will reported that conversations about the issue of precarious employment would often spontaneously arise in the tearoom and as such he referred to these encounters as “tearoom talk” (Will1). Will described instances where tenured staff members would compare their position to his in a way that highlighted his unfortunate situation:

*Well **my** position's secure and thank goodness **I'm** not on a fixed-term contract because that'd worry **me**... **you're** new so **you** have to get good evaluations because **your** probation is in a year and a half and **you** need to achieve that to be able to stay here (Will1 – my emphasis).*

Will found this type of interaction highly distressing. I have emphasised the personal pronouns in this data as they reflect what Goffman (1961, p.7) refers to as “talk across the boundaries” where “social distance is typically great and often formally prescribed” in hierarchical institutional settings. Goffman (1961, p.8) claims that this talk, in this case between a tenured staff member and Will, is often conducted “in a special tone of voice” that highlights structural discrepancies among people. This relates to Giddens’ (1984, p. 7) concepts of signification and reflexivity in that information is coded in the practice of communication which prompts people to think how to act within normative social structures. In this example, the communication signified that a worker in Will’s position should feel insecure and anxious within the university, thus legitimising his fears associated with precarious work.

The signification of social structures need not be communicated only through words. Logan described how despite having his PhD, and being employed by the university in a full-time capacity, he still spent most of his time “*hanging out with the PhD students*” because he felt aligned with their position (Logan2). Logan knew that tenured and precarious employees were treated differently within his department because precarious workers were not given private office spaces but rather worked in an open-plan space with the students. This experience signified his lowly position and legitimated a status divide between senior academics, ECRs, and precarious workers, whose position was assumed to be similar to students (as aspirants or apprentices). The power of the institution in the allocation of office space was applied in a way that underscored his insignificance. Most of the participants understood their position at the university to be similar to an apprentice and they described either playing supporting roles to senior academics or trying to leverage their position to join those in more secure and privileged positions.

Tenured academics were in more powerful and privileged positions to the participants and were enablers, or supporters, of the precarious workers. Even so, some of their comments, from an outside perspective, appear very patronising. Will said that tenured academics might say to him:

***We** do want **you** here, like **you** are passionate, **you** are the right person for the job. Yes **you** don't have ten years of industry experience but **we** can support **you** for what **you** need to do **your** job” (Will1 – my emphasis).*

Will was positioned as a needy benefactor of support from others, which contributed to his anxiety around needing to prove himself in order to be thought worthy to be an academic. Tweedie (2016), claims that the power dynamic between secure and precarious staff in university departments “gives permanent staff considerable proxy-employer powers” as “securely employed academics can effectively hire and fire their casual colleagues” (Tweedie, 2016, np). Jasmine highlighted these proxy-employer powers by describing the dynamic between precariously employed academics (who she characterised as being slightly ‘outside’ academia) in contrast to tenured staff (who were seen as powerful and capable of offering or withholding support as

academic ‘insiders’). Highlighting this divide, Jasmine’s “I” statements quickly became replaced with “we” as she aligned herself with the casual group:

*...the people [tenured academics] in actuality are quite happy to see **me** succeed and you know if there was something that **they** could do to help with that, that wasn’t going to inconvenience **them**, **they** would... but I know that **they** are also very mindful of the fact that **they** can only do so much to encourage **us** whilst still representing the department and the University... as much as **they** want to see **us** do well, **they** will also, there is still that feeling of there’s going to be a cut-off point as well. Like I am sort of waiting for that. At the moment it is going okay but I am wondering when it is going to get to the point where **they** want to distance again (Jasmine3 – my emphasis).*

“Me” suddenly became “us” as Jasmine revealed two camps– the “us” of casual academics and the “them” of the tenured academics. Jasmine’s quote emphasises her experience and understanding of the various constraints that operate within the university that shape the reality of her working life, and perceptions of self (Wieland, 2010). She struggled to maintain a sense of coherency in her identity as an academic worker, and therefore sought this sense of ontological security by aligning herself with her other casual colleagues who experienced a sense of stability in their position as academic hopefuls.

4.1.3. Identity work involved in dealing with identity threats

Ontological security is reflected in feelings of stability, trust and the reliability of people and things (Giddens, 1991a). Without being able to rely on the support of the university to provide continuous employment, the participants sought-out ontological security through informal networks, sharing experiences, and actions that they perceived to be complementary to sustaining their position at the university. They sought reinforcement of the continuity and coherence of their self-constructions from other ECRs whose similar situation legitimated their experiences as aspiring academics. These relationships also operated within “social and material environments of action” that the participants could trust would continue, which contributed to their sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1991a, p. 93). In this way, participants’ wellbeing was supported by friends and networks who sympathised with

their experience and shared similar experiences to them, thus contributing to an ongoing identity narrative of striving, endurance, and being part of a young academic group. Wellbeing was supported by these experiences that solidified their position as young academics and contributed to their feelings of ontological security.

Participants' wellbeing was threatened by their understandings that, as precarious workers, they were vulnerable, low status, and dependent, as this contributed to feelings of anxiety, distress, and pressure to perform. These lived experiences of anxiousness were the result of feeling continually at-risk of being excluded from Monash because the participants closely associated their personal identities with Monash and the academic profession. Fitzmaurice (2013, p. 614) notes that for academics "there is an ongoing process of identity construction and deconstruction" with "considerable emotional and intellectual work involved in this endeavour". Part of this work involves dealing with "identity threats" (Brown & Coupland, 2015, p. 1315) to avoid experiences of "unbecoming" (Colley, James, & Diment, 2007, p. 178). Participants felt that losing their job would endanger their ontological security as their sense of self-coherency was tied to being good and worthy academic workers. Brown and Coupland (2015, p. 1316) claim that "organizational employees often regard their work identities as imperilled, menaced and fragile" (Brown & Coupland, 2015, p. 1316). Fragile work identities contribute to negative wellbeing outcomes when, like the participants of this research, workers closely align their personal identity to their job and profession. I found that anxiety was provoked when participants felt their academic identities were under treat due to being precarious workers and to not being certain that their position within academia would continue.

Precariously employed academics often struggle with being positioned as illegitimate or inauthentic professionals in comparison to their tenured colleagues:

...the mechanisms through which contract researchers are rendered marginal and inauthentic are not only explicit (e.g. short-term contract) but can also be subtle and enacted in a myriad of 'small acts' and everyday injustices which become engrained with the daily cultures of institutions (Archer, 2008, p. 396).

Many, not all, participants reported experiencing subtle acts that highlighted their fragile position within academia. These acts included: being the focus of conversations

about job insecurity, not being given an office space or being paid for their work, being excluded from performance reviews, having their employment conditions changed, and not being supported to engage in professional activities (such as attending conferences or publishing). These everyday injustices posed identity threats that disrupted participants' sense of ontological security as they were made to feel insignificant and vulnerable to exclusion from their workplace.

Participants referred to the power of other academics to “deploy (chronically, in the flow of daily life) a range of causal powers” (Giddens, 1984, p. 15), such as the ability for “*them*” to “*cut-off*” casual academics and create “*distance*” which would then have the causal effect of unemployment and alienation (Jasmine3). In this way, identity threats were also wellbeing threats as participants were often haunted by their precarious positions which caused high levels of stress and contributed to feelings of worthlessness and vulnerability. Will, for example, mentioned the word “*probation*” twenty-five times during his first interview and he had a tangible fear that if he, or any of his colleagues, did not meet their probation objectives then it would be “*goodbye*” (Will1). At Monash, both continuing/tenured and fixed-term academics are subject to a probationary period of “five years’ service or 50% of the period of the fixed-term contract, whichever is the shorter” (Monash University, 2014, np). This means that for the first half of a fixed-term contract, or five years of a tenured appointment, academics are effectively ‘on trial’ as they endeavour to meet the performance indicators set for them by the institution. This probation period is markedly insecure and the policy states that “Before the end of the staff member’s probationary period, the University may: confirm the appointment in accordance with the contract of employment; or terminate the appointment” (Monash University, 2014, np). This adds another layer of precariousness at the university because even those in seemingly more secure positions, working as ‘tenured’ academics, are still vulnerable to dismissal until their appointment has been confirmed.

The participants all knew, as Mike put it, that Monash could “*get rid of people*” by simply not offering them another contract (Mike3). As such, the precarious nature of their employment did not present “idle threats” (Archer, 2008, p. 391) but rather very real worries of “unbecoming” (Colley et al., 2007, p. 177). Many participants experienced visceral fear that their academic identity would no longer be associated with Monash, and having sometimes witnessed this happening to their colleagues,

these anxieties were heightened. Part of this was because participants held Monash in high-esteem, but also it was linked to their connections to Monash: often having been students at Monash for years. They also noted that it took a long time to become familiar with the norms and systems embedded in the institution.

4.2. Bridging narratives

The following two case-study narratives highlight how two participants tried to develop a “successful’ career” by conforming to the structural norms of their workplaces (Collinson, 2003, p. 536). These “thick” case study descriptions act as a bridge between this first section, concerned with participants’ understandings of their position as precarious workers, and the second section, focussed on how participants utilised their agency through the reflexive monitoring of their enactments in being/becoming academics (Merriam, 2009, p. 44; Stake, 2006, p. 4). I show how participants continually monitored the “flow of their activities” by reflexively considering how to act as academics in a bid to achieve a sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1984, p. 6).

4.2.1. Jasmine’s story: Responding to advice and competing demands

When I first met Jasmine she impressed me as a well-presented and together young woman with a real go-getter attitude. In my research notes I commented that Jasmine was thoughtful during the interviews and expressed herself articulately. I found it quite startling that she could speak so fluently and confidently about the academic profession. Jasmine had her PhD and a diverse employment history within Monash, and she had really made it her business to gain advice from multiple people within academia about how to develop a “successful’ career” (Collinson, 2003). Her confidence in relaying this information highlighted her intense desire to become an academic and she had invested significantly in pursuit of this goal. She came across as a very ambitious and hard-working person. This is exemplified in the following narrative about how Jasmine strived to get a tenured job by following the advice she was given:

I went along to a sort of a mentoring talk session and he [the mentor] basically said you will not get a job without a book. You will not get any kind of grant funding without any type of peer reviewed publications in top journals. And you will not get a full time job until you have one of

those two things. You will not get a post doc position until you have one of those two things (Jasmine1).

This advice affirmed Jasmine's understanding that tenured academic appointments were very difficult to get and that she would have to be an exceptional young academic to achieve this. As such, Jasmine concluded *"until I have a book contract I have no hope of getting a research position. So, I'm, you know, working on that"* (Jasmine1). Jasmine did work on that and gained a book contract, with a prestigious publisher, by the time of her second interview. However, she was still only working as a casual employee.

At the time of her third interview Jasmine was two months behind on submitting her book to the publishers because she had been involved in so much casual work that had put her under immense time pressures. She described the previous semester as *"mental"* (meaning hectic, busy, and overwhelming) a number of times and noted:

I was meant to have my book finished by the end of the October, which didn't happen because I am still doing it now... I said yes to way too much this semester, but you don't want to say no because you don't want to miss out on any of the opportunities. I haven't slept much... it's a difference of letting yourself down or letting other people down... writing a chapter you can put that off because you don't feel like doing it (Jasmine3).

Jasmine mentioned letting herself down in this quote whereby she was referring to her original contention that publishing a book would get her closer to obtaining a permanent academic position. Jasmine knew that she had worked too much during the semester and this affected her wellbeing and career plans (although not all negatively). It was too difficult for Jasmine to cover all academic bases. Writing a book, as advised by a mentor professor, while at the same time being a reliable worker and trying not to miss any opportunities within the department, proved to be an exhausting position to be in. Jasmine explained *"it has been a massively hectic time since I last spoke to you. It has been mental and is still mental, I plan on sleeping in two weeks when everything is done"* (Jasmine3).

Jasmine's actions reflected her desire to be a good and worthy worker, and fulfil the demands that she perceived to be required of her in order to gain a permanent contract.

Her enactments were shaped by her understandings of the social norms of her profession, and her reflexive monitoring of how to behave in ways she perceived to be valued in order to contribute to her goal of getting a permanent position. As such, she saw limited possibilities to act in ways that transgressed the advice she was given, even though this meant coming under pressure and not taking care of her wellbeing. Jasmine's impetus to gain a tenured position was closely linked to her search for ontological security as all of her actions reflected her desire to experience constancy in her position as an academic (Giddens, 1984). Her story highlights the susceptibility of participants to try and please their employers, who legitimated these compliant enactments by valorising achievements linked to being over-committed. Jasmine's investment of her time and energy into her pursuit of a successful academic career highlighted the greediness of the institution which made her feel as though she had to be exceptional to be granted a tenured position.

4.2.2. Will's story: Role modelling and tacit knowledge

Participants often looked to their colleagues for cues on how to behave as academics, which they then reflexively considered in relation to their own actions. Will described how long working hours were a legitimised practice in his workplace:

So when I leave here at 6:30 tonight there is still probably somebody else on the top floor... In fact it's a running joke, look at the three of us, the three of us on this side of the building are here and it's 6:15 at night and it is dark. When I log onto my email on the weekend or after hours you can also see who is online, there are three or four other people who are also online at 10:30 at night or 11:00 at night... just today somebody actually said to me that ... if we actually took our hourly rate and divided by all our hours we are probably getting like \$7 per hour... and like I said earlier you know when you try to approach someone they are also busy, they are drowning... I do think that they are also struggling so, family and friends have said to me, maybe it's just the start of semester and once you sort of settle in it will resolve. Then I look at my other colleagues who have been doing this for many years that are incredibly experienced and they are still here at 6pm in the evening and I think maybe it won't, maybe this is the way it will be" (Will1).

In this interview Will came across as incredibly burnt-out. I noted in my post-interview reflections that he held his head in his hands a number of times, and he appeared to be heading down a path of self-destruction. This first interview was near the very beginning of his fixed-term contract and it prompted him to reflect on the sustainability of his current position. At the end of the interview he resolved to use the three month time period before the next interview as a timeframe to get things sorted. In this way, the interview prompted him to reflexively monitor his actions.

During the second round of interviewing Will indicated that he had changed some of his work practices in order to reduce further burn-out. This was prompted by his realisation that not all colleagues worked late and he realised that there were alternative ways of working. However, he was still aware of the demanding expectations of his workplace as he described a time when both he and his supervisor were on sick-leave but were emailing each other about work. He said:

...it felt like that was an expectation that the exam, you can't hand over an exam to somebody else. That is your responsibility and the Chief Examiner's. It is just unfortunate that the time we were both off sick... demand that keeps you working and gets you back fairly quickly (Will2).

Will described the excessive demands of his workplace as being normative and embedded in the culture and as such he saw no other choice but to tow-the-line. Giddens' (1984, p. 23) notes that "most of the rules implicated in the production and reproduction of social practices are only tacitly grasped by actors: they know how to 'go on'". Nobody told Will how to act in any of these circumstances but the norms and values of his workplace were signified through the practices of his supervisors and colleagues who he looked on as role-models.

McCabe (2011) describes how workplace cultures are, among other things, created by systems and structures, formal and informal rules and regulations, norms, values and habits. In combination "these create a body of knowledge through which we are defined and discipline ourselves as cultural subjects" (McCabe, 2011, p. 432). Will's experiences of his workplace culture defined and disciplined him as an employee because he understood, through the "communicative process of interaction", how to act in accordance with the normative structures of his workplace (Giddens, 1984, p. 32). He recursively acted in this way to reproduce the social norms because he saw

that this would increase the stability of his position at Monash and his sense of ontological security. He was exposed to the demands of the greedy institution through his understanding that committing all of his time and energy to work would mitigate the threat of exclusion from his academic position. In all three of his interviews Will was very nervous about his probation. He feared that if he did not conform to the norms of his workplace, and act as a high-achieving academic, then he would be fired during his probation review.

Will was highly passionate about his work and wanted an academic career. He desired a sense of continuity in his position at Monash and felt disturbed by the possibility of having to leave. The precarious nature of his employment, including the hurdle of a probation period, reduced his “transformative capacity” as he saw himself as having limited resources to act contrary to the norms of his workplace (Giddens, 1984, p. 34). Kroon and Paauwe (2014, p. 23) state that “resources that agents are knowledgeable about determine their perceived power to act and to deviate”. Transformation can occur only when “repetitious deviations... create margins for structure change” (Kroon & Paauwe, 2014, p. 23). Will overworked himself at the expense of his wellbeing because, in his position as a precarious worker, he felt dominated by the power of the institution which could financially (through pay) and psychologically (through diminishing his sense of ontological security) damage him (Giddens, 1984).

4.3. Part 2: Enactments of being/becoming an academic

Many of the participants considered that their job was part of who they were. Their personal identities were closely tied to their academic work and sense of belonging in academia. Giddens (1991, p. 54, cited in Brown & Coupland, 2015, p. 1316 – Giddens’ italics) explains, “a person’s identity is... to be found... in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*”. Logan kept this narrative going by strongly identifying with academia and considering himself to be a researcher. He explained:

I'm still a researcher even if I don't have a job. I guess. It would be the best way I could describe it you know, even if I'm, job hunting and sitting at home doing other things, I still see myself as a researcher (Logan1).

To consider oneself a researcher, even when not engaging in research, reflects an attachment to an academically-oriented identity construction, and the desire to

maintain a sense of continuity in this identity construction. Identity can be considered a fragile and precarious construction marked by transience and change (Knights & Clarke, 2014) but this did not stop participants from desiring a relatively fixed and stable sense of self. Indeed, an individuals' sense of continuity and stability of self are key aspects contributing to feelings of ontological security and "identity is the creation of constancy over time... the maintenance of personal identity, and its connection to wider social identities, is a prime requisite of ontological security" (Giddens, 1994, p. 80). Often, participants referred to themselves in rather determinate ways, using their work to anchor a stable sense of self by stating "I'm an academic" (Ruby1), "I am a researcher working in a university" (Mia1). Will referred to how being a teacher was a long-term defining characteristic of his ideal-self: "I had this sort of teacher image in my head... I just wanted to be a teacher" (Will1).

Participants' claims of holding a fairly static, constant, sense of self, linked to the academic profession, was one way that they engaged in identity work to support their wellbeing. Identity work refers to people's engagements "forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness" (Alvesson, 2010, p. 201). The identity work of participants in this study was in forming and maintaining a sense of being/becoming academics. When their academic identity constructions felt threatened the wellbeing of participants appeared to diminish and when their identity constructions were reinforced participants' wellbeing levels appeared to increase.

Jasmine was an exceptional participant in terms of the identity work she engaged in to develop coherence in her sense of being an academic. One significant action she took was the hiring of an office space in central Melbourne, for which she paid \$240AUD per month. An interesting aspect of this action was that she was prompted to rent a desk in what she described as a "*creative space*" (Jasmine1) because she was not provided with an office at Monash in which to work. In the absence of any reinforcement of her status and identity as an academic employee by the university Jasmine went out and sought her own office in order to maintain her narrative of being a professional academic worker.

She described her office space as a simple but sociable environment where young professionals come together to perform their jobs:

It is this beautiful 1920's building. They haven't done a whole lot inside it; they have put in new lifts and new bathrooms, which is nice. But the actual office itself, in terms of amenities is fairly low. But you have these beautiful windows that look out over the top of St Paul's Cathedral... So there are ten people in there. Three website developers, two graphic designers, an illustrator, three architects and myself. So it is this weird group of all sort of creative and design minded people. I literally have a piece of wood on some trestle and that is your desk and you have a little area...Trying to research and work, sometimes you want the quiet and working alone but you also need the human interaction otherwise you go a little stir crazy. Being able to go, so what are you working on today, or you know. You know when someone finds a hilarious You Tube video you can share it and then you can get back to work. So it is really nice for that (Jasmine1).

Jasmine's action of seeking her own office space (and paying for this from her wages), while only being employed by Monash for six hours per week at the time of this first interview, illustrates the lengths participants went to in order to enact their academic identities - even in the absence of any tangible support from their institutions. The fact that these hireable office spaces exist, full of young professional workers, highlights how increasingly the responsibilities and costs associated with precarious work are put onto insecure workers and are legitimated and normalised.

4.3.1. Being exploited

In this process of becoming academics these participants often committed much more of their time and energy to their workplaces than they received back. While some participants were able to manage this, others struggled to manage the demands of the institution and their experience became overwhelming and unrewarding. This was particularly the case with Will who described feeling like he was “*drowning*” in his heavy workload (Will1). Will was, as previously noted, completely burnt-out at the time of his first interview, which was also at the very beginning of his employment contract. He described his work hours as the primary contribution to his feeling so exhausted:

... I woke up at 4:30 this morning because I couldn't sleep, I tried to sleep for a little while and couldn't so by 5:00 I was up. I was on my

laptop and working, trying to clear, you know yesterday's backlog of emails. I then got into work, I was here by 8:00 this morning and I will probably be here until, I normally leave here about 6:00 – 6:30 at night and it is not uncommon, tonight I can almost guarantee, I will go home, have dinner, go to my spin class at the gym and then I will probably work for another three or four hours at home (Will1)

He desired “freedom... to leave my laptop at work” and claimed it had not been left at work “a single night since I started” (Will1). Will felt that he was unable to leave his work at work, not just physically but also emotionally and mentally, as he said “...in terms of ruminating over it I take it home... I've noticed it's really hard to just put it aside and leave it here” (Will1). Sullivan (2014, p. 2) links increased workaholism to contemporary ways that workers are valued. She explains that in modern professional life “being busy is often a badge of honour, status, and importance... today visible busyness can serve to signal one's place in a hierarchy”. Forging a place in the academic hierarchy, and being perpetually busy, meant forgoing other important aspects of life for Will, such as being in a romantic relationship. Will felt that his single status decreased the pressure of performing in his personal life, as well as at work. For Will this was an issue of time:

I am single at the moment and part of me thinks thank goodness for that because I would just be the most neglectful partner. Which sounds terrible because it's not the kind of person I am but I just think to myself, if I was at work all day and come home and spent six hours in front of the computer my partner just wouldn't get a look in... I wouldn't say I am consciously putting off looking for a partner it is sort of there, get home and thank god I'm single... thank god this is my time and I can keep working and I can, you know, stay on top of my work goals (Will1).

A significant-other relationship would be seen as an obstruction to Will's ability to dedicate most of his waking hours to work which is detrimental to his wellbeing; his job actively blocked his pursuit of achieving other personal life goals.

This narrative told by Will echoes the stories told by all other participants keen to fulfil their roles as good workers. It relates to identity in the way that Wieland (2010) conceives of as enactments of ideal selves. Max also enacted being a ‘good educator’

as he understood that this meant being well-prepared and dedicated to the students' needs – even though this meant sacrificing his own time and not being paid for the hours worked:

...we (casual teaching academics) don't want to only do the hours that we are getting paid for, because you want to make sure they (students) actually get what they need. You spend more time marking than you are actually getting paid for so that you can give them proper feedback...
(Max1)

Wieland (2010, p. 515) claims that some people act-out their ideal selves by being “deliverers”. Being a deliverer entails having the sense of (and being perceived as) being a good and committed worker: “someone who delivered, who produced what he or she was expected to produce...” (Wieland, 2010, p. 515). This identity construction is important to the process of becoming an academic as participants' understandings, of what needed to be delivered, shaped their enactments.

Jasmine understood the experience of becoming an academic to be about prioritising work above wellbeing and always saying ‘yes’ and being available to support tenured staff and the institution. At the time of her third interview Jasmine was placing more energy into Monash than ever and had provided a lot of support to her department by being a ready and able back-up person when two senior academics had to take unforeseen leave during the semester. While they were on paid leave, Jasmine took over their work responsibilities. Initially contracted to work as a tutor on the unit these academics were co-ordinating, Jasmine ended up doing most of the duties of these experienced supervisors: co-ordinating the unit, lecturing across campuses and developing the curriculum along the way. This covered their teaching, however she also took on multiple research assistant positions as she organised a conference and took on other roles.

Jasmine described “*helping out*” and was happy to do these tasks although she admitted it was much more work than originally anticipated. Her willingness to go above and beyond her employment contract and responsibilities was notable and it became clear that she was being exploited. She said:

I ended up doing unit co-ordination without being I guess paid or really acknowledged for that, but that didn't worry me at all... it wasn't acknowledged, it wasn't sort of contracted co-ordination work but it was sort of acknowledged by senior people and all of that type of stuff in terms of knowing what I was doing and all of that (Jasmine3).

Jasmine described feeling rewarded by this sense of unofficial acknowledgement because she thought it meant she would get more work: *"I guess taking on the extra responsibilities in the teaching area helped with getting other bits"* (Jasmine3). Jasmine was pleased with this outcome as the "regular repetition" of work made her feel more ontologically secure in her position at Monash (Giddens, 1994, p. 101).

However, while the extra work was regular, it still fluctuated from week to week and often hours were quadrupled in deviation from her original contract. She was also not remunerated for a number of her hours as she said lecturing preparation *"takes, always, much longer than you actually get paid to do"* (Jasmine3). Many of the participants reported working more hours than they were paid. This is a widespread issue affecting precarious academic workers (NTEU, 2015). This influx of work was difficult to manage, particularly in conjunction with her other jobs and commitments, and she took some time off from one of her other casual jobs outside of academia to recover from the academic work by sleeping all day. Jasmine also missed many of her group exercise sessions which provided her with an escape from academia. She understood becoming an academic to require intense levels of commitment, time, and energy and in this way her work experience was aligned to the demands of the greedy institution (Coser, 1967).

Despite all of this, when Jasmine was asked how she was feeling she said *"generally feeling pretty good"* (Jasmine3) and she explained:

I think I probably thrive to a certain extent under pressure. You know, I am not joking when I say I haven't slept much. I mean I have been exhausted for the last three months. And yes I guess if I didn't have quite as much going on I would have probably panicked at some point but I haven't had time to... don't have time to fall to pieces, I've got the next thing I have to get done (Jasmine3).

Jasmine's structural position in this scenario rendered her insignificant, dependent and vulnerable to exploitation. The university can be seen, in this scenario, as a greedy institution (Coser, 1967). The university took on the role of a greedy institution as it exploited Jasmine and drew her time and energy away from the rest of her life and funnelled it into her work at the university. However, Jasmine legitimated these processes by positioning herself as somebody who thrived under pressure and was willing to sacrifice sleep, exercise, rest and other paid employment commitments in order to cope with the stress of taking on excessive amounts of academic work. The increasing sense of ontological security she gained from being in continuous employment in the university was more important to her sense of wellbeing than other factors associated with stress and exhaustion.

Participants often minimised the wellbeing impacts of their experience by characterising themselves as certain types of people, able to handle the demands of their work. The embodiment of a workaholic persona appeared to be an aspect of becoming an academic. Many of the participants described themselves as "workaholics" as they applied themselves continually, sometimes compulsively, to their work. Ruby said "I am a workaholic" (Ruby1) three times in her final interview. Will often referred to his individual "personality" and said things like "that's just my personality to be a workaholic" (Will3) and "I'm not a 'no' person I tend to be 'yes' to everything. Sometimes to my detriment..." (Will1). Logan said in his first interview "I've learnt to accept that I actually just enjoy working all the time" (Logan1) and in the second interview I reminded him of being a type of self-confessed workaholic to which he responded "Yes, that's pretty close, I certainly don't take that one back" (Logan2).

The following quotes exemplify how some participants allowed work to take priority in their lives, due to the strong link they made between academia and identity:

...work is a very important part of who I am and because of that a lot of the things that I do and a lot of the things I prioritise in my life are work related things. They are not prioritised because they are work related things, they are prioritised because they are important to me... personal things get just ignored along the way, if they are not things that are, you know, that I see as particularly important things. Then they get put off and put off and put off... (Logan3).

I basically don't play at all, I work pretty much all of the time. If I'm awake I'm probably working, that's where it is. And if I'm like, wanting to sleep but am still awake, it is because I am working. So I mean that's fine because a lot of my hobbies just happen to be work related (Ruby2).

These quotes, which are indicative of many of the participants' views, emphasise two important things: 1) work could be a very rewarding and important aspect of the participants' lives when they strongly identified with it (Avanzi, Dick, Fraccaroli, & Sarchielli, 2012); 2) this strong identification with work played into the power of the greedy institution which demanded excessive commitment, time and energy from participants.

Technology was particularly enabling in terms of the greedy institutional reach into the personal lives of participants as Ruby explained: *"I'm on my work email 100% of the time, so it is checking in the background of my phone right now and it will tell me if something happens"* (Ruby2). Ruby's technological connection to work was also her connection to friends as her social life included engagement with colleagues and supervisors on Facebook in the evenings and at weekends, although largely the interactions related to work matters. Smartphones and laptops have amplified the ability to work from anywhere at any time and these devices become "tethers that keep the employees attached to their work and their supervisors 24/7" (Sullivan, 2014, p.4). Jasmine lived a similar experience, as she said:

Most of my friends are academics so half of their posts on Facebook are linking to articles about, yes. That's basically my entire social life is around that, I don't know many people outside of that. Even if I am checking Facebook, so I am not necessarily looking at it to connect with work, I can't escape work because that is my entire world, basically (Jasmine3).

This was not problematic for either Jasmine or Ruby because they considered their social lives to be integrated into work however it legitimated the invasive nature of academic work as a norm, even in their social lives. Ruby made a joke about this by saying sarcastically: *"occupational hazard, all your friends are geniuses, life is so hard"* (Ruby2). Ruby's romantic relationship was linked to Monash as her partner was also a Monash employee.

These experiences, which normalised strong identification with Monash and work, reinforced social practices of the greedy institution such as never disengaging from work and linking social ties to the institution. This relates to Russell's (2013, p. 289) contention that it is unhelpful to frame work and life as "balanceable entities" but rather to consider the connections "between and among the embodied ramifications of working lifestyles". Russell (2013, p. 289) claims that "In articulating such connections, we cultivate habits for discussing how work shapes profoundly our everyday experiences, particularly in ways concerning our health, personal relationships, and overall sense of well-being". With this in mind, it is possible to acknowledge the benefits that can be gained from a strong identification with work and the sense of meaning and community that can stem from this. However, the identity work involved in becoming an academic is an active process which, in concert with the structures in which participants engaged recursively, reinforced participants' time and energy commitments to the greedy institution. .

Alvesson (2010, p. 201) notes that "specific events, encounters, transitions, surprises, as well as more constant strains, all serve to heighten awareness of the constructed quality of self-identity and to compel more concentrated identity work". The constant strain of battling feelings of insecurity in precarious employment, coupled with a desire to foster a sense of ontological security through continued employment, propelled participants to engage in the intense identity work associated with considering themselves to be workaholics. Avanzi et al. (2012, p. 303) explain how this can manifest as an exhausting effort that influences wellbeing:

Highly identified employees are prone to work hardest to achieve organizational goals, but when they associate themselves with their organizations too strongly, they are likely to develop a maladaptive attachment in the form of workaholism, and this harmful "addiction" may decrease their psychological wellbeing. Over-identified employees could see job demands and their coping strategies in a distorted way, by either systematically underestimating job demands and/or overestimating their coping skills and resources. This would lead over-identified employees to spend a large amount of time working, which in turn would give them less time to recover from their excessive efforts.

This extra effort in the long run could lead to elevated levels of strain, compromising the individual's health.

Caught in a cycle of excessive work in the face of insecurity, many of the participants enacted being workaholics and this was expressed in the phrase "*supporting a habit*" in an effort to become academic (Jasmine1). Workaholism can be defined as "being overly concerned about work, being driven by an uncontrollable work motivation, and spending so much energy and effort on work that it impairs private relationships, spare-time activities and/or health" (Andreassen, Griffiths, Hetland, & Pallesen, 2012, p. 265). In actuality, these taken for granted enactments were just ways of trying to fit into the accepted structures of academia (Giddens, 1994).

McCabe (2011, p. 444) argues that "discipline is not simply done to us for we turn ourselves into subjects". Participants turned themselves into workaholic subjects through "acquiescence", that is reluctant acceptance without resistance, to the norms of the workplace (Giddens, 1991a, p. 177). This was because participants understood workaholic behaviours to be legitimate academic enactments as many felt that they were surrounded by anxious, committed and suffering academics. Will noted this when he observed that it was not just him who was "*drowning*" but also his colleagues and supervisors: "*when you try to approach someone they are also busy, they are drowning... they are also struggling*" (Will1). The fact that academia demands so much from its workers reflects the context of the greedy institution and the norms which influence agents' conceptualisations of how to act. Seeing themselves as workaholics, even when this meant being exploited, reinforced the participants' identity constructions of being an academic.

4.3.2. Avoiding exploitation

Some of the participants did not understand these over-committed tendencies to be necessary to enacting valued academic identities. For example, Charlie said he would check his emails during his leisure time but said he might not "*actively engage in the content of those messages until a more appropriate time*" (Charlie3). This was part of "practicing" wellbeing as Charlie put it, managing to form boundaries between his work and personal life. Likewise, Mia went to lengths to ensure that she protected her personal time and resisted pressures from her workplace to work more or start merging her work and personal life. One step further, two participants were exceptional

cases in that they were actively protected from exploitative practices by their supervisors and workplaces. Tanya and Olivia were not pressured to work more than contractually agreed and they also did not need to take precautions to guard themselves from exploitation. This was because their supervisors clearly communicated to them that it was not appropriate to work more than their contractually agreed hours, and they were also told that if they did so then they would be compensated for this extra time. In this way, alternative social structures surrounding academia were signified to the participants who then enacted very different practices to the participants previously mentioned.

Olivia and Tanya uniquely experienced a nearly complete segregation between their working and personal lives and did not experience demanding organisational cultures. Olivia said:

...the culture sort of insulates you from potential downsides I think when people talk about the downsides of technology they talk mostly about the pressure to be always on, which at least luckily for me, isn't the case (Olivia2).

Both Olivia and Tanya felt that their disengagement from work had multiple benefits and they enjoyed their work because of the ability to switch-off, both literally, in the case of technology, and metaphorically, at the end of their working day. Tanya said she could wind-down and sleep well after work as she said *"I get to have dinner with my husband, we watch TV and then we go to sleep. It is actually like turning off for the night"* (Tanya2). She described her segregation of work and life as *"really novel"*, especially in comparison to her previous employment that was demanding of her time and energy.

The insulation from their supervisors against excessive working did not mean that these participants lacked identification with their work as academics, but it did mean that they could engage in more balanced work experiences since these were acceptable in their workplaces. The routine nature of their work, and clear communication from their supervisors, also increased their sense of ontological security. The fact that their work was highly structured and predictable meant that Olivia and Tanya could develop routines and a sense of reliability in their positions, rather than dwelling on thoughts of anxiety and insecurity. Their work arrangements

contributed to a certain lifestyle; one that was enjoyable. Giddens (1991b, p. 82) argues that “a lifestyle involves a cluster of habits and orientations, and hence has a certain unity – important to a continuing sense of ontological security...” As these participants could feel more secure in their positions, they experienced increased levels of commitment and positive association to their work. For example, Tanya saw Monash as a very attractive workplace that provided “generous” policies (Tanya1). During the second interview, Tanya told me she had been invited to attend a job interview for a position within another organisation. The job offered a much higher salary and was permanent in nature. However she felt that it was not somewhere she would like to work because she explained “*nowhere did it mention work-life balance, it didn't seem to be a place that appreciated that. So it didn't align with my values now*” (Tanya2). Tanya continued to explain what Monash offered that the other workplace did not: “*now I feel like I can plan my own day, I can come in later and leave later. I know other people come in early and leave early and that is perfectly allowed...*” (Tanya2). Tanya’s comment about being “allowed” to work in this way refers to her sense that institutional structures shape and prescribe how people practice being academics.

Due to the institutional structures being viewed positively by Tanya, and her feelings that working in academia aligned with her values, Tanya decided she would undertake a PhD. This suggests that Tanya decided that the norms and values of academic work in her workplace supported her wellbeing and plans enough to facilitate her commitment to undertake a major qualification. Workplaces do not need to be greedy in order to foster commitment, time and energy from employees because people feel commitment to workplaces that legitimise supportive wellbeing practices (in this case: clear communication and balanced working hours). This fostering of commitment was also evidenced in Olivia’s claim that not being pressured to work at home actually encouraged her spontaneous engagement with work:

You don't have to be thinking about work, actually makes me feel often like I want to get back in on Monday morning, or like do it. Like occasionally, I catch myself thinking, God I can't wait to start this thing, which is a bit odd, but, yeah, sometimes happens. Or sometimes, we'll wind up wondering about like some sort of big picture, research question, while you're in the shower or whatever, just because you don't feel like

you have to be thinking about things. Whereas if I was trying to put pressure on myself to be working all the time, I think I would be thinking about more concrete things, instead of big picture, whatever, and that would be less productive overall (Olivia1).

Although this quote indicates a positive identification with work, it also highlights a narrative that academic work was still invasive to Olivia in the sense that she often thought about work during her time off. It was also interesting how Olivia also commented that it was her choice not to put pressure on herself to work all the time. This reflects her sense of agency as “agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency implies power...)” (Giddens, 1984, p. 10). Important to this sense of agency that Olivia displayed was that she was also enabled to act in the way she ‘chose’ because she had been explicitly told what was expected of her from the structures of her workplace, and her ‘choice’ aligned with these legitimated expectations. The structures of her workplace provided “enabling” power to act in this way, as opposed to being a “constraint” (Giddens, 1984, p. 177).

The working conditions were so different for these participants because their supervisors encouraged recursive social actions that were supportive of wellbeing, in the sense of not pressuring employees to work beyond their job roles or timeframes. Also, the participants saw that caring for their wellbeing was a legitimate practice of working in academia as their colleagues and supervisors followed the same work-life balance rules they set for Olivia and Tanya. This then strengthened the coherency of their academic identities as they began to align their values with that of Monash, and felt part of an organisation that would support their wellbeing and identity narratives of being respected, supported, and cared-for young academics.

4.3.3. Defending/justifying exploitation

Considering that only two participants experienced relatively structured work environments, and did not overtly experience the demands of a greedy workplace, it was interesting to analyse how the other participants understood their experiences and enactments as academics experiencing a greedy institution. It was common for participants to justify and minimise the downsides of their work experience so as not to talk negatively about their workplace. This sometimes appeared to be a denial of

the greediness that operated within the university. Mike, for example, having just said that he works on average an extra one unpaid day per week that causes him stress and PhD pressure, said:

I don't feel like the organisation is a demanding environment. Like I don't know what would happen if I did start working less, probably not a great deal. Everyone I work with is really nice and friendly and pretty relaxed sort of people. So I think there is a good organisational culture (Mike3).

I probed further to find out why Mike worked extra hours, if there was no real expectation or pressure to do this from his work supervisors. Mike explained that he worked more to free-up time for his PhD, which was ironic because he also said that the work took time away from his PhD. Mike was adamant that he was not working for free to be seen, however he also commented that he hoped work supervisors would notice his extra effort. This highlighted another contradiction in the way he understood his actions to reflect the valued social practices of his workplace. The fact that Mike's supervisors never intervened in his excessive unpaid extra work, work that conflicted with his study time, undoubtedly contributed to Mike's tacit knowledge of what it meant to be an academic as their acceptance of his enactments made this obvious (Giddens, 1984).

The pressure to be seen, and be seen to be working and switched on, can come from working cultures that reward employees for being "visibly present at work" (Darcy, McCarthy, Hill, & Grady, 2012, p. 114). It has been found that young workers are vulnerable to this as employees beginning their careers often perceive that utilising work/life boundary policies "signals to their employers that they are less committed to their career and therefore such a move is deemed as damaging going forward" (Darcy et al., 2012, p.117). Collinson (2003) also describes how workers act, and construct their identities, in certain ways as a survival strategy when they feel insecure within the organisation. The "dramaturgical self" strategy, described by Collinson (2003, p. 538), involves becoming "manipulators of the self, reputation and image in the eyes of 'significant others'". As Mike noted, he hoped that his supervisors would notice his extra effort and acknowledge his dedication to work. However, this strategy was linked to his feeling of vulnerability as a precarious employee, understanding a need to continually prove his worth in order to try and maintain ongoing employment because

his supervisors were seen to control this process. In this way, while he might have been enacting a “dramaturgical self”, this was influenced by the domination of Monash as an institution which wielded power over him in his precarious position. Collinson (2003, p. 538) argues that “Dramaturgical selves are more likely to emerge where employees feel highly visible, threatened, defensive, subordinated and/or insecure” (Collinson, 2003, p. 538). Many participants felt institutional power and pressure to work on their performance as academics, such as Will who said “*I feel like I have a year and a half to prove myself in terms of service, research and teaching*” (Will1). In these cases the institution applies power by threatening the financial wellbeing and identity constructions of participants. The demands of the greedy institution constrained participant choices about how to act in in this way.

Greedy institutions rely on the voluntary giving of members who offer their time and energies to the institution in the hope that this might lead to exclusive rewards (Egger de Campo, 2013; Mackay & Rhodes, 2013). Egger de Campo (2013, p. 971) claims that the greedy institution offers benefits to its loyal devotees, such as “...the honour of being among the chosen ones, the illuminated, to be a member of a cadre or the elite, and exclusive access to the powerful”. Participants who offered their time and devotion to the university were acting in ways they understood to be normal within academia. For example, Mike quickly minimised the issues associated with feeling insecure and over-working by saying “*I think it is a really good work environment, I just think there are a couple of funny things about how they handle contracts and staff and stuff*” (Mike3). In this way, contradictions were smoothed out by justifications of precarious employment practices, and working without pay accepted as a quirk associated with the authentic academic experience.

One explanation for why participants conformed to the increasing demands of the greedy institution, is because they often considered their work to be “enchanted” (Endrissat, Islam, & Noppeney, 2015, p. 1). These authors explain how enchanting work “provides a sense of meaning and fulfilment, seen as inhering in aspects of the job or organization itself...” (Endrissat et al., 2015, p. 8). Many participants did not appear to mind that the organisation was being greedy of their time and energy, because they saw the job itself as enchanting and they found a sense of meaning and fulfilment in being an academic at Monash. Some participants even viewed certain negative features of the work to take on enchanting characteristics. For example, the

fact that Monash relied upon precarious workers and offered few career pathways to their graduates or early career academics was justified by Jasmine as she explained *“At a place like Monash they have to be recruiting the best of the best”* (Jasmine1). Jasmine went on to explain that the best of the best constituted internationally recognised, senior academics. Likewise, Ruby, justified her precarious position at Monash by deprecating her credentials saying: *“I really don't have the qualifications to justify them hiring me as a continuing staff member at this point”* (Ruby1). Ironically, Ruby did not have her PhD because her studies were on intermission due to excessive work commitments and she was often employed in more than a full-time capacity.

Participants often believed they gained prestige from being affiliated with the university and therefore their tenuous membership to the organisation was enough to encourage commitment and loyalty in a way that legitimated precarious employment policies at Monash. Even precarious work could help to increase participants' sense of identity and ontological security because they felt this would lead to more (possibly permanent) employment. As such, while the 'voluntary' nature of their action was prescribed under certain conditions of constraint, the dialectic of control operated as participants made choices about how to act in relation to the overarching objectives guiding their decisions (Giddens, 1984). Reflexivity is central to this process whereby participants monitor their actions in accordance to their understandings of social norms and perceived power to act in certain ways.

Even when participants were reflexively critical of their experiences as precarious employees, they felt limited in their capacity to act in ways contrary to the norm. For example, Mia was exasperated that her contract was extended for 12 months, not 15 months, which would have seen her employed until the end of the project. This meant that she would have to apply for her job again for the last three months of a project, which she saw as a pointless and time-consuming task. She described herself as being an irreplaceable research assistant, given her experience working on the project for a long time, and the niche field the study she was involved with, meaning she would be difficult to replace for three months. Mia articulated her value, and the power this gave her in her position, but she did not challenge this decision. Knights and Clarke (2014) explain how workers often criticise demands legitimated in the workplace, while at the same time complying with them. This is because norms and values embedded within social practices at work solidify their legitimation and restrict opportunities to act

in ways that deviate. Also, much of this data suggests that while participants felt that they were good and dedicated academics, they also lacked a certain level of confidence to consider themselves fully worthy of gaining tenured positions or even having more say in their employment conditions. As such, they mitigated the threat of exclusion from academia (which they perceived would be the outcome of disobeying the institutional norms) by acting in ways that were commonly accepted and that they felt might contribute to achieving permanent employment. This meant that the perpetual threat of exclusion (Colley et al., 2007) was powerful in the way in which it restricted the actions of participants.

4.4. Part 1 and 2 summary

Participants donated their unpaid time, and energy to their workplace as they understood that these actions were norms of becoming an academic and would therefore increase their likelihood of gaining continuing employment at the University. The nature of precarious employment meant that participants believed they could be easily excluded from work at Monash and replaced. My use of the word 'willing' here denotes a Giddensian perspective which assumes that participants had a choice in how to act as academics, even if this choice was constrained by the prescribed ideals of what being an academic entailed (Giddens, 1984). I have highlighted that it often appeared to be the cultural norm of the workplace for employees to prioritise work and have very limited or no boundaries around working hours which legitimated greedy institution characteristics.

Participants' efforts to achieve ontological security were directed at sustaining an identity narrative linked to their involvement in academic work at Monash. Giddens (1984) conceives of the ways in which "identity and structure continually interweave" (Elliott, 2014, p. 52). At the heart of this perspective is the 'reflexivity' involved in 'being' whereby people reflect upon the moves they make in life and are often dissatisfied with the results and therefore desire to change and correct them in a continual cycle (Bauman, 2012). The participants developed their identities by learning how to behave within the structure of the university through continuous reflexive monitoring of conduct related to being good and worthy academics. Agency is underpinned by the structures of society that pre-exist and thus the participants' actions reinforced the structures of

the university as they reflected upon and made sense of their lives in relation to what was known and valued by society (Kroon & Paauwe, 2014). What the participants perceived as being known and valued by society was highly prescribed by the academic working contexts in which they were immersed.

Participants tried to position themselves as valuable and attractive employees by acting in ways they understood to be appropriate in the academic context and they also justified exploitative practices by seeing this as part of the academic pathway. This was influenced by their understanding that complying with normalised practices (even if this meant being exploited) would increase their sense of ontological security. Compliance would support their continuing employment and strengthen their preferred identity narratives linked to academia. In this way, consent to the power of the institution was produced in much the same way that McCabe (2011) found in his study. He describes processes of individualising, identity-challenging, and economic threat. Individualising practices included the inferior treatment of precarious workers and their feelings of being on their own and not being able to rely on others: a very important facet of trust central to ontological security (Giddens, 1991a). Identity challenging threats included the participants' feelings that they could lose their jobs and be excluded from academia if they did not make the right choices and career-moves. This threat challenged their identity narratives of being legitimate Monash people, or academics more generally. The economic threat was founded in the participants' fears of underemployment or unemployment that they understood to be the punishment for transgressing institutional norms and expectations.

Participants negotiated the power of the institution, which could constrain and enable possible actions and identities, by conforming to existing social norms they understood to be valued and legitimate. This was part of a strategy to avoid the "negative sanctions" they perceived would follow if they deviated from the structural norms, which in turn rendered particular actions and choices unavailable (Giddens, 1984, p. 177). According to Giddens (1984, p. 177), negative sanctions relate to "constraint deriving from punitive responses on the part of some agents towards others". It was through a fear of negative sanctions, and a desire for ontological security, that "acquiescence" was obtained (Giddens, 1984, p. 177). This is discussed in more detail in the following section.

4.5. Part 3: Analytical synthesis – reproducing the greedy institution

The power of Monash, as an institution that employed the participants and shaped their understandings and experiences, was profound. This was particularly noticeable in the cases of Ruby, Will, Jasmine and Logan who devoted much of their lives to their work. In their cases Monash appeared to be an endless funnel through which their time and energy flowed. Other participants, with the exception of Olivia and Tanya, had to actively resist pressures to do this. Olivia and Tanya's experiences were quite different to the other participants' in that they were supported to nurture their personal lives, spend time disengaged from work, and only participate in their jobs as contractually agreed. The differences in experiences among these participants contributed to their understandings about what becoming an academic entailed, and this knowledge was shaped by their observations of legitimised social practices enacted in their work contexts.

My observation that there were multiple ways to be an academic, reflected in the participants' recursive social practices, encouraged my engagement with the "greedy institution" (Coser, 1967) metaphor. The phrase "greedy institution" refers to how institutions "harness human energies to their purposes" (Coser, 1967, p.196). This characterisation helped to make sense of the structuration process occurring between participants, as agents, and Monash, as the structured workplace context. Considering this structuration process, I developed a typology from the data, comprising of three 'types': *giving, resisting and being insulated*. The typology is a useful tool because the three 'types' refer to the ways that participants enacted being/becoming academics through their everyday identity forming practices in relation to the structures of the greedy institution, and their search for feelings of ontological security. The explanatory power of presenting 'types' rests on their ability to "serve as a heuristic device in analysing the complex nuances of 'insecurity'" (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 341). None of the types represent an articulation of "cognitive or psychological traits" but rather reflect orientations that the participants adopted in being and becoming academics, using the "socially available cultural resources" available in this process (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 375). The analysis leads back to Giddens' (1984) notion of social reproduction as

the complicit actions of these 'types' is highlighted in a way that reinforces the power of the greedy institution.

4.5.1. Participant typology

The typology reflects the time, energy and commitment that participants dedicated to Monash as their experiences in becoming academics became closely entwined with their feelings of ontological security and personal identity. This typology links ontological security to new conceptions of wellbeing that highlight the importance of ongoing identity work in developing academic selves. It reveals the actions and orientations of participants as they engaged in the development and maintenance of self in relation to the greedy institution. In this way, the typology is linked to work-life boundaries. Elasticity of work-life boundaries suggested that participants understood the institution to require them to dedicate themselves fully to institutional needs, even if this was at the expense of their wellbeing. The ability of an employee to separate their work and personal life suggested that the participant experienced a workplace that supported wellbeing through structured working hours, clear expectations, and an ethic of care towards an employees' out-of-work pursuits and free-time. In this way the typology reflects the understandings and recursive social practices of participants as they engaged with the structures of academic work and enacted becoming academic in ways constrained and enabled by their workplaces. The 'types' are depicted in the following illustration along with the core enactments associated with each orientation:

Figure 4. Typology comprising of three 'types'



4.5.1.1. Giving: Fluid work-life boundaries

Enactments of 'giving' involved extreme dedication and commitment of time and energy to academic work and involves being willing to put every institutional demand into action and prioritise work above all else. Jasmine, Will, Ruby and Logan were all heavily involved in 'giving' as their actions, noted earlier, were extremely work-orientated and reflected their understanding that to be an academic meant working long, hard, unpaid hours and needing to prove oneself as worthy. These participants engaged in much identity work to foster a continuous narrative of being/becoming academics. As a result, they often enacted 'giving' in order to show their value as aspiring academics who were dedicated to embed themselves within the structural norms and values of their workplace.

4.5.1.2. Resisting: Semi-porous work-life boundaries

Participants involved in 'resisting' understood that they would need to make efforts to segregate work from their personal lives, as a way of managing work-life boundaries and enacting being balanced academics. Charlie, Mia, Mike and Max were largely involved in 'resisting' as they understood it to be a necessary feature of negotiating academic work to manage their time and energy in relation to work. Mia exemplified this when she said "*I feel like I have to be fairly strategic in order to have a personal life and have a job in this industry*" (Mia3). They saw that the institutional context of their workplace could be greedy and while this was often legitimised so were other practices that resisted greed. This was highlighted by the case of Mike who said he worked on average an extra day per week, and this was legitimised by his workplace. However, he also felt that it was okay to be able to manage emails and feel in control of his working time, meaning that he did not need to feel overly pressured to respond to every institutional demand instantly. As this shows, many of the 'resisting' participants also enacted 'giving' and sometimes experienced 'being insulated'.

4.5.1.3. Insulated: Solid work-life boundaries

The 'insulated' participants experienced a type of immunity from overburdening demands of the institution as the norms and values of their work environment legitimised structured work and clear communication. The two participants who experienced being 'insulated', Tanya and Olivia, were actively discouraged from taking work home or working excessive hours and this was clearly communicated to them by their supervisors and colleagues. Unlike experiences of 'giving' or 'resisting', the 'insulated' experience fostered institutional commitment by legitimating a caring and ethical work environment which the participants viewed as being generous and attractive.

4.5.2. Organisational culture and susceptibility to greed

The participants fixated on gaining permanent employment, or at least their next precarious employment contract, because they so desired the sense of ontological security that they felt could be achieved through the continuation of employment in academia. This, ironically, meant that the participants were implicated in the maintenance of precarious work practices. Participants contributed to the conditions of their exploitation by recursively acting in ways that reinforced the power of the greedy institution. Only Max rejected the structures of the institution, by leaving

academia (discussed in the following chapter), but no participants made attempts to transform the structures of Monash.

If participants had rejected the greedy institution by refusing to work precariously, by not working more hours than paid for, or not ‘filling in’ and responding to unreasonable demands, then labour practices within the higher education system would transform over time. However, participants did not recursively resist the structures of the institution as they perceived this to be too risky in terms of damaging their careers. In this way their choices were restricted by the dominating power of the university (Giddens, 1984). This power did not render participants powerless, but because their actions were reflexively driven by their motives, goals, and search for ontological security, their understandings of how to act were prescribed:

...actors have ‘good reasons’ for what they do...good reasons involve choice from very limited feasible alternatives, their conduct may appear to be driven by some implacable force similar to a physical force. There are many social forces that actors, in a meaningful sense of the phrase, are ‘unable to resist’. That is to say, they cannot do anything about them. But ‘cannot’ here means that they are unable to do anything other than conform to whatever the trends in question are, *given the motives and goals which underlie their action* (Giddens, 1984, p. 179 – my italics)

As Giddens (1984) points out, individuals always hold power to shape the social world although their choices and actions are shaped and constrained by structures and forces that affect the way they rationalise their decisions and actions. That is to say, “structural constraints do not operate independently of the motives and reasons that agents have for what they do” (Giddens, 1984, p. 182). The way in which structure and agency worked together in the structuration of the employment experiences of the participants accounts for why each of the participants negotiated being in academia differently.

When employees accept and internalise the ever-increasing demands of their supervisors and institutions, in exchange for the most basic employment conditions, the slippery-slope of exploitation begins. This might be considered as an unintended consequence of the participants’ actions (Giddens, 1984). Collinson (2003, p. 542) describes how workers create multiple subjectivities in order to cope with insecurity in

their working environments and often “unintended and paradoxical effects” are the result of selves produced to “secure material and/or symbolic security”. The actions of consent highlighted by the participants’ enactments of becoming academics meant that they began to take the status quo “for granted” which had the effect of reproducing negative existent social conditions (McCabe, 2011, p. 432). *Giving*, for example, was one subjectivity that normalised intensive (and often exploitative) working conditions, to the detriment of workers themselves and other ECRs who might be expected by organisations to act similarly. These other social implications add to the explanatory power of the typology.

4.5.2.1. Explanatory power of the typology

These ‘types’ need to be understood as fluid rather than fixed as structures and agents continuously and recursively construct lived experience through the process of structuration (Giddens, 1984). To be/become an academic requires working within and enacting the conditions that both shape and limit this identity. As Brown and Coupland (2015, p. 1329) contend “processes of identity construction are fluid and dynamic”. As such, these ‘types’ represent ways that participants enacted being academics and constructed their professional identities. These enactments and identity constructions were not fixed, or perfectly conforming to any ‘type’, as participants continuously (re)constructed their identities in relation to normative and legitimated academic practices.

In this way, these ‘types’ also reflect the actions and experiences of other academic employees at the university as participants acted in ways that mirrored their supervisors and colleagues. For example, ‘giving’ participants recursively acted in the ways they did because they understood their enactments to be legitimate and reflective of the academic way-of-life, having seen others in their workplace act in the same way. All participants reflexively monitored their actions like this and their enactments were in response to their understandings of what social actions were normative and valued at the university. The reason participants recursively acted in ways they identified as valuable, was linked to their understanding that if they acted like academics in their *becoming*, one day they would gain a tenured position and be able to claim the full status of *being* an academic.

The findings also emphasise the role of senior academics in maintaining detrimental structures of precarious employment and ideas surrounding what it means to be an academic. The participants described the limited investment from supervisors and other staff at the university to support their career goals and transitions from precarious employment. Indeed, many participants reported being actively exploited by senior academics at Monash. Kroon and Paauwe (2014, p. 22) suggest that it is the combination of all actors which “reproduce a social structure that has legitimacy both at the level of the firm and at the level of the industry”. Often the actions of senior academics legitimised questionable practices at Monash, and in higher education more generally, by placing unwarranted demands on the participants who, as early career academics, saw their supervisors and colleagues as role-models. Supervisors often, not always, neglected to offer mentoring, reliable information or healthy role-modelling about how to be a successful academic. This reflected senior academics’ acceptance and compliance with the practices of precarious employment within higher education which was shameful given their (often) more secure position within the institution and therefore fewer constraints in terms of transformative capacity (Giddens, 1984). The exception to this was Tanya and Olivia’s work supervisors who were very clear about the need to support the wellbeing of employees by not placing excessive demands or expectations on them. As a result, these employees reported positive wellbeing experiences and a high level of commitment and enjoyment associated with their work (although they still desired more permanent employment).

4.5.2.2. Delineating wellbeing effects

The fact that all participants closely related their personal identities to their work at Monash, and constructed academia to be part of who they were, was reflected in their vulnerability to exploitation. Closely tying their academic positions to their constructions of self was part of their search for ontological security as their employment position at Monash helped them to keep the ‘I’m an academic/researcher’ narrative going. As such, it was very important for participants to gain their next contract and work towards a tenured position as this would strengthen their sense of self-coherency, and thus ontological security (Alvesson, 2010; Giddens, 1994; Wieland, 2010). It has been highlighted throughout the chapter that participants experienced two wellbeing threats. The first wellbeing threat stemmed from a fear of being excluded from work at Monash, for all participants. The second wellbeing threat

was associated with continuing work at Monash, for some participants. Often these threats worked in complex ways to highlight the lived experience of wellbeing and the interrelatedness between participants' wellbeing, identity constructions, and feelings of security and trust.

To address this first wellbeing threat, the participants feared exclusion from work at Monash. Because they so closely identified with their jobs and the academic profession, the thought of losing their employment, not passing probation, or not having their contract renewed, was akin to losing a sense of self. This wellbeing threat was also an identity threat. Petriglieri (2011, p. 643) highlights this when she says "The more positive the value of an identity, the more self-worth an individual draws from it..." As the participants highly valued their academic identities, the threat of losing their membership to academia, and therefore claim/legitimation of this identity, meant that participants felt anxious, stressed, and pressured. They were also often exploited as they tried to impress their supervisors and enact being ideal academics in their vulnerable positions as precarious workers. Because they wanted to be perceived as impressive and committed academic employees, participants often sacrificed certain aspects of wellbeing in order to protect their feelings of ontological security.

This ties into the second wellbeing threat associated with continuing work at Monash. In staying at Monash as precarious employees, some of the participants exposed themselves to burn-out, sleep deprivation, and missed exercise and social opportunities due to the commitments of time and energy that work demanded. This was coupled with the continuous experience of feelings of insecurity associated with the ongoing threat of losing their job. The negative impact of dealing with this continual threat to their identity and feelings of ontological security, affected all participants. However, the other wellbeing effects associated with working in academia were not so broad-brush and rather depended on the individual's situation. For example, while Will and Jasmine suffered due to the demands of their work, others such as Logan and Ruby experienced equally demanding work but claimed to enjoy working so hard and merged their whole lives into work. As such, they did not report so many immediate wellbeing impacts associated with feeling out of control, and pressured.

This paints a very complex picture of the lived experience of precarious work and wellbeing suggesting that overall precarious employment was negative to the wellbeing of all employees as it threatened their sense of identity, trust, security and abilities to care for themselves. However, the actual experience of working in academia was not always negative to the wellbeing of participants, even when it appeared to be incredibly demanding (which appears to be linked to the precarious nature of employment). Therefore, individuals' wellbeing was not clearly linked to any particular enactments of how to be an academic, but was rather linked to the way participants tried to construct their identities surrounding valued norms of academia. This informed their impetus to recursively act in ways they deemed to be legitimate social practices in this context. This extends the field of literature by offering a lively ontology of wellbeing and precarious work, examining agentic enactments influenced by social structures (Campbell & Price, 2016). It also extends knowledge around how insecurity in organisations shapes the ways in which "a person's social significance could easily be disturbed, disrupted and reshaped by changes in social relations" (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 338) which contributes to the literature concerned with employee experiences of identity threats (Brown & Coupland, 2015).

4.6. Conclusion

As young employees, often in their first 'real' career job, the participants were susceptible to being moulded into ideal academic selves, as understood through their reflexive monitoring of social norms and values at Monash/in academia (Wieland, 2010). Their knowledge about being/becoming academics was heavily informed by the prescribed information available to them and their observations in the workplace. They took cues on how to enact this role from supervisors and colleagues. Orientations towards working that appeared to be valorised in academia affected each participants' actions as they reflexively monitored their conduct to act in desirable ways because they understood that being good and worthy academics would help them secure their next contract, thus reinforcing their academic identity constructions and ontological security (Alvesson, 2010; Giddens, 1984). This often involved consenting to exploitation in the reproduction of existing greedy institutional structures. Saltmarsh and Randell-Moon (2015) claim that institutions can extend their reach and power into

the bodies, minds, families, and lives of academic workers. The ‘types’ presented here reflect the ways in which the structures (policies, workplace cultures, supervisors etc.) of the university enabled this reach, and how the experiences of participants were shaped by the power of the institution. This typology links ontological security to new conceptions of wellbeing that highlight the ongoing identity work involved in the creation of professional academic identities.

The main contribution of the chapter rests in its illumination of the way that precarious employment links to notions of ontological security and identity work. This adds to organisational studies literature regarding how engagement with insecurity offers a unique perspective related to “emotional selves, and the stresses and anxieties involved in working lives” (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 352). New conceptions of how precarious work influences wellbeing have also been highlighted by situating wellbeing in relation to the day-to-day practices of participants and social structures of precarious work (Campbell & Price, 2016; Dale & Burrell, 2014; Stokols et al., 2013). As such, the research offers a distinctive understanding of precarious employment as an ongoing, lived experience that threatens the wellbeing and identity of participants through the disruption of their ontological security (Brown & Coupland, 2015; Fitzmaurice, 2013; Giddens, 1991a). The findings also contribute to knowledge about how consent and compliance is obtained from workers (McCabe, 2011). It was identified that because participants were highly ambitious and eager to please their supervisors, in order to gain future work and increase their sense of ontological security, they often experienced limited capacity to disrupt the status quo. In many cases this resulted in their consenting to exploitation and the reproduction of precarious work practices.

Chapter Five: Temporal aspects of precarious work and future-orientations

In the previous chapter I explored the participants' experiences of precarious employment and wellbeing within the context of their day-to-day lives and spatial context of the workplace. In this chapter I turn to temporal dimensions by highlighting the long-term implications of precarious employment and its relationship to wellbeing. Accounting for the temporal dimension of experience, and change over time, reflects a key aspect of the bioecological model – the chronosystem. The chronosystem is the cornerstone of the bioecological model as it represents the “process” of experience, rather than a static approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1999, p. 4). Giddens (1984, p. 3) also emphasises the importance of processes as he claims that considerations of time-space are central to understanding and contextualising human action. Constraints imposed on participants by precarious work, and the future-orientations and rationalisations bound up with identity work that participants adopt, are presented. I show that a number of personal and career-based temporal implications result from the lack of ontological security that stems from precarious work (Giddens, 1984, 1991a). Adam's (2010) conceptions of the future assisted in the theorising of a 'continuous present', an emergent theme from the data, which refers to the practice of deferring and sacrificing life plans in the hope for an imaginary future that may, or may not, arrive.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first I show the incongruence between precarious work and the participants' personal goals that involve settling down. Precarious work is marked by uncertainty, instability, risk and fluidity (Bauman, 2012; Kalleberg, 2009; Standing, 2011; Wilson & Ebert, 2013), whereas 'settling down' (starting a family, buying a house and other plans) require enduring commitment, solidity, financial security and trust in the future (Adam, 2010; McDonald, Pini, Bailey, & Price, 2011; Wilkins, 2016b). I address the wellbeing implications of precarious employment by examining the struggle to reconcile the disjuncture between precarious work and life plans, using the concepts of ontological security and identity construction to do so. This analysis highlights how the greedy institution metaphor can be extended in temporal terms vis-à-vis the futures of the research participants.

In the second part of the chapter I highlight how the notion of progress is very important to participants as they construct orientations towards the future that emphasise career mobility and control of the future as important factors related to the development of ontological security (Adam, 2010; Bauman, 2012; Giddens, 1984). Their hopes for the future, and risks underpinning precarious work, necessitate the adoption of future-orientations which help participants to rationalise their actions in the present (Giddens, 1984, p. 179). I propose three future-orientations which are empirically derived and involve *removing*, *resigning*, and *recreating* the self. Much identity work is necessary in this process of utilising future-orientations as participants use the orientations to develop a continuous and coherent self-narrative (Alvesson, 2010; Brown & Coupland, 2015; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Wieland, 2010; Ylijoki, 2010). In the final section of the chapter an analytical synthesis of the temporal dimensions associated with precarious work and wellbeing is provided. I engage with the work of Adam (2010) to derive my own time-based category of the 'continuous present' to reflect the experiences of participants. I begin by highlighting the importance of feelings of ontological security for the participants who perceive that in order to make responsible decisions they should be able to trust in the stability and reliability of their work.

5.1. Part 1: The incongruence between fluid work and solid plans

Participants were often not able to overcome the incongruence between their life plans and positionality as precarious workers. The following sections provide examples from the data that show how participants often deferred or sacrificed their life plans. There was a wellbeing cost to this, as they did not experience the sense of ontological security they felt was required for them to be able to commit responsibly to their future (Giddens, 1991a). The dynamic of work taking priority in life, and taking-over or sidelining other aspects of life, shows how the greedy institution extended into the future lives of participants. The university reached into the participants' present and future lives by impacting upon the participants' planning and progression in the long-term. This relates to Adam's (2010, p. 361-362) contention that contemporary daily life is conducted "in the temporal domain of open and fluid pasts and futures, mindful of the lived past and projectively oriented towards the 'not yet'". Participants' experiences

today relate very closely to their future-orientations as “social systems ‘bind’ time and space” (Giddens, 1991a, p. 15).

This section is split into three parts which represent major themes. The first part focusses on the participants’ desires for permanency as they position themselves as people who would like stability and the options that can arise out of feeling a sense of trust in the reliability of work. The second section focusses on family plans and the third on living arrangements more specifically. Central to the discussion is how precarious work relates to precarious lives and the ways in which the impact of precarious employment on wellbeing can be mitigated by various support mechanisms and agentic, self-protective factors.

5.1.1. Desiring agency

Bauman (2012) highlights the features of liquid modernity and states that in contemporary society, characterised by precariousness, it is unwise for individuals to cling to any sense of stability since this will only bring disappointment. Unwise as it may be, the participants in this study did desire stability and they endeavoured to feel settled and wished to plan for the future. Their search for ontological security was crafted out of a liquid and unsettled world, as they tried to support their work and personal life goals within structural features that limited their agency and ability to achieve this (Giddens, 1991a). Logan and Olivia, for example, desired permanent employment as they saw this as a feature of stability that would enable other aspects of their lives to flourish:

Yes, the major thing with that is just having that peace of mind that you can actually sit down and make plans and do things that commit you for the future, without having to sit there and go well in two years I might be unemployed and I might not get another job for a year in that time and what do I do in that case? Because that is not a situation where you know, it’s not a good situation for raising a family or having other commitments like that. So that’s the main reason I would be concerned about contract work (Logan2).

...if I ever wanted to buy a house or make a really big financial commitment that way, because those loans are definitely longer than say three or four years. I think that that might definitely affect the type of

interest that people would be, banks would be prepared to offer you and that could have a pretty serious effect... (Olivia3).

Logan referred to a desire to “*sit down and make plans*” for personal life goals that he said could “*commit you for the future*” (Logan2). This challenges Bauman’s (2012, p. 163) observation that:

In the world in which the future is at best dim and misty but more likely full of risks and dangers, setting distant goals, surrendering private interest in order to increase group power and sacrificing the present in the name of a future bliss does not seem an attractive, nor for that matter sensible, proposition.

It became evident that individuals were living in the present and were not able to bind their current lives with an anticipated future, the notion of which challenges trajectories and forward-planning (Adam, 2010).

It is important to realise that even if fluidity is a characteristic of liquid modernity, which heightens risks and dangers, this does not mean that individuals can cope-with or mould to fluid modes of being without suffering. The depiction of an individual capable of coping with continued fragmentation and malleability is that of the ‘surfer’ (Alvesson, 2010). Alvesson (2010, p. 203) describes how, when identity is viewed as a temporal position, “‘identity’ is put in motion without much friction; it flows with the various forces and contingencies acting upon it”. This, however, positions people as adaptable and resilient in the face of adversity. While the participants were negotiating a life of fluidity and unstable ground, there were significant wellbeing issues associated with this and as Olivia mentioned, the limitations placed on individuals in precarious employment can have a “*serious effect*” (Olivia3). These serious effects meant that participants often thought they could not sustain their position as precarious workers:

I really want [my position] it to be sustainable, like I want to stay where I am but I mean, my boss was put on rolling over 12 month contracts for eight years. I won't do that just on principle but I also can't do that because I can't afford it, so I will be looking for alternate employment if things don't pan out how I want them to. So I am happy to do the next contract, so 2016 basically, at the end of 2016 if they don't have better options for me then I will be very actively pursuing alternate employment

because it takes a while to scout these options. There is not a lot of work out there so yes (Ruby3).

Time frames were particularly important for the participants who, as young people, wanted to feel that they were able to respond to the multiple demands and important life experiences and milestones that underpin experiences of young adulthood (Wyn, 2006). Due to the limiting effect of precarious employment, as a blocker to their self-determinacy, independence and feelings of stability, there was a consensus among participants that they could not withstand precarious employment beyond another one to two years. As Ruby's quote shows, this was not only because of the end dates of contracts, as these are often renewed, but rather, it was due to the fact that precarious employment was not seen as an attractive long-term option for participants. Jasmine, like many participants, used temporal referent points to portray her dissatisfaction with precarious employment long-term when she said *"if it [precarious employment] went on for a lot longer than a year then I think it would start to become a negative because I'd be wanting the next step"* (Jasmine3). Mia echoes this sentiment in her statement: *"Right now everything is insecure and it feels like it has to be that way. In a few years it would really piss me off"* (Mia1). In this section I highlight why participants felt this way and how their long-term involvement in precarious employment posed a threat to life goals and wellbeing.

Ongoing feelings of insecurity and uncertainty were seen to culminate in a way that decreased wellbeing, in the sense of conflicting with participants' plans and hopes for the future and ability to invest their energy into themselves and their personal relationships and lives. Olivia said *"...it seems very stressful, not knowing where you're going to go, or even what country you'll be able to live in"* (Olivia1). Mike said *"It's just nice to know that you have got a job into the future"* (Mike2). Jasmine said, with reference to all young precarious academics, *"It is not what we want to be doing, we would rather be settled somewhere"* (Jasmine1). These quotes point to Bauman's (2012, p. 137) contention that in times of precariousness, "plans for the future tend to become transient, protean and fickle, reaching no further than the next few moves". Precarious employment was the driver behind this limited ability to forward-plan, and this presented numerous wellbeing issues related to participants' feelings of ontological security (Giddens, 1991a).

Ontological security relies upon trust in the continuity and reliability of people and things - linked to “the experience of familiar social and material environments” (Giddens, 1991a, p. 99). If trust is not developed then “the outcome is existential anxiety... the antithesis of trust is thus a state of mind which could best be summed up as existential *angst* or *dread*” (Giddens, 1991a, p. 101, original italics). The participants could not trust in the stability of their work positions and this posed numerous wellbeing issues for participants in their day-to-day lives (as presented in the previous chapter). This also posed wellbeing issues for participants’ future as an inability to trust in the continuation of their employment confronted participants with feelings of being out of control of their lives, unable to determine their futures, fearful of missing out, and stuck in a ‘continuous present’ as important life plans were necessarily put-off (the idea of a continuous present is discussed in the analytical synthesis of the chapter). These feelings meant participants sometimes felt restricted in their capacity to live a normal, settled life. In their view this involved committed romantic relationships, joining the local sports club, adopting a pet, as well as moving out of home, starting a family, or buying a house. Participants felt restricted in these respects because, as other studies of young Australians have shown, they were “conscious and purposeful” in their thoughts about experiencing “adult status passages” (McDonald et al., 2011, p. 77). The thought of investing in relationships, engaging with the community, or taking on long-term commitments, sometimes felt like an irresponsible (or pointless) pursuit given that participants often saw themselves as living a transient and non-linear life as precarious workers.

As Logan pointed out “*once you have got a family or you know once you have bought a house or something like that, it is not easy to just go sorry I can’t do that anymore I haven’t got a job*” (Logan3). The participants struggled to balance multiple temporal considerations of “biological time” (such as the reproductive biological ‘clock’), “work time”, and “private time” (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 383). Giddens (1991a, p. 98) explains that “ontological security and routine are intimately connected, via the pervasive influence of habit”. It was because of the participants’ distrust in the continuity of their routines, due to being precarious employees who were vulnerable to sudden work changes, that participants felt that their life plans, requiring stability and responsibility, were not compatible with the reality of their situations. They sought to develop routines and habits that they could rely on, such as having nine to five working days, a predictable

salary, and scheduled leave entitlements, but this desire for regularity and predictability did not reflect the participants' reality and they struggled with this as it impinged upon their ability to experience a sense of ontological security.

Many of these plans were associated with participants' ideas of becoming an adult, and although I resist engaging with "a narrative of deficit" by framing the participants as having failed in making certain adulthood "transitions" (see Cuervo & Wyn's, 2014, critique of this transitions narrative), some participants engaged with this narrative themselves as they were critical of their perceived lack of independence, self-sufficiency, and self-determinacy and considered themselves to be held-back by their employment status. These feelings need to be contextualised within a precarious youth labour market which challenges ideas surrounding "transitions from youthful dependence to adult independence" and have made the very idea of stable, linear transitions "intensely problematic" (Furlong & Kelly, 2005, p. 208). This is especially within the context of Australia where young people are buying homes when they are older and also having children later in life, suggesting national, context-specific changes in the way people are now living their lives (Wilkins, 2016b).

Participants' power was limited in the sense that the participants often felt they lacked the agency to make their own decisions regarding how to lead their lives. Giddens (1984, p. 10) claims that "agency refers not to the intentions of people doing things but to their capacity of doing those things in the first place". Max said "...*once I am getting to a point in my life where I want a bit more stability, I want a bit more stability in my job as well. I want those to be options*" (Max1). This desire to have options and be able to make choices, without feeling limited by the vulnerability associated with precarious employment, shows how participants experienced precarious work as a blocker to their capacity to become independent people who could fulfil their life goals and ambitions. Ylijoki (2010, p. 384) summarised the sentiment shared across my participants in her statement:

...across all orientations the short-term academics - irrespective of their disciplinary field or gender – in one way or another strive for more secure employment. There are hardly any signs of satisfaction or pleasure at being wild and free from the bonds of permanent or long-term employment (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 384).

Like Ylijoki's (2010) short-term academic participants, my participants emphasised the importance they placed on employment security and stressed that there were few/no benefits associated with casual or fixed-term employment in comparison to permanent employment. Starting a family was one important life goal that the participants felt was dependent upon their sense of stability, responsibility and ontological security and was thus an important milestone that felt out-of-reach for the precariously employed participants.

5.1.2. Starting a family

Both male and female participants in my study highlighted the lack of leave entitlements as a major limiting factor affecting their consideration of having children as precarious workers. Both casual workers (who are not afforded any leave entitlements), and fixed term employees (provided leave entitlements during their limited-term contracts), often referred to the lifelong commitment of having children. This commitment far extends beyond the length of a semester or a one to three year contract. Starting a family was one major life goal that was referred to often in the interviews. Both male and female participants were aware of the limits that precarious employment placed on their ability to plan towards starting a family. Lack of parental leave and long-term financial insecurity were the main elements that participants were weary of. For example, Jasmine said "*there is no way*" she could have children because it is logistically impossible as "*there is no way I could afford to go for a year and not apply for casual contracts and not apply for that kind of stuff*" (Jasmine2). Instead of writing it off completely, Ruby calculated her income very specifically and related this to what she felt she could and could not do in her personal life, which included having children. Ruby said:

...as a woman there is the maternity leave consideration... even if I wanted to just take you know, even just six weeks off to literally be in hospital, have a baby whatever, I can't do that. So that isn't even being offered and I get that the casual employment pays better because that's not being offered. I mean I get that, but there's a point at which you are willing to sacrifice some income for greater security. My problem at the moment is I would have to sacrifice so much that I actually can't afford to live, so it's like, yes. I am already sacrificing potential income for the basis of slightly more security but I mean there is a threshold that you

actually can't push any further. It's like, yes I actually can't live, you know, I cannot afford my rent if I do that, yes (Ruby2).

Ruby carefully considered the cost of having a child, and the impact this would have on her financial wellbeing.

Ruby referred to the differences between fixed-term and casual employment in terms of leave entitlements and security. Casual work usually pays more because, as Ruby mentioned, employees who work on a casual basis are typically paid 25% (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2016a) extra as a 'casual loading' in recognition that they are not afforded benefits such as leave entitlements (Fair Work Ombudsman, 2016b). Fixed-term employees are afforded slightly more security, for the length of their contract, with structured work hours, an agreed-upon income, and leave entitlements. However, as Ruby found out through her calculations, the pay of being a fixed-term employee was lower but as she said, she would be willing to sacrifice some pay in exchange for security due to her future life plans; a sentiment shared among the participants when they considered their stage of life. This reflects a broader trend in Australia whereby it has been found that every year a woman spends in casual employment reduces her likelihood of childbirth by around age 35 (Steele, Giles, Davies, & Moore, 2013). This study found that irrespective of socioeconomic status, partner's education and parents' birthplace, women's' likelihood of childbirth was "reduced by 8, 23 and 35% for 1, 3 and 5 years spent in casual employment, respectively" (Steele et al., 2013, p. 155).

Participants were aware of the risks involved in being precariously employed workers, with no guarantee that they would be financially supported before, during, or after pregnancy. As Mia pointed out, even fixed-term contracts have their end date and she perceived that it would be difficult to find another fixed-term position if she were to start a family, even though pregnancy discrimination is illegal (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016). Mia felt that employers would find it off-putting to hire a pregnant woman because they would know that maternity leave would be taken. She explained:

Let's say some accident happened and I got pregnant and my contract ended in November or even February the following year. Like, the prospect of trying to find a job when, like a new job, if you were pregnant and needed maternity leave, or whatever, like I just don't, I don't have confidence in that happening. So even though that's not my situation,

that's the kind of thing that makes me feel nervous about having like an end date with nothing afterwards. (Mia3)

These were hypothetical scenarios imagined by the participants, but these imaginings were often how participants visualised the future effects of precarious work in terms of starting a family. Mia referred to her lack of trust in other people to support her if she were a young pregnant woman searching for work and this reflects her lack of feeling ontologically secure as Giddens (1991a, p. 99) explains that “drawing assurance from the reliability or integrity of others is a sort of emotional regrooving...” central to ontological security. Mia and Ruby referred to the connections between “trust and risk” and “security and danger” in their positions as they weighed the potential future experience of having children while they were precarious workers (Giddens, 1991a, p. 101). As Adam (1995, p. 21 – original italics) claims “questions about ‘good’ or ‘bad’ times for action, moreover, are primarily about *timing*, and this in turn may be dependent on a wide variety of factors”. Participants, like Mia and Ruby, concluded that the risks and dangers associated with having children would far outweigh feelings of trust and security in being able to maintain financial stability and employment. This meant they saw their precarious employment as a negative factor contributing to their understanding that it would be bad timing to have children.

5.1.3. Mitigating factors

Campbell and Price (2016) recently explored the relationship between contextual circumstances and precariousness in a study of precarious workers and found that contextual factors can alleviate the negative aspects of precarious work (Campbell & Price, 2016). They identified several contextual conditions, including access to alternative sources of income and alternative career options, as elements that “tend to cushion the potential impact of precariousness” (Campbell & Price, 2016, p. 326). A number of the participants referred to such cushioning factors. For example, Jasmine explained that having a partner in stable employment could cushion women who have children while employed precariously:

I have seen other women who have had kids while working year to year contracts and it is only because their partner has very stable work that they are able to do that (Jasmine2).

Max, also described the level of dependency that precarious work imposes on the lives of workers who have to rely on others for security. He said:

I admit I am still young, but I definitely think if I was at the stage where either of those [starting a family, home ownership] were seeming particularly feasible, being in a job where you have virtually no job security for more than six months, well not even six months, three months, would pretty much make those pretty much dependent on what your partner's situation, if you have a partner, their situation. You would only apply for a home loan if your partner has a secure job, you would only have a kids if your partner has a secure job because there is no guarantee that you are going to keep getting work... (Max1).

It was not an attractive option for participants to be dependent on others: they wanted to make their own decisions and have their options open to make important life choices. Max continued *"I want it to be my choice, to have a home or not have a home, to have kids or not have kids. I don't want it to be imposed on me by my job or anything else really"* (Max1). Their precarious employment made participants dependent on the institution for employment but they also depended on others for support to be able to live their lives while only precariously employed. In this way, the greedy institution also took time, energy and resources from other people in the participants' lives as the financial stability of their partners was centrally important in considerations of important life decisions.

Taking into account contextual elements that affected the precariousness of young people, it was interesting to note that Tanya was the only home-owner at the time of first interview. By the time of the third round of interviewing Mike and Ruby had also bought homes with their partners. These three participants were also the only married participants, all were on fixed-term (as opposed to casual) contracts, and Mike and Tanya had partners in secure full-time employment. These features supported their ability to buy a home as they benefitted from external sources of security, and the "reliability" and "integrity" of these relationships (Giddens, 1991a, p. 99). Ruby described how her husband was in low-paid employment that was not secure and as a result she found the house buying process to be stressful because of their level of financial insecurity. Ruby was on intermission from her PhD and was working four

days per week on a fixed-term contract which allowed the option of being approved a home-loan but she described experiencing intense stress immediately after making the purchase when her employment came under threat. Eventually this issue was resolved after some serious negotiations but the significant impact this had on Ruby's wellbeing, disrupting her sense of being able to rely on her workplace for support and realising the vulnerability of her position, made her increasingly critical of her position. As a result, she decided to put a time-limit on her engagement with precarious employment, as per her previous quote.

The fact that Tanya, Mike and Ruby were all married and in fixed-term employment and could then buy a house suggests that these outside influences certainly change the dynamic of how precarious employment can affect life plans. The achievement of certain life milestones, such as buying a home, getting married and starting a family are often clustered (Wilkins, 2016b). Precarious employment is a condition of work only whereas precariousness is a condition of life, encompassing work, and therefore "the temptation to leap freely from precarious work to precarious workers (or precarious lives) should be resisted" (Campbell & Price, 2016, p. 326). These findings, and the comments from participants, suggest that the impacts of precarious work can be mitigated by secure and stable conditions in life that buffer against an overall precarious existence, as has been found in other studies (Buchtemann & Quack, 1990; Keuskamp et al., 2013; Lewchuk et al., 2011).

5.1.4. Leaving home – becoming an adult

One participant, Jasmine, experienced this buffering effect by living at home with her parents and benefiting from the stability this provided her. Although she felt more financially secure living with her parents, Jasmine was heavily impacted by her negative feelings that living at home meant she was financially dependent on others and remained in a child-like state. Jasmine had been reliant on Centrelink welfare payments when she experienced a gap in academic employment between semesters. It is a major financial benefit to the university that casual teaching staff are not paid between semesters. As a result casual employees may experience up to four months without pay. Although she managed to become more financially independent by the time of her third interview, as a result of working multiple jobs (in and outside academia), Jasmine felt that her position was too unstable to support herself out of her parents' house.

Jasmine explained how precarious employment infantilised her. She described emotionally how living at home significantly affected her wellbeing because it made her feel inadequate and stuck in a childish timeframe (Adam, 1995). She described the stigma of this situation as she felt living with her parents represented “*being like an adult child*” (Jasmine3). Her position as a university employee heightened these feelings as teaching young students increased Jasmine’s awareness that she had not achieved a milestone she considered normal for people her age:

...the idea that they [my students] have achieved a milestone in life that I haven't. The moving out of home, doing all that kind of stuff, sort of, I don't know why it is such a big problem for me but it is (Jasmine3).

Jasmine described these feelings as a type of inadequacy and disappointment – there was a lack of congruency between what she thought she would be doing, and wanted to do at this age, and the reality of her life. Adam (1995) describes how industrial time, related to employment and labour, is inherently linked to power and control and she contends:

...those relations of power are not restricted to situations in which time is exchanged for money: they permeate the most private times of consciousness, the moments ‘when’, the right time to act, the timing of interaction, the tempo embedded in natural and social processes, and the time-frames within which we organize social life (Adam, 1995, p. 28).

In this way, the power of the greedy institution colonised the future-time of participants’ lives by the way that precarious work at the university shaped personal thought-processes and actions related to social life. As a way of dealing with her feeling of being restricted in terms of her agency to move out of home, as a result of the greedy institution limiting her freedom by offering only precarious work, Jasmine had to engage in intense identity work in order to maintain her sense of being an accomplished person. One way she did this was by hiding her living arrangements when talking to people:

...it really bugs me that I am still at home and I hide it when I talk to people. It is the thing I try not to admit to... I think I'd always expected that I would have been out by now... Like looking around and going why

am I incapable of doing everything everyone else has done? I know the reasons but it still doesn't make me feel better (Jasmine3).

The emotional impact of this situation for Jasmine was that it made her critical of herself as being “*incapable*” and child-like.

I commented in my post-interview notes that Jasmine was noticeably upset when talking about this experience. This was because she felt her social identity was stigmatised as a result of her limited capacity to act (Giddens, 1991b). Wieland (2010, p. 504) states that “control operates unobtrusively in modern organizations”, often extending far beyond the walls of the organisation (Wieland, 2010, p. 504). The greedy institution’s control even extended into Jasmine’s sex-life as she felt this was impacted by the financial instability she experienced because as she said if she “*brought a guy back home*” then it would be her parents’ home, and her parents would meet him, the idea of which “*kills that*” romantic experience for her (Jasmine3).

Wieland (2010, p. 504) explains that it is important to connect personal identity (who am I?) with social identity (what should I be?):

One way to reconnect them is to think about identity construction as a normative activity through which socially acceptable ideals of whom one should be are woven into an individual’s understanding of whom he or she is... we might consider how ideal selves - expectations for what a good person should be - act as resources for identity construction.

In Jasmine’s case this was an aspect of identity work as she tried to reconcile her real situation (living at home, dependent, in precarious employment) with her imagined ideal (accomplished academic, successful, independent) and the cultural norms associated with ‘adulthood’ in Australian society (leaving home, not relying on parents, having a partner, becoming self-sufficient). Kuhn (2006, p. 1341) argues that identity work “concentrates on actors’ efforts to create a coherent sense of self in response to the multiple (and perhaps conflicting) scripts, roles, and subject positions encountered in both work and non-work activity”. This is why it was so distressing for Jasmine to be teaching young university students while feeling inadequate in her personal life. She felt that as a lecturer, in a senior position to the students, her sense that students had accomplished leaving home before she had done so threatened her own sense of self-

coherence and success. These identity values are inherently linked to the construction of time, as we socially determine “when it is time for certain events to take place” (Adam, 1995, p. 21) in a dynamic of “time-space ‘zoning’” (Giddens, 1991a, p. 17).

This analysis illustrates how the wellbeing experiences of precarious employees are underpinned by a combination of “real” measures and variables (such as financial stability and social support), in combination with subjective experiences (such as feelings of being obstructed or limited in terms of agency). This supports a contention made by Campbell and Price (2016, p. 318) that “institutions and social relations outside the workplace can act to mediate the relation between work and the worker”. For Jasmine, her feelings of being limited in her capacity to become an adult, have romantic relationships, and feel like an accomplished person in relation to her peers and students, were all directly related to the casual nature of her employment contract which rendered her financially dependent and insecure and therefore unable to move out of home. She was stuck in a continuous present, unable to move forward into her imagined future.

5.1.5. Missing the boat – future vanishing

This sense of occupying the future was an important concept for participants who all expressed time-orientated goals. Participants wanted to be able to choose “when” it was time for them to do certain things (Adam, 1995, p. 21). However, participants often felt restricted in their capacity to engage with their anticipated futures because their lack of ontological security obstructed their sense of power in being able to control and plan their lives with any degree of reliability (Giddens, 1991a). As such, participants feared that they might miss opportunities as their futures vanished. Logan articulated this:

All those big adult decisions that you're supposed to make at some stage and I feel like they kind of get deferred for anyone who's on an academic pathway. They're not really options any more... It worries me a little bit. Probably up until a couple of years ago I wouldn't have been particularly worried, but I mean... yes, it worries me that, things are going to disappear, opportunities are going to disappear. I don't really want to be a vagrant for the rest of my life (Logan1).

Logan emphasised the stage of his life as the primary reason for wanting more secure employment again in the second interview when he said “... *hey I’m 29, it would be nice to settle down at some stage and have a family and, you know, all that sort of thing*” (Logan2). He described wanting to “*invest*” a lot more in setting his life up and this included living in Melbourne long-term, as well as making other “*time investments, effort investments*” associated with being settled such as joining sports clubs and making friends (Logan2). As somebody who had been working precariously for a number of years, Logan was becoming increasingly tired of his perceived “*vagrant*” status (Logan1). A vagrant is defined as “A person without a settled home or regular work who wanders from place to place and lives by begging” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2017, np). There are clearly implications from his comment about feeling unsettled, lowly and dependent on others as a precarious employee, which links back to the way the greedy institution takes time and energy from people while concurrently diminishing opportunities to pursue personal goals beyond the objectives of the organisation. Coser (1967, p. 196) describes how competition for an individual’s personal resources operates within the greedy institution dynamic:

Not only do human beings possess only finite libidinal energies for cathecting social objects, but their resources of time, are similarly limited. As a consequence, various groups that have a claim on individuals’ energies and time compete with one another in the effort to draw as much as they can, within normative limits, from the available pool of resources.

The way that work could detract from participants’ other life plans, suggests a draining of their resources. Participants’ awareness of this was evident when they were asked to consider what might be different in their lives if they were more permanently employed.

Logan’s response was a representative example of the participants’ perspectives, when he described imagining “*buying a house*”, being “*a lot less indecisive about whether we were going to get a dog*” and feeling “*less indecisive about when we’re going to start a family*” when he imagined life in permanent employment (Logan1). The suppression of this sense of freedom and ability to make decisions weighed heavily on the participants. For example, Logan feared that he might get “*too old*” to achieve

these goals, or lose a sense of “*belonging*” to where he lived if he kept pursuing a precarious academic career as he perceived that working precariously in academia would require him to constantly move houses, following work where it came up. These thoughts about life as a “vagrant” explain his reluctance to make plans and commitments, or invest in making friends or joining community activities in his locale. In the case of Logan, these experiences were arguably compounded by the fact that far from being buffered from the negative implication of precarious work, Logan was financially supporting his partner who was studying towards her PhD. This situation not only added extra financial pressure but also increased his sense of uncertainty as he imagined them both trying to work precariously in academia.

The major wellbeing implication associated with the participants’ negativity regarding the prospect of long-term engagement with precarious employment, rested in their inability to feel optimistic that their current employment would transition into anything more permanent. The uncertainty and lack of trust in progress created disquiet among the participants about their future because the perpetual change and fluidity that characterised their precarious employment meant they had nothing to hold onto, nothing to bind their time (Bauman, 1999). As such, participants were unable to experience a sense of trust, as an essential component leading to feelings of ontological security, because they saw their personal trajectories as non-linear and disjointed. Giddens (1991a, p. 35) defines trust as “confidence in the reliability of a person or system, regarding a given set of outcomes or events...” He further explains how “...trust is always bound up with modes of organising “reliable” interactions across time-space” (Giddens, 1991a, p. 101-102).

When reliable interactions are not available, ontological security cannot be formulated and individuals are subject to losing their sense of security, stability and continuity of self-identity (Giddens, 1994). Many participants, like Logan, used temporal referent points to indicate their long-term plans however there was limited ability to trust in the continuity of their lives across time and therefore limited prospects of binding the present to the future. This is why Bauman (2012) claims that living for a future bliss is not very sensible as the future presents an unknown, empty void. However, even if not sensible or realistic, most participants engaged with an ideal narrative of progression that appeared to be a coping strategy. Participants found comfort in their thought that they were experiencing progression towards an idealised career, and the

sense of security that would accompany this achievement. This relates to the 'bridge' or 'trap' dichotomy (Natti, 1993) discussed in the literature review. Key to this analogy is the concept of progress and the "temporality of life" (Adam, 1995, p. 26). Participants wanted to feel that over time their situation would change, and that they would not get stuck or trapped in precarious employment since this affected so many of their future plans.

I noticed that participants highlighted the importance of experiencing progression and they linked progression to the duration of their employment contract and also to the perceived value of different employment types. Participants ranked their order of preference for employment types and this clearly showed that casual work was seen as the lowest rung of the ladder, followed by fixed-term employment and then permanent work. Instead of a bridge to permanent employment being the only goal, and all other forms of precarious employment being clustered together by participants, it was rather that any transition toward more secure employment, in relation to that currently occupied, could be considered a form of progression and thus a bridge. For example, Max described how as a casual employee, a transition into fixed-term employment would be seen as a bridge towards security. He explained:

I think it's a kind of sad fact that I don't have really, I used to think that fixed term positions weren't that great and I understand from friends who are more industrially savvy that fixed term positions aren't that great. But having never had any job other than a casual position, fixed term sounds fantastic to me... Fixed term seems like a step above. Maybe after six, 10 years of fixed term I'd get sick of it but at the moment a fixed term seems fine (Max3).

Suddenly, in opposition to a casual position the notion of a fixed-term role felt like a bridge into something better, something more secure.

In a similar way, Logan indicated that longer fixed-term positions would act as bridges to an improved employment situation, however these would also become a trap once he started a family and required permanent employment:

I would like to not be on a one year contract obviously. Yes, I mean typically something like a three or a five year contract, I could be relatively happy with that for whatever my next job happens to be. I

mean, you know, as yet I don't have any particular, you know, I don't have a family that I am trying to care for or anything like that. At the moment, I am okay with that. I think maybe if I was getting to maybe five years down the track I'd be a little more hesitant to take a short term role. Anything under five years I would be a little more hesitant... obviously it would be good to get off a contract but I could keep doing it for a few more years yet. At least until I start a family (Logan3).

Central to these analogies are ideas surrounding mobility and timeliness (Adam, 1995). The participants desired to feel that they were moving forward, that their contract timeframes would be extended, and that their employment would get incrementally more secure and long-term as they orientated themselves towards the future.

5.2. Part 2: Future-orientations

Adam (2010) claims that contemporary lives have become decontextualized and disembodied due to capitalist conceptions that emphasise commodification, the present, control and progress. Bauman (2012, p. 135) refers to theorist Pierre Bourdieu's thoughts on the state of progress when he says:

To design the future, a hold on the present is needed... it is now the individual's hold on her or his present which matters. And for many, perhaps most, contemporary people their individual hold on the present is at best shaky and more often than not blatantly absent. We live in a world of universal flexibility, under conditions of acute and prospectless *Unsicherheit* (Bauman, 2012, p. 135).

Unsicherheit translates from German to English as: uncertainty, insecurity, instability and danger. In a time of uncertainty participants engaged in various responses to their position in academia and they framed their present experiences in relation to their imagined futures by considering precarious employment to be a stepping-stone to more secure forms of employment. Charlie, for example, said that his current job was akin to experiencing a “*period of training*” (Charlie1) that would help secure a future of permanent employment. Max considered his employment to be “*a step to something else*” (Max1). Mia articulated the sentiment that was held by all participants when she said:

I would kind of hope that the shorter term stuff would give me a better chance of getting the longer term stuff. But I don't know that for sure. I really don't know how long I could stand it. Hopefully as long as I need to (Mia3).

All participants hoped they would not become trapped or stagnant in their position. However, riddled with feelings of uncertainty about what the future held, participants had to deal with the unknowns of their position and consider how to respond in order to orientate themselves towards their desired futures and manage their wellbeing along this journey. Many of the participants oriented themselves towards a future marked by some idea of linearity as they acknowledged that their present actions could, to varying extents, shape their anticipated futures.

As part of my analysis I present three future-orientations which are classifications derived from the empirical data (shown in Table 9.). These orientations are linked to the participants' understandings of their ability to shape their future, and the best course of action to do this. As such, they are closely related to the agency of participants in that they reflect the perceived capacity of participants to control and direct their lives in the present, towards an imagined future (Giddens, 1984).

Table 9. Analytically derived future-orientations with indicative actions and quotes

Future-orientation	Action	Indicative quotes
Removing self from academia for an alternative imagined future of secure employment and increased feelings of ontological security	Leaving precarious employment in academia and pursuing more secure work elsewhere to support wellbeing	<p><i>"It's kind of disappointing... I mean, obviously I have the option of staying but in some sense it feels like there wasn't much option of staying if I want to be realistic about it myself. It feels like, it feels like, I don't know, just that there isn't so much of a choice, like it would be good if the sector was different so that I could see it as a long term career" (Max3)</i></p> <p><i>"I don't see much likelihood of doing anything different in the next five years if I just keep working as a tutor which has kind of made, kind of informed the decision to move [overseas] because I'm not really going forward in any way. So I'd be better off trying something else, trying a field where I actually can grow and develop</i></p>

		<p><i>more and get recognition for that whereas I don't feel like that exists within higher education so much" (Max3)</i></p> <p><i>"...you have to go with the [job/organisation] signing you up properly" (Ruby3)</i></p>
<p>Resigning self to an unknown future, hoping for an increased sense of ontological security over time but uncertain of ability to control this</p>	<p>Trying not to focus on the future by living in the present and being resigned to the unknown and uncontrollable nature of the future to support wellbeing</p>	<p><i>"I have absolutely no plans for five years' time" (Mia1)</i></p> <p><i>"I kind of feel like in a way it is best not to make plans... if I was to say I wanted to have finished a post-doc in five years then that kind of stresses me out because I feel like a lot of what is required to get to the point is out of my hands" (Mia1)</i></p> <p><i>"I am worried about putting all my hopes for the future in really concrete goals. So I think for me it's more trying to make the best decisions at the time, with a view to what that means to my future but not having a really clear vision" (Mia1).</i></p>
<p>Recreating the self for an anticipated future of being securely employed in academia, and increased sense of ontological security in this imagined future</p>	<p>Continuous striving towards enhancing the self with some belief that the future can be crafted by strategic present actions in a bid towards achieving increased future wellbeing</p>	<p><i>"At the moment, I think, that's kind of the mind-set I am in at the moment, I am trying to get as many things that give me a bit of leverage and a bit of, a bit more of a say in my future so that if something does, if it does come to something happening or if, you know, this job falls through or if something happens, then I have got a little bit more say over what happens after that" (Logan3)</i></p> <p><i>"[My achievements are] giving me more I can talk about, I have experience, I have skills, I have all of these things if I need to move into another field that is a solid thing I can use to convince people to give me a job" (Logan3).</i></p> <p><i>"Like you know, being able to say that I have organised a public lecture and a master class and now I have been one of the RA contracts I do is to organise a conference. These are all things that often come up when you are going through</i></p>

		<p><i>selection criteria things like that, so it will be good to have on my CV” (Jasmine3).</i></p> <p><i>“I am not fading away into invisibility. It does seem to be picking up but I don’t know if it is going to translate into anything more permanent” (Jasmine3).</i></p>
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These orientations do not correspond to the typology presented in the first chapter although, like the typology, the orientations represent fluid rather than fixed constructs and are linked to the enactments and perspectives of participants who could adopt multiple orientations at any one time. In this way the future-orientations adopted by participants were the result of conscious decision-making as “actors have ‘good reasons’ for what they do” (Giddens, 1984, p. 179).

5.2.1. Removing the self

Many of the participants mentioned leaving their jobs as a potential solution to the negative effects of precarious employment, as they conceived of finding more secure work elsewhere. Ruby, for example, reluctantly applied for a permanent job outside of Monash, but still in academia, as by the time of her third interview she was frustrated by precarious employment practices. Max actually did leave as he considered his future-self worries too important to ignore and decided he was not willing to make the long-term sacrifices that he perceived an academic career required. He said “*I just want more secure employment so that I can have that more security in my outside life*” (Max2). This was an important decision because precarious employment also heavily affected his wellbeing as he said “*if I think back over the last year I would say some of the times when I have been the most anxious would have been related to employment*” (Max1).

In a bid to protect his wellbeing in the present, and carve-out an improved future for himself Max left academia to try and achieve his five-year goal of gaining secure employment. Giddens (1984, p. 176) notes that “power is the means of getting things done” and this includes enabling as well as constraining social action (as discussed in the previous chapter). Max’s action of leaving Monash exemplified his mobilisation of agency and power. However, this action was informed by his realisation that he had

very limited power to change the conditions of his employment in academia as he felt constrained by structures of power operating within Monash (Giddens, 1984).

Giddens (1984) describes agents' "transformative capacity" achieved through recursive social action in the process of structuration. In this sense, Max's action of leaving the institution had limited transformative influence on the structures of the greedy institution because by removing himself from the institution, he had limited opportunities to repetitively challenge the normative features of work at Monash (Giddens, 1984). However, in another sense, leaving Monash was the ultimate form of resistance as without agents to recursively reproduce social practices the institutional structures would cease to exist (Giddens, 1984). As Kroon and Paauwe (2014, p. 23) explain, "transformation processes are enacted structural properties that could eventually change the structural principles". The transformational capacity of this type of action would depend upon many members collectively acting in this way over a prolonged time period (Giddens, 1984).

I suggest that participants, on the whole, did not leave Monash in a bid to create change for the future, because they often felt that they could be easily replaced and were in this sense disposable and insignificant within the institution as a whole. Also, they perceived that leaving would incur a great personal cost, as Ruby pointed out "*...if I went to another institution I have to learn it [the systems and policies] all over again*" (Ruby3). Knights and Clarke (2014, p. 350) point out that academics are particularly challenged in terms of resistance to the university in that it is easy to "write critically about the intensification of work and managerial demands in university" while at the same time complying with "the very controls that we criticize". This is because the university workplace, and structures surrounding it, act as legitimising forces central to the construction of academic identity which "offers a tantalizing array of potential and possible selves" (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 351). The development and strengthening of their academic identities was very important for the participants and as such participants were often willing to accept the negative effects of the academic career path.

5.2.2. Resigning the self

Resigning the self to an unknown future and undetermined career-path was one future-orientation adopted by participants as a way of mitigating the negative

experience of feeling out of control. Mia, for example, consciously tried to adopt fluid ways of thinking, conceptualising the future as a mechanism of coping with her precarious position. She rejecting feelings of inadequacy and uncertainty that precarious work presented as she decided to live each day as it came and not make plans for the future. Many of the participants did in fact comment that it was unlikely they would be able to change the structures of precarious work within academia and felt that a level of acquiescence was required (Giddens, 1984). Participants resigned towards an unknown future engaged with an “instant living” narrative and attempted to “bracket the future and the worries related to it from their minds and focus on the immediate present” (Ylijoki, 2010). Mia bracketed the future by rejecting external pressure to have “*very clear plans*” (Mia1) focussed around other peoples’ expectation of what she should or should not achieve by certain timeframes. This relates to Adam’s (2010, p. 6) contention that time can feel like “constraint, discipline, control and structure” adding to a sense of time-pressure and shortage.

In her rejection of buying into time-pressures she saw were accepted within academia, Mia concentrated on being “*a good worker*” and “*smart*” by doing what she felt she could manage rather than trying to “*jump through hoops that I don’t know if they really make any difference*” (Mia1). In this sense Mia found that it was actually a wellbeing practice not to place too much emphasis on the future and pressurise herself to try and control events and tick every box. She constructed her identity using characteristics of Alvesson’s (2010, p. 202) image of the “surfer” whereby identity is seen as a process with “an element in the flow of events” which draws attention to “the radical openness of the world”. Mia tried to allow her expectations and conceptions of her life and self to be moulded by events as they occurred, rather than positioning herself as somebody fixed and set on continuity and planning. Alvesson (2010, p. 203) claims that a surfer identity “flows with the various forces and contingencies acting upon it. Pain and resistance are less salient elements here, as the self – typically or at least ideally – is adaptable...”. Mia saw that framing herself and the events in her life as flowing and adaptable supported her wellbeing as she could minimise the anxiety associated with trying to control events that she deemed to be out of her hands.

This future-orientation also echoes a finding of Brown and Coupland (2015) who in their analysis of identity narratives of elite professionals found that work-related identity threats could be appropriated by participants and constructed in more positive

terms to reframe their narrative. Mia, like some participants of Brown and Coupland's (2015) study, emphasised the present in order to construct the narrative of her identity and frame her situation more positively. She could have engaged with a narrative of risk, vulnerability and striving (linked to possible failure), but instead she described living for the moment, being adaptable and resisting stress and pressure from those more anxious.

Ylijoki (2010, p. 375), whose work inspired my analysis of future-orientations, described how some of her participants also oriented themselves towards a practice of "bracketing the future" and focussing on "instant living". Ylijoki (2010, p. 375) states that "... this orientation offers a protective cocoon that filters out real and potential future threats and in this way sustains individuals' well-being and capacity to pursue their work" (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 375). Engaging in the practice of "instant living" (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 375) was a way to mitigate the threats of precariousness and embody notions of fluidity as a coping mechanism. I found that participants were only partially successful in supporting their wellbeing using this orientation. Mia, for example, described an ongoing tension between finding "*comfort*" in living each moment as it came and also finding it "*scary*" and feeling "*nervous*" because "*it's very unstable*" (Mia3). This reflected the invasive wellbeing effects of precarious employment described by all the participants, even those who tried to embrace the insecurity of their work as a self-protective mechanism.

5.2.3. Recreating the self

In contrast to resigning the self to an unknown future, a number of participants oriented themselves towards a future they envisioned as being possible if they were willing to work hard enough for it. These participants engaged in "aspirational" forms of identity work whereby they withstood precarious employment and managed their experiences in a way that they hoped would give them some leverage towards transitioning into more permanent academic work and strengthening their academic identities (Alvesson, 2010; Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 343). Participants felt that their commitment and dedication to academic work would help foster the "treasured identities" they were crafting as good and worthy academics (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 344). Many of the participants aimed to take hold of their present by acting in ways they conceived would progress their careers. This involved building their curriculum vitae (CV) and reputation within the academy as a way of increasing their perceived

likelihood of gaining permanent employment and therefore enhancing their feelings of ontological security and strengthening their academic identity.

The participants knew that secure employment would not be guaranteed after a period of precarious work, however they hoped that they might achieve this transition and so they decided to increase their chances through hard work and the avoidance of negative “sanctions” (Giddens, 1984, p. 176). Without seeing into the future, or being able to rely on anything more solid than guess-work, many of the participants’ actions were built around strategy and the concept of hope. They felt a sense of optimism for the future and saw that linear progression might be possible and this fostered feelings of temporal continuity linked to ontological security (Giddens, 1984). In this way their present lives could flow directly into the constructions of their futures as they used their time as a “resource” for the creation of their futures (Adam, 1995, p. 15).

These participants oriented themselves towards a “scheduled future” (Ylijoki, 2010) and were “aspirants” (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 343) who considered themselves to be “on a path” towards employment security (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p. 201). The sense of progression, and working towards a better possible future, linked to their ideas of wellbeing as they envisioned transitioning into ideal and secure selves. In this way, their actions were protective, in that participants saw that they could control, to a certain extent, their future feelings of ontological security, by leveraging the status of their position as employees.

In the absence of a clearly defined career path, this progress was self-driven as participants tried to gain publications, secure grant funding, attend conferences, upskill, build professional reputations, and generally meet the key selection criteria requirements for permanent academic positions. The participants saw their striving as a form of self-defence as they used their skills and power to try and recreate themselves and their position within academia – crafting themselves into being accomplished, attractive, and therefore more likely to be employed, academics. In this way participants were involved in a temporal process of recreating themselves from apprentice-type, precariously employed academics, into full, tenured academics.

Logan, for example, felt that he needed to achieve certain work goals as a form of “*self-defence*” (Logan3) to protect himself from future unemployment and he described his efforts to gain as much experience to possible to enhance his CV which he planned

to use as leverage for gaining a future tenured academic job. Likewise, Jasmine utilised her time in precarious employment to spend a year to “*CV build*” which was a conscious decision she made in anticipation that this would help her gain future job opportunities (Jasmine3). In these ways, the participants scheduled their futures by merging present actions with imagined future outcomes. They did this in very specific and conscious ways with clear assumptions that their actions could propel them forward into tenured academic employment. This was unlike the ‘resigned’ future-orientation which assumed that the future was unknown, out of reach, and out of control of actions in the present.

The ‘recreation of self’ orientation suggested a belief in the thought that through self-efficiency and productivity “academics are able to improve their chances of being among those who will win in the academic gamble” (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 381). This notion of the ‘gamble’ reflects that chance, luck and uncertainty were still themes prevalent in this orientation, however the idea of improving chances suggests that participants thought they could do certain things to support their success. This suggests an orientation towards “constant time awareness and the need to use time in the best possible way” (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 381). Lewchuk et al. (2011) found that some of their precariously employed participants saw themselves to be on a path towards permanent employment and as such were involved in “investing considerable effort into securing permanent employment” (Lewchuk, 2011, p. 201). My participants saw that this investment of self-improvement and recreation would lead to an ideal imagined future. Indeed, the most pertinent task of our time is thought to be the negotiation of the never-ending challenges here and now in a bid to progress towards a desirable future (Adam, 2003a, 2010; Bauman, 2012). Bauman (2012) describes the nature of this future-oriented strategic planning as he explains: “Work has drifted from the universe of order-building and future-control to the realm of a game; acts of work become more like the strategy of a player...” (Bauman, 2012, p. 138). In this way, participants acted in ways they perceived might produce an improved social reality over time (Giddens, 1984).

Logan felt quite confident in his strategy and after the year of being involved in this research he could reflect in the final interview on the accomplishment of numerous highly-regarded academic achievements, and as a result felt that he would be able to sell himself as an attractive proposition to employers. In this way he experienced an

enhanced feeling of self-coherence as he perceived himself to be a socially acceptable ideal (Wieland, 2010). This then increased his sense of ontological security:

I wouldn't say I am relaxed but I am feeling relatively good about my job and future things and you know having that grant there kind of gives me a bit of extra certainty that has well. That then, you know, snowballs into a whole heap of other things that I can plan in advance and get organised and just generally feel like I'm on top of things (Logan3).

Participants felt that when they achieved work goals, and were able to perform to a standard that is valorised in academia, this developed their own “treasured” identity which they thought would translate into being securely employed (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 344). Participants’ feelings of experiencing progression translated into an increased sense of ontological security as they began to see themselves in a better, more secure position within academia, less vulnerable to exclusion.

This orientation towards self-improvement and recreation of the self towards a more secure state, both aligns with, and contests, Knights and Clarke’s (2014) argument that the development of a secure identity is illusory. Knights and Clarke (2014, p. 350) explain that “identity is a perpetually revolving ephemeral construction, the security of which can only ever be transient”. The revolving construction of identity is true in that the recreation of the self involves the morphing of identity from one thing to another. Nevertheless, there can still be continuity throughout this process as participants engage in identity narratives that rely on persistent self-trajectories. The participants relied on a certain level of self-coherency as they perceived that their present self (as precarious academics) would transform into a fully-fledged academic self in tenured employment. With the perceived successfulness of this self-recreation came other enhanced feelings of confidence and a sense of ontological security, as will now be discussed.

5.2.3.1. The successfulness of progress and self-recreation

Over the course of the year, Logan had possibly achieved the most of all participants in terms of objective career advancement and transitioning towards more long-term career prospects. Logan had been awarded a research grant (which almost certainly guaranteed the renewal of his contract), he had been heavily involved in teaching (both locally and overseas) and he was supervising a student researcher. Logan said about

securing a grant: *“It certainly is a huge thing in terms of both you know, career and CV and getting things done here as well. It is a good position to be in”* (Logan3). At the time of this third interview Logan’s partner was looking for work and to my surprise Logan said that he would not have any issue with leaving Monash. He explained:

I am not particularly wedded to the idea of being an academic or anything like that. I could quite happily move into industrial research or something outside of research altogether. If it did come to that I feel happy I could find something... Essentially for the moment, everything is going well enough and we are just going to keep on and see how far we can push it until it all works out (Logan3).

Logan had just discussed the good position he found himself in and this increased sense of security and control over his employment appeared to influence his feelings of confidence about making decisions, including rejecting academia if he so desired, because he felt that everything would work out. He felt a certain sense of self-confidence in the present, as Bauman (2012, p. 132) explains:

To people confident of their power to change things, ‘progress’ is an axiom. To people who feel that things fall out of their hands, the idea of progress would not occur and would be laughable... But if self-confidence – the reassuring feeling of ‘keeping hold on the present’ – is the sole foundation on which the trust in progress rests, no wonder that in our times trust must be unsteady and rickety.

The participants in this research so desperately desired progress yet they knew that their present was precarious and therefore future unknown. However, this could change as when Logan, for example, started to feel that his security was increasing, his self-confidence grew and he began to feel he had a grasp on the future as he stated *“it is pretty much guaranteed that they are going to keep me on next year”* (Logan3). This level of certainty also made him feel capable of making choices himself, rather than relying on the whim of Monash to offer him a job. He now considered himself to be an attractive employee with options, with enhanced resources and capacity (Giddens, 1984).

Logan felt that his attempts to impress and fulfil organisational objectives made all the difference in terms of achieving his goals. He transitioned to a more secure perch where he was able to shake-off some of the fears associated with feeling insecure. From his new vantage point, Logan was able to enjoy his position and felt less pressured to forge ahead and more able to pick and choose his options without being stifled by feelings of insecurity. He had successfully recreated himself, experiencing a greater sense of ontological security and coherent sense of self, less reliant on external factors. Jasmine was less confident about her abilities to recreate herself and enhance her position in academia by transitioning into permanent employment. She certainly hoped, and was relatively optimistic, that her actions and dedication would pay-off, but she still feared that her efforts would not “*translate*” into anything desired for the future (Jasmine3).

I enquired further into her reasons for CV building and realised she was just as perplexed about how to get a permanent job as ever:

Kate: So that is still your main objective, is to get a permanent academic career path going?

Jasmine: Yes... I am hoping that that will help. There is still that question of how you actually get the jobs, I haven't worked that one out yet (Jasmine3).

This unknowing is a good example of the guess work the participants were involved in as they considered their futures. Jasmine felt optimistic that if she could withstand the negative aspects of academic precariousness for long enough then she might be rewarded with a tenured, full-time position. She viewed precarious work within academia as a type of initiation process whereby she thought that should she meet all the demands of the institution, and be the “*last one standing*” of all the hopefuls in the line-up for a tenured position, then eventually she would gain a permanent position (Jasmine1).

Precarious employment, and the perils associated with it, were viewed as trials to be overcome, by participants involved in ‘recreating’ their sense of security and position in academia. Ylijoki (2010, p. 379) explains how “short-term academics are constantly on trial, they have to prove their worth in order to ensure the continuity, and possibly also the advancement, of their career”. This level of long-term investment and hope is

contrary to Bauman's (2012, p. 162) conceptualisation that "instant gratification" is the strategy most reasonably deployed by individuals living in a time of liquid modernity. Jasmine's dedication to continue on her pathway and excel academically were perceived by her as badges of honour signifying her dedication and deserving of a tenured position. In this sense, she had a certain level of faith in the future that underpinned her motivation to engage in future-oriented practices as she assumed that the past would flow into the future (Adam, 1995).

5.3. Part 1 and 2 summary

In the chapter so far I have examined the reasons why participants desired permanent employment and I have related this to conceptions of temporality, highlighting how "the past, present and future get joined up with life stages" (Adam, 1995, p. 6). Given their understanding that long-term future plans required solidarity and commitment, the participants often felt held-back in their positions as precarious workers. The fluid and unpredictable nature of precarious work meant that participants often felt unable to move forward in their lives. However, as young future-focussed people, the participants adopted future-orientations through which to make sense of their current position and identities in relation to future prospects. These future-orientations were bound-up with the actions of participants who attempted, in some cases, to activate control in the construction of their future. Participants always knew they were limited in their abilities to control the future due to the risks and uncertainty associated with precarious work. Giddens (1991a, p. 111) notes that "to recognise the existence of a risk or set of risks is to accept not just the possibility that things might go wrong, but that this possibly cannot be eliminated". In this sense, participants knew that they could not eliminate risks associated with the future, but some thought that certain actions might make a difference in terms of leveraging their position and minimising risks. The future was never far from the participants' minds.

5.4. Part 3: Analytical synthesis - continuous present and cruel optimism

Conceptions of living with the future in mind relate to Adam's (2010) ethics of the future where she posits that the future can be conceived in two distinct ways: 'present future' versus 'future presents'. The present future is defined by the question "what can the

future do for us?” and Adam (2010, p. 369) argues that this questions seeks “ways of borrowing from the future for the benefit of the present”. From the perspective of the present future, Adam (2010, p. 369) considers that the future is treated as a free resource base from which to take, she explains:

... The standpoint of present future is deeply embedded in the economic practice of discounting. This economic base principle ensures that any future present is devalued with reference to our present, since discounting works on the basis that the future is less valuable to us than the present (Adam, 2010, p. 369).

As Adam (2010) notes, this ‘present future’ places emphasis on present, spatial, experience. This emphasis on the present relates to Bauman’s (2012) argument that in times of liquid modernity it is best to take what one can in the present, rather than delaying gratification for a “future bliss” that may never eventuate (Bauman, 2012, p. 163). The participants did take what they could from the present but they also carefully considered their futures in all present actions.

Participants conceived of their future selves and tried to protect their future selves, suggesting that they conceptualised life in terms of the ‘future presents’. Adam (2010, p. 369) explains that when people ask the question of the ‘future presents’, which is “what are we doing to the future?” they are lengthening the present into the future as she explains:

... We are extending ourselves into the future present of others, and we seek to accompany our actions and their dispersed effects to their potential eventual destinations (Adam, 2010, p. 369-70).

In this quote Adam (2010) refers to ‘others’ however the participants in my research often conceptualised the ‘future presents’ mostly in relation to themselves, to their imagined future self and “anticipated *future presents*” (Adam, 2010, p. 362 – original italics). This aligns with Bauman’s (2012, p. 148) contention that the key defining characteristic of liquid modernity is the “individualising force” which predominates. The questions posed by Adam (2010, p. 369) then, are reflective of liquid modernity which refers to a present-time defined by uncertainty and futures “not yet” known but still subjected to the “future-creating actions” of individuals living in the present but for the future (Adam, 2010, p. 370-1). Under precarious conditions people are forced to

contemplate how they are conducting their lives and what that means in a dynamic world.

A scenario that accurately reflects the way these participants conceived of the temporal nature of their lives, is that of the 'continuous present', an important theme of this research. Rather than solely taking from the future or giving to the future, the participants were forced to inhabit a kind of 'continuous present' where the future was put-off. The lack of control that participants had in being able to choose their employment contract types, and therefore make plans for their futures, meant that they were often excluded from decision-making about their future and inhabited career-paths and lifestyles that were constructed for them, rather than by them. As Bauman (2012, p. 137) claims, "The less hold one has on the present, the less of the 'future' can be embraced in the design". This was a scenario depicted by participants who experienced an inability to plan their lives due to an inability to plan their careers. In terms of the continuous present they were always becoming. The precarious nature of their present lives extended into the future lives of participants in this way, blocking their ability to gain a sense of ontological security. Adam (2003a) describes how times have changed in modern society which disrupts the ability to design the future, she explains:

Cause and effect, linearity, spatiality, invariability, stability, clarity and precision are not being replaced but have alongside and superimposed contrasting temporal principles such as instantaneity, simultaneity, networked connections, ephemerality, volatility, uncertainty as well as temporal multiplicity and complexity (Adam, 2003a, p. 74).

The participants tried to make sense of their lives according to some of these disparate principles. The participants considered that their efforts in the present might increase their stability but their strategies to be good workers with excellent reputations and work experience were not following a linear mode of progression which caused frustration. Logan felt much more secure in his job as the result of gaining a grant while at the same time seeing limited pathways out of his precarious employment position. Jasmine, despite all efforts, was still unsure how to claim the future as she did not know how her present would translate into her future and what she could do to enhance her career trajectory beyond trying to build her CV and hoping for the best.

Mia simply said that she had very limited ability to make decisions around navigating more permanent employment: "*I kind of feel like it's out of my hands...*" (Mia3). The uncertain and temporary nature of their precarious employment caused many disruptions to linear processes and cast doubt in the participants' minds.

Ultimately, the future cannot be grasped or controlled, and the fluid and risky nature of the present renders the future "empty" because it is so difficult to foresee what is coming next (Adam, 2010, p. 367). This means that the future is constructed through a certain degree of "fiction" as the thought of a calculable future is not true (Adam, 2010, p. 367). Fiction is linked to falsehood which disrupts any sense of truth, reality, or reliability: a sense of the unknown comes to the fore. This unknown is disruptive of a sense of ontological security because ontological security is underpinned by feelings of constancy and trust (Giddens, 1991a). For this reason, participants were kept in a continuous present in their personal lives as they deferred starting a family, felt limited in their available living arrangements and lacked the feelings of ontological security they felt were required to make big commitments. They had to engage in identity work to try and strengthen their constructions of an ideal self to mitigate against identity threats and feelings of insecurity which affected their wellbeing and sense of coherency (Alvesson, 2010; Brown & Coupland, 2015; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Wieland, 2010; Ylijoki, 2010). Time kept on ticking for the participants, even as they invested in their careers and deferred their life plans. Their lives did not wait for them to secure their permanent employment which meant that their present employment was actually stealing their lives. In this way, the greedy institution extended its reach into the future lives of participants (Coser, 1967).

As each contract rolled over to the next, or another casual contract was signed, the participants' lives continued, but often not in the way they intended or which supported their wellbeing. Participants were aware that "they were postponing taking care of themselves and were putting their personal lives 'on hold' until they found more permanent employment" (Lewchuk et al., 2011, p. 202). Their hope towards transitioning to permanent employment acted as a mechanism through which they could cope with precarious employment and the continual delaying of other important aspects of their personal lives. Lewchuk et al. (2011, p. 203) describe how these types of precarious workers are involved in "depleting their own resources and thus compromising their long-term health and well-being". They are required to "work hard,

efficiently and in a disciplined manner” (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 379). They exhaust themselves in the present for the future which they perceive to be better and more fulfilling. A future where they can have children, romantic relationships, move out of home, buy a house, join a sports club, and adopt a pet. Instead they exist in a continuous present: striving, coping and adapting to circumstance.

This scenario can be considered to be one underpinned by “cruel optimism” (Berlant, 2011, p.1). Cruel optimism refers to a relation that exists “when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing”. In this case, the cruel optimism of desiring an academic career obstructed both the present and (possibly) future flourishing of the participants. Precarious employment in academia facilitates a level of cruel optimism as it was highly desired by participants, yet presented many constraints and negatively influenced wellbeing. The participants were attached to their jobs, and passionate about their academic work, and with the exception of Max the participants found ways to cope with precarious work in academia long-term. Berlant (2011, p. 27) argues:

...it is an incitement to inhabit and to track the affective attachment to what we call “the good life,” which is for so many a bad life that wears out the subjects who nonetheless, and at the same time, find their conditions of possibility within it.

The possibilities of academia were enticing for young academics but also reflected a certain level of sacrifice and melancholia.

5.5. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter I have argued that participants experienced what Bauman (2011, p. 1-15) calls “liquid modernity”, where their lived experience was characterised by uncertainty and ever-changing conditions which meant their life and career trajectories were divergent and ambiguous. The future is never predictable as Bauman (2011, p. vii-iii) explains, “...we don’t have a clear image of a ‘destination’ towards which we seem to be moving... Instead, we react to the latest trouble, experimenting, groping in the dark”. This lack of direction impacted upon the participants’ wellbeing as they experienced the type of “*angst*” and “*dread*” that arises when people are not able to trust in a sense of stability in life or feel that social practices are reliable (Giddens, 1991a, p. 101 – original italics). The uncertainty associated with precarious

employment restricted the participants' feelings of ontological security which, in turn, limited their perceived ability to plan for the future and trust in the continuity of their employment situation. This is an important issue for young people who are in the stage of life where uncertainty is known to negatively impact upon their ability to "establish the stability that underpins marriage and childbearing commitments" and also realise their "hopes and dreams" (Wyn & Andres, 2011, p. 21). As such, this chapter contributes to scholarly research about how young people cope with experiences of instability and insecurity that underpin liquid modernity.

Theorising three analytically derived future-orientations I have offered insight into how the participants understood and constructed their futures in relation to the notion of progress as it relates to actions and identity narratives. *Removing, resigning* and *recreating* reflect orientations that the participants engaged with in order to make sense of their ability to shape and direct their lives in the present, towards an imagined future (Adam, 2010). With the exception of Max, who left academia, all of the participants constructed future-orientations in order to help them cope with the realities of working precariously and feelings of restriction in their capacity to transition to more permanent positions. Using these future-orientations to rationalise their actions, the participants risked further deferring or sacrificing their future plans as they extended their engagement with precarious employment. In this way they experienced life in a continuous present and their anticipated futures appeared to be continuously colonised by the present and out of the participants' reach.

This chapter contributes to understandings of how precarious work impacts the wellbeing of young academics by presenting a disruption to feelings of ontological security which then affected the ability of participants to invest in other life plans (Giddens, 1984; 1991a). In this way it showed the invasion of the greedy institution into the future personal lives of participants (Cosser, 1967; Sullivan, 2014). The findings extend understandings of how precarious workers deal with feelings of inadequacy, lack of control and dependency as they engage in identity work to construct a more ideal image of themselves (Brown & Coupland, 2015; Wieland, 2010). This provides another account of how identity constructions surrounding future selves can be used as a way to orientate present experiences towards the future as a way to manage the wellbeing threats associated with precarious work (Ylijoki, 2010). The main contribution of this chapter rests in the analytically derived idea of the 'continuous

present', a temporal construct which assists in examining how past, present and futures collide when people feel limited in their capacity to experience progression in their work and personal lives. The 'continuous present' provides a metaphor through which to understand how precarious work is sustained, even by individuals who are negatively affected by it, as time keeps on ticking while they focus on a future that never seems to come.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

In this final chapter the thesis is brought to a conclusion. In the first section, I provide a synthesis of the whole thesis, covering the research problem and literature review, key details of the research design, and the principal empirical findings analysed using the chosen theoretical framework. In section two, I go on to articulate the contribution to knowledge represented by this thesis. Practical implications stemming from the study are outlined. Because precarious employment affected my participants in significant and problematic ways, institutional change would be ideal in addressing some of the issues raised and a number of recommendations are made. These are directed towards Australian national higher education policy makers, including: the Department of Employment; the Department of Education and Training; the Fair Work Ombudsman; and, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency. These recommendations are relevant to the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) by way of their role in setting workplace standards through enterprise bargaining. Recommendations are also directed towards workplace management practices at the university level and toward academic employees, precarious workers and others. Finally, future directions are highlighted.

6.1. Synthesis of the thesis

This thesis has addressed the significant issue of how young academic employees experience precarious work and how this relates to their wellbeing. Existing labour studies and the management and sociology literatures show that linking precarious work to health and/or wellbeing is a complex task (Campbell & Price, 2016; Keuskamp et al., 2013; Lewchuk et al., 2011; Pocock et al., 2004). Many studies have centred on precarious work as a negative contributor to measurable physical and psychological states (Moscone et al., 2016; Schweder et al., 2015). Other studies have acknowledged a more complex picture of lived experience that highlights notions surrounding choice, mobility, identity and other life factors (Buchtematt & Quack, 1990; Crimmins, 2016; Furlong & Kelly, 2005; Moss et al., 2012; Ylijoki, 2010). The trend across multiple fields is to consider wellbeing to be something that can be measured through static pre-determined indicators at the level of the individual (Moscone et al., 2016; Schweder et al., 2015). This is a problem because it reduces the concept of wellbeing down to medicalised states rather than allowing for an examination of

wellbeing as an ongoing, social, lived experience (Crimmins, 2016; Pocock et al., 2012; Stokols et al., 2013). The higher education and youth studies literature (Archer, 2008; Crofts et al., 2015; Ryan et al., 2013; Woodman, 2013) places emphasis on the holistic experience of precarious work for different individuals and groups by exploring how profession, industry, age, and life stage, contribute to wellbeing experiences. As noted by Wyn (2009), often these studies are large-scale and focus across cohorts to generate broad findings rather than specifically focussing on a particular group and their wellbeing. Based on these limitations in the current literature, my study has set out to contribute to knowledge about the link between precarious work and wellbeing by focusing on the in-depth lived experiences of young academics, a group of precarious workers who are disproportionately affected by precarious employment practices.

This study used the work of Giddens (1984; 1991; 1994) primarily, and other social theorists, for example, Adam (2010), Bauman (2012) and Coser (1967), in order to develop a conceptualisation of wellbeing as a social experience linked to feelings of ontological security in relation to precarious work. Wellbeing, as presented here, is a dynamic and ongoing experience that requires attention to the multiple elements that contribute to the lives of individuals and groups across spatio-temporal boundaries (Giddens, 1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994). This conceptualisation of an ontology of wellbeing, underpinned by a social-ecological approach, was identified in the early stages of the study as useful in order to address numerous personal and contextual factors contributing to workers' wellbeing experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1999, 2000; Stokols, 1992, 2000; Stokols et al., 2013). This emphasises the spatial-temporal elements of precarious work and wellbeing and shows how recursive actions lead to legitimated social practices in the workplace to become extended across time and space and affect participants' multiple spheres of life. In addition to these conceptual and theoretical specificities, the focus on young academics, coupled with the multiple case study design methodology in this study, aimed to make a distinctive contribution to the literature (Stake, 2006).

These methodological elements have enabled an in-depth look at how precarious work operates within the academic profession specifically, and how it influences the wellbeing of young people, a cohort identified as being particularly affected by precarious work (Furlong & Kelly, 2005; Wilson & Ebert, 2013; Woodman, 2013; Wyn,

2009). An overview of the core findings, as they were presented in each of the two findings and discussion chapters, will now be presented.

6.1.1. Spatial aspects of becoming an academic

In the first of the findings and discussion chapters, I identified ways in which participants came to understand their position as precarious workers which in turn shaped their experiences of becoming academics through the reflexive monitoring of their actions (Giddens, 1984). The discussion brought forward spatial aspects of the participants' experiences encompassing structural spaces within which the participants were attempting to carve an identity in their being/becoming academics. These structural spaces incorporated the physical and ideological context of the university and the constructed practices and interactions of academic work. The spatial aspect of the analysis was not limited to the context of the university as the working lives of participants infiltrated other spaces of their lives, their thought processes, and wellbeing experiences.

Using Giddens' (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) theory of structuration, I explored the ways in which certain academic ideals were signified, legitimised and then constructed through power dynamics which influenced the ways participants negotiated work in the institution (Giddens, 1984). I likened the University to a greedy institution (Coser, 1967) and considered the participants' experiences to be shaped by the greedy structures (policies, organisational cultures) in which they were located. The susceptibility of participants to be shaped and moulded into academics who would be deemed valuable by supervisors and colleagues was notable, suggesting that the work context plays a significant role in informing experiences of precarious work. Recursive social practices reflect the spatial dimensions of participants' experiences as "continual inputs of knowledge" affected the "actions of individuals" in a way that highlighted how social practices were constructed (and could potentially be reconstructed) across time-space (Giddens, 1991a, p. 18). Social systems are disembedded, meaning that social practices are no longer tied to particular expectations in the "empty space" of modernity but are subject to being moulded and shaped (Giddens, 1991a, p. 19). This provides multiple avenues for exploring complex constructions such as wellbeing, a lived experience across multiple domains.

Overall, precarious employment made participants feel vulnerable as they feared being excluded from their academic jobs. This was problematic because many of the participants strongly identified with being/becoming academics. So much so, that the thought of being excluded posed a threat to the sense of coherency and wellbeing (Brown & Coupland, 2015; Knights & Clarke, 2014) that underpinned their sense of ontological security (Giddens, 1984) across multiple spheres of their lives. In this respect, my thesis contributes to understandings about how identity threat operates within a professional field where workers experience an incongruence between their ideal self and the identity construction that is offered to them as precarious workers. Key to this contribution is the idea that the more employees invest, and are encouraged to invest by employers, in their desired careers and constructions of self within this domain, the more vulnerable they are to threats of exclusion and instability as they become increasingly attached to particular identity narratives. To illustrate how participants enacted being/becoming academics through their everyday wellbeing and identity forming practices I developed a typology. Derived from my analysis of the data, the typology comprised three 'types': *giving*, *resisting* and *being insulated*.

Enactments of 'giving' involved extreme dedication and commitment of time and energy to academic work: being willing to put every institutional demand into action and prioritise work above all else. Participants involved in 'resisting' understood that they would need to make efforts to segregate work from their personal lives as a way of managing work-life boundaries and enacting being balanced academics. The 'insulated' participants experienced a type of immunity from greedy aspects of the institution as the norms and values of their work environment legitimised structured work and clear communication. All of these were underpinned by the participants' understandings of what actions were valued in their workplaces and how their enactments could support and strengthen their self-identities and feelings of ontological security (Alvesson, 2010). The typology helped explain the wellbeing implications of precarious work.

The explanatory power of the typology extends far beyond the participants as the 'types' have been devised from analysis focussing on structuration processes, and as such reflect the range of structural features in the University. For example, these 'types' point to identity work as participants reflect on the actions of colleagues and supervisors, because the participants reflexively monitored their actions to reinforce

the norms they saw to be legitimised by these other people. Kroon and Paauwe (2014, p. 22) describe how it is the combination of all actors which “reproduce a social structure that has legitimacy both at the level of the firm and at the level of the industry”. In this way, it can be noted that often the actions of senior academics legitimised questionable practices at Monash, and in higher education more generally, by normalising over-burdening work practices and the exploitation of precarious workers. The contribution of this typology is that it highlights how social processes at the university were the result of interactions among multiple actors and the culmination of individuals’ recursive actions across space-time. The typology did not construct the participants as passive victims of the structures of their workplace, but highlights the potential of collective agency. The typology exemplifies how workers respond to identity threats associated with feeling insecure in their employment position. These day-to-day identity and wellbeing threats extended the temporal dimension of precarious work as discussed in the second findings and discussion chapter.

6.1.2. Temporal aspects of precarious work and future-orientations

In chapter five I examined temporal dimensions of wellbeing associated with precarious work by investigating the reasons why participants desired permanent employment. I related these reasons to conceptions of temporality, highlighting how “the past, present and future get joined up with life stages” (Adam, 1995, p. 6). I continued to engage with Giddens’ (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) work, but not exclusively. I expanded upon his concepts using Adam’s (1995, 2003a, 2003b, 2010) work on time and temporality, as well as Bauman’s (2012) ideas surrounding life experiences in ‘liquid modernity’.

Key to this chapter was the finding that participants felt hindered in their abilities to move forward in life. As precarious employees, they struggled to maintain a sense of stability in the present which challenged their facility to feel ontologically secure, a prerequisite for moving forward into their desired futures. As young people, the participants had specific needs associated with wanting to feel independent, accomplished, and relatively stable, as necessary prerequisites to being able to plan their lives. These feelings were associated with the accomplishment of certain life milestones, or temporal markers, for example: moving out of home, buying a house, starting a family, and having long-term relationships. Participants felt that these

milestones required long-term solidarity, commitment, and feelings of ontological security, which were not available to them as precarious workers stuck in the fluid present (Bauman, 2012). This scenario contributed to feelings of inadequacy, inability to plan, feelings of being stuck, and in one case, being child-like. These feelings of being stuck and unable to achieve certain milestones were problematic for participants as they felt that the lack of these achievements signalled personal lack, failure and dependency within the context of Western society (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014). The restrictions that precarious employment imposed on the personal lives of participants challenged their conceptions of ideal-selves as they struggled to reconcile the disjuncture between socially acceptable ideals of who they should be, at their age and stage of life, with their own understandings of who they were in reality (Wieland, 2010). This adds a temporal dimension to the participants' experiences of identity threats.

In order to cope with, and direct their energies towards reconciling this disjuncture, the participants adopted future-orientations through which to make sense of their current position and identities in relation to future prospects (Ylijoki, 2010). I proposed three analytically derived future-orientation classifications: *removing*, *resigning*, and *recreating the self*. These future-orientations were bound-up with the actions and understandings of participants who attempted, in some cases, to activate control in the construction of their future. These orientations also functioned as mechanisms through which participants engaged with, and made sense of, their ability to shape and direct their lives in the present, towards an imagined future (Giddens, 1984). With the exception of Max, who left academia, all of the participants constructed future-orientations in order to help them cope with the realities of working precariously and their limited capacity to transition to more permanent positions.

The first future-orientation, 'removing the self', involved leaving precarious employment as a potential solution to the negative effects of not being able to foster feelings of ontological security. Participants conceived of finding more secure work, and thus stability, around which to position their identities, elsewhere. 'Resigning the self' meant accepting that the future was unknown and indeterminable. Participants realised that there was limited benefit in trying to tie too much energy into the conception of a linear career trajectory and idea of time (Adam, 1995). 'Resigning the self' meant trying to find comfort in "bracketing the future" and focussing on "instant living" (Ylijoki, 2010, p. 375). 'Recreating the self' involved participants' orientations of

themselves towards a future they envisioned as being possible if they were willing to work hard enough for it. These participants engaged in “aspirational” (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 343) forms of identity work whereby they withstood precarious employment and managed their experiences in a way that they hoped would give them some leverage towards transitioning into more permanent academic work and strengthening their academic identities (Alvesson, 2010). In their engagements with these future-orientations, participants always knew they were limited in their abilities to control the future, due to the risks and uncertainty associated with precarious work and life in a time of liquid modernity. However, many participants still used these future-orientations to rationalise their actions and try to gain some control over the trajectory of their future (Adam, 1995). In this way, the future was never far from the participants’ minds.

I considered that this process of focussing on the future, as a way of managing negative feelings and experiences in the present, further distracted and side-lined participants from moving forward as they continued to defer or sacrifice their future plans. Participants experienced what I conceptualised to be a ‘continuous present’ whereby their anticipated futures appeared to be continuously colonised by the present and out of the participants’ reach. In this ‘continuous present’ participants deferred starting a family, felt limited in their available living arrangements and lacked the feelings of ontological security they thought were required to make big commitments. They had to engage in identity work to try and strengthen their constructions of an ideal self to mitigate against identity threats and feelings of insecurity which affected their wellbeing and sense of coherency (Alvesson, 2010; Brown & Coupland, 2015; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Wieland, 2010; Ylijoki, 2010). This meant that their responses to the identity threats associated with precarious work kept participants in a continuous present. The analysis in this chapter highlights how the greedy institution metaphor can be extended in temporal terms vis-à-vis the futures of the research participants as the institution demanded the time, energy and commitment of the participants in the present, at the expense of their future (Coser, 1967). The findings presented in the two findings and discussion chapters of the thesis contribute to new knowledge from which practical implications and recommendations can be derived.

6.2. Contribution to knowledge

Conceptually, the study contributes to knowledge about the ongoing lived experiences and wellbeing of precariously employed workers. Offering a spatio-temporal perspective that explores recursive social practices using Giddens' (1984) concept of structuration and the metaphor of the greedy institution (Coser, 1967), the study extends the conception of wellbeing beyond static and individualised accounts. As such the research offers a distinctive understanding of precarious employment as an ongoing, structurally constrained lived experience that threatens the wellbeing of participants through work relations that threaten their identities.

My findings have shown how spatial and temporal relations (Giddens, 1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1994) generate both the threat, as well as strategies of identity threat negotiation, under conditions of precarious employment. Identity threats are typically problematic for individuals when they challenge conceptions of an ideal self (Wieland, 2010), sense of coherency (Alvesson, 2010), and feelings of stability and security at work (Collinson, 2003; McCabe, 2011). However, the subjective and social dynamics that generate such a threat (Brown & Coupland, 2015), as well as processes by which individuals "recognize an experience as identity threatening, assess its impact, and decide how to respond to it" are underexplored according to Petriglieri (2011, p. 642). My findings contribute to this research area.

The typology including *giving*, *resisting*, and *insulated* 'types', contributes to understandings of how the recursive actions of multiple actors lead to legitimated social practices which shape precarious work practices and norms. This typology reflects the way in which identity threats are understood and negotiated by participants through day-to-day enactments and processes of being/becoming academics. Participants acted in ways they perceived to be 'allowed' within the institutional space of the university – a space which limited the ways in which they could create and maintain desired identities. The typology highlights how identity threats can operate to enable greedy institutional structures as the emphasis participants placed on their desired academic identities generated consent to exploitative practices. This lived experience of the greedy institution contributes to the identity literature by showing how threats can generate contrasting outcomes for organisations/individuals (Petriglieri, 2011). While the participants suffered from the perceived identity threats

associated with their insecure position, the institution concurrently gained from the participants' defensive enactments of being 'good' and over-committed academics.

The empirically derived future-orientations and my conceptualisation of a continuous present, extends understandings of how precarious employment effects wellbeing across space-time boundaries and shows how the participants were existing on hope for an invisible future. The future-orientations exemplified how participants made sense of their identity-positions and reflect a strategy of how they negotiated identity threats. The continuous present theme which emerged from my analysis showed how participants struggled to inhabit another time and space as they felt stuck in the present. Their static position both enabled and constrained identity constructions as their engagement with precarious employment enabled continued enactments of being/becoming academics, while at the same time this position compromised their sense of self as agentic decision-makers. The temporal dimension of my analysis adds a more nuanced and socially embedded presentation of experiences of precarious employment, which have been identified as required in the field (Campbell & Price, 2016). It also solidifies the value of adopting social-ecological approaches to studies concerned with wellbeing and work, which suggests a turn towards more complex and layered understandings of workers' experiences of precarious employment (Bone, 2015; Lejano & Hipp, 2013; Pocock et al., 2012; Stokols et al., 2013). The analysis assists in generating deeper understandings of the "collective dimensions" associated with wellbeing, organisations and occupations (Dale & Burrell, 2014, p. 160).

This social-ecological orientation, alongside engagement with Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration, and Coser's (1967) greedy institution metaphor, has highlighted the role of institutional structures, created and legitimised through recursive social action that influences and shapes the wellbeing experiences of employees. Turning away from the idea that wellbeing is ultimately the responsibility of the individual, this study has clearly shown how workplace policies and organisational culture forms individuals' experiences of precarious employment and the wellbeing effects of this. The way I have presented an ontology of wellbeing and precarious work extends knowledge around how insecurity in organisations shapes the ways in which "a person's social significance could easily be disturbed, disrupted and reshaped by changes in social relations" (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 338). This contributes to the literature concerned

with employees' experiences of, and responses to, identity threats, by adding a spatio-temporal element (Brown & Coupland, 2015).

This study is unique in that it does not focus on a traditionally vulnerable group of workers but rather looks at a relatively privileged workplace and highly educated young people living in an affluent society. My finding that the participants often felt vulnerable in their position, which negatively affected their wellbeing, provides insight into the invasive effects of precarious employment practices on workers' lived experiences. The focus on the academic workforce shows the diversity of experience within higher education and the heterogeneous nature of the university as a workplace. My methodology provided the precision required to refine a picture of individual peoples' lives within the large institutional context of Monash and the profession of academia. The findings presented here show that despite the many advantages associated with this privileged profession, precarious employment threatens the wellbeing of young academics as it destabilises their sense of ontological security which flows over to affect numerous aspects of their lived experience. This is important to remember because often emphasis is placed more on groups deemed to be vulnerable, such as those involved in low-skilled labour (Furlong & Kelly, 2005; McGann et al., 2012; Schweder et al., 2015).

The study also contributes to the area of youth studies where there have been multiple calls from the field to further explore how precarious employment impacts the many spheres of young people's lives (Cuervo & Wyn, 2014; Furlong et al., 2012; Woodman, 2013). An important methodological contribution to this area is my qualitative case study design which allowed me to portray the voices of participants and humanise their experiences in-depth. This is important as young people are often side-lined from being active participants in research about their experiences of employment (Besen-Cassino, 2008; Oxenbridge & Evesson, 2012). By providing these in-depth accounts I have also been able to challenge assumptions of youth entitlement, finding that the participants exemplified an extreme work ethic while at the same time experiencing employment marginalisation.

Next, I will draw out the practical implications from my research and highlight recommendations for key parties involved in precarious work practices and policies.

6.3. Practical implications and recommendations

I have a number of recommendations that stem from the findings of this research. These recommendations will be of interest to employment and educational policy makers (both national and higher-education specific), university management, the National Tertiary Education Union, all academic staff (including precarious academic employees), and young precarious workers more generally.

6.1.1. Policy makers

This research has shown the negative effects of precarious employment on young people that influence their day-to-day lives and futures. The HILDA survey presents large datasets that relate to changing household trends in Australia and shows that young people are buying their first home and starting a family later in their lives (HILDA, 2016). My research has provided insight about how young people make decisions about these life milestones and what effect precarious work has on their planning.

My recommendation for employment and education policy makers is to put pressure on universities to support all of their staff through the use of more permanent employment, or at least fixed-term employment for positions that are truly uncertain. My participants reported that permanent employment was their preference, followed by fixed-term contracts and lastly casual work.

- Make universities accountable for the wellbeing of their staff through fair employment policies that do not exploit the use of casual or fixed-term contracts.
- Place constraints on the use of casual and fixed-term contracts for staff in positions that will likely be continued longer-term by providing an avenue for workers to claim their position as permanent and report abuses of precarious employment contracts.

In reference to this last point, it is known that precarious employment within the university is actually often long-term and can even be reasonably steady. For example, the NTEU (2015, p. 22) found in a recent survey that nearly 44% of casual academics stated that they “worked regularly” in the university sector for six or more years and nearly 16% had worked on a regular basis at universities for over ten years. Likewise, nearly 20% of fixed-term academics reported working precariously for ten years or more (NTEU, 2015). The NTEU found that 77% of their survey participants would

prefer permanent employment (NTEU, 2015). For this reason, it is necessary to consider not only objective features of precarious employment but also how these relate to the plans of employees and their desires.

This suggests that much academic employment is ongoing but staff are made to reapply for their positions or move around within the industry to sustain their income. In this study I found that the participants' employment remained surprisingly static over the course of the year. Many had their contracts renewed, sometimes hours were slightly changed. It appears that precarious employment often is not as precarious as it seems however, the imminent insecurity of the end-date of a fixed-term contract, or threat of job loss from casual work, puts undue stress on employees that is detrimental to their wellbeing. It is thought that this transference of risk onto individuals results in the often precarious state of university funding (Sullivan, 2014). As such, I make the following recommendation to policy makers to help remedy this situation and prevent precariousness at all levels in the higher education system:

- Resist university deregulation.
- Support universities during downturns in the economy.
- Place emphasis on the public good of education, rather than commercial interests.

6.1.2. University

The university has an obligation to support its employees in terms of minimizing the use of precarious employment and supporting the career pathways of early career academics. Monash supports the wellbeing of academics by offering a Staff Wellbeing Activity Program (SWAP) which provides exercise, mindfulness training, nutrition advice and other such activities (Monash University, 2016b). The aim of this program is to help “improve staff wellbeing, productivity and morale through low-cost programs targeted at all ages and fitness levels” (Monash University, 2016b, np). Monash University has won a global award as a result of its wellbeing programs and policies and the following excerpt describes the criteria for this:

Monash University values, supports and promotes programs and policies that improve the physical and psychological health and

wellbeing of its employees and allocates funds to support participation (Global Centre for Healthy Workplace, 2016).

While this is a good starting point for the promotion of health and wellbeing at work, fundamental structural issues are overlooked which affect wellbeing and could be addressed at a prevention level. The wellbeing program offered is an individualised intervention-based approach to wellbeing.

Precarious employment is wide-spread at Monash, and higher education more generally, and is known to continuously adversely affect the wellbeing of workers (Junor, 2004; May et al., 2013). The university has full knowledge of the wellbeing implications of precarious employment as the NTEU has been campaigning for changes to these practices for a number of years (NTEU, 2012, 2015). The implications of precarious employment are far reaching and even extend into the retirement of academics due to the marginal contributions to superannuation funds of casual workers, and sometimes fixed-term employees as well (Jamieson, 2014).

Core findings from my thesis highlight the need for universities to provide more tangible support for ECRs in precarious employment. This includes transparency and information for ECRs about how to achieve a successful academic career and supportive pathways. All of the participants of my research wanted more secure employment but were only able to guess as to how this would be accomplished. They also often relied on informal avenues of information gathering. As such, I suggest the following:

6.1.2.1. Transparency

- Provide a strategic hiring plan for the university so that ECRs know how many permanent staff will be hired in any one year, broken down as specifically as possible into departments, faculties or schools. This can help ECRs prepare realistic goals as they determine their chances in gaining tenured employment.
- Provide tenured career pathways for casual and fixed-term staff. This means recognising the desires of many ECRs to gain tenured employment and the ongoing nature of much work in the university that is currently carried-out by those on precarious employment contracts. Academic employment history

should accumulate in recognition of the service casual and fixed-term employees provide to the university, and the profession.

The Scholarly Teaching Fellows Agreement (Monash University, 2017b) provides one such avenue for casual tutors/lecturers to transition to more permanent employment. However, this scheme requires the employee to (usually) work for three years on a fixed-term basis and does not guarantee permanent employment after this time. More secure and speedy pathways for all university staff are required. Employees require more knowledge about how to gain permanent employment. I suggest:

- Universities clearly outline what is required to gain a tenured position in terms of key performance indicators and other attributes deemed essential by university employers. These should be realistic and acknowledge the limitations placed on students and casual workers who are not eligible to be chief investigators on grants or unit co-ordinators.
- Provide a break-down of the hiring practices from the last five-ten years so that interested parties can see trends and patterns that help to situate their likelihood of gaining the job they seek within academia.

Increased transparency can enable precarious workers to make informed decisions about their future and make the changes necessary to increase their chances of securing a tenured position. However, precarious workers also need support in their striving towards a successful career and decision-making surrounding career pathways. I suggest the following in response to this:

6.1.2.2. Support

- Provide precarious workers with the support and resources required to do their jobs including the allocation of a quiet work-space (for creative work), access to a private meeting room (for conversations with students and research participants), as well as a laptop computer, stationary, lockable cabinet and desk available for anytime use.
- Provide the necessary training and inductions for all the positions that precarious employees occupy so that they can gain support about the basics without having to rely on other precarious employees for information about, for

example, how to do timesheets, prepare a lecture etc. This training/induction should be paid.

- Allocate a mentor, who is not their work supervisor, to all fixed-term and casual staff so that a senior academic is always available to offer unbiased support and mentoring.
- Develop record keeping facilities so that unfair work practices and exploitation can be recorded. Precarious workers should be able to record their concerns so that the university can take a stance against these practices. With this comes a greater responsibility for the university to address illegal/unfair work practices and set a standard for how casual and fixed-term staff are treated in their employment at the university.

6.1.3. All university staff

All university staff play a role in the creation of workplace culture and practices. This includes immediate supervisors, colleagues and human resources administration staff associated with the execution of a precarious academic's employment contract and their experience once an employee. In my research it was troubling to find how 'messy' the participants described their employment experiences to be. HR processes were particularly muddled and participants noted that there were many mistakes made related to the initiation and ongoing management of precarious employment contracts. Also, supervisors and colleagues often set employment standards that were questionable and could treat precarious employees exploitatively. These contributed to negative experiences of work at the university.

6.1.3.1 Supervisors and colleagues

I found that the direct supervisors of the participants could act anywhere along a continuum from protector to exploiter of precarious employees. Colleagues also played a role in this. It is important that permanent employees do not increase feelings of vulnerability in precarious workers by commenting on the insecure nature of their employment because these 'reminders' can increase feelings of anxiety and stress for those casual and fixed-term workers. It is helpful for permanent employees to offer advice when it is sought and in a way that is appropriate to the needs and desires of precarious workers so that they feel listened to and supported within the context of

their work environment. In terms of supporting, rather than harming, precarious workers, I have a number of suggestions for supervisors and colleagues:

- Treat precarious workers with the same level of respect and professionalism as you would any other staff member at the university.
- Be aware of the differential of power between supervisors and tenured employees in comparison to precarious employees. Precarious workers fear being excluded from their workplace and their insecure employment makes them prone to this. As such, precarious workers often find it hard to say 'no', or to address important wellbeing issues to supervisors. This means that supervisors need to be considerate of their precarious employees so as not to engage in exploitative or oppressive behaviours.

It is important that all university staff are aware of the remuneration that precarious employees gain for their work. A casual employee is only paid for a set amount of hours and any work beyond this is unpaid. As such, it is illegal/unfair to expect that a casual employee has the same amount of time built into their job role for tasks such as marking, lecture preparation, student consultation, research and professional development. Fixed-term employees are also prone to working beyond paid hours due to the pressures they feel to impress their supervisors. Setting clear expectations about the amount of time and input required from precarious workers, and checking that this aligns with allocated hours and workloads, is an important task for supervisors to undertake in order to protect their employees from exploitation. I recommend that under all circumstances university staff should:

- Resist exploiting precarious employees, even if they are amenable to this, because it sets an unhealthy expectation within the workplace and can result in the burnout of precarious employees or result in them leaving the profession. This includes asking precarious workers to take on duties beyond their pay level, working for free, or expecting employees to be available at all hours including evenings, weekends, or while on leave.

6.1.3.2. Human Resources

A critique of the institution and university HR systems is that they can be incredibly disorganised for employees and the participants highlighted a number of HR issues at Monash. Precarious academics are often required to work in multiple workplaces or have multiple contracts within the University in order to make a living wage. The stress of this disjointed working life is compounded by disorganised HR systems which heighten feelings of stress and insecurity on the part of precarious workers. Participants also often described having to carefully monitor HR processes on a continual basis because there were so many errors in communication from HR. This monitoring took an unnecessary amount of time out of participants' lives.

It is necessary for Monash, and higher education institutions generally, to acknowledge that the use of precarious employment contracts increases costs associated with hiring and administration. These time and financial costs should not be levelled by the precarious employee who is usually already investing unpaid time and energy into seeking employment to supplement their precarious roles at the university (NTEU, 2015). I recommend the following changes to the way universities manage their HR systems to support, rather than worry, precarious employees:

- Never allow an employee's contract to lapse while they are still working. It is not acceptable for precarious workers to rely on 'word of mouth' contractual agreements and reassurances while they continue to work without a valid employment contract. The time taken to renew contracts means time that precarious employees are not being paid for which places unnecessary financial strain on workers. Some participants were not paid for months due to delays in HR finalising contracts. Contracts should be renewed and finalised before the end of the previous contract so there is no time-lapse between employment agreements as this puts precarious workers, and their supervisors, under undue pressure.
- I recommend that case managers be assigned to employees during their negotiations with HR so that records keeping is efficient and clear. More clarity and organisation in the systems would assist this.

A number of participants received emails sent in error, about the termination of their contracts and access to their university email system. They also received unexplained offers of employment via email which were stressful and confusing. As such, I suggest:

- Automated emails should be avoided as this dehumanises the employment experience and increases the incidence of mistakes.
- Continuity across the university would be ideal in terms of contractual agreements such as pay rates, superannuation, and other such set-ups. One participant had worked across multiple departments and campuses at Monash and described the lack of continuity between settings. Also I noted that some fixed-term participants received 9.5% superannuation while others 17%. I recommend that all university staff be provided with 17% superannuation.

6.1.4. Precarious employees

Participants in this research were often overly compliant in their actions at work and this supported and reproduced norms that were sometimes greedy and exploitative. While precarious academics face certain challenges in terms of their job security which they feel places them in a vulnerable position, they are also often highly skilled and sought after within the institution. I found some of the participants did negotiate with their supervisors for better terms and conditions and recommend that all precarious employees take it upon themselves to protect their wellbeing and employment interests. This includes the following recommendations:

- During the initial stages of a contractual agreement, employees need to have a discussion with their supervisor around issues such as intellectual property and publishing, professional development, expectations surrounding working times, and hours. Regular meetings need to be set up to discuss employment progress and this may generate an investment from the supervisor regarding achieving a successful career trajectory as an employee. Important questions must be asked in order to clarify exactly what the expectations are so that there are no misunderstandings in terms of future treatment as an employee.
- Precarious workers must act in the way in which they will continue and consider if that can be maintained in the long-term. For example, put boundaries in place and do not respond to emails or phone calls from work outside of the contracted

hours. As an employee understand that being available 24/7 may become an expectation. In the same way, new and precarious workers must avoid working more hours than they are paid for as this may easily become a norm. Consider avoiding social media relationships with supervisors and colleagues to maintain professional relationships.

It is also important for precarious workers to hold supervisors to their word and try to maintain a professional relationship by documenting important information in writing. For example, sending an email after a meeting with notes about what was discussed. Along this line I also suggest the following:

- Precarious workers must become the main champion of their employment interests without expecting others to consider their best interests (not because they should not but because they might not). The academy is a highly competitive workplace and one that places workers under pressure, including colleagues in tenured and senior positions. It is important to remember this and precarious workers must be their own advocate.

A number of participants in this research were able to make successful negotiations in their position. They appeared to be particularly successful at this once they felt confident that their skills and experience were invaluable to the workplace. As such I recommend people:

- Negotiate to achieve satisfying agreements, such as pay level, type of contract, hours allocated. For example: 1) request a fixed-term contract instead of a casual contract where work is going to be ongoing, 2) having one day per week of a full-time position allocated to studies in order to gain higher qualifications (such as a PhD), and 3) request more hours where the work is taking longer than specified in the contract (or stop work once these hours have been completed).

Precarious workers might also join the National Tertiary Education Union so that they can access information about entitlements and know where to seek support if any issues arise in their employment. The union provides an outlet to obtain authoritative information about working rights as well as opportunities to share experiences with

other workers. This will make new and precarious employees feel more confident to stand up for themselves at work. As the researcher I would give this direct advice to prospective precarious workers at the university:

- Never accept being exploited. Learn to say 'no'. Expect recognition for good work. Exploitative practices can include: 1) pressure to work all day, evening and weekend, 2) being asked to carry out tasks that are beyond reasonable jurisdiction (such as leading a grant or course co-ordination without the recognition and pay associated with this role), 3) writing publications and not being an author, and 4) working many more hours than paid for. Once these exploitative practices are accepted in the workplace it creates a new norm and expectation that precarious workers are willing to do anything in order to maintain their position or impress a supervisor. This is a slippery slope and one that is not only harmful to the wellbeing of the worker in question, but also all those who come after who will be expected to do the same.

6.4. Future directions

Future research could continue to develop the social aspects of precarious employment and wellbeing that create more embedded accounts of wellbeing as a lived experience and move away from medicalised, individualised approaches. This would involve a shift away from emphasis on wellbeing interventions and quantitative measurements of wellbeing indicators. It would also require more in-depth research exploring the way wellbeing can be conceptualised as a social phenomenon that is constantly changing and linked to various agentic and structural factors. I would like to re-connect with my participants in five years' time to follow up on their experiences, thus adding a more longitudinal aspect to my research. This was not part of my original plan and had not been approved by the ethics committee.

The health aspects of precarious employment are now widely acknowledged (Bambra, et al., 2014; Benach & Muntaner, 2007; Inoue et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2012) but conceptions of wellbeing are still underexplored and this offers great opportunities to further understand the relationship between working conditions and lived experience. Other researchers might investigate different types of precarious workers or workers from different industries, perhaps comparing how different work contexts and

professions shape experiences. I recommend that future studies could aim to seek these more holistic accounts by conducting small-scale studies like the one presented here. Theoretical gaps include: how social capital and professional identity contribute to the experiences of precarious workers in academia; how an engagement with organisational identity theory might contribute to analysis in this field; and in what way studies such as the one presented here might be embedded to a larger extent in process and practice studies. I recommend, like Campbell and Price (2016), that it would contribute greatly to the field to develop more of the nuances and complexities associated with precarious employment rather than assuming a one-size-fits-all approach with broad-brush studies. This includes maintaining a focus on process, rather than static variables or outcomes. Ashforth, Harrison and Corley (2008, p. 341) summarise this point precisely in their claim that many researchers “capture relatively static predictors and not process; that is, they provide pictures of the surface of an ocean wave, not the undercurrents that formed it”. I agree with their contention that it is important to “capture these undercurrents” in order to examine the dynamic social experiences of employees (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 341). As such, I propose my adaptation of the bioecological model as an ideal social-ecological approach to examining the multi-layered dimensions which, in combination, contribute to the wellbeing experiences of precarious employees (Bone, 2015).

6.5. Closing of the thesis

This thesis has provided a voice to participants who all appreciated the opportunity to tell their stories of how they experienced precarious employment and wellbeing. My ethical objective all along has been to portray an honest picture of how the participants negotiated their employment at Monash and conceptualised wellbeing within this experience. I sincerely hope that my portrayal of the lives and experiences of participants might influence more people to stand-up for young precarious academic workers and realise that they are people with goals, dreams and lives which need to be nurtured.

I asked all of my participants at the end of the third interview what they hoped would come out of their story. Jasmine’s response perfectly summarised the sentiments of the participants:

Something that I am hopeful that your research will illuminate is that Universities need to think about whether or not there is going to be a dramatic change... the people who are in the position to make the decisions don't get to talk to us, don't get to find out what it is like to be a sessional. I hope your research is able to paint a picture around the negatives, you have got to, you know, think about these people, whether or not you want them to continue on in the University, these are the challenges... I guess with my story I am probably hoping that it will show that there are people who are really wanting to be involved in the University who are producing research and want to contribute to all of the aspects of it, but you know, it is just that we are faced with not having the chance (Jasmine3).

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Appendices

7.1. Appendix A - My published adaptation of the bioecological model

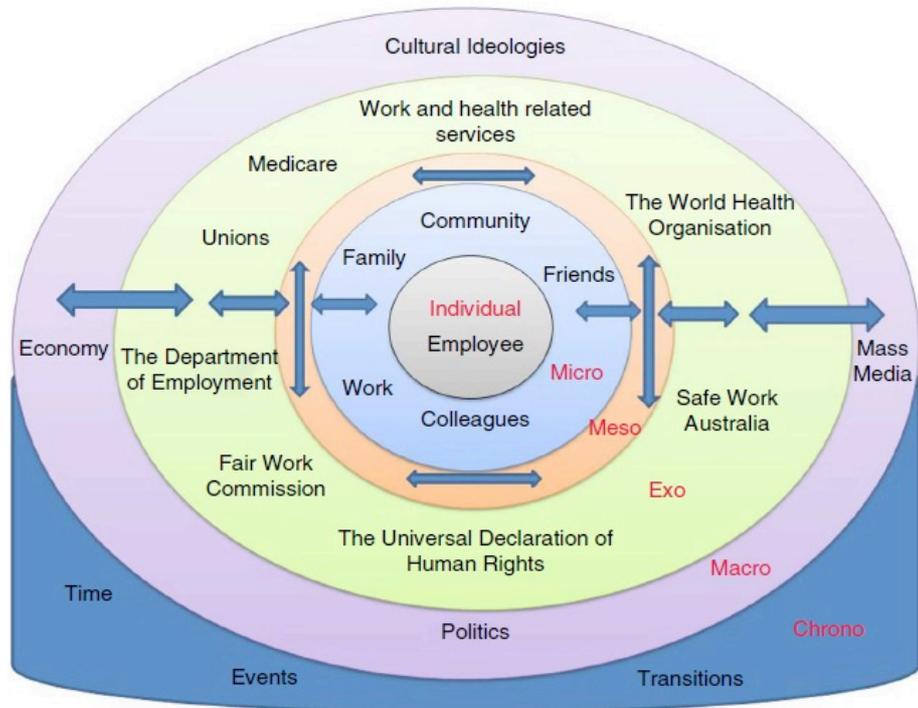


Figure 1.
The bioecological
model of workplace
health and
well-being
management

Note: Model created by author
Source: Adapted from Santrock (2014)

Note: Taken from Bone (2015, p. 258).

The full publication is available (open-access) from:

<http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/full/10.1108/IJWHM-04-2014-0010>

7.2. Appendix B - Recruitment advertisement

STUDY ON YOUNG ACADEMICS & WORK



ARE YOU: 30 years old or younger?

ARE YOU: Employed at Monash on a fixed-term or hourly-rate contract?

ARE YOU: Interested in sharing your experiences?

IF YES, PLEASE TEAR OFF A STRIP BELOW AND CONTACT ME!

Interview participants required! Young Academics and Work kate.bone@monash.edu						
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7.3. Appendix C - Pre-participation screening tool

Question	Response
What is your name?	
What is your highest qualification?	
What is your age?	
What is your gender?	
What is your Faculty/Department/Institution at Monash within which you are currently employed?	
How would you describe your current employment status/academic staff category?	<p><i>Please highlight:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teaching Associate Sessional (hourly paid) b) Casual Academic Research Assistant (hourly paid) c) Fixed-term (salary paid)
What are the characteristics of job?	<p><i>Please highlight:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Teaching only b) Research only c) Teaching and research
We are seeking some participants to be involved in three 60-90 minute interviews throughout the year in 2015. Are you willing to commit to three interviews approx. three months apart in 2015?	
Are you involved in an official dispute or in a negotiation process with you Department or Faculty at Monash University?	
Can I please get your contact details so I can keep in touch with you about this project and send you the explanatory statement and consent form?	<p><i>If yes please provide:</i></p> <p>Mobile phone number:</p> <p>Home phone number:</p> <p>Work email address:</p> <p>Personal email address:</p>

7.4. Appendix D - Pre-interview survey

Question	Response
Name	
Preferred pseudonym name (optional)	
Age	
Gender	
Living arrangement (e.g. flat-share, own house, renting, living with parents...)	
Approximate household income (optional)	
What is your family set-up? (e.g. single with two children; in a partnership with no children; married with two dogs...)	
Are you the primary caregiver of any person? Who? (e.g. children, family member...)	
In total, how long have you been living in Australia?	
How would you describe the level of social support you have?	
What does 'wellbeing' mean to you?	
What things in life affect your personal wellbeing the most?	
How would you describe your general wellbeing?	

Questions about your current post/job at Monash University

Which Faculty/Department/School/Institute are you employed within?	
What is your employment status? (e.g. hourly rate casual, fixed term...)	
What is your job title? (e.g. teaching associate, research assistant...)	
What is your highest qualification?	
Are you studying now? (Towards what qual?)	
Which campus are you based at?	
How long does it take you to get to work?	
How long in total have you been employed by Monash University?	
Are you in the Union? (Optional)	

Questions about your 'type' of employment

There are many words used to describe work that is not 'permanent', do you know some? (E.g. casual, flexible ...)	
Which of the terms you have just listed reflect your situation accurately?	
Can you name or describe any governmental policies that are in place to protect you at work?	

The following questions are taken from the Monash University Staff Engagement Survey 2014

- **NOTE:** YOUR ANSWERS WILL INFORM THIS CURRENT RESEARCH PROJECT ONLY. Neither your contact details nor raw data responses will be provided to Monash University.

How to fill in the survey

- If a question asks if you agree or disagree with a statement, use the rating scale above the statements and write your score in the space provided.
- When you don't feel as though a question is appropriate for you, don't have an opinion, or don't know the answer, answer "Not Applicable/Don't Know".
- Answer the questions based on your personal experience within the last 12 months. Don't try to think how other people might answer the questions, or what might be happening in other parts of Monash University.

Not Applicable/ Don't Know	Strongly Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Mixed Feelings/ Neutral	Tend To Agree	Strongly Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5

Question	Score
I am likely to still be working in Monash University in two years' time	
I would like to still be working in Monash University in five years' time	
I can see a future for me at Monash University	
I feel a sense of loyalty and commitment to Monash University	
I am proud to tell people that I work for Monash University	
I feel emotionally attached to Monash University	
I am willing to put in extra effort for Monash University	
I am given enough support to achieve my teaching & learning goals	
I am given enough support to achieve my community engagement goals	
I am given enough support to enable me to engage with industry	
I am given sufficient support to be creative and innovative	

I feel in control of things at work	
I feel emotionally well at work	
I am able to keep my job stress at an acceptable level	
I am able to maintain a good balance between work and other aspects of my life	
Monash University provides the flexibility I need to manage my work and family responsibilities	
My supervisor supports the use of flexible work arrangements	
My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment	
I like the kind of work I do	
Overall, I am satisfied with my job	
Sexual harassment is prevented and discouraged	
Discrimination is prevented and discouraged	
There is equal opportunity for all staff in Monash University	
Bullying and abusive behaviours are prevented and discouraged	
<i>“Supervisor” = The person you report directly to, or who directly monitors your performance.</i>	
My Supervisor listens to what I have to say	
My Supervisor gives me help and support	
My co-workers give me help and support	

7.5. Appendix E - Three interview schedules

7.5.1. Interview 1

Introduction

Thank you for meeting with me for this interview.

You've already read the explanatory statement but just to recap; the aim of this project is to find out how academics up to the age of 30 working in higher education in Australia perceive their wellbeing to be impacted by employment status.

So, you are currently employed at Monash University as a (insert employment type and position)

Great, well during this semi-structured interview I will ask you a number of questions and I'm really interested in your opinion on the topic. There are no right or wrong answers – I just want to listen to your perspectives.

Remember that no identifying information will ever be published about you, for example your Faculty, Department or School. A pseudonym name will be used to protect your identity so what you say here is safe. If you don't want to answer any of the questions that's fine just let me know and we'll move on.

Do you have any questions?

The interview will take between 60 and 90 minutes. If you need a break at any time just let me know. The toilets are... (Indicate location of toilets).

Ok so let's get started.

TURN RECORDER ON: 'Kate interviewing (participant pseudonym name), round 1 (date and time)

Section 1 – Firstly, I'd like to find out how you got here (biography)

- 1) You've been employed by Monash for (insert duration), how did you end up working in academia?
 - Is there anything you feel is different about working as an academic compared to other professions?
 - Would working at a university be your first career choice?
 - Given your skills and qualifications, what do you expect your workplace to offer you?
 - Are these expectations being met? – (probe: how does this make you feel?)
- 2) Why do you think you have been hired on a (fixed-term/casual) contract instead of in a more permanent position?

- 3) On the pre-interview survey you listed some words that are commonly used to refer to your type of employment (e.g. you listed...) and you felt that the term (insert preferred term) Best suited your situation.
 - Can you explain why?
 - What do you think of the term 'insecure' as in 'insecure employment'? Does that phrase reflect your position at all?
- 4) When people ask you about what you do for a job how would you typically respond?
 - Do you mention your employment status? (Probe: how does this make you feel?)
- 5) When you were a student doing your PhD did you think that your qualification would lead to more permanent, secure employment?
- 6) In life in general, where do you hope to be in five years? (Probe: and in terms of your career?)
 - Do you think this will happen?

Section 2 - Now, to discuss some of your experiences as an employee:

- 1) How do you feel about your job right now, near the beginning of the semester (and having been working in your position for x amount of time)?
- 2) What does your **family** think about your employment status? (Probe: and your friends?)
- 3) You were appointed to your current position (insert date)
 - Have you been given your contract yet?
 - How far in advance did you know you would be employed?
 - When does your current contract run out?
- 4) What is expected of you in your current position? (Do you have a mentor at work?)
- 5) Have you had any training for your position? (Probe: do you feel confident about what's expected of you)?
- 6) What do you think you would do if you found you encountered problems in this position e.g. you were working more hours than you were being paid for or had a relationship issue with a colleague? (Probe: who do you have that you can go to seek support about any work issues?)

Section 3– Thank you. I now have a number of questions about your thoughts and perceptions of your workplace

- 1) Do you think you work in a broadly ‘healthy’ workplace? (Probe: what makes you think that?)
- 2) Can you describe your physical work environment? (E.g. office space, location, lighting, smell, colleagues etc.)
 - How does this environment make you feel?
 - Could your environment be improved somehow?
- 3) Did you know that Monash has an award winning Staff Wellbeing and Activity program?
 - What do you think about that?
 - Have you participated? (why/why not?)/ would you ever participate? (In case participants don’t know about the SWAP program list a few of their offerings e.g. 10,000 steps challenge, boxing, mindfulness, nutrition etc.)

Section 4– The next questions specifically relate to your wellbeing, please take your time answering these questions and provide as much detail as you feel comfortable.

- 1) In the pre-interview survey you wrote that ‘wellbeing’ to you means: (insert participant’s definition)
 - Do you have any reflections on this definition you provided now?
 - Would you feel happy to use this definition/conceptualisation when referring to wellbeing for the rest of the interview?
- 2) You mentioned in the survey that (insert response) affects your wellbeing the most. Can you explain how this impacts you (how does this manifest)?
- 3) In the pre-interview survey when asked how you would describe your general wellbeing you said (insert response)
 - Can you elaborate on why you responded in this way?
- 4) Do you feel that your current employment situation supports your wellbeing? (Probe: can you tell a story about this?)
 - What do you feel are the greatest perks about this job? (Probe: can you describe how these perks make you feel)?
 - Are you worried about anything in your current employment position?
- 5) Do you have any wellbeing goals? (Probe: short-term? Long-term?)
 - Are you optimistic you could achieve these goals in your current employment situation?

- 6) How does your employment influence major decisions you make in life (e.g. home ownership, starting a family, big purchases)?
 - In what way do you think your employment in this job might influence your plans (e.g. holidays, career changes)?
 - It's still early days for you in this new position but is there anything you would like to do but feel you can't because of your employment situation?
 - Does being a fixed-term/casual employee affect your relationships outside work? (Partners, children, friends, community engagement, others?)

- 7) How does being employed fixed-term/casual help or hinder your ability to care for yourself? (And others?)

- 8) As an employee who do you think is 'responsible' for making sure your wellbeing is supported? (Probe: can you please elaborate on why you feel this way?)
 - Can you describe how your wellbeing is cared for at work? (Probe: by yourself? Others – colleagues? Supervisors? Organization e.g. SWAP program? Union?)

- 9) Thinking about your life in general. What difference, if any, would it make to your wellbeing if you had a more permanent/secure job?

- 10) If you could choose your current job to be permanent rather than fixed-term/casual what would you choose? (Probe: why?)

- 11) Is there anything else you'd like to add about how your employment affects your wellbeing (positively/negatively)?

Section 5 – Ok, so the following questions relate to what you think about (fixed-term/casual) employment more generally

- 1) Do you affiliate with (insert preferred terminology) workers from other professions?
 - Can you describe any instances when employees on contracts like you are given any attention in the media?

- 2) How do you think worker wellbeing is supported (or not) by the current government?

- 3) As an academic employee do you feel like a valuable member of society? (Probe: What makes you think that?)

- Do you feel respected by society? (Probe: why?)

TURN RECORDER OFF – (insert end time)

Conclusion

Thank you very much for your time and thoughtful responses to my questions. I'm going to follow up with you in the next few days to see if you thought of anything after the interview and would like to add or delete anything from your transcript. You can also feel free to contact me anytime if you have queries.

That was great; I appreciate your time in meeting with me and hope to see you again for the next rounds in July and November.

I really feel this research can make a difference in terms of understanding how to increase the wellbeing of young academics and workers in general so I thank you for your interest in supporting the project.

- **Give envelope with \$20 cash for participant reimbursement.**

7.5.2. Interview 2

Greet participant and reiterate objectives of the interviews (same as the first interview schedule).

Opening question

- 1) Tell me how you have been in the last few months – anything new? (has anything major changed in terms of your work life or personal life? How are you feeling right now? Any concerns?)

Gender: How does gender relate to insecure employment?

- 1) At present have you any thoughts about whether you're treated differently in terms of your employment because you're a wo/man? (Probe: provide examples e.g. being chosen for a role, opportunities, interaction with colleagues).
- 2) Describe some reasons why as a wo/man you would prefer more permanent employment, instead of being on a casual/fixed-term contract?

Hierarchy: Is there a relationship between employment status and experience at Monash?

- 1) Academic employment status in the university might be categorised into 3 categories: 1) being employed on a casual contract; 2) being employed on a fixed-term contract; 3) being employed on an ongoing/tenured contract.
- 2) What do you think are the differences between casual, fixed-term and tenured contracts?

.....**Give participants card**.....

Card:

Some scholars (May et al.,2013, p. 259) argue that there are actually only two groups of academic staff at the university: 1) hourly paid staff who teach in universities, as casual academic staff; 2) academic staff who receive a regular salary with access to leave entitlements (regardless of whether they are in ongoing employment or on a fixed-term contract).

'Casual' staff:

- 3) *Paid hourly rate*
- 4) *No guaranteed or set hours*
- 5) *No leave entitlements (sick, holiday, maternity)*
- 6) *Generally minimum superannuation rate at 9%*

Fixed-term/ongoing staff:

- 7) *Set salary and hours*
- 8) *Set employment timeframe or ongoing employment*
- 9) *Access to leave entitlements (sick, holiday, maternity)*
- 10) *Generally higher superannuation rate at 17%*

- 3) Apart from these differences (listed on the card) are there any other differences you experience as a fixed-term/casual employee compared to your other colleagues?
- 4) Are there any other advantages or disadvantages associated with being casual, fixed-term or tenured?
 - Any other faculty-specific differences? (Probe: e.g. faculty specific benefits or disadvantages or university specific bonuses or disadvantages)
- 5) Some scholars talk about there being a divide between ongoing/tenured academic employees and other academic employees at the university, for example, in one article I read it said that academics who were not tenured might be seen as an 'underclass' (Kimber, 2003) meaning they have lower status. What are your thoughts on this?

Institutionalisation

- 1) Can you describe how you separate the domains of 1) work 2) sleep and 3) play in your life?
- 2) Do your patterns of sleep and play change because of your work? (Probe: is this related to your employment contract being casual/fixed-term?)
- 3) How does technology impact your work-life boundaries?

In the first round of interviews some participants said that working at Monash gave them flexibility and freedom and as long as they did their work then they could manage their own time.

- 4) Do you personally think you experience true flexibility and freedom in your job or are you just really good at managing yourself so you do well in this job to get the next contract? (Probe: e.g. do you create strict rules for yourself where Monash doesn't have any? Is the flexibility and freedom offered by Monash just a façade?)
- 5) **Thank and give envelope with \$20 cash reimbursement**

7.5.3. Interview 3

Greet participant and reiterate objectives of the interviews (same as the first interview schedule).

Reflection

- 1) Has anything changed in your work or personal life since we last met?
- 2) So how are you feeling in general right now?

From Guy Standing (2011) - tapping into the seven forms of labour-related security

You might remember in the email I sent you when organising this interview I asked if you would reflect on any progress you have experienced since the very first interview.

- 1) This year, have you experienced any career progression? (Probe: academic levels A to B etc., pay raise, new job, further studies or skills training?)
- 2) Has anything happened that might help you to get, what you consider to be, a good job in the future?
- 3) This year, have you had any opportunities to increase your skills? (e.g. conference attendance, publications, qualifications, training)
 - Were you supported by your workplace?
 - Was it part of your job?
- 4) Are any of your skills not currently being utilised in your job?
- 5) Who represents your employment interests?

From analysis to date

- 1) I'm just wondering, how sustainable do you feel your current employment situation is?
 - How long do you think you will be able to continue working casually or in fixed-term positions?
 - If you continue working in similar employment conditions to what you have now, what impact do you think this will have (either positively or negatively) on your wellbeing short or long-term?
- 2) I've been analysing the interview transcripts to date and have devised some categories in which to group participants like you. The categories are largely based on how well participants maintain work-life boundaries and specifically the impact of technology in mediating this.
 - Please mark on the paper which feature you feel applies to you, if any. As you work through please explain your responses' **(give paper and highlighter pen to participant)**

#	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
1	Regularly take work home	Do not feel compelled to take work home but might sometimes	Rarely take work home (might be technologically impossible)
2	Regularly work beyond paid hours	Sometimes work beyond paid hours	Only work paid hours (overtime discouraged or remunerated)
3	Continually connected through technology	Moderately connected through technology but can manage switching off	Not continually connected to technology
4	Experience a sense of urgency to perform in job (maybe fear of loss of job)	Do not work out of urgency or fear (maybe not too fearful of job loss - have other viable options)	Do not work out of urgency or fear (maybe not too fearful of job loss - have other viable options)
5	Unclear expectations of job role set by work supervisor	Somewhat clear expectations of job role set by work supervisor	Very clear expectations of job role set by work supervisor
6	Personal life heavily impacted by work (either negatively and/or positively)	Actively segregate work from personal life (moderately effectively)	Work does not impact personal life
7	Somewhat demanding organisational culture	Organisational culture marginally demanding	Organisational culture not at all demanding
8	Work takes priority in life (no boundaries between work and personal life)	Work and personal life boundaries can be managed	Work and personal life very separate
9	Strong desire for more job security	Moderate desire for more job security	Moderate desire for more job security
10	Non-ongoing employment status heavily impacts upon wellbeing (either positively and/or negatively)	Non-ongoing employment status moderately impacts upon wellbeing (either positively and/or negatively)	Non-ongoing employment status marginally impacts on wellbeing (either positively and/or negatively)

Great, so I've labelled the groups (give participant sheet of paper):

#	Giver: Characterised by a total disintegration of work-life boundaries	Resister: Somewhat effectively managing work-life boundaries	Insulated: Experience a type of immunity between work-life conflicts resulting in intact boundaries
1	Regularly take work home	Do not feel compelled to take work home but might sometimes	Rarely take work home (might be technologically impossible)
2	Regularly work beyond paid hours	Sometimes work beyond paid hours	Only work paid hours (overtime discouraged or remunerated)
3	Continually connected through technology	Moderately connected through technology but can manage switching off	Not continually connected to technology
4	Experience a sense of urgency to perform in job (maybe fear of loss of job)	Do not work out of urgency or fear (maybe not too fearful of job loss - have other viable options)	Do not work out of urgency or fear (maybe not too fearful of job loss - have other viable options)
5	Unclear expectations of job role set by work supervisor	Somewhat clear expectations of job role set by work supervisor	Very clear expectations of job role set by work supervisor
6	Personal life heavily impacted by work (either negatively and/or positively)	Actively segregate work from personal life (moderately effectively)	Work does not impact personal life
7	Somewhat demanding organisational culture	Organisational culture marginally demanding	Organisational culture not at all demanding
8	Work takes priority in life (no boundaries between work and personal life)	Work and personal life boundaries can be managed	Work and personal life very separate
9	Strong desire for more job security	Moderate desire for more job security	Moderate desire for more job security
10	Non-ongoing employment status heavily impacts upon wellbeing (either positively and/or negatively)	Non-ongoing employment status moderately impacts upon wellbeing (either positively and/or negatively)	Non-ongoing employment status marginally impacts on wellbeing (either positively and/or negatively)

3) Which of the following categories (if any) would you say you belong to?

- Group 1 I've called 'Givers' who I've thought are 'characterised by a total disintegration of work-life boundaries'.
 - Group 2 I've called 'Resisters' who I've thought are 'somewhat effectively managing work-life boundaries'
 - Group 3 I've called 'Insulated' who I've thought are 'experiencing a type of immunity between work-life conflicts resulting in intact boundaries'.
- 4) How do you feel about being grouped with other participants who have described similar experiences to yours?
 - 5) Which is the most attractive category in your opinion?
 - 6) As the researcher, I put you in (x) category because of (list reasons and convey analysis of participant's data to date). What do you think about that?

Moving on/future (Chronosystem)

- 1) It's the end of the year. How are you feeling now before the holidays?
- 2) Are you going to be working (paid or unpaid) over the extended Christmas break?
- 3) What are your plans for next year?

Methodology (research process)

- 1) Has anything changed in your thoughts about your employment status or position in the university from being in this research?
- 2) As the researcher is there anything in particular you would like me to convey about you as a participant?
 - o Are there any messages you would like to come through in your story?
- 3) What have you thought about the process of this research like how have you found the interviewing process?
 - o What did you think about being interviewed on more than one occasion?
 - o What did you think about being interviewed by somebody in your peer group?
- 4) Was there anything you would have liked me to ask you that I didn't address?

Thank you so much for your participation in this project, you have made the whole study possible. I'll send your transcripts in the next few months. I am really grateful for your insights and honesty in participating (give envelope with \$20 cash reimbursement).

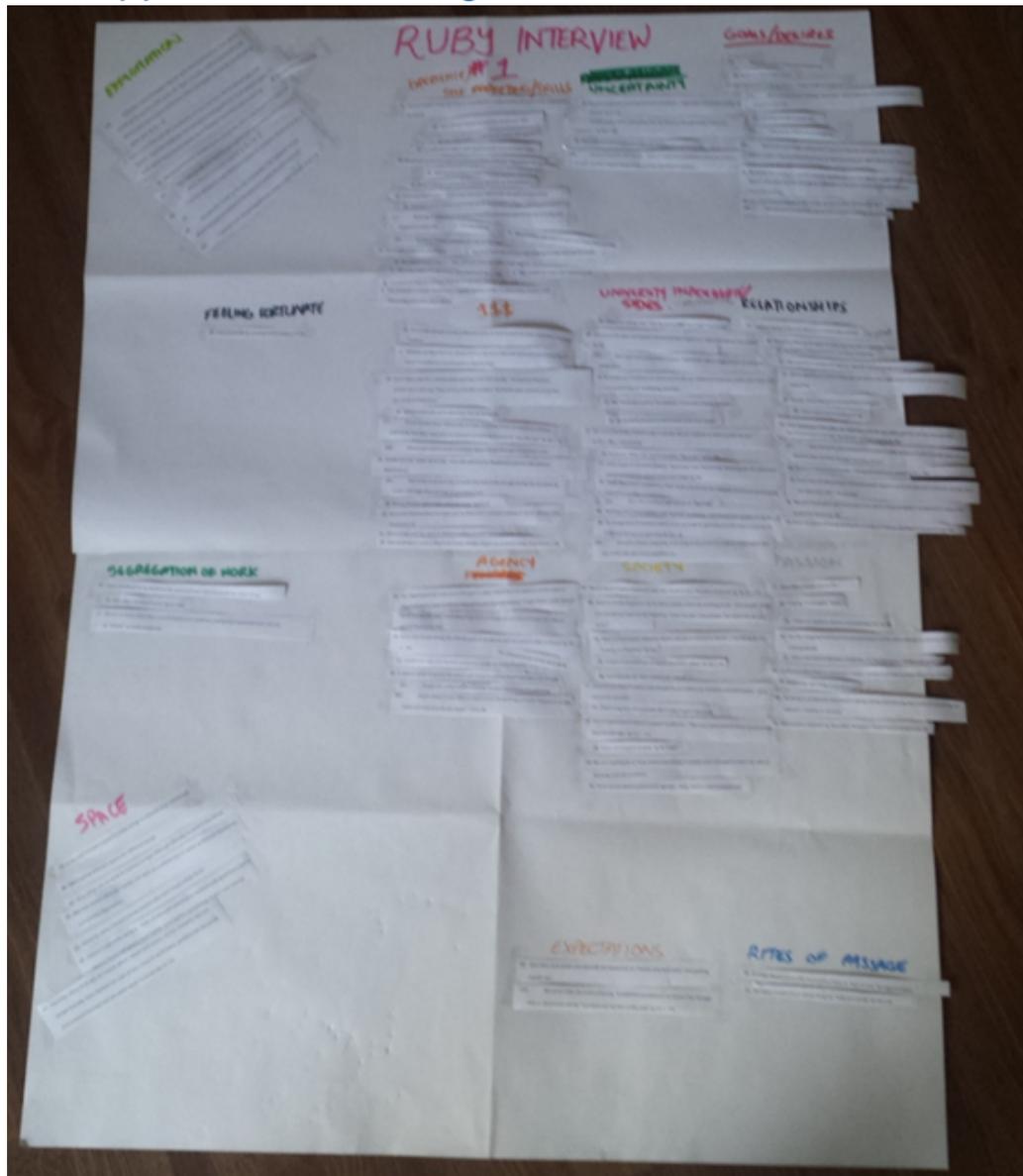
7.6. Appendix F - Thematic analysis round one

Overarching theme	Aspects of theme
Identity: Self-perception and identity	Presentation of self Passion Self-abilities e.g. “real world” Personal drive and intention Other’s perception of self Self-perception Making a difference Self-confidence or self-doubt Goals and dreams Transformative experiences
Wellbeing: References to feelings/state of being and other things that influence these	Voice Work/life balance Caring for self “Safety net” Maintaining wellbeing Freedom of thought and expression Support (financial, social...) Pressure Relationships ‘Drowning’ Supporting other family members
Space and environment (Salutogenics): Perception of environmental impacts on wellbeing	Description of settings Feelings at work Ability to enhance wellbeing Lighting
Uncertainty	Not sure of what will happen next Ability to get a job – dependent on “job market”

	<p>Contradictions in reasoning (lack of consistency)</p> <p>Disposability</p> <p>Optimism or lack of</p> <p>Nature of research</p> <p>Luck</p> <p>Competition</p> <p>Vulnerability</p> <p>Uncertainty of position – lack of clarity surrounding contract or roles</p>
Agency and control	<p>Flexibility or rigidity</p> <p>Experiences of freedom or not in job</p> <p>Ability to ‘choose’</p> <p>Control over the self and resources</p> <p>Dependency level</p> <p>Voice</p> <p>Power relations</p> <p>“Supporting a habit”</p> <p>Dedication</p> <p>Use of battle/death language e.g. ‘that’s me gone’ (Mike) or ‘kill your career’ (Logan) or ‘that’s it. Gone.” (Logan)</p>
Respect, recognition, expectations	<p>Feeling (or not feeling) grateful, appreciated, recognised, respected, generosity</p> <p>Expectations being met or not</p> <p>Hopes of achieving goals and expectations – optimism</p> <p>Knowledge and skill set</p> <p>Impact (of work)</p> <p>Grooming</p>
Time	<p>Invasion of non-work time</p> <p>Work/life balance</p> <p>Lack of time</p> <p>Time to realise impact</p>

	Time management and control
Life Plans	<p>Moving house</p> <p>Buying house</p> <p>“Investing” energy in community engagement e.g. joining sports club and making friends (Logan1)</p> <p>Getting a pet</p> <p>Hobbies</p> <p>Personal time</p> <p>Adult decisions – settling down</p> <p>Attending friend’s funeral</p>
Rites of passage	<p>Intergenerational disjuncture</p> <p>Being on the path</p> <p>Hurdles</p> <p>Proving self</p> <p>External comments about how to get to goals</p> <p>Support systems or lack of by seniors at work</p> <p>Frustration associated with not being given due status</p> <p>Being judged for work</p>
Critiques or acceptance of institutional agenda	<p>Propaganda</p> <p>References to the institution</p> <p>Ideologies</p> <p>Training/qualifications</p> <p>“That’s how it is”</p> <p>Using and abusing workers or students</p> <p>Passive or critical</p> <p>Monash offerings</p> <p>Status of Monash – affiliation</p>

7.8. Appendix H - Coding



7.10. Appendix J: NVivo themes

INDIVIDUAL/IDENTITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agency and control Desires Expectations Identity Life plans Personal relationships Skills and experience
ENVIRONMENT/STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic hearsay Acceptance of institution Critique of institution Logistics about the job Organizational relationships Respect Rites of passage Salutogenics
WELLBEING CONSEQUENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culture and society Freedom Institutionalisation Time Uncertainty and insecurity Wellbeing Work life boundaries

7.11. Appendix K - Ethics Committee approval letter



MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Research Office

Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: CF15/231 - 2015000102

Project Title: Young Academics and Work: Impacts on Wellbeing

Chief Investigator: Prof Chris Goddard

Approved: From: 2 March 2015 To: 2 March 2020

Terms of approval - Failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Professor Nip Thomson
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Katherine Bone, Assoc Prof Lucas Walsh

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