



# UNIVERSITY OF HULL

## **Living Precarity, Enduring Bias: Exploring the Gendered Experiences of UK Early Career Academics**

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## Abstract

This research explores the gendered lives of Early Career Academics (ECAs) within the gender regime of the neoliberal university and examines the commonalities and differences of their lived experience. Overall, participants lives were characterised by both aspects of labour market precarity – through workplace casualisation – and feelings of precariousness, a vulnerability engendered through harmful modes of working and further exacerbated by a deeply held attachment to academia as vocational, passionate work. Regarding gendered differences, ECA women expressed frustration that male peers were promoted at a faster rate, and at the various forms of bias that compromised their progression in a competitive environment. ECA men in comparison felt both the affective and material impacts of precarious work but did not identify many of the obstacles reported by female participants. Overall barriers to academic labour market progression were experienced either as financial harms – inequalities in material distribution (particularly precarity) – or as subjective feelings of non-belonging, misrecognition, an experience more common to women and other atypical ECAs. Resistance to the neoliberal university and the patriarchal gender regime was expressed by speaking up (both as individuals and as groups), kindness, and collective action as a challenge to individualism. This research was undertaken through 19 in-depth phenomenological interviews with ECAs, five with senior academics and an online survey to provide wider scope.

## Epigraph

*'Labour is not a commodity'*

International Labour Organisation

*'Ooh, yeah, you're amazing!*

*We think you're incredible*

*You say we're fantastic*

*But still we don't head the bill'*

Kate Bush

*'Sometimes we have to do the work even though we don't yet see a glimmer on the horizon that it's actually going to be possible.'*

Angela Davis

*'Don't get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life.'*

Dolly Parton

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## Acronym List

**ALMP:** Active Labour Market Policy

**ASC:** Athena Swan Charter

**BAME:** Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic

**BPS:** British Psychological Society

**BSA:** British Sociological Association

**DOE:** Department of Education

**ECA:** Early Career Academic

**ECR:** Early Carer Researcher

**ECU:** Equality Challenge Unit

**ESRC:** Economic and Social Research Council

**EURAXESS:** European initiative providing access to researchers to pursue their research careers in Europe

**HEI:** Higher Education Institute

**HEPI:** Higher Education Policy Institute

**KEF:** Knowledge Excellence Framework

**MC:** Middle Class

**NPM:** New Public Management

**OCED:** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

**ONS:** Office for National Statistics

**REC** Race Equality Charter

**REF:** Research Excellence Framework

**SER:** Standard Employment Relation

**SSH:** Social Science Humanities

**STEM:** Science Technology Engineering Maths

**TEF:** Teaching Excellence Framework

**TUC:** Trade Union Congress

**UCEA:** Universities & Colleges Employers Association

**UCU:** University College Union

**WBG:** Women's Budget Group

**WC:** Working-class

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1. Widening Participation, Increasing Precarity

When considering academics in fiction and within popular culture, they often appear secretive, apart from the world, eccentric and privileged, the image of Samgrass lying languid by the spires in *Brideshead Revisited* (Waugh, 1981 [1945]). Today, for many this perception still rings true; as evidenced by some of the anti-intellectual sentiment surrounding Brexit, as MP Michael Gove recently remarked, ‘the people in this country have had enough of experts’ (Gove cited in Mance, 2016). There persists a narrative that posits academics as snobbish and disinterested, however, the reality of who academics are and how academics conduct themselves lies far from this stereotype. Firstly, academics are an increasingly heterogenous group despite the prevalence of the senior, white, male academic that dominates popular culture; they are women, disabled, black, working class, clinicians, social workers amongst many other types of individual. Secondly, most academics are also passionate about contributing to the ‘knowledge commons’ (Connell, 2019), a collective pool of research that they hope will improve and enrich lives in some way. Far from residing in ivory towers academics walk among us, and universities themselves are important community focal points, centres of research and teaching (ibid). Furthermore, waves of massification in the last 50 years— pushes in policy that have sought to open HE to more individuals— have been essential, not only increasing the percentage of the population that is university educated, but also expanding ideas of ‘who’ an academic can be. The New Labour target – that 50% of young people would attend university – has now been achieved (DOE, 2019). In 2019, UK university applications hit a record high (UCAS, 2019) and more academics than ever before are now being employed by the nation’s universities (Locke et al., 2016). Initiatives such as widening participation have also helped to diversify the social categories of those within HEIs, primarily BAME and working-class students (DOE, 2017). Rather than existing apart on an isle of ‘experts’, academics and the university are firmly enmeshed with society and with its corresponding social actors, there is also more diversity in the occupation of academic than ever before.

These links with the wider political and social project bring with it many positives: a better educated workforce, better public engagement, and a stronger tie to the knowledge economy, the link between knowledge production and social needs (Neumann & Tan, 2011). However, to exist as a modern social structure is to also exist within the dominant political project and its corresponding moral and economic philosophy—neoliberalism—and to abide by its key edicts: individualism, autonomy, and a (cost)efficiency that enable a focus on accumulation and profits. For universities and their employees this has meant enduring the rise of precarious modes of working, particularly for those at the beginning of their careers: Early Career Academics (ECAs). Those that experience precarious work find it inherently unstable, that it debilitates their ability to plan and can lead to severe fluctuations in employment and income. Through deregulation, particularly around work, and the corresponding imposition of regulation protecting the interests of business (see the Trade Union Act, 2016) workers' rights have atrophied. The diminishing power of trade unions and collective bargaining have made it increasingly difficult for employees to fight back against overwhelming structural powers (Vallas & Prener, 2012; Millar, 2017; Alberti et al., 2018). As such, in the global North we are now witnessing a re-commodification of work, a process whereby the labour of individuals is objectified (Greer, 2016). Our futures are now more fluid than ever, with work unlikely to see us through the life course in a way it once had (Bauman, 2000). Employees also now endure more risk as institutions transfer the responsibility they once held for their workers to the individual (Beck et al., 1994). This is evident now in ever increasing discourse around employability and the idea of 'self-branding' (Jones, 2019). To endure labour market precarity, is to feel deeply precarious, a state Butler (2003) likened to an extreme vulnerability, one engendered by misrecognition and the experience of being othered.

Work based precarity is expressed in various types of contracts, primarily fixed term, where work contracts are defined by units of time or zero hours, where the number of hours worked each week is decided by the employer and thus vary greatly with no guarantee to the employee. These also usually have no recourse to holiday or sick pay. Though there are many differences in the daily nature of their work, academics experience many of the same harmful impacts of deregulation as those endured by gig economy workers, the Deliveroo couriers and Uber drivers that are now visual ubiquities in UK urban areas (May et al., 2013; Healy et al., 2017; Rubery et al., 2018). These include irregularities in pay and employment, underemployment—where individuals experience involuntary part-time work



–(Bell & Blanchflower, 2013; Worth, 2016) and a lack of recourse to work-based benefits. Another key issue with precarious contracts is that we live in a world still largely defined by Standard Employment Relations (SERs), for example securing a mortgage or a rent agreement often requires the guarantee of a continuous salary. Though discussions of precarious work are by no means new (Marx, 1976 [1867]; Bourdieu, 1998), and are largely defined by the brief post-war period in the global North where a Fordist mode of work dominated, the rolling back of workers' rights alongside the normalisation of instability is a concerning trend (Rubery et al., 2018).

## 1.2. The Unique Context of Precarity in Academic Work

While academia endures many of the same impacts of neoliberalism evident in other occupations, there are several unique aspects to the work that differentiate it. For instance, a key reason that this research has elected to focus on the 'early' career stage of being an academic is that precarious contracts are prevalent at the entry stage of an academic career but far less common when one moves beyond this (Macoun & Miller, 2014; McKenzie, 2017; Thouaille, 2017; Jones & Oakley, 2018). Additionally, I have elected to use the term 'permanent' contract in this research to refer to a continuous, salaried SERs as is the norm in the literature (Elcioglu, 2010; May et al., 2013; Bozzon et al., 2017; Loveday, 2018b). It also acts as a useful symbolic antonym to precarious work. Of course, no job is ever truly permanent, especially in neoliberal institutions such as universities which are often subject to redundancies and restructuring in the pursuit of cost-efficiency.

Another unique aspect of academic work is how often those that pursue it categorise it as a 'vocation', a term which specifically addresses the intense relationship between some social actors and their chosen profession. Vocational work is work people perceive as intrinsically fulfilling, meaningful, and which motivates them beyond material rewards (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Carvalho et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; Vos, 2017; Sotirin & Goltz, 2019).

Generally, to pursue vocational work is considered positive, enabling individuals to derive meaning and ergo happiness from their working lives (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Unfortunately, those that experience work simultaneously as vocation and as precarious may find themselves located at a dangerous intersection whereby their dedication is exploited. Cost-efficient employers are all too aware of how employees that exhibit a vocational

relationship to their work will be more willing to accept unstable contracts and low pay. Placing so much personal meaning in work also becomes an increasingly hazardous pursuit when that work is precarious, a withdrawal or reduction in employment can become extremely anxiety-inducing and damaging to the ego (Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Knights & Clarke, 2014). Work that many would consider as a vocation also directly relates to work that is competitive with ‘meaningful work’ being in high demand (Balaram & Wallace-Stephens, 2018). Sectors such as academia and the arts experience high levels of social congestion (Brown, 2013) with more people qualified and desiring to work within them than jobs available. Frequently therefore, the odds of success in these occupations are low.

### 1.3. Neoliberal Gender Order, University Gender Regime

As individuals the actions of social actors are contained within various overriding structures and this research concerns itself not only with the political project of neoliberalism, but also the ‘gender order’ put forth by Connell (1987; 2005), a theorisation of how gender relations are formed in different macro contexts. As Connell outlines this contains a consideration of labour (the division and segmentation of), power (the implementation of hierarchies and oppression), cathexis (the negotiation of emotional attachment and sexuality), and finally symbolism (the impact of cultural institutions and education). The current gender order at work in the UK is not only a neoliberal one but also a patriarchal one where male power and influence dominate. These two forces (neoliberalism and patriarchy) also have a cyclical influence on each other, for example many neoliberal values—risk-taking, competition—are values that would be traditionally considered as masculine (Davies & O’Callaghan, 2014).

To illustrate how the gender order is conceived in the UK today, we can consider how much has changed since the earlier half of the century where women were presumed to have a stronger cathexis to family (Barrett & McIntosh, 1991) and men to work (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Greig, 2011) and though these ideas still hold significant influence, there have also been several developments. For example, the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen the emergence of a neoliberal feminism (Eisenstein, 2010; Fraser, 2013; Rottenberg, 2014) that espouses women’s salvation and equality as being achieved through work. This is an ideology that has resulted in women taking on increasing responsibility for paid work

while still being primarily responsible for unpaid work in the home (Adkins, 2018). Women, far more than men, have also had to endure the harms of austerity in the neoliberal project due to their increased reliance on benefits and on the public sector (Elson, 2013; O'Hara, 2014). Comparatively, the impact on men in the current gender order has been more severely felt and expressed via changes to their subjectivities, as they are increasingly brought into precarious modes of work (fixed term, zero hours) that have traditionally been the domain of women (Standing, 1999; Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004).

Within Connell's gender order theory sits her corresponding idea of the gender regime, of how gendered relationships are enacted within particular organisations or contexts, in this case the neoliberal university and the ECAs within it. Gender regimes usually mirror the macro gender orders they are held within and UK universities are no exception, a result of both neoliberal and patriarchal forces (Acker, 2006). Men in academia are generally afforded greater overall access to all forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1989), and receive as a result a 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell, 2005). Women academics in comparison are subject to a greater number of biases and barriers which hamper progression. However, many ECAs are correspondingly united by the commonalities in their experience, of precarity and other related harms indicative of the neoliberal university, for example surveillance and overwork (Lorenz, 2012; Sullivan, 2014). Ideas of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Styhre & Tienari, 2014; Sang, 2016) and the fact that most ECA men actually occupy a subordinate form of masculinity (Connell, 2005; Cornwall et al., 2017; Walker, 2017) also complicate the experience of living within the current university gender regime.

The exploration of how gender and precarity interact and how this impacts gendered ECAs forms the crux of this research. It is an important area worthy of exploration as it tells us not only about who gets to survive and thrive in academia—and the impact of this experience—but also about larger social inequalities relating to capital, gender, and other categories such as race. For instance, who gets to work in vocational occupations when pay, contracts, and hours are so precarious that many cannot endure it unless they are supported? Furthermore, vocational work is often extraordinarily competitive and difficult to access requiring advantages in symbolic, social, and economic capital. Those that lack these resources therefore may find it more difficult to succeed. In many cases, those that

do ‘make it’ embody the ideal of the abstract worker (Acker, 1990), one who is able to totally dedicate themselves to their profession, a figure that is usually male, white, and able-bodied. This research has uncovered how despite its reputation as a forward-thinking institution, the university often replicates many of society’s wider social biases (sexism, racism) alongside its structural inequalities. It has become clear therefore, as proposed by Fraser (2013), that changing the institution means addressing both biases through recognition—the importance of representation and identity—and material disparities through redistribution, of striving for economic equality.

In this research, I also wanted to emphasize the importance of accounting for the lived experiences between men and women, to show both the many commonalities that unite gendered individuals in their material struggles, and the differences in gendered experience that afford some certain social advantages over others. As opposed to this being a capitulation to a much-maligned conception of identity politics (Fisher, 2014), I perceive the pursuit of recognition alongside material redistribution as essential, as social actors we encounter barriers that are due to far more than economic status alone. As such, my approach for this research has been informed by the theoretical framework of materialist feminism, a perspective which accounts for grand-narrative structures, such as capitalism and patriarchy—and how people operate within them—while still valuing subjectivities and individuals’ ability to effect change in their lives through agency. As a theory, it also accounts for the fact that these experiences vary within different historical and social contexts (Barret, 1997; Hennessy & Ingraham, 1997; Jackson, 2001; Fraser, 2013). Alongside this, I have also incorporated theories of intersectionality into the research, it being both inaccurate and far too simplistic to state that women are always disadvantaged in the gender order/gender regime. Ours is a society informed by structural, implicit, and explicit forms of bias that also stem from racism, classism, and other numerous forms of bigotry. An intersectional analysis accounting for the differences *within* the gendered categories of women and men as well as *between* them has therefore been essential in the analysis of this research (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2012; Styhre & Tienari, 2014; Sang, 2016).

I come to this research not as a disinterested scholar but as a woman and a first generation academic with an aspiration to succeed in the university. The fears and anxious subjectivities described by participants are in many regards my own. I too worry whether I

will be excluded from certain networks because I am a woman, and I concurrently wonder if I will be afforded certain opportunities, because I am white, or in the current hostile climate, because I am British. Though this could position myself as a solipsist concerned with my own outcome in the process—and of course I am involved with the same career-building activities as my participants—I also hope this research will go some way toward the movement in ‘speaking out’ (Gill, 2010; Mountz et al., 2015; 1752 Group, 2018; Phipps, 2018; Puāwai Collective & Le Heron, 2019;) against exploitation, just as many of my participants and the many other theorists and activists I look up to—and toward—have elected to do.

#### 1.4. Overview of the Literature

This research builds on the work of many others who have contributed to the literature on what it is to be both a precarious and gendered ECA. Since beginning this project in 2016, the amount published on this topic has grown exponentially, an outgrowth of frustration—by all levels of the academic hierarchy—surrounding early career working conditions. Furthermore, there is an anger and frustration amongst researchers that sexism, racism, classism, and other forms of bigotry continue to exist within universities, for the most part, their places of work. Here, I will give a summary of the work that has been conducted in this area, I will then account for the ways in which my own work has sought to address gaps within the literature. Before continuing, I wish to state my own definition of Early Career Academics, as five years following the awarding of the doctorate. My aim was to directly compare the experience of ECAs within a defined time frame, in order to account for differences in the phenomena of labour market experience. I also deliberately choose to use the term Early Career Academic (ECA) over the more common Early Career Researcher (ECR) to make it clear that I am accounting for academics on all career pathways, including teaching only.

Returning to an overview of the literature, there have been several reports published over the last decade that have sought to uncover the working lives of ECAs which inevitably has meant addressing conditions of precarity. This includes Bennion and Locke’s (2010) examination of early career paths in 17 countries and papers such as Ivancheva’s (2015)

which examine the overarching conditions of precarity in the academy. Among these are reports investigating early career working conditions by trade unions such as the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU, 2016; UCU, 2019a), employers association such as the Universities Colleges and Employees Association (UCEA, 2015), and professional development organizations such as Vitae (Thouaille, 2017). Others have looked specifically at certain ECA positions such as both Jones and Oakley's (2018) and McAlpine and Amundsen (2015) examination of post docs. Within this literature, there has also been a growing sub-section around ECAs considerations on leaving academia (Kinman & Jones, 2008; Wöhrer, 2014; Dorenkamp & Weiß, 2018).

Another area of research has addressed the quotidian working tasks of ECAs, for instance addressing how for many the role has become more teaching-focused and student-centric (Gale, 2011) and the need for more resources to support this (Hubbard et al., 2015). Also, in addressing teaching Lopes and Dewan (2015) explore how precarious work identities intersect with pedagogical concerns and both Zeb (2018) and Wånggren (2018) examine how teaching controversial topics can be a high-risk activity for precarious, early career academics. Another emerging area of study has been addressing the formation of a particular ECA subjectivity, one often characterised by the interaction between passion and anxiety (Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Loveday, 2018a).

Within the literature concerning the specific intersection between gender and ECAs there are several recently edited collections including: *Gender in Precarious Research Careers* (Murgia & Poggio, 2019), *Feeling Academic in the Neoliberal University: Feminist Flights, Fights and Failures* (Taylor & Lahad, 2018), and *Being an Early Career Feminist Academic: Global Perspectives* (Thwaites & Pressland, 2016). These all address many of the various gendered factors impacting on ECAs with a concentration on the inequalities experienced by women. Other sub-areas within the literature that covered the gendered experiences of ECAs were as follows: work-life balance (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013; Bozzon et al., 2017; Cukut Krilić et al., 2018), how ECA women are discriminated against in recruitment (Herschberg et al., 2015; Herschberg et al., 2018), and how gender interacts with ideas of academic kindness among a precarious workforce (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Patzak et al., 2017; Puāwai Collective & Le Heron, 2019; Ivancheva et al., 2019). There were also various other subjects that covered women's experiences in academia more widely, issues which still affected ECAs amongst others in the hierarchy, these included: the division of academic housework between men and women academics (Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Acker and

Feuerverger, 2006; Heijstra et al., 2017), the prevalence of women in academic tasks requiring emotional labour (Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Bozzon et al., 2018; El-Alayli et al., 2018), the exclusion of women academics from male-dominated socializing and mentoring networks (Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014), the dominance of male-coded values in academia (Acker, 2006; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Thornton, 2013; Davies & O'Callaghan, 2014), bullying and sexual harassment (Simpson & Cohen, 2004; 1752 Group, 2018; Phipps, 2018), intersections with race (Brown-Glaude, 2010; Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Gabriel, 2017; Stockfelt, 2018; Harris & Moffitt, 2019), and with class (Barker, 1995; Clancy, 2001; Morley, 2001; Reay, 2001). Finally, there were also the various forms of bias that women in academia were subject to: bias in single-blind or open peer review when the author is known to the reviewer (Borsuk et al., 2009), bias in interviews (Rubini & Menegatti, 2014), bias in promotion (Clark-Blickenstaff, 2005; Bagilhole & White, 2013), bias in co-authoring where women are assumed to be the lesser partner (Sarsons, 2015), bias in securing mentorship (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010), and bias towards women academics with children (Mason et al., 2013).

This research contributes to work addressing precarity and gender bias in academia both through the data uncovered and through its methodology—a phenomenological, feminist approach conducted through in-depth interviews and an online survey. Together, these uncovered key commonalities and differences in gendered ECA's lives. A key reason for taking this approach was due to a gap in the amount of literature that directly compared in-depth, subjective experience in HE between genders, aside from Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra (2013) and Cukut et al's (2018) non-UK explorations of work-life balance. Within the gender regime of UK, HE there was even less work that explored the perspectives of both men and women. I have sought to address this by purposefully gathering the opinions, experiences, and perspectives of ECA men as well as women in my research, expanding conversations surrounding ECA masculinities of which there is a limited amount of literature (Harley, 2003; Armato, 2013; Duan et al., 2010; Styhre & Tienari, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2015). Literature on gender in HE is dominated by research which looks at the inequalities experienced by women, and while this is a natural concern given the current gender order, it does not explore important interactions between gendered groups of ECAs, the unique ways academic life is experienced by men, or the impact of intersectionality upon masculinities and privilege (Styhre & Tienari, 2014). There is also little that addresses how ECAs personal and professional lives cross over—though again this

is addressed somewhat by Cukut Krilić et al. (2018) and Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra, (2013). I was eager therefore to examine not only how work-life balance and experiences at work differed regarding gender, but also how relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners are configured through a professional lens.

Therefore, given the existing literature, and the gaps that emerged, my research aims were as follows:

- To explore how precarity and neoliberalism are impacting the gendered experiences of ECAs within the UK
- To explore how ECAs have been affected by the gender order within academia
- To explore how the private and public lives of ECAs intersect

Specific contributions made by this research include further exploration on many of the topics described in the literature review, with an explicit focus on the commonalities and differences in gendered experience: that ECAs often experience a pull between passion and precarity which leads to anxious subjectivities, that they experience ambivalence in how they perceive academic work, that precarity has become increasingly normalised, that ECAs are subject to the changing shape and varying annual flows of academic work, the importance of the pedagogical relationship with students and the conception of the student as consumer, experiences and expectations around flexibility and autonomy, the lack of time afforded to personal relationships due to time constraints, the gendered nature of free time, pastoral and emotional work, the transfer away from explicit to implicit forms of bias, the importance of both redistribution and recognition for equality at work, the importance of intersectionality in accounting for privilege and oppression, and the complexities of being able to frame different aspects of our social identities. Ultimately, this research uncovered a great levelling for ECAs in the UK university gender regime; that there were many commonalities in gendered experience between men and women, especially relating to precarity. However, the patriarchal dividend afforded to ECA men – particularly their increased access to symbolic and social capital—alongside the relative lack of bias experienced, resulted in a gender regime where the majority maintained a competitive edge over ECA women.



## 1.5. Thesis Structure

I will now outline the various chapters that structure this thesis. Subsequent to this introduction will follow chapter 2, a literature review divided into two main parts. The first *Working as Neoliberal and Gendered Subjects* which deals with the macro, ordering structures of this research mainly neoliberalism, and how it is enacted in UK HE, the gender order, and a wider discussion of how both intersect in wider conversations around precarious work. The second part of the literature review *The Gendered ECA in the Neoliberal University* –will explore themes and literature around the lived experiences of ECAs, including their experiences of precarity, how their experience differs regarding gender, and an examination of intersectional perspectives. This will also include a closer examination of the gaps around ECAs’ personal lives and ECA masculinities. Following this will be chapter 3 *Methodology*, which will outline the overarching approach (feminist and phenomenological), methods (in-depth interviews and an online survey), alongside the theoretical framework (materialist feminism). This chapter will also cover sampling, recruitment, data analysis, and ethics. Next will follow the three main data chapters that will provide a thematic analysis, chapter 4, *How do Early Career Academics Engage with work?*; chapter 5, *Networks of Progression, Networks of Protection*, and chapter 6, *Read as Academic*. Chapter 4 will discuss how participants relate to the concept of paid work itself and how they perceive their relationship to academia, it will contain discussions around career-building; the gendering of some aspects of academic work, and what ECAs consider to be non-work. Chapter 5 will examine the relationships and networks that are important in ECA lives including line managers, mentors, their students, and personal relationships with friends, family, and romantic partners. This will also include an examination of how ECAs often feel squeezed in their working lives, trapped between the demands of their students and superiors (if they teach), a discussion on how ECAs tendency toward overwork wears away participant connections to life outside of academia, and also an examination of how ECAs often categorise their relationships into those ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of academia. Chapter 6, the final data chapter will examine the theme of being ‘read as academic’, how some, particularly those fitting the traditional description of the academic are afforded larger amounts of symbolic and social capital and how this can be used to accrue more of each. It will also include an examination of how those that have less access to this capital, women and other atypical academics (BAME, WC, queer) are often not read as being legitimately

academic and in addition to this, experience various forms of bias: structural, explicit, and implicit which frequently seek to exclude them. The conclusion chapter 7 will tie the key findings of all these chapters together and relate these to the larger sociological ideas of gender, work, and precarity that have informed this research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1. Introduction

This review will be divided into two parts, the first, *Working as Neoliberal and Gendered Subjects*, will explore the macro levels of this research's social context, the neoliberal project that characterises the current UK episteme. Here, I will examine how the three key characteristics of this project— individualism, autonomy, and efficiency (alongside the competition they expedite)—are expressed both in the wider political project and in the meso level institutions contained within; in this case, the university. As this project seeks to uncover gendered experience there will also be a discussion of the macro 'gender order' (Connell, 1987) within the UK. Following, will be a section covering labour market precarity alongside related feelings of precariousness (Butler, 2003) outlining how this mode of work became increasingly normalised, how it is experienced, and its intersections with gender. This first part of the literature review will posit that while the neoliberal project has increased efficiency and made the university more accountable, it has largely been harmful to academia and ECAs. This is due to a preference of social mobility over social justice, a roll-back on collective workers' rights, deregulation, and a pursuit of efficiency and profits above all other aspect of learning, teaching, and research. The second section of the review *The Gendered ECA in the Neoliberal University* will cover the specific object of enquiry, the commonalities and differences in gendered ECA experience alongside a discussion of modes of resistance and the importance of intersectional analysis. Finally, there will be a discussion of what gaps have emerged within the literature concerning gendered ECAs.

### 2.2. Working as Neoliberal and Gendered Subjects

Neoliberalism began as a marginal theory, supported by a small group of intellectuals who largely subscribed to a similar set of ideas. These included individual liberty, the promotion of an open society, and a belief in the harmonising abilities of the free market. It was this

mixture, of political liberalism and capitalist ideas, that then became the key principles of modern neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007a). It was not until the ‘stagflation’ of the 70s, however, that there was a direct appeal for new solutions in state-level economic policy, one that was filled by neoliberal ideas and then embraced by world leaders such as Reagan in the US and Thatcher in the UK (ibid). Globally, we can now see neoliberal ideas (in varying strengths and forms) within the majority of OCED countries (Scholte, 2005) whose political and hegemonic dominance have now also ensured a spread to the global south (Boden, 2011). Fuchs (2016), talks specifically about how the neoliberal project has developed in the UK and how it has continued from Thatcher through all subsequent Conservative, Labour and coalition governments until 2016 (the time of the article’s publication). Evidence for this can be found in the increased privation and scaling back of the welfare state since the 1980s, for example the movement away from universal to means tested unemployment benefits (Basak, 2006: 509). Although there may have been slight oscillations in policies between different governments, such as in the New Labour era, these developments have continued largely unchallenged (Fuchs, 2016). What has become clear in analysing this historic move towards neoliberalism is how as a political project it conflates economic ideas with approaches to morality. As a philosophy it proselytises that both markets and people should embody the spirit of ‘do-it-yourself’ and move away from the restraints/reliance of the state, what they perceive as the Keynesian, welfare based- ‘give-it-to-me’ nation (Schmidt, 2001: 257).

Moving on, I now want to address what it is that advocates of neoliberalism believe, how neoliberalism is enacted through the state, and how it is expressed in its monetary and moral dimensions. After a thorough examination of literature which examines idea of neoliberalism both as a political and state philosophy (Kotz, 2002; Brown, 2003; Harvey 2007a; Eisenstein, 2010; Boden, 2011; Gershon, 2011; Standing, 2011; Somek, 2011; Springer 2012; Fraser, 2013; Fuchs, 2016) and how neoliberalism manifests within HE (Wagner & Yee, 2011; Adam, 2012; Hartman & Darab, 2012; Davies & O’Callaghan, 2014; Moscovitz et al., 2014; Mountz et al., 2015; Lopes & Dewan, 2015; Loveday, 2018a; Loveday, 2018b; Phipps, 2018; Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019) I have established three common tenets of neoliberalism which are as follows:

1. Individualism: a focus on the individual as responsible for their own success, as evidenced in ideas of social mobility whereby individuals move above their inherited

economic status. The belief that no individual should be held-back by occupying a particular social category (race, gender, disability)

2. Autonomy: allowing markets to operate ‘freely’ as possible through deregulation and thus enabling competition. On an individual level, this also refers to an adherence to personal freedoms, for example free speech.

3. Efficiency: the outcome of autonomy, of pursuing the largest possible outputs – profits – from the smallest inputs – costs. The idea that allowing competition will result in the greatest amount of efficiency.

To examine exactly how each of these ideas impacts Higher Education this review will discuss each of these tenets in relation to it. Of course, these will intersect and overlap in countless ways, but this will help to organise the ideas of what is a complex philosophical, moral and political project. There are of course various neoliberalism(s) dependent on time, place and the particular embodiment and measure of the above values (Harvey, 2007b: 23).

### 2.2.1. Not in it Together: Individualism

The idea of personal freedom is central to neoliberal thinking and it often seeks to disavow any form of discrimination that curtails it. Somek (2011), describes neoliberalism as generally enabling the personal pursuit of success, often expressed as an individual’s access to agency (Love 2008; Brown 2011; Adam 2012) and ability to determine their future direction. This belief, that the individual has the capacity to lift themselves beyond their class origin, or the confines of personal identity (race, gender, sexuality) through a blend of education and self-determination is often described as either meritocracy (Young, 1994; May, 2016), or social mobility (Brown, 2013; Cabinet Office, 2011). As a tenet of neoliberalism, this is implemented through a combination of policy – via the use of state interventions (scholarships, widening participation) – alongside the promotion of a particular moral framework, of entrepreneurship and self-motivation to ‘succeed’ (Jones, 2019). Those that support this approach present it as a fair and efficient way of allowing individuals to compete and improve their economic and social standing, that there is ‘room at the top’ (Cabinet Office, 2011: 11).

Historically, social mobility in HE has been tied to waves of massification, a process that has made university available to more student as well as diversifying the overall student body (Furedi 2011). Following two major waves of HEI accreditation, the first in the 60s following the Robbins Report (1963), and the second wave following the Further and Higher Education Act (1992), the number of individuals attending university skyrocketed. In 1963, four in every 100 young people became full-time undergraduates (Robbins, 1963: 8), in 2019 there were 2.3 million students at UK higher education institutions, most of those fulltime students studying first degrees (Bolton, 2019). Nevertheless, though the opportunity to attend university has resulted in social mobility for some, there are others who have decided not to pursue a degree due to a specific combination of economic circumstances. These include (1) a lack of financial resources, (2) anxiety due to the high levels of debt incurred and (3) the increasing decline of good-quality jobs a university education now guarantees (ONS, 2016). To address point (1), social mobility has been derided for not considering an individual's material circumstances and what this means for their educational options (Brown, 2013). Though more people than ever can access higher education, there is evidence some—particularly those from a widening participation background—are being deterred by the cost, a result of fees, living expenses, and high private rents in university cities (Minsky, 2016). Regarding point (2), the replacement of maintenance grants with loans in 2015 (Sprinks, 2015; Havergal, 2017) has further discouraged working class students, many of whom find debt a trigger for anxiety (Mayor, 2004). Finally, addressing point (3), as Brown (2013) posits, though you may increase an individual's life chances through a university education, the issue of 'social congestion' (683) remains, that there are now too many graduates for the shrinking amount of graduate-quality jobs and salaries. Concentrating on the educational attainment of a few 'deserving' individuals from atypical backgrounds therefore has the potential to be tokenistic when the chances of working class and BAME students are so strongly affected by their access to economic capital. This is an important point to emphasise in relation to this research, as without diversity in the student body, we also lose diversity among academics further up the pipeline (UCU, 2019a).

In its pursuit of individualism, Neoliberalism has also tended to focus on the enshrining and protection of individual rights as opposed to those of the collective. While for certain groups, mainly women and minorities, this has been beneficial – offering increased protection from harassment and discrimination (Somek, 2010) – this has occurred

alongside a concurrent weakening of workers' rights. As Peetz and Murraray (2017) observe, many occupations are now subject to increased regulation distance which allows their employers more autonomy and less protections from the state or unions. To illustrate with an example from UK HE, we can see this imbalance between individual and collective rights through the increased focus on diversity initiatives, particularly those based on gender, such as Athena Swan (ASC), and those based on race, such as the Race Equality Charter (REC). Though progress on these very real inequalities is extremely important, there is a legitimate concern that they may draw the discourse away from institutional decisions that lead to higher levels of precarious work. As Tzanakou and Pearce (2019) argue in specific relation to ASC, the imbalance can lead toward a 'moderate feminism' that fails to draw upon a structural analysis or consideration of class. These contracts affect people of all genders and all races at the early career stage and therefore it is essential we consider issues of redistribution, how precarious contracts effect income, alongside recognition (Fraser, 2013).

### 2.2.2. Autonomy Now?

Freedom is one of the founding tenets of neoliberalism and an idea deeply tied to its foundations in classic political liberalism, that both individuals and markets should ultimately be free (with caveats) and largely autonomous (Harvey, 2007a). It is another tenet that ties the moral direction of neoliberalism to its economic policy; that we should be self-reliant. Regarding the state, this translates to an aversion by neoliberal advocates to interventionist Keynesian policies and most forms of central state planning (ibid). Regarding individual rights, those who subscribe to neoliberal philosophy tend to see restrictions on individual freedoms such as the curtailing of free speech as unjust (Campbell & Manning, 2018). However, how freedom is enacted, and for who, is a complex social issue and neither individual nor state is entirely unregulated or unpoliced. For example, there are laws in the UK that forbid hate speech (Racial and Religious Hatred Act, 2006) and therefore, conversely act to restrict free speech. Correspondingly, there are also regulations that restrict the freedom of organisation to entirely hire and fire at will, for example The Equality Act (2010). However, the state paradoxically also must introduce more regulations to protect the freedom of businesses while curtailing the freedom of others, for example the Trade Union Act (2016) which heavily restricts the ability of unions

to call for strike action. It is important to note that the economic policies that enable neoliberalism are state-based decisions; neoliberalism as Harvey (2007a) emphasises is a political project. Autonomy therefore is a result of both deregulation but also the imposition of regulations that help maintain it.

In terms of autonomy UK, HEIs are relatively unique, with various aspects of their facilitation (widening participation, REF, TEF) and funding under either private or public control, they are what Brown (2011) refers to as quasi-markets. According to the European Universities Association's (EUA, 2019) research into university autonomy (which generally posits autonomy as a positive force) the UK ranks within the top five of all four ranking measures when compared to 29 other European states. In organisational autonomy which 'refers to a university's capacity to determine its internal organisation and decision-making processes', it ranks first; in financial autonomy, the ability to 'manage its funds and allocate its budget independently, it ranks third; in staffing, the 'university's ability to recruit and manage its human resources as it sees fit', it ranks third; in academic autonomy, 'a university's capacity to manage its internal academic affairs independently, it again ranks third. In Europe therefore, UK universities are perceived as being highly autonomous.

While not at the same level of deregulation as US universities, a HE system the UK increasingly seeks to replicate, it is noted that there is ambition by current policy leaders to head in this direction (Furedi, 2011). An example of how the UK has recently moved towards a deregulated system include the lifting of the student cap on recruitment, an act which Higher Education Policy Institute's (HEPI) Hillman (2017) argues will allow universities to better compete at both a local and international level by securing more fees. Yet, there are also several barriers to autonomy in UK, HE in existence, primarily the emergence of state-sanctioned benchmarking exercises. These include, the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the recently introduced Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), and the soon to arrive Knowledge Excellence Framework (KEF) a metric which will measure public engagement and knowledge transfer (Coiffait, 2017). Though neoliberalism may seemingly call for maximum possible autonomy, the emergence of these benchmarks demonstrate how that is constrained by other neoliberal values, chiefly competition. Universities are now under pressure to explicitly demonstrate their value – to be accountable – so that they can then be competitive in national and international rankings, a status which will permit them to accrue more money and prestige. In UK,



HEIs, this is demonstrated perhaps most explicitly by the visual indicators of TEF success: the gold, silver and bronze awards which are designed to quickly signal ‘quality’ to prospective students (Gunn, 2018).

From the above we can surmise that UK, HE enjoys relatively high levels of autonomy despite the accountability and competition demanded by bench-marking metrics. I would now therefore, like to move on and consider the moral implications of autonomy, of the ways it might impact those that engage with the university. Supporters of increased self-sufficiency and market freedoms contend that they have enabled the HE sector to thrive, and to keep pace with international competition (Universities UK, 2014; EUA 2019; The Times, 2019). Social economist Polanyi (1944) however, noted that many of those who favoured the freedom of markets positioned economic systems as operating almost entirely apart from society, as opposed to being embedded within them. The consequence of this was that many advocates of this approach believed the free market would act in a rational and predictable way. Polanyi instead proposed that freedom as a political and economic concept was incredibly fraught due to society’s inherent complexities, and that it could be utilised for both positive and negative means. While he agreed that curtailing markets could lead to negative consequences such as the imposition of autocracies, he also noted that freedom of the market could manifest as ‘the freedom to exploit one’s fellows’ (257).

In UK, HE this contradiction of freedom is expressed within university’s autonomy around staffing, primarily the rapid levels of casualisation and the normalisation of precarious contracts in academia. While increased autonomy has enabled the university to take charge of its own staff and remain both profitable and competitive on the world stage (EUA, 2019), it has simultaneously allowed it, with little consequence, to use selective cost-cutting measures and cheap, casualised labour (UCU, 2016). While UK universities have secured increased private income, it is apparent that it is not being used to benefit staff, instead funds are being used to plug gaps left by the withdrawal of statutory funding (Universities UK, 2015) and to invest in buildings, facilities and marketing drives designed to attract more fee-paying students (Love, 2008). Though high levels of autonomy for HE has enabled certain freedoms for universities and how they manage staff, as Polanyi expressed, they have also allowed them the liberty to exploit some of the most vulnerable employees within their institutions.

### 2.2.3. More, More... More! Efficiency, Profit and Accumulation in the Neoliberal University

According to neoliberal philosophy, the purpose of autonomy is to allow institutions and individuals to best serve themselves and to best serve the needs of the market; as Adam (2012) observed, the consequence of this principle is, inevitably, efficiency. Advocates of neoliberalism believe, that when barriers to profit and state regulation are removed, we should produce a system that runs more efficiently, one that provides the largest possible output in relation to input. Fitzimons (1999) also notes, that many supporters of neoliberalism believe efficiency acts as an antidote for what is chaotic and wasteful, and that it is therefore inherently good. Though the idea of efficiency has its roots in scientific systems, when used in the neoliberal context as Lorenz (2012) posits, we can safely assume that it refers to cost-efficiency and the self-financing of organisations, in other words the maximisation of profits.

For Higher Education in the UK, as Brown (2011) explains, efficiency has meant embracing marketisation, attracting the largest number of fee-paying students every year for the smallest amount of expenditure. To compete, universities are simultaneously having to invest, mainly in facilities and buildings, to make themselves attractive prospects (Love, 2008), and cut costs, for example on staffing (UCU, 2016). Undergraduate students now have a far more direct influence on their education as they are a significant funder of the sector, a phenomenon many refer to as the 'student as consumer' (Brown, 2011; Gibbs, 2011; Woodall 2014; Collini, 2017; Tomlinson 2017). Though purposefully appealing to students can result in more profits and ergo more cost-efficiency, as Love (2008) observed, a customer-driven demand to exceed expectations, a 'more for less' model of efficiency, eventually reaches a tipping point where the quality of the product is compromised. To illustrate, there is evidence universities have secured additional fees by enlisting more students but without recruiting more staff to cope with increased demand. According to a recent OECD (2018) report, in Europe UK, HEIs received the most in student funds, but spent far less than average on staff. While there may be cost efficiency, this has come at the expense of many students learning experience.

Another significant way in which the idea of efficiency has affected Higher Education is through the introduction of managerialism, a work practice ostensibly designed to ensure value for money. In the literature, this is frequently referred to as the New Public

Management (NPM; Lorenz, 2012; Bozzon et al., 2018) a workplace trend whereby employees, who were not academics or support staff, were brought in to run universities. The establishment of this occupational group as one unburdened by professional values or loyalties, was viewed as a definitive move toward efficiency with the NPM better able to focus on profits, removed from any sense of vocational duty (Lorenz, 2012). Many academics however have decried the introduction of NPM, for its impact on their work and values, particularly solidarity and collegiality (Adam, 2012). There is also an argument to be made that NPM has ultimately led to *more* bureaucracy, and *less* efficiency in workload due to its consumption of time and resources via constant benchmarking exercises and internal evaluations. As Fisher (2009) observed, society has not been saved from Stalinist bureaucracy by neoliberalism, instead, its focus on managerialism has frequently served to increase work in order – ironically – to signal its efficiency.

Lorenz (2012) even questions NPM's notion of efficiency itself, that it is entirely cost-focused and seemingly never ending, that there is no such thing as being 'efficient enough'. Here, we can see that efficiency inevitably leads to accumulation, a term that criticises neoliberalism's constant call for ever increasing gains despite pernicious consequences (Harvey, 2007b; Bakir, 2015). Though HEIs maintain a focus on profits, we can see accumulation at work in other aspects of academia, particularly in relation to publications and HEIs pressure on academics to produce increasing numbers of them, despite impacts on quality (McCulloch, 2017). This constant need by institutions to swallow up increasing amount of academics' time and resources is what led Sullivan (2014) to term HEIs 'greedy institutions' (2). Ultimately, the neoliberal university's pursuit of cost-efficiency and profits has served to compromise teaching and research while frequently leading to increased levels of bureaucracy. The adherence to an unbridled accumulation in pursuit of even further financial gain has also served to encourage the expediated consumption of what are finite resources, for instance the time and well-being of academics.

#### 2.2.4. Summary

The neoliberal state determines the way that the institutions within it run, and that they should align in some way with the key tenets of neoliberal thought: individualism, autonomy and efficiency, in both their moral and economic dimensions. All aspects of

British society have in some way been affected by the changes of the 1980s, and universities have gone through an intense period of transformation as the state has actively sought to marketise the sector. Through these changes, UK, HEIs have secured high levels of autonomy, a state which many advocates of neoliberalism believe has accounted for their good performance in international rankings as well as accounting for its profitability as a sector. UK universities are also now more accountable both in terms of research funding, through REF, and to its students, through TEF, which has helped to address a lack of top-line focus on teaching. The advancement of individual rights under the neoliberal project has also been beneficial both in widening participation and ensuring the protection of staff and students from discrimination, thus better enabling diversity within the academic labour market. However, when looking critically at UK, HE today it becomes clear that neoliberal edicts have been extremely damaging – both to key professional values: collegiality, solidarity, and to epistemological pursuits: teaching and research – within the university. Ideas of efficiency and profits now frequently take precedence above other aspects of university life; a university that performs well – in terms of ranking and profits – is often now considered a ‘good university’ due to this alone. This is despite the damage that may have been incurred by staff and students: through casualisation, the denigration of pedagogical quality, pedagogical variety and pressures on research. A focus on the individual pursuit of social mobility has also done little to alleviate national inequality as it concentrates on improving the life chances for a few as opposed to increasing access to HE education for all. Alongside this, the waning of unions’ bargaining power has further weakened worker’s rights and served to make opposition to powerful institutions nearly impossible. Responsibility for risk, alongside employability, has now been transferred to the individual. Within the following section, I will explore not only what it means to exist as a social actor under neoliberalism, but also what it means to exist within the current gender order and how the conception of different ideas: of feminism, masculinity, and subjectivities, are affected by it.

### 2.3. The UK Gender Order: Neoliberal Feminisms and Anxious Masculinities

Hitherto, I have examined how the neoliberal project is enacted, through the tenets of individualism, autonomy and efficiency and the impact this has had on UK, HEIs. A key

part of this research will also involve uncovering the workings of the current ‘gender order’, a theoretical device created by Connell (1987) to uncover the forces that govern the macro, state level, ways gender is enacted and controlled. Within this parent idea of the gender order, sits the idea of the gender regime, of how gendered oppression occurs within a specific context, in this case the neoliberal university. Connell designed the gender order/regime to account for disagreement among feminist researchers in accounting for a single source of women’s oppression, her approach therefore accounted for a variety of structures, also stressing that these were contingent on changing historical and social contexts. Within gender orders/regimes she proposed there were four key structures at work: labour, the division and segmentation of; power, the implementation of hierarchies and oppression; cathexis, the negotiation of emotional attachment and sexuality, and finally symbolism, the impact of cultural institutions and education (Connell, 2005). Currently, the UK exists within a gender order that is both neoliberal, due to its relation to the central political project, and that is also patriarchal, that men have the overall social advantage in terms of power as well as increased access to capital; they are in receipt of what Connell (2005) terms the patriarchal dividend. The following section will explore how gender is enacted in the neoliberal project, (gender order/UK) before moving on to explore its manifestation within a specific occupation (gender regime/academia).

An important caveat to add before continuing with this section, I adhere to the belief that the lived experience of gender far transcends the binary between men and women (Butler, 2006 [1990]) and that there exist a great variety in gender identification, for example, trans gender, non-binary, agender and pangender identities. I have welcomed participants to my research that identify outside of the binary, however, as these identities are in the minority, I will focus my review on conceptions of ‘men’ and ‘women’. This also reflects current policies, legislation and initiatives in HE and otherwise which are based on this bifurcation. There is of course a need to further research and account for both atypical genders within the UK and within academia specifically, however, this lies outside the scope of this research.

### 2.3.1. Salvation Through Work: Women and Feminism Under Neoliberalism

To talk about women under neoliberalism, as Walby (2011) remarks, requires a concurrent discussion of the feminist project, as it is the conception of a particular form – neoliberal

feminism – that has changed the course of the state and the individual women that live within it. In the 1970s and 80s, anti-hierarchical, anti-oppression feminisms, such as Marxist and radical feminism held sway in academic circles. However, they were considered too extreme to be assimilated due to their rejection of current social orders, such as the nuclear family, and economic orders, such as capitalism (ibid). Other theoretical approaches however, chiefly social democratic (which promotes Keynesian, welfare-based solutions to gender inequalities) and neoliberal (also known as liberal or cultural) feminisms found acceptance, and at different points have dominated as the current state feminism (Vosko, 2010; Walby, 2011). Today, neoliberal feminism dominates the gender order in the UK and is the leading ideology that guides government initiatives around gender.

What makes this particular enactment of feminism neoliberal, is that it operates in accordance with its key tenets: individualism, autonomy, and efficiency. For instance, as a gender led, political project it works to ensure that there is no overt legislative discrimination against women and that they have the chance to succeed through social mobility, work and education (Somek, 2011). A key concern of neoliberal feminism has been ensuring equal participation in the labour market for women. As Eisenstein (2010) notes, economic autonomy was a significant concern of second wave feminists, and neoliberal feminism now shares this same concern. Contained within this economic edict is also a form of moral guidance, that women should not simply work, but also view it as a form of empowerment, a chance to better themselves not only financially but personally. This neoliberal feminist spirit can be observed within several TV shows: *Girl Boss* (2017); *Sex and the City* (1998), and books: *Lean-in* (Sandberg, 2014); *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* (Frankel, 2004) that together push a seemingly inspiring message, that women can smash glass ceilings, navigate a work-life balance and scale career ladders.

Critics of neoliberal feminism however, (Eisenstein, 2010; Fraser, 2013; Rottenberg 2014) point out that it is a feminism for the few; a feminism for an overwhelmingly white, middle-class group of women. It is also one largely based within the global north and that presents women's material success as outright evidence of gender equality as opposed to what is often financial or class advantage. Moreover, the focus on work as a pathway to autonomy and success also fails to address the more pressing intersectional concerns of marginalised women whose class, race, sexuality or transness, may be more immediate

issues. For those dealing with the impact of physical and sexual violence, work often becomes a secondary concern (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

As a state project, neoliberal feminism has served to cement inequalities, between men and women and amongst women themselves. As Walby (2011) observes, women as a group are more severely affected by the current political project, firstly, through the shrinking of the state and democratic space necessary for the operation of feminist goals, and secondly, through austerity. As a policy, austerity became the guiding principle of UK economic policy following the election of the 2010 coalition government, with the aim of generating cost-efficiency through cuts, however, it has had the related effect of harming some of society's most vulnerable – primarily working-class and disabled – women (Elson, 2013). As outlined in the Women's Budget Group report (WBG, 2015), austerity has been achieved through severe cuts to public sector jobs, benefits, and state services, all of which women are more reliant upon than men. Aside from this, the neoliberal project in conjunction with neoliberal feminism, as Peetz and Murray (2017) argue, has harmed women by moving them away from the protections offered by regulation (what they call increased regulation distance) and through the attrition of collective rights via unions. This has meant women have less recourse to challenge discrimination, harassment and gender gaps in pay (Walby, 2011).

The drive of neoliberal feminism, to bring more women into the workplace, also does little to address the unpaid work women do. Shrinking the state therefore, in pursuit of efficiency, is directly at odds with increasing the life chances of many women. It has long been a demand of Marxist, socialist and material feminisms (Hochschild & Machung, 1990; Barrett & McIntosh, 1991; Jackson, 2001; Cockburn, 2009; Federici, 2012) that women's emancipation must address unpaid labour, what is often termed 'social reproduction', the non-financialised work that cares for and produces future workers. As Adkins (2018) outlines, an issue with the neoliberal gender order is that for women, it often means engaging in both forms of labour, paid and unpaid, with little respite from either. Stagnating wages have also pushed those with caring responsibilities toward paid work to maintain a constant standard of living (ibid). There has also been ideological resistance from neoliberal feminism toward women, particularly toward lower socio-economic groups, who resist paid work. For instance, there are certain strands of the UK media that demonise women who are in receipt of benefits (Allen et al., 2015).

As we can see, for women under the current gender order there are two independent but related factors at work, firstly, that they must endure the impact of being a woman under neoliberalism, and secondly, that they must also be subject to a particular form of 'neoliberal' feminism. To address the first aspect of this gender order experience, women in the UK, particularly working-class and disabled women, have had to endure the sharp end of austerity, with a shrinking of the public sector and its accompanying services. This has occurred alongside a moral and economic push toward work, and additionally, an increasing co-existence of both daily paid and unpaid forms of labour. These have been the result of a neoliberal gender order which in many cases have been upheld and exacerbated by a neoliberal feminism that values the advancement of individual women through work and education but fails to account for the material reality that prevents many from achieving this. It also fails to value the collective spirit of other feminisms and that gender emancipation is about far more than access to economic capital.

### 2.3.2. Men and the Search for Hegemonic Masculinities Under Neoliberalism

If we are to examine the current gender order under neoliberalism, as well as addressing women and the conception of a specifically neoliberal feminism, it is also necessary to address men and neoliberal masculinities. Neither gender exists in isolation from the other and the construction of each is based upon a historic and evolving relationship. As a discipline, masculinities developed from academic gender studies and provided a name for a specific body of work that both examined men and theorised their experience (Cornwall, 2017). Connell (2005), made a significant contribution to this field through the theorisation of 'hegemonic masculinity', a term that explains that though men – as a collective – dominate in the current gender order, there exists another hierarchy: one that exists *amongst* men. Within this ordering of different male subjectivities, hegemonic masculinities (what we might also term aspirational or revered masculinities) are placed at the top, an example of what a man should 'seek to be'. Though, as Connell explains, there is no one figure that represents this gold standard man, there are various manifestations of masculinity that align better with the current neoliberal gender order than others. For example, we can consider the owner of a successful start-up company, or a well-paid, expensively dressed footballer to be celebrated male role models in the UK today. Subordinate masculinities are more complex but can generally be considered as any man falling short of this ideal, the majority



of men who work less 'desirable' jobs and that perhaps lack economic capital. In a later article developing this theory, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), responded to criticisms of the hegemonic male, making it clear that he is destabilised, that 'who' he is (if he even exists) varies in different geographical strata: local, regional, global and also within time. It is also affected not only by top-down power but also inter-directional agency. Who the hegemonic male is therefore, is one heavily contingent on a multitude of factors and frames of analysis.

One of the key ways in which subjectivities of all genders are formed under neoliberalism is through the promotion of inequalities. As outlined in earlier discussions, the pursuit of deregulation and individualism has both cemented and increased levels of inequality; wealth and power are now increasingly concentrated in a small group of individuals and institutions (Elson, 2013). Although men overall may benefit from inequality in the gender order, most men are not part of 'the elite' and therefore also suffer from the effects of material maldistribution through stagnating wages and precarious work. Consequently, this economic subordination characterises modern day masculinity as being eminently anxious as many men experience an internal pressure to succeed as providers alongside a distance from the hegemonic, high-earning example of modern masculinity they aspire to (Greig, 2011). Moreover, though men as a group may require less recourse to public services, many still suffer the impacts of austerity. For instance, the closure and shrinking of mental health service and promotion adversely impacts men who often require these services at crisis point, when they are close to attempting suicide (Robertson & Baker, 2017). When considering the intersectionality of men's experience, of whether they are BAME or a migrant for example, the issue becomes even more complex with some of these men requiring more recourse to public services than some women (Hastings et al., 2015).

In conjunction with inequality, men's rapidly changing relationship to work under neoliberalism is another significant factor affecting their subjectivities. Though women are also affected by their relationship to work, and are often breadwinners (Lewis, 2001), the strong emotional connection, cathexis (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), men have with employment means their identity is more likely to be questioned when that relationship is compromised. As Cornwall (2017) reflects, the authority and respect men have for themselves is frequently encapsulated in their ability to provide materially for their partners and children. The reduced quality in working conditions, pay, and protections that neoliberalism has enabled – particularly through precarious work (Vallas & Prenner, 2012;

Morgan et al., 2013; Worth, 2016; Rubery et al., 2018)– have made this increasingly difficult. Regarding how the world of work has changed, the jobs that British men do now, compared to the previous generation, have undergone significant transformation with traditionally male-dominated sectors: heavy industry, shipping, shrinking and others: hospitality, office and warehouse work, expanding to take their place (Bruegel, 2000). These changes in the labour market, the move toward sectors of work (customer service, hospitality), and modes of work (part-time, fixed term), associated with women have been referred to as the feminisation of labour (Standing, 1999; Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004; Barker & Feiner, 2010). Some men, therefore, have found these occupations and ways of working to be emasculating due to this association.

Many men in a rapidly shifting world have had to reconfigure their notion of masculinity – as both winners and losers – that aligns with their values and allows them to persevere without compromising their egos. In his research into working class, Russian masculinities in the post-soviet era (where the political regime quickly jolted toward neoliberalism) Walker (2017) discovered that men transformed their subjectivities in align with the occupations they found themselves within. Those who secured corporate jobs, for example, presented themselves as being in line with a new capitalist, hegemonic masculinity which emphasised their material success. Others who found themselves in more traditional, manual working-class jobs, though dissatisfied with their lack of material wealth found a coping mechanism in valuing other ‘masculine’ skills such as manual dexterity and know-how alongside ‘bodily capital’ and strength; they correspondingly mocked those in corporate jobs as being ‘effete’. Other studies such as Choi’s (2018) examination of Chinese taxi drivers, however, demonstrate that some male workers struggle to achieve a new, suitable subjectivity and experience a loss of both expertise and control as precarious workers in a new political order. This she observed compromised taxi drivers’ egos and on occasion turned them towards violent behaviour and suicidal ideation. It is evident therefore, for better or worse, that neoliberalism has had a powerful effect on male subjectivities through the changing world of work and that while some are able to find a suitable identity, others struggle with consequences.

### 2.3.3. Summary

For most individuals of all genders, neoliberalism has entrenched inequalities and diminished overall quality of life, despite assisting some previously disenfranchised groups such as women, via narratives of social mobility and right to work. These ideas inherent in neoliberal feminism and in the valuing of a new hegemonic, and wealthy, masculinity both serve to establish narratives of individual mobility over the collective. It is apparent that the neoliberal gender order has had a powerful impact on the creation of gendered subjectivities whether that is the valuing of work as a form of social emancipation, or, moulding one's sense of masculinity to a changing world of work. Subsequently, I will provide a greater theoretical and contextual analysis of precarity and precariousness in the UK, including a discussion on how this is gendered.

## 2.4. What's So Precarious About Precarious work? Labour Market Precarity and Feelings of Precariousness.

Precarity is a condition where nothing remains permanent and the only constant that exists is change. As a state it is one which has come to characterise our age, as outlined by Bauman (2000) in his idea of 'liquid modernity' and Beck et al.'s (1994) 'reflexive modernisation'. It is the idea that everything from our private relationships to our societal institutions are increasingly unlikely to see us through the life-course. It is a condition characterised by instability and linked to feelings of precariousness, a state Butler (2003) conveys as a deep-seated feeling of vulnerability aggravated by a lack of recognition, drawn from Levinas' (Levinas, cited in Butler 2003) consideration of our own subjectivities in relation to 'the other'. Writing in the wake of 9/11, Butler's essays in *Precarious Life* discuss how certain individuals – such as those targeted by US foreign intervention – are framed as abjectly different in public discourse, less grievable and less worthy of mourning. Some lives, she expresses, are inherently more precarious due to their status as dehumanised subjects; they are more easily subject to violence without protest.

This research posits that precarity and precariousness are intrinsically linked, with life for many in an increasingly instable labour market marked by experiences of vulnerability and

otherness, however, within this section I will be concentrating primarily on the material effects of labour market precarity (Vosko, 2010; Standing, 2011) Following this, will be a discussion of how precarity is experienced by both men and women in the current gender order. Before continuing, it is important to note that this is an examination of precarious work within a specific country and political project – UK neoliberalism – with some exploration of other similar national contexts of precarious work, for example the US and Europe. The discussion of precarious work in the global south differs greatly as it is often the dominate mode of work, an already existing normal as opposed to a particularly significant change (Lee & Kofman, 2012).

#### 2.4.1. The Shape of Precarious Work in the UK

Defining labour market precarity in the UK today is difficult, precarity itself is a term that is already loaded as a pejorative and largely synonymous with instability. In discourse surrounding modern work, what is termed precarious work is also commonly referred to as casualisation, a perhaps more neutral word that lacks the same negativity, as such, it is far more common in political discourse (Taylor, 2017). Despite their stance, however, both terms are used to describe modes of work that are moving away from standard employment relations (SER) contracts: continuous, fulltime, salaried, toward work that is fixed term and often irregular. The use of the term precarity therefore, is one that implies a political stance against this kind of work, that it is primarily harmful. I have elected to use this term to emphasise a general denigration in working conditions. As Standing (2011) argues the term ‘precariat’- one whose life is characterised by precarity- has helped to identify a group that has endured pernicious working practices and have been politicised by them.

As discussed earlier, deregulation enabled precarious work by giving autonomy over to employers, allowing them to set the conditions of work. Inevitably, this led to many sectors and occupations expressing a preference for the cheapest and most malleable contracts possible, ones that allow them to shrink and grow their labour force with ease and to pay a minimum in benefits (Greer, 2016; Worth, 2016; Alberti et al., 2018). Regarding the specific nature of these contracts, there is a degree of variability in how these are enacted, however, TUC’s (2016b) report on precarious work noted that they are often defined by one or more

of the following features: a fixed date of termination, a variable amount of paid working hours and/or a non-direct relationship between employee and the organisation that employs them. Within this, they observed three main groups of precarious contracts.

**Casual:** Fixed term contracts defined by finite time periods and seasonal work; this also includes temp workers.

**Zero Hours:** Refers to a type of contract where an employer can shrink and increase the employees' hours of work depending on labour required. In theory employees can refuse shifts although there are often repercussions for doing so.

**Self-employment:** Whereby an employee works for themselves or as a freelancer for a business. Contracts are negotiated on a case by case basis.

It was estimated by TUC that in 2016 there were around 3.2 million individuals on some form of precarious contract, a figure which translates as one in ten working in the UK today. While SERs are still by far the dominant mode of work in the UK overall, precarity in the labour force is both increasing as a total number of employees, and becoming prevalent in certain sectors, such as academia. Alongside these main forms of employment contract, there is also acknowledgement of underemployment as an essentially precarious work practice, a labour market trend whereby an employee wishes to work more hours but cannot secure them; they become a part-time worker by obligation as opposed to by choice (Greer, 2016). The Taylor report (2017) highlights this as a key issue to those surviving in the modern labour market.

#### 2.4.2. Flexibility or Flexploitation?

There are many that argue the case for precarious contracts, that they can be emancipatory and flexible, and for some this is true. Work outside of SERs has provided some individuals with the opportunity to break away from paternal, Fordist relations and value freedom over their security and exclusivity to their employer (Standing, 2011). Best-selling books such as Pink's (2002) *Free Agent Nation*, and Florida's (2004) *The Rise of The Creative Class*, have exemplified a life-style where one could make a living by picking and choosing different projects and of existing outside organisational hierarchies. Morgan et al (2013) argue that many in the creative industries maintain 'ambivalence to the job for life' (398)

and that flexibility is essential for employees who wish to pick up a range of skills and experience. There is also the idea that these modes of working, while perhaps precarious in the short-term, can lead onward to better opportunities and continuous contracts, particularly in competitive areas such as academia. As Bryson (2004) proposes, they can sometimes act as bridges to better work.

However, when we look at the types of people and industries that benefit from ‘flexible’ contracts, we can see they are a largely privileged (Pink 2002; Florida 2004) and can financially absorb periods of unemployment or underemployment. Most individuals do not experience the world of work as affluent portfolio workers (Brown & Gold, 2007), those that can pick and choose projects, but as members of the ‘risk society’ (Beck et al., 1994) on the edge of crisis. The reality for most is that precarious contracts while promoted by many employers and state actors as a means of flexibility act as smokescreens for worker exploitation. Individuals suffer from a form of ‘flexploitation’ (Morgan et al., 2013) taking on precarious work when it is offered and suffering the effects when it’s suddenly withdrawn or reduced. The dangers of this downtime are now further aggravated by current UK active labour market policies (ALMP) and the attrition of unemployment benefits under the Conservative government (Greer, 2016). Additionally, as noted in the Taylor report (2017) there exists a ‘one-sided’ flexibility for the employer, who shrinks and expands their workforce, but little agency or say for employees on the other side of the equation. As opposed to bridges, as Bryson (2004) argues, precarious work often acts a trap, whereby individuals struggle to escape a series of exploitative contracts.

#### 2.4.3. Feminised Labour: Is Precarious Work gendered?

As Bourdieu (1998) observed, in modern times precarious work has fallen to society’s most marginalised groups, traditionally migrants and women who are valued as low wage, flexible workers. This was an idea that Marx’ (2002 [1842]) also wrote about in his conception of the ‘reserve army of labour’, that society would make use of different groups of individuals – including women – to temper the supply and demand of the labour market. For women, this association with precarious work was also due to their ideological and physical connection with the home, a duty which ruled above all other activities such as paid work, what Barrett (1991) termed the ‘family ideology’. When women did undertake

financially remunerated work therefore it was perceived as additional to the male subsistence income, ‘pin money’ (Collinson, 1987). They also had to fit this work around their domestic duties should they choose to undertake it. As a result, Vosko (2010) argues, SERs to this day, have been based on the male breadwinner model and the male life course: education, then work, then retirement. Though much has changed, the idea that women earn a subsistence wage while men earn the main family wage has cultural and economic echoes, for example, women still dominate in part-time work (Deschacht, 2017). Certain forms of precarious work therefore (fixed term and part-time primarily) are often considered to be feminised forms of labour due to their traditional association with women (Standing, 1999; Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004; Barker & Feiner, 2010). Furthermore, in the UK today, there are some forms of precarious work that are skewed towards women, for example women make up 55% of individuals on zero hours contracts (Pyper & McGuinness, 2018). There are also specific occupations, such as academia, where women are more likely to hold precarious contracts due to their pervasiveness at the lower end of the hierarchy, the end where these contracts dominate (ECU, 2019). However, if we dive deeper into available statistics around precarious work, the picture becomes more complex with specific areas where men appear to be more prevalent. Men make up the larger percentage of the self-employed at 19% overall compared to 11% of women (House of Commons, 2019) and as a TUC (2016b) report notes, there are more men in *involuntary* temporary employment. It would appear as a group therefore, that more men are being forced to take on fixed terms modes of work unwillingly. A report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies also brings to light that there is a connection between a decrease in working hours for men (Belfield et al., 2017), and how much they are paid per hour or per annum. It would appear therefore that more men, in comparison to a recent past, are being increasingly drawn into feminised modes of working.

#### 2.4.4. Summary

To conclude, precarious work is on the rise and has very real consequences of instability and financial privation for those that are subject to this mode of working. While there are those that use these contracts as bridges to better work, and, wealthy individuals that are able to endure periods of unemployment and underemployment they are overwhelmingly exploitative. Deregulation has withdrawn many of the benefits and protections for

employees, and autonomy for employers has resulted in a preference for cost-efficient, precarious contracts. Whether precarity is gendered is more difficult to say and though women have a historical association with this kind of work, it is often dependent on the specific contract, occupation and career level in question. A lack of firm statistics around precarious work and the different ways they intersect also make this difficult to ascertain (Clark, 2015). The next section of this literature review will utilise the context of everything discussed thus far – the neoliberal political project, the neoliberal gender regime, and the relationship between precarity and precariousness together – and, ultimately, consider how these impact the particular gender regime and occupation under scrutiny: the neoliberal university and the gendered ECAs that work within it.



## Literature Review Part 2: The Gendered Early Career Academic in the Neoliberal University

### 2.5.1. Introduction

There is a significant amount of literature addressing gender and precarious work within academia and how these intersect within the context of the neoliberal university. It is this existing research, and the relevant themes within them, that have informed and structured this particular section of the literature review. To account for the central research question, of exploring gendered experiences, I have separated this section into two main parts, the first examining commonalities in gendered ECA experience within the literature, and the second, areas in which the research noted significant gendered differences alongside that endured by other atypical academics (BAME, working-class). Within the literature there was a greater weight placed upon the inequalities experienced by women in early career academia, however, this review will also evaluate the small amount of literature that addresses academic masculinities. Additionally, this second part of the literature review will also examine ideas of intersectionality in UK, HE (particularly race and class) and how academics practice agency and resistance within such powerful, and often silencing, structures.

### 2.5.2. Gendered Commonalities:

#### 2.5.2.1. A Dangerous Passion

At the early stages of an academic career, where there is near gender parity (ECU, 2019), all ECAs regardless of gender are subject to and constituted by many of the same working practices and attachments to work. Those who are drawn to academia as an occupation tend to perceive it as a passion (Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Bozzon et al., 2018), and as a vocation (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Carvalho et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; Vos, 2017; Sotirin & Goltz, 2019), work which forms the central focal point of their life,

that motivates them beyond pay, and where conceiving of a different career choice becomes inherently unappealing. However, as Morgan et al. (2013) discovered in their examination of the Australian creative industries (an equally vocational career) this can cause employees to form a dangerous attachment to work and become more willing to tolerate exploitative work conditions in their chosen (often competitive) careers. Passion is easily exploited by employers. Unlike jobs where individuals ‘clock in and clock out’, vocational employees are less likely to leave or to protest poor conditions in a job they perceive to be their calling (Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Bozzon et al., 2018). In their research examining passion amongst precarious Italian academics, Busso and Rivetti (2014) observed that many ECAs created a form of self-representation, of ‘passion as motive’ (47). This acted as a coping mechanism, allowing academics to characterise themselves as driven by ‘pure’ vocational purpose, seemingly indifferent to their working conditions or pay. Busso and Rivetti however noted that within this academic identity lay a paradox: individuals constructed subjectivities where their primary professional motivation was passion not pay, yet this was what allowed them to be exploited economically and which also pushed them to act as compliant, neoliberal subjects.

Alongside passion, ECAs’ attachment to academic work is further complicated by the intense levels of competition involved, a market reality which once again empowers HEIs to offer sub-standard contracts. (Ivancheva, 2015; UCU, 2019a) Universities are fully aware that they can advertise these positions and receive a high number of suitable candidates (Bozzon et al., 2018). As Brown (2013) surmised, social mobility has been compromised by social congestion, that there are simply too few jobs in desirable careers, like academia, for the number of qualified applicants. For many, the sector promotes, in Berlant’s (2011) words, an exercise in ‘cruel optimism’, whereby individuals are kept beholden to the job with the promise of a better contract or even permanent work that may never be realised. This supports Bryson’s (2004) conclusion that precarious contracts are more likely to act as traps as opposed to bridges. The limited number of permanent jobs available in academia means that more people have to fail than succeed. On an emotional and collegial level, Ivancheva (2015) highlights how these competitive structures punish ECA friends and colleagues encouraging them to view each other as adversaries: for jobs, grants and resources. This also impacts ECAs’ capacity for collegiality by shifting their focus toward the individual achievements that will help them ‘succeed’ (ibid).

Together, passion and competition allow universities to act as ‘greedy institutions’ (Sullivan, 2014) that consume academics’ time and capacity for work. Academia, it can be argued, has a lot in common with what Hewlett and Luce (2006) label ‘extreme work’: working long hours and/or high levels of work-intensification, concentrated bouts of mental or physical exertion. These jobs are often boundless as Kalleberg & Epstein (2001) describe, defined by whatever it takes to get the job done. Though an ECA may not experience all these qualities at once, or to such a severe intensity, there are many parallels and points where their work may be considered extreme. Academic work, however, is often tempered by the autonomy and flexibility the job allows (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). A way in which academia does frequently align with extreme work (Bozzon et al., 2018) is the expectation that employees will work long hours in order to secure promotion (Gascoigne et al., 2015). This is despite the negative impacts on ‘human sustainability’ (Pfeffer, 2010): reduced well-being, lowered job satisfaction and an increase in work-life conflict. Furthermore, many precarious ECAs also experience additional, unpaid, constraints on their time through the continual need to search and apply for work (UCU, 2019a: 22).

However, in contrast to many of the examples of extreme work described by Kalleberg & Epstein (2001) such as finance workers or doctors, ECAs are not compensated by high levels of pay, and often have less recourse to benefits due to their contractual status (TUC, 2016b). Though these wages may be comfortable compared to other occupations, ECAs have often endured debt and the attrition of savings in the pursuit of precarious work (Locke et al., 2016; UCU, 2019a). A survey of casualised staff by UCU (2019) found that almost 60% of respondents struggled to make ends meet, while 40% said they experienced problems paying bills (4). Concurrently, it is common for ECAs to try and rebuild savings as much as possible during periods of employment in order to cushion the blow of possible breaks in work (Thouaille, 2017). For many, this feeling of having sunk costs in academia, both in respects to time and money, means that they feel reluctant to leave even when their working conditions are poor (Dorenkamp & Weiß, 2018). Additionally, the constant relocation required of ECAs acts as a further financial drain and correspondingly adds to ECA feelings of stress and isolation by further distancing them from their support networks (McAlpine et al., 2014; Renfrew & Green, 2014; Hubbard et al., 2015; Herschberg et al., 2018; Jones & Oakley, 2018).

Aside from precarity, changes in the focus of ECA contracts are now also working to make the pursuit of an academic passion increasingly fraught. Paradoxically, while academic work

at this level is becoming more diversified – ECAs are now expected to take on more administrative and pastoral tasks – academic contracts are becoming increasingly specialised, with research and teaching especially being siloed onto different contracts (Bozzon et al., 2018). Locke et al's (2016) report into the changing nature of academia in the UK remarked that, for the first time, teaching and research contracts were in the minority compared to single-focus teaching and research contracts. For ECAs, the primary impact of the separation of teaching and research is that those on the more common teaching-only contracts are not afforded the time, money or space to conduct career-building research (Hubbard et al., 2015; McKenzie, 2017). ECAs frequently therefore undertake this work unpaid, outside of contracted hours, in order to advance (UCU, 2019a).

#### 2.5.2.2. Fragile Selves: The Making of ECA Subjectivities

In determining the experiences of ECAs, the way universities inform subjectivities is key. Certain historical points and state political projects – such as neoliberalism – have been key in determining how subjectivities are formed (Foucault et al., 2008 [1979]). Additionally, particular institutions and occupations – universities and academia in this case – can also have unique impacts (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Bozzon et al., 2018) on the conception of individual identities. Consequently, academic subjectivities both mirror wider neoliberal trends, individualised modes of thought (Kalfa et al., 2018) and ambivalence to insecure work (Bozzon et al., 2018), alongside other more specific occupational developments.

In their work on academic identities (which includes all levels of the academic hierarchy) Knights and Clarke (2014) found that above all else, academic identities were characterised by insecurity. Within their research, they uncovered three categories of insecure academic: an imposter identity, exacerbated by self-doubt; an aspirant identity that tempered current insecurity by focusing on a better future; and the final existential category, which sought to combat insecurity around the marketisation of academia by valuing non-competitive academic pursuits. The subject of the insecure academic is one viewed as inevitable by Gabriel (2010), with fragile academic subjectivities constantly under attack, from surveillance, criticism, and rejection. Loveday (2018a) also characterises academic

subjectivities as inherently anxious, a conclusion formed from her empirical study of fixed term academics. For Loveday, the ‘neurotic academic’ is an individual ‘governed through anxiety’ (162), a legitimate response to the stresses of precarious work; however, she also found that participants concurrently were ‘encouraged to take responsibility for the self-management of those anxieties’ (162), to be perceived as coping in the face of immense pressure. As well as managing their own fragile subjectivities, these academics were also performing high degrees of affective labour in the workplace to appear productive and in control.

It is evident, that ECA subjectivities, as highlighted, are often vulnerable and subjugated, embodying a deeply-felt sense of precariousness (Butler, 2003) and that this, alongside precarious work and financial privation, has led to a rise in poor mental health amongst ECAs. A recent report by Morrish (2019) has pointed toward a crisis of mental health within academia: between 2009-2015 counselling referrals by universities increased 77% and referrals to occupational health 64% (13). Hall and Bowles (2016) in turn, outline many of the factors that have turned the university into an ‘anxiety machine’ (33), the combination of excessive workloads, metrics, precarious employments and performance management subsuming the individual’s ability to cope. Kinman (2001) found that, when compared to other sectors, academics suffered a particularly high level of stress compared to job satisfaction, with 53% reporting some form of mental illness. Kinman also found, that that ‘employees from the lower grades’ (477) were more significantly affected. Acknowledgement of the mental health crisis in academia is important, both due to its impacts upon the individual: disrupted sleep, mood swings, and cognitive impairment (UCU, 2019a), and also due to the high esteem academia is traditionally regarded with. This high occupational status, as Gill (2010) argues, makes people reticent about speaking of academia’s harms, a condition which is then used as a silencing technique, preventing change (ibid).

### 2.5.3. Gendered Differences Among Early Career Academics

It is evident that men and women endure many of the same impacts of being ECAs in the UK, neoliberal university. As social actors, they are located in work that is largely vocational, intensely competitive, and increasingly siloed, all while inhabiting largely fragile, anxious and insecure subjectivities. However, just as gendered experience varies within the

greater gender order, so too do they vary within the gender regime of the university; the experience of being a female or male ECA therefore holds many differences as well as commonalities. In the next section, I will therefore begin to address the divergence in gendered experience, covering some previously discussed themes while also introducing some new aspects of ECAs' professional and personal experience.

#### 2.5.3.1. Glass Ceilings and Leaky Pipelines

When discussing gender inequalities within academia, it is imperative first to examine the top-level structural issues that hamper women's progress, primarily the glass ceiling and the leaky pipeline. The glass ceiling, specifically, refers to the lack of female representation in senior levels of academia (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Skeggs, 2008; Gutiérrez et al., 2012). The leaky pipeline (Clark-Blickenstaff 2005; Birch 2011; Joecks et al., 2014; Ysseldyk et al., 2019) addresses the reasons for which women are lost at each step of progression on the academic ladder. The number of women 'lost' between the ECA level – where there is close to gender parity (ECU, 201) – and subsequent stages of academia is particularly high (Herschberg et al., 2015). It is extremely important, therefore, that we ascertain the reasons for this.

Ultimately, this has a very real, material impact on ECA women in the wider gender order, as it allows the gender pay gap to become further entrenched by vertical segregation (Macarie & Moldovan, 2015), with men occupying the majority of high-paid, senior positions.

While this research is focused on ECAs, the lack of women in the upper strata of academia has a direct impact on their experience. For example, it intensifies the rate of homophobia (Grummell et al., 2009a), an organisational phenomenon whereby employers hire people that reflect their own identities. In senior levels of academia, this predominately means men hiring men and white academics hiring those of the same ethnicity (ibid). A significant number of women in senior positions is also important in demonstrating self-efficacy (Bandurra, 1997) to ECAs, proving that women can, and do, advance in academia. Neale and Özkanlı, (2011) found that having women in senior academic positions was highly valued by ECA women, that they often acted as role models and as evidence that subverted stereotypes, that women could successfully fulfil these positions.

The purpose of the next part of this review will be uncovering why the leaky pipeline – and thus the glass ceiling – continue to persist, and why the particular point between ECA and permanent contract leads to so many women leaving the occupation. To answer that is to examine all the ways that women are structurally and culturally alienated from academia, what is collectively referred to as the ‘chilly climate’ (Maranto & Griffin, 2011). Aspects of this include: the gendered segregation of academic work (Acker & Feuerwerker, 1996; Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Heijstra et al., 2017); women’s primary responsibility for unpaid and unrewarded work in their professional and personal lives (Hochschild & Machung, 1990; Zilanawala, 2016; Heijstra et al., 2017); bias (Mayer & Tikka, 2008; ECU, 2013; Rubini & Menegatti, 2014; MacNell et al., 2015); a lack of role models (Bagilhole & Goode, 1998); barriers to networking (Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014); the masculine domination of hierarchies (Teelken & Deem, 2013) and male constructions of excellence (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Aside from individual penalties for women, the glass ceiling and the leaky pipeline contribute to the loss of a unique epistemological perspective in academia (Anderson, 1997).

#### 2.5.3.2. Privilege and the Male Idea of Excellence in Academia

While most ECAs, of all genders, begin on similarly precarious contracts, a key issue within the literature is how ECA men as a group ascend the academic hierarchy at a faster rate (Bozzon et al., 2018). Just as women are subject to a ‘chilly climate’, men concurrently appear to receive a patriarchal dividend (Connell, 2005), or what McIntosh (2003) termed ‘a knapsack of invisible privilege’: a collection of social advantages that allow them to move more seamlessly through academia. In their examination of ‘the gender paradox’, Van den Brink and Stobbe (2014) observed an interesting contradiction regarding male privilege. Though academic men were often privy to networks of support throughout their careers, academic women conversely were often admonished for receiving additional help from gender equality initiatives. While attempts to improve structural, gendered instances of inequality were viewed as an affront to ‘just’ occupational competition, male advantages in networking were disregarded (ibid). Another issue Van den Brink and Stobbe (2014) identified was how male-coded qualities were naturalised as indicators of academic aptitude and then held up as hegemonic indicators of success, for instance, the idea that men are

more confident and therefore better suited to academia. Herschberg et al. (2015) also found this to be evident in their research examining the gendered dimensions of recruitment for ECAs, where a great deal of worth was placed on the idea of confidence by the interview panel. The specific conception of confidence, however, they argued was narrow; one based on a dominating, masculine style of communication. In their paper, Van den Brink and Benschop (2012) also challenged this and other ideas of academic excellence, arguing that recruitment processes valued male-coded behaviours (confidence, evidence of working long hours) and typically masculine academic achievements: a strong publication record as opposed to teaching or evidence of academic citizenship. In cooperation, networking and static ideas of academic excellence frequently serve as a leg up to ECA men while acting as blockages for their female colleagues who are less able to access and replicate them.

#### 2.5.3.3. Power Struggles: Bullying and Harassment

Gender and power are both unevenly distributed toward the top of academic hierarchies. As Connell (1987) theorised in her examination of the gender order/regime, men tend to dominate the upper strata (of both state and organisational hierarchies) and therefore have more access to – and ability to exert – power. As a result, ECA women are more likely to be victims of various misuses of power, primarily bullying and harassment, as they are more likely to occupy junior roles. As Simpson and Cohen (2004) found in their small-scale study, women are more likely to be victims of bullying in HE where they are usually the targets of senior personnel – employees who know their actions are unlikely to be challenged. Bullies themselves, however, were more mixed in gender, and studies such as Field's (1996) found little gender difference among those who exhibited this kind of behaviour. While misuses of power can be exerted by anyone with a certain level of seniority, regardless of gender, women are more likely to be victims.

Harassment, as McMahon (2000) posits, differs from bullying as it is based on individual features such as gender, race or sexuality. Since the Equality Act was introduced (UK Government, 2010), individuals can also be punished by law for engaging in harassment, for example through hate speech. Sexual harassment – any bullying or intimidation that takes a sexual form – is named as such due to its inherent link to the individual feature of



gender, with most victims outside of and within HE being women (1752 Group, 2018). Most literature that exists on the topic of sexual harassment within HE examines student/staff relationships as opposed to harassment committed against ECAs; however, despite differences, the overall action of sexual harassment takes the same form, the downward exertion of power within gendered hierarchies. A recent report by The 1752 Group (2018) examined the narratives of 16 interviewees (mostly postgraduates, and one ECA) who raised complaints of sexual misconduct in their institutions (a wider range of behaviours than sexual harassment, not necessarily illegal) analysing both the procedure of reporting the misconduct and its outcomes. It uncovered that as well as most perpetrators of harassment going on to repeat offend, as a consequence of challenging power within HEIs many participants incurred repercussions. These included: drained finances; health repercussions (both physical and mental); revenge on the part of the individual harasser; the refusal of references; malicious gossip, and pressure from HEIs themselves toward victims, pushing them to drop their case or to leave the institute entirely. The experience of the victims in this report echo Ahmed's (2017) work on complaint, whereby the complainee becomes the problem, the focus for institutional ire, chastised for drawing attention to faults within the system. This is despite many institutions presenting a positive public face on challenging sexual harassment, particularly in documents, and assuring staff and students that it will be dealt with should it arise (*ibid*).

As Fitzgerald et al. (1988) noted in their investigation into sexual assault within the university, challenging the sexual misconduct of male academics, who often hold a great deal of institutional power, is often viewed by victims as not being worth the risk. This is supported by more recent research by Phipps (2018), who considered how disclosures of sexual misconduct were handled in the neoliberal university and how they were viewed by HEIs within market terms. From her research, she concluded that within universities there was a degree of 'reckoning up' in the handling of harassment or misconduct, that universities key aim regarding an outcome was whatever was most cost-efficient. For instance, ignoring or handling an incident badly could cause reputational damage and impact student numbers, and thus fees, while sacking a powerful perpetrator, a 'research star', could impact REF scores and endanger the academic's standing, a reputational 'proxy for that of the university' (8). While cost-efficiency can work in favour of victims, Phipps however acknowledges that entrenched hierarchies, whereby those with the most power are the most protected, inevitably work against them. 'Institutional airbrushing' (4) favours

those more closely tied to the HEI in question: the long-established academic over the student. For ECA women in the neoliberal university, particularly those on precarious contracts (which evidence suggests leaves them even more exposed to sexual harassment [TUC, 2016a]), unequal distributions of gender and power mean that they often bear the brunt of its misuses. Challenging such behaviour in institutions, which often place more value on reputational management and cost-efficiency than actual justice, left many of those who experienced bullying or harassment feeling powerless in addressing the perpetrators.

#### 2.5.3.4. Gender and Work-Life Balance in ‘Extreme’ and ‘Greedy’ Academia

As well as benefitting from a naturalised association with academic excellence, ECA men also gain from better fitting the role of the dedicated, neoliberal worker, one who is less burdened with unpaid work, the childcare, caring, and housework that take place in the domestic sphere (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013; O’Connor et al., 2015). The prevalence of some aspects of extreme work in academia (boundless, long hours) is also gendered as it makes little allowance for any commitments outside of work and, therefore, is more likely to exclude women (Gascoigne et al., 2015). In their study of work-life balance among academic parents in Iceland, Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra (2013) found that even in a country with high gender equality, female academics still took on more domestic tasks and therefore suffered from higher levels of time poverty, a lack of ostensibly ‘free time’. This directly impeded academic women’s ability to thrive, preventing them from engaging in career-building activities such as research. The ‘greedy’ (Sullivan, 2014) and competitive nature of universities means that a large amount of ‘free time’ – often time that is unpaid for ECAs – needs to be dedicated to work-related activities in order to advance, yet women are less likely to have the ‘free time’ in which to do this.

Existing evidence also supports the fact that children impact academic women’s lives more than those of academic men. As Puljak and Sharif (2009) found in their survey of an American university, men who have children 5 years post-PhD are 38% more likely to have a permanent position. Returning to Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra’s (2013) work, the researchers also highlighted how the interaction of flexible work and children was a gendered issue. For instance, mothers generally experienced flexibility as *parents* but not as *individuals*; they

had some freedom in deciding when to undertake work tasks or family tasks, but ultimately had little time for themselves. For most academic mothers in the study, this meant they were constantly working in one way or another, whether paid or unpaid (Adkins, 2018). In the study, academic mothers also appeared more accepting of the personal liability and the constraints on time of having children in a way that fathers did not. Considering academic fathers, O'Connor et al. (2015) did discover a 'family orientated bread winning masculinity' (533) that dominated throughout the academic hierarchy, whereby men maintained a stronger overall commitment to family than work. This loyalty to family life, however, came with the caveat that this commitment would not come with a reduction of working hours. Consequently, the impact of raising children on academic woman has been an increase in time poverty due to their status as the primary carer, which again, reduces the time they have available for career-scaling pursuits such as research. Regarding ECAs specifically, however, Ivancheva (2016) makes the point that for many early career women the concern is in deciding when to have a family, a task that for many seems impossible on precarious contracts.

A final point on gendered work-life balance is to consider what it means to work part-time, it being a mode of work in which women dominate, both inside and outside of academia (Higgins et al., 2000; ECU, 2019). There is little literature available that fully expands upon 'why' women in academia specifically work part-time, however, Sieverding et al's (2018) study tested the 'mothers work less' hypothesis amongst German and American ECRs finding it to be true for the former, that in Germany women drastically reduced their hours when they had children going part-time, and false for the latter, with American women working similar hours of work to their childless colleagues. More research therefore is needed in this area to confidently assert whether family commitments are primarily responsible for ECA women's dominance in part-time work. There is however plenty of literature concerning the wider gender order that asserts that this is the case (Higgins et al., 2000; Hill et al., 2004; Zilanawala, 2016).

The gendered division of part-time work matters as those employed on these contracts are often working far more hours than they are paid for (UCU, 2019a), and alongside this experience difficulties in being promoted – academia being an occupation which values long hours (Deschacht, 2017). Another issue with analysing the effects of part-time work is knowing if it is voluntary, a positive decision directed by agency, or involuntary, whereby individuals are working part-time because they cannot secure more hours, that they are

underemployed (Bell & Blanchflower, 2013). Maynard and Joseph's (2008) work looking at faculty in the US found that those who were involuntarily employed part-time experienced more dissatisfaction at work but found no significant results relating to gender. Research on the specific nature of underemployment in academia and its gendered nature are conspicuously lacking within the literature. What is apparent is how the casualisation of the academic workforce has led to less secure, full-time employment and a proliferation of part-time hours with associated consequences. These include an increased proximity to poverty and the working of multiple jobs simultaneously (UCU, 2019a).

#### 2.5.3.5. Doing the Dirty Work: Academic Housework

Heijstra et al. (2017) term 'academic housework' the tasks performed within a university which are 'time consuming and undervalued, but nevertheless crucial' (765) – for example, the general academic citizenship tasks: sitting on boards, unofficial mentoring – that help HEIs run smoothly. Universities often present these tasks as the collective duty of the academic community, and while senior academics do many tasks such as peer review, the less desirable aspects of this work (event admin, student engagement) often fall to ECAs (ibid). As Heijstra et al. observe, ECAs often eagerly take this work on as they are desperate to increase their 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu, 1989): the status required to build a good reputation and secure further opportunities. Many ECAs view this as a temporal condition of the early career stage, and of precarity, believing that undertaking this work now will eventually lead to promotion with the added benefit of increased autonomy.

Academic housework, however, while an aspect of all ECAs' working lives, is more skewed toward women ((Heijstra et al. (2017). This is frequently due to delegation by senior academic men, who view ECA women as more 'adept' at this kind of work, as better communicators and readers of emotions, a form of benevolent sexism that essentialises women's supposed nurturing qualities (Kuchynka et al., 2018). For this reason, women in academia are often shunted towards work that requires emotional and affective labour (Ahmed, 2004; Wetherell, 2012). This again impacts women's progression by compromising the time they have to dedicate to tasks that are rewarded by promotion. Time is not only lost within the personal sphere to unpaid work but also to unrewarded tasks within the professional sphere. Aside from academic housework, the work involved in addressing gender and BAME inequalities in HE (what Ahmed [2012] calls 'diversity

work’) also serves to shrink further the time of academic women. While Ahmed used this term in her own work to discuss BAME issues in academia (with BAME individuals suffering similar impacts on time), we can also see this at work in gender initiatives such as Athena Swan, whereby, as Tzanakou and Pearce (2019) note, women do the vast majority of work. Like academic housework, diversity work also tends to go unrewarded when it comes to promotion, and paradoxically, while this work seeks to reduce gendered inequalities, it often cements them through an unfair division of labour.

### 2.5.3.6. The Gendered Disciplinary Divide: STEM, SSH and the Battle for Funds in the Neoliberal Knowledge Economy

It is apparent within academia that there is a gendered division between the broad categories of disciplines (Clark-Blickenstaff, 2005; Skeggs, 2008; Lavar et al., 2014) with more women in SSH (social sciences, humanities) and more men in STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths [ECU, 2019]). Though seemingly incidental, this matters as there is a direct relationship between disciplines and funding within the knowledge economy, an interconnection which then determines the careers successes of ECAs. To reiterate, the knowledge economy refers to the needs and demands of society from research, a phenomenon that has a significant impact on the university. As Buchbinder (1993) outlines, it determines which disciplines the university views as a priority, and also determines emerging disciplines, chiefly in terms of financial investment and resources. Buchbinder also notes that the knowledge economy is directly related to neoliberal ideas as it allows the free market to dictate what is produced and delivered by the university.

Steinþórsdóttir et al. (2018) explored how the knowledge economy, amongst other factors, influenced universities’ budgets and determined the allocation of resources among disciplines alongside its corresponding gender impact. As they had expected, STEM subjects received far more funding than SSH disciplines where student/teacher ratios were highest. When they questioned institutions on this, it was argued that this was appropriate in terms of knowledge economy demands but also because of a historical precedent where STEM subjects are simply considered to ‘cost more’. A significant impact of this was that female-dominated subjects became increasingly under-resourced and that the amount of teaching per academic became far higher than those in STEM disciplines. It is apparent

therefore, that there is a gendered impact: that STEM, male-dominated disciplines receive more investment and support from their institutions. Additionally, it means an expanding and more secure job market for those working within STEM. Correspondingly, ECA women are more likely to be concentrated in SSH disciplines that have fallen victim to cuts, disciplines less immediately connected to the knowledge economy (Davies, & O'Callaghan, 2014). Of course, the gender trend between disciplines is not so neatly delineated, with some male dominated SSH subjects such as history and philosophy suffering from the same effects (Hyslop-Margison & Leonard, 2012).

#### 2.5.3.7. Am I Worth it? Imposter Identities Among Academic Men and Women

A common feature of neoliberalism is how adept it is at creating anxious, insecure and vulnerable subjectivities; within the neoliberal university, one of the keyways in which this is expressed is through the phenomenon of imposter syndrome. Originating in the psychological literature of the 1970s (Clance & Imes, 1978), imposter syndrome is characterised by feelings of fraudulence, that one does not match the standards required for the job or task at hand. As individuals constantly subject to metrics, measures and surveillance, it is unsurprising that imposter syndrome is extremely common among academics (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Gabriel, 2010). As Breeze (2018) writes, it is so commonly referenced among ECA colleagues that it is often referenced as a joke: 'blame it on imposter syndrome!' Regarding gender, most literature focuses upon imposter syndrome's impact on women. For instance, Falkner et al.'s (2015) study reported that 67% of women interviewed reported feelings of fraudulence in academia. Additionally, Collett & Avelis (2013) in their analysis found that self-reported imposter syndrome was a more pertinent barrier to women's progression in academia than a lack of family-friendly policies. Loveday (2016) examines how the affective practice of judgement (Wetherell, 2012) by established groups within academia (middle-class, white, male) works to embody certain classed (working) and gendered (female) individuals with feelings of deficiency and shame, a practice that feeds back into their own self-perception as inferior. Though Loveday does not reference the term 'imposter syndrome' here, she exposes some of the mechanics around it, how those in certain locales – the university in this case – are made to feel ashamed by their perceived lack of legitimacy. Aside from direct acknowledgement of

imposter syndrome, evidence for academic women's experiences of it can be seen in various guises: they self-cite less (King et al, 2017) and are less likely to apply for promotion (De Paola et al., 2017). Within the wider gender order, there is also an argument to be made that women are socialised to have lower levels of confidence (Clisby & Holdsworth, 2016), which makes them more susceptible to imposter syndrome.

While the majority of research in academia focuses on women's experience of imposter syndrome, there is also evidence that men not only experience it but that they do so in a different, uniquely gendered way. Badawy et al. (2018) found that in many ways men had more adverse reactions to imposter syndrome, that they had stronger reactions under conditions of high accountability, and after receiving negative feedback decreased their efforts. The reason, they argue, that imposter syndrome has been ascribed more to women, is its basis in 'individual competences', in essence: confidence, a quality men are more socialised towards (Clance et al., 1995). Expanding imposter syndrome to include measures of anxiety, effort and performance therefore creates a more complex gendered picture of imposter syndrome. Men's heightened reactions to having their competency questioned could be symptomatic of an adverse reaction to a compromised masculinity: that they have fallen short of the hegemonic ideal (Adams & Govender, 2008; Greig, 2011). Currently, there appears to be no existing literature that compares academic men and women's experiences of imposter syndrome. This would be a useful gap to address.

#### 2.5.3.8. The Unholy Trinity of Bias and Its Gendered Consequences

Bias is an idea that features heavily within literature addressing gender in academia (Acker, & Feuerverger, 1996; Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Clark-Blickenstaff, 2005; Maranto & Griffin, 2011) and is generally considered to be a culmination of all the negative effects that make academia an unwelcoming environment for women: the chilly climate (Maranto and Griffin, 2011). Bias can be a difficult term to pin down but can be generally expressed as a collection of prejudices that act against a particular group (ECU, 2013). While there may be some elements of ECA life that are biased against men, and which will be discussed herein, the literature overwhelmingly addresses female disadvantage in academia. Moreover, though gender bias has existed in universities long before the current political project, I will be focusing on the way it is presently enacted. Within this section I will discuss how

gendered bias works within HE by dividing it into three different yet interrelated strands: structural bias, prejudice enacted at a state or organisational level; explicit bias, direct and unequivocal demonstrations of bigotry, and finally – the most prevalent in HEIs today – implicit bias, the judgements which are most subtly woven into everyday practices and actions.

To begin, I will briefly address the idea of structural bias as this has already been discussed at length throughout the review. As a term, this refers to all the collective policies, legislation and organisational measures made at the macro level that impact ECAs' lives, for instance exploitative contracts, metrics such as TEF and REF, and reductions in legal aid (UCU, 2019a). Alongside these, there are structural factors that specifically target women's progression, a lack of recourse to maternity benefits on precarious contracts and poor quality, part-time work. The impact of this bias translates into what Farmer (2009) called 'structural violence', whereby top-level social institutions directly impact upon an individual or particular group's quality of life and their access to justice. All the top-level decisions that have taken place within the neoliberal political project and in the university gender regime which have caused harm are evidence of this. To address the second manifestation of bias listed – explicit bias – this refers to prejudices that are outwardly expressed by individuals toward particular groups, unambiguous expressions of sexism and racism for example (ECU, 2013). These can still be observed in the university today in expressions of bullying and harassment as discussed, however, explicit bias, as Dovidio et al. (2002) observe, is falling. They note that most individuals in a professional context are largely aware that the outward expression of bias is no longer widely tolerated, despite their personal views.

It is for the above reason, therefore, that focus has shifted from explicit toward implicit bias – prejudices which affect thoughts and actions, but that individuals may be less overtly aware of. Dovidio et al. (2002) express that this is often a more accurate measure of intentions as individuals are less likely to filter their preconceptions. While a more nebulous concept to grasp than structural or explicit forms, implicit bias has been described by Schwarz (2010) as stemming from three main sources. Firstly as an information-processing short-cut, for example presuming certain essentialised gendered qualities (lack of confidence in a job interview); secondly from motivational and emotional factors, assuming certain qualities or behaviours due to past experience (the behaviours of previous



colleagues); and finally social factors, largely the influence of the media and their role in creating stereotypes (a presumption that women are the primary carers of children).

Although some literature uses the term unconscious bias, Tate and Page (2018) and the ECU (2013) advise against this, noting that it can obscure people's ownership of certain behaviours and actions. Though a prejudice may not operate on the explicit level, this does not mean that an individual should be absolved of responsibility for holding or expressing it.

Implicit bias can be particularly insidious as it intensifies the reproduction of masculine culture and its exclusion of women while also being extremely difficult to point toward and single out. As West & Zimmerman (1987) theorised, gendered construction at work operates through minute and cumulative actions: biases are woven into the daily fabric of occupational life. The everyday experience of this is often referred to as the endurance of microaggressions, incidents which, though seemingly small, together can take a significant toll on an academic's well-being (Simatele, 2018). Curtailing implicit bias within institutions is important as, unchecked, it leads to a litany of discriminatory behaviours (ECU, 2013): bias in single-blind or open peer review, when the author is known to the reviewer (Borsuk et al., 2009); bias in interviews (Rubini & Menegatti, 2014); bias in promotion (Clark-Blickenstaff, 2005; Bagilhole & White, 2013); bias in co-authoring where women are assumed to be the lesser partner (Sarsons, 2015); bias in securing mentorship (Neale & Özkanlı, 2010); bias towards female academics with children (Mason et al., 2013) and bias in distribution of work (Acker and Feuerverger, 2006). It may be well-documented that implicit bias exists within academe; however, holding individuals and institutions accountable for it can be an extremely difficult task.

#### 2.5.3.9. Playing the Part: ECA Women and Symbolic Violence

One of the keyways that implicit bias has been deployed in academia, as a way to maintain the current gender regime, is through the enactment of Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990 [1977]) conception of symbolic violence. As a social practice, symbolic violence refers to a process whereby individuals in a system maintain its current structures of power, despite being subjugated or disadvantaged by it. Often, the recipients of this process are women, BAME or some other marginalised category which social systems seek to control

(Fotaki, 2014; Grzyb, 2016). The goal of symbolic violence is to appear completely naturalised, a ‘doxa’ (Bourdieu, 1979) or unwritten rule of everyday life. Our attention to the workings of symbolic violence, therefore, are usually only signalled when social rules are breached. Additionally, as Grzyb (2016) explains in her work which applies Bourdieu’s theory onto honour killings, symbolic violence exists on a continuum with other forms of violence that are exerted against women in that ‘they all derive from the same rules of patriarchal order and symbolic masculine domination...’ (1039).

In academia, we can see symbolic violence at work in the way women constantly consider and adjust their conduct. As Dempsey and Slaughter (2014) discuss women are under pressure to appear as neither too feminine nor too masculine, too weak nor too strong. Bagilhole and Goode (1998) term this the ‘broad curriculum’, a process through which we learn how to act as ‘good’ institutional and gendered citizens by fitting within our expected social roles. When a woman disrupts the system, therefore, and exposes the gendered doxa at work, there are often repercussions. For example, Morley (1995) explores what can occur when women refuse to take on the brunt of emotional care in academia:

*‘The practicalities of writing necessitate becoming independent and self-centred- saying no to the demands of others. This contradicts the cultural prescription for women’s accessibility and availability. Moments of creative self-absorption disrupt the academic woman’s socially constructed nurturing role both within and without the workplace.’ (123).*

For women, speaking up – disrupting the doxa –can come with great consequences, especially for those on precarious contracts. To address sexism may mean putting oneself at risk of losing a promotion or even a job. In some way, all ECAs experience a degree of symbolic violence, with their compliance ensured by the neoliberal political project and the transfer of the risk and responsibility around employment onto the individual (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002 [1994]). In academia, ECAs are a group that serve to stand high losses from violating the rules (Heijstra et al., 2017).

#### 2.5.4. Academic Masculinities: Perpetuating or Protesting Sexism?

In academia, women are most often the victims of bias: structural, explicit and implicit, due to the way in which power is exerted in the academic gender regime; nonetheless, men can

also be negatively affected. For example, men are often presumed to be careerist as opposed to family-orientated (O'Connor et al., 2015), and they too experience imposter syndrome, albeit in a different way from women (Badawy et al., 2018). It is also important to note that women can also exert gender bias against other women and exhibit bullying behaviours (Field 1996; Bagilhole & White, 2011). In this section, I will explore academic masculinities, both to ascertain how ECA men experience bias, and to consider how ECA men react to the sexism experienced by their female colleagues: do they perpetuate or protest it? As discussed, men's masculinities have been greatly affected – and the majority compromised – by neoliberal impacts on their subjectivities. In response, therefore, have ECA men renegotiated a new and more inclusive feminist masculinity (Anderson, 2005)? Or have they further entrenched aspects of the gender regime that have afforded them a historical advantage?

As with every specific locale and institution, academia has its own conceptions of hegemonic masculinity; it is one, however, that is becoming increasingly fractured along generational lines. To illustrate, O'Connor et al.'s (2015) study into male academics – of all levels of seniority – found four key categories of masculinity: (1) careerist masculinity: strong career and weak relationship commitment; (2) enterprising masculinity: strong career and strong relationship commitment; (3) pure scientific masculinity: weak career and weak relationship commitment and (4) family-oriented breadwinning masculinity: weak career and strong relationship commitment. At a senior level, the most common type of masculinity uncovered was 'careerist', one strongly adhering to traditional male associations with work and the values of neoliberal, hegemonic masculinity, for example self-made success and managerialism (Davies & O'Callaghan, 2014). The other three forms of masculinity presented in the study, however, did demonstrate a break-away from work-focused, managerial masculinity and were most common amongst lower levels of seniority. For instance, type 2 and type 4 ('enterprising' and 'family-oriented breadwinning') masculinities both emerged as categories that attempted to address work-life balance and challenge expectations that men should have minimal involvement with the family. However, while these men were willing to readdress the traditional balance, none were prepared to reduce their hours or go part-time, demonstrating some limitations in how much they were willing to address the division of labour. Overall, Connor et al.'s study shows that there is an increasing split amongst academic men along lines of seniority with those nearer the top more likely to embody a 'careerist' masculinity, and those toward the

bottom more likely to challenge traditional ideas around the family. Duan et al. (2010) uncovered a similar finding amongst male counseling psychologists in academia, that they perceived themselves as being more dedicated to their families than work, but that they struggled to balance the demands with primarily full-time roles.

Armato's (2013) paper also interrogates modern academic masculinities using the personal experience of a conference to frame ideas of inclusive masculinity and 'enlightened sexism' (578). Compared to other displays of masculinity, Armato observes that academics in general, and particularly ECA men, are more likely to address instances of bigotry explicitly and frame themselves as 'men of reason' (599). He points toward a new form of 'inclusive masculinity' (Anderson, 2005) exhibited by some academics where the masculinity that is valued is one that does not exclude women. In this same piece, however, Armato warns the reader that there are male academics capable of an 'enlightened sexism', those that operate as 'wolves in sheep's clothing' (579). These academics may publicly renounce sexism – which affords them significant financial and symbolic capital – yet, they concurrently participate in behaviours that exclude women, for example, failing to invite them into unofficial occupational networks. Moreover, Armato highlights that the most common way academic men harm women's progression is through their inaction and silence when witnessing gendered oppression.

Other recent research addressing masculinity in academia includes Styhre and Tienari's (2014) discussion of privilege and reflexivity in academia. This is a piece that uses the authors' own experiences as academic men in gender studies to discuss their outsider status in the field. As a conclusion, they surmise that though it is true that men maintain their privilege in many contexts, it is also crucial to consider intersectional perspectives, the way gender identity crosses over with other social categories such as race, and how this can lead to different experiences of social advantage and disadvantage. Changing a situation can radically alter how power is experienced within it, and there can be instances therefore where it is academic women who have the power and control over academic men. The self-reflexivity of the two researchers therefore was subject to continual renegotiation.

Given the limited amount of literature on academic masculinities it is not possible to arrive at any concrete conclusions of how men perpetuate or protest bias against academic women. In some ways it is possible that male academics are prolonging prejudice, by paying disingenuous 'lip-service' to equality and upholding privilege with silence (Armato,

2013). In other ways, it would appear they are challenging traditional ideas of masculinity where they find them (Styhre & Tienari, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2015). Defining what motivates academic men's actions is, however, difficult to observe, as it is possible to perform anti-sexist ideas without actually enacting them (Amarto, 2013). It would appear, therefore, that there will be instances where the espousal of feminist values is genuine, and instances where they are not. It is perhaps better, therefore, to perceive a move toward a more inclusive masculinity through actions, such as the male academics in Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra, (2013) and O'Connor et al.'s (2015) research, in which men actively participated in parenting (albeit not to an entirely equal degree). There is also the fact that male, feminist academics such as Amarto (2013) and Styhre & Tienari, (2014) have sought to open up discussion of sexism and bias among academic men, as well as looking at how we can expand this to include intersectional ideas. Nevertheless, it is important to remember, as Amarto also notes, that a common way in which academic men block women's progress is through silence and inaction, practices which by their very nature are less likely to be recorded or observed.

### 2.5.5. Tools for Resistance: Agency in the Face of Neoliberal Structures

In this section I will address some of the ways that academics, and ECAs in particular, resist neoliberal forces (primarily the negative effects of precarity) and bias (chiefly gendered bias) within academia. How do individuals push for change in the face of such overwhelming forces and structures? Alongside this, I also wish to consider the barriers that work to prevent and slow academic resistance in the neoliberal university. To reiterate, in this research I have adopted a materialist feminist approach as I believe it both accounts for the unique phenomenological aspects of individual gendered experience while acknowledging the power and influence of structures such as patriarchy and historical moments, neoliberalism, that actors are located within (Barret, 1997; Hennessy & Ingraham, 1997; Jackson, 2001; Fraser, 2013). This is important to re-emphasise at this point in the review as this section will largely deal with the tension between agency and structures.

Much of the literature concerning academics' ability to engage in resistance is pessimistic, inferring that managerial and structural forces are too powerful, and the punishments for

contesting them too severe to warrant it. Kalfa et al.'s (2018) research into 'compliance and resistance' among academics in an Australian university found that there was little protest amongst academics, especially ECAs, who largely remained silent. Academics' main concern was the building of social capital, an idea also supported in the work of Heijstra et al. (2017), and the avoidance of symbolic violence through complicity. In its conclusion, Kalfa et al.'s study found that discontent was more likely to be expressed through a neglect of work – a far more realistic strategy for senior academics – or exit from academia completely. Knights and Clarke (2014) arrived at similar findings, with the majority of their participants – UK business school academics – lacking the will to resist in the face of powerful, managerialist regimes. When resistance did show itself, it was once again through individual strategies such as 'ignoring the rules' (350).

Nevertheless, while there was an overall acknowledgement that resistance was difficult and dangerous in academia (Knights and Clarke, 2014; Kalfa et al.'s, 2018), there was also plenty of evidence that demonstrated its existence. The ways in which this resistance was demonstrated fell generally into four central practices: firstly, speaking out despite risks; secondly, by taking back ownership of time-poverty through slow scholarship; thirdly, by reemphasising academic collegiality and kindness; and finally, through collective action, both among ECAs and via unions.

The first method of resistance we can see at work in Gill's (2010) essay *Breaking the Silence* whereby she encourages academics to speak out on the injuries caused by neoliberal academia in order to address them. This is echoed by Phipps (2018) in her examination of sexual harassment in HE, which pushes for open discussion within institutions as opposed to institutional air brushing. Within this work, she cites Foucault's idea of *parrhesia* (Foucault, 1983, cited in Phipps, 2018): radical truth-telling as a way to move discourse forward. Breeze (2018) makes a further contribution by re-contextualising imposter syndrome, making internal anxieties collective concerns, and positing the phenomenon as a 'public feeling', one that is determined through structural oppression and inequalities. Imposter syndrome, as a quality both incubated and exacerbated by the neoliberal university, is one that should therefore be spoken about openly as a form of defiance.

The second point of resistance – slow scholarship – has emerged from a distinctly feminist direction due to its contingent concerns with women's relative time poverty (Davies, 1989; Mountz et al., 2015). As a movement, it has developed as a means to resist the neoliberal

tenets of ‘more for less’; as Mountz et al. (2015) propose, academics should fight back against the imposition of ‘excellent’ in metrics, and instead settle for good enough, ‘the new perfect’ (1253). Hartman and Darab (2012) also recommend enacting ‘slow pedagogy’ with students to resist ‘slimmed down content and a compressed timeline’ (56) when it comes to teaching. While generally supportive of slow scholarship as a means of resistance, The Puāwai Collective & Le Heron (2019) are careful to stress that, for ECAs and mid-career academics, it led to ‘feelings of discomfort and vulnerability’ (41) due to their tenuous place within the university. The third means of academic resistance, academic kindness, was another key area through which ECAs fought back against atomised, neoliberal subjectivities and instead sought to value collegial qualities (Petersen, 2011; Mountz et al., 2015). Once again, this was linked to feminist praxis, which The Puāwai Collective & Le Heron (2019) describe as ‘ethics of care’, of which slow scholarship formed a part alongside feminist networks and the facilitation of open discussions around precarity and sexism.

Finally, the last means of resistance, collectivism, was again viewed as an antidote to the individualism peddled by the neoliberal university, an opposition which takes two main forms: the establishment of groups within HEIs, and collective action through unions. To address the former, there are several examples of academic-led networks within HE, for instance Macoun and Miller’s (2014) feminist reading group, and The New Zealand Puāwai collective (2019) of early and mid-career women academics. There are now also many active precarity-based groups, visible both online and on the ground, for example Anti-precarity Cymru (Twitter, 2019) and Precarious@Kentuni (Twitter, 2019). For Macoun and Miller (2014), these groups were essential in providing resources and support, academically and emotionally, for those at the margins, allowing them to survive and thrive. Being part of a collective was also important in making vulnerable individuals feel more able to speak to and challenge managerialist structures (Mountz et al., 2015; Puāwai Collective & Le Heron, 2019). Moving on to the second form of collectivism, union power has re-emerged as a powerful force within recent discussions of ECA resistance in the neoliberal university, particularly since the 2018 USS strikes (Davies, 2019). While the view of what unions have done, and can do, for precarious workers has been mixed (Ivancheva & O’Flynn, 2016), the strike brought to the fore increased visibility of many ECAs and their concerns. In their book *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance*, Bailey and Freedman (2011) point toward collective bargaining as a means to resist the neoliberal university and win back

workers' rights. They also emphasise the importance of standing in solidarity with students and support staff, and their own respective unions, to achieve meaningful change. Despite the anxieties and fears that silence many ECAs, both the literature and ongoing activism outlined within this section demonstrate a co-existing will for change.

### 2.5.6. More Than Women, More Than Men: The Importance of Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term which, in its most rudimentary definition, has become shorthand for the consideration of multiple aspects of group and individual identity and how these different facets interact with each other. An intersectional perspective therefore does not simply examine, for example, being black and being a woman as separate spheres, but critically analyses how these fuse to illustrate an experience that is more than the sum of its parts. As a philosophical perspective, intersectionality embraces an epistemology of difference and also works to outline the various points of oppression and disadvantage that exist in various social contexts. Crenshaw (1991) is largely credited with coining the term as a means to provide a legislative framework for cases that dealt with multiple issues of identity, however, the philosophical spirit of intersectionality existed long before this. For example, groups such as the Combahee River Collective (1978) in the 70s examined what it meant to be black, feminist and often queer.

There are those that argue how a focus on intersectionality is a distraction from more pressing material and political concerns, a form of identity politics only concerned with the self. Young (1989) argued in support of this; that a focus on difference and identity occluded energy that could be spent on addressing material injustices across all intersections of identity. Fraser (2013) has also been critical of focusing too heavily on personal, social categories while acknowledging the need for some form of identity 'recognition'. Another objection to practicing intersectionality is that it can encourage a form of competitive victimhood, with communities trying to frame themselves as being the most oppressed, which Hancock (2007) describes as 'the oppression Olympics'. The idea that intersectionality can be defined as competitive oppression is something that Yuval-Davis (2012) however heavily contests, instead she offers the solution of 'transversal politics', that injustices are best combatted through 'a dialogue between people of



differential positionings, and the wider the better' (51). Listening to a wide range of concerns from a diverse range of individuals only serves to improve our understanding of how inequalities are enacted and experienced. There is also no reason why framing certain representational injustices – of being oppressed on the basis of race or gender, for example – should overcome a collective political project of material equality. Individuals do not only experience subjugation on the basis of economic capital, therefore it is important that we consider all the ways in which oppression is experienced.

It is imperative that intersectional frameworks are applied to HE research in an attempt to readdress both issues of underrepresentation within academia and to locate the multiple sites of oppression and advantage. The number of intersections we could discuss in relation to HE, and the various issues they represent, are many and it would be impossible to address them all here, which is why I will be concentrating on the two instances of intersectionality which are most pertinent to my research: how race, and how class, intersect with gender.

#### 2.5.6.1. Race and Gender in Higher Education

Within the literature surrounding gender and academia, Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) women have been highlighted as a group that face a number of additional struggles within the sector (Brown-Glaude, 2010; Kupenda, 2012; Sang, 2016). The ECU 2018 statistical report highlighted the juncture of race and gender as being a particular concern, noting that '...a higher proportion of male staff were from BAME backgrounds than female staff' (242). BAME women therefore make up a small percentage of the overall academic population, an experience which often doubly exacerbates prejudice and feelings of not belonging. As a result of low numbers throughout the hierarchy, BAME women have even fewer role models in management than white women (Bagilhole, 2011), and the effects of homo-sociability (Grummell et al., 2009), of hiring like for like, are once again aggravated. The issue of bias within student evaluation has also been proven to be worse for BAME women than their white colleagues (Brown-Glaude, 2010). Furthermore, BAME women face additional pressures from being concentrated in critical disciplines that are experiencing attrition from the neoliberal university, not only feminism but also racial

and post-colonial studies (Hyslop-Margison & Leonard, 2012; Wagner & Yee, 2011; Moscovitz et al., 2014).

On an individual level, BAME women are also frequently allocated higher amounts of emotional labour tasks than their white colleagues. Kupenda (2002), a black, female academic illustrates this by framing her own experience: she was presented by a senior member of staff not only as someone for students to turn to, but also as an individual responsible for the welfare of all the BAME students in her department. This is only one example of the many microaggressions (cumulative instances of bias) that BAME women in academia deal with in their daily lives (Simatele, 2018). BAME women also have to deal with what Young (1989) called 'the dilemma of difference' (268), whereby those embodying an intersectional identity felt only able to fight from one corner at once, for instance as a woman or as a black academic. This is also reflected in Sang's (2016) study on the intersectionality of feminism in HE. Herein, participants felt they had to frame one aspect of their identity over another (black, woman, feminist), forfeiting their right to speak out about other injustices. On a positive aside, some black women in the study referenced the power in 'otherness' to express unique or controversial opinions.

It must be noted here that while we have focused on BAME women, an intersectional analysis also calls upon us to consider the position of BAME men relative to their white colleagues. Though data is unfortunately not available for ECAs specifically (only fixed term contracts), the ECU (2018) report notes that BAME individuals are overrepresented at lower contract levels and underrepresented in higher professorial or managerial positions compared to white academics of all genders. This is important to consider in relation to ideas of subordinate, non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) as not all men from an intersectional perspective are going to experience the same amount of financial and cultural capital as some women. BAME men in academia are also more likely to be on precarious contracts than their white male colleagues (ECU, 2019). As Styhre and Tienari, (2014) found, the power inherent in academic masculinity varies greatly dependent on points of intersection and context with race being a key point of difference.

### 2.5.6.2. Feeling Neither Here, Nor There: Class and Gender in Higher Education

Class is an interesting social category to consider as it exists in sociological theory both as an indicator of economic inequalities (Brown, 2013) and as a deeply felt, culturally-constructed subjectivity (Barker, 1995; Loveday, 2016). The former – economic inequalities – is particularly important when we consider the financial repercussions of being working class (WC) on precarious contracts; that WC individuals will have less access to savings and less access to support networks that provide a monetary cushion (TUC, 2016b). The latter aspect of being WC – the construction of subjectivities – is also important, as it assists our understanding of how WC people experience the world and the specific gender regime of an overwhelmingly middle-class (MC) university. For instance, Loveday's (2016) exploration of 'embodying deficiency' among students and academics in HE found that judgement by others, such as comments on accents, or the open questioning of WC academics' knowledge, had a profound effect. It inevitably altered the way WC academics felt about themselves, that they were in some way lacking. Regarding intersections with gender, Loveday examined the experiences of two pregnant WC participants in this paper, whose physical bodies were judged as class signifiers by senior MC academics. One participant disclosed how they were shamed by their PhD supervisor for their pregnancy: 'You're the reason women ..., women like you shouldn't get funding' (1140). WC, female bodies here were judged by to be fecund and unregulated. For these women therefore, feelings of deficiency and non-belonging were further compounded by their joint working class and gendered identities. Other works addressing WC female or WC feminist academic identities are outlined within the edited collection *Class Matters* (Mahoney et al., 2001). Herein, Reay (2001) explores the double-bind aspect of this identity, of being somewhere between WC home and MC location (the university) and how this engenders feelings of inauthenticity in both spheres. Clancy (2001) explores what a WC woman should do when feeling aversion to MC culture and the urge to rebel against it. Morley (2001) in turn explores how WC women academics experience psycho-social negations of their own intelligence and how feelings of fraudulence are continually reified by the university.

There is little literature that examines working class academic masculinities specifically or which compare WC men and women's experience directly. Barker's (1995) exploration of white WC academics in America, however, makes a direct comparison between these two

groups that helps to highlight some commonalities and differences. In terms of similarities, they found both genders experienced a sense of their class as 'invisible'; that they were perceived as middle-class and therefore it was often their own choice of whether they 'outed' themselves as WC. Interestingly, this differs from Loveday's (2016) account where individuals' bodies, appearance or accents marked out students and academics as conspicuously WC. There was also an aversion felt by all participants in Barker's study to the dominance of MC values and pressure to adhere to them, there was also a feeling that their intelligence and authority were consistently undermined. Considering differences, WC academic women talked about the difficulty in maintaining class connections, to family and friends, whereas men talked about losing them, of moving away from their roots (Barker, 1995). An illuminating finding in Barker's work was how WC women academics felt a distinct aversion to MC academic femininities, yet men did not express any of the same feelings toward MC academic masculinities, expressing no trouble in adjusting toward them. Women also seemed to fare worse in the double-bind of classism and sexism regarding their levels of intelligence and authority. Practically, they were also in closer proximity to poverty, receiving the lowest amount of financial support (Higginbotham & Cannon, 1988 in Barker, 1995). The WC men in Barker's research did appear to struggle more at conferences, where they tended to isolate themselves and expressed a fear of being 'found out' – a form of imposter syndrome. WC women however, appeared to have much more positive experiences with networking.

In summary, theories of intersectionality are important in considering the unique, gendered experiences of ECAs; they are also imperative in considering how their identities intersect with the other categories they occupy as social actors. Also, while there is debate about the relevancy and importance of 'identity politics' in an increasingly unequal society, it is important to explore complex social identities and the difference they make. To reiterate, there are many ways in which one can experience oppression – racism, sexism, homophobia – outside of access to economic capital. Intersectional identities themselves are also often tied to matters of material redistribution; for instance, both WC and BAME individuals are more likely to be located within precarious work, lacking the economic, social and cultural capital it often requires to advance beyond them (Standing 2011; ECU, 2019).

## 2.6. Literature Review: Summary

In the UK we live within the macro-political project of neoliberalism which determines how the meso-levels of institutions – such as universities – contained within it work. It is also evident that though it is primarily discussed as an economic philosophy, it also has a moral dimension (Schmidt, 2001); that individuals should be self-reliant and enterprising in their endeavours. Although neoliberalism differs in its specific inactions across location and historical context (Harvey, 2007a), a review of the literature has identified three key tenets: individualism, autonomy, and efficiency, which act as its guiding principles. In examining how the macro-level neoliberal project impacts gendered subjects, it was also necessary to look at the macro, state-level gender order (Connell, 2005) before going on to examine its specific manifestations at the meso (university) and micro-levels (gendered ECA subjectivities). This is important to consider as the way in which men and women have been impacted by the neoliberal gender order, while containing some commonalities, such as rising material inequalities, has also differed. Women have been chiefly affected by a neoliberal feminism which views economic and personal salvation as being achieved through paid work (while simultaneously offering little assistance with unpaid work) alongside the effects of austerity. Men comparatively have been more affected by the compromised nature of masculinities in a changing world of work. Additionally, in providing necessary context for this research it has been necessary to explore the wider social impact of precarious work, it being a reality for most academics at this career stage. This is coupled with the experience of precariousness (Butler, 2003), a deeply felt vulnerability that often accompanies this labour market position. Though not all individuals on precarious contracts experience precarity, or feelings of precariousness, the vast majority endure ‘flexploitative’ practices, for example, having contracts terminated at short notice (Morgan et al., 2013).

Having established all the various macro frameworks that impact the lives of the gendered ECA – the neoliberal political project, the gender order and the reality of precarious work – the review then arrived at the specific focus of the research: the experiences of gendered ECAs in the neoliberal university. To achieve this, the review first addressed commonalities in gendered experience before moving on to consider the salient differences. In summary, the aspects of ECA experience that were shared across genders included a passionate attachment to work (Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Knights & Clarke, 2014; Bozzon et al., 2018);

viewing it as a vocation (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Carvalho et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; Vos, 2017; Sotirin & Goltz, 2019); connections with extreme work, such as the requirement of long hours and intense levels of mental exertion (Hewlett & Luce, 2006; Gascoigne et al., 2015); enduring high levels of competition (Macoun & Miller, 2014; Ivancheva, 2015; Thouaille, 2017; Jones & Oakley, 2018); the increasingly siloed nature of contracts between research and teaching (Locke et al., 2016; Bozzon et al., 2018); and finally how academic subjectivities of all gender and levels were affected by anxiety, aggravated by constant surveillance, metrics, evaluation and rejection (Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Knights & Clarke, 2014, Bozzon et al., 2018; Loveday, 2018a).

Moving on to differences, it is well covered in literature addressing gender in academia that there is a leaky pipeline (Clark-Blickenstaff, 2005; Joecks et al., 2014; Ysseldyk et al., 2019) with the point between Early Career and permanent post where many women are 'lost' (Herschberg et al., 2018). In turn, this results in the glass ceiling (Maranto & Griffin, 2011; Fotaki, 2013; Harris et al., 2013; Ysseldyk et al., 2019) with fewer women at the top of the organization, leading to a lack of senior female role models (Bagilhole & White, 2011) and higher levels of homo-sociability (Grummell et al., 2009). Alongside the fact that more women were employed on precarious contracts (ECU, 2019) – contracts that often act as traps (Bryson, 2004) – there were several other barriers acknowledged that made women's ascension in academia, and even their ability to stay within it, more difficult. These included the following: being distanced or locked out of essential social and professional networks (Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014); the fact that academia is built upon male-coded values (Davies, & O'Callaghan, 2014), and definitions of excellence (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). ECA women also appeared to be more subject to pernicious uses of power, mainly bullying and harassment than ECA men (Simpson & Cohen, 2004; 1752 Group, 2018; Phipps, 2018) although the perpetrators themselves were mixed in gender (Field, 1996). Work-life balance was another area where women in academia suffered, enduring higher levels of time poverty than their male colleagues due to their skewed responsibility for unpaid work (Hochschild & Machung, 1990; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013; Zilanawala, 2016). In terms of time poverty, women also experienced an unfair division of largely unrewarded 'academic housework' (Heijstra et al., 2017), and both women and particularly BAME staff were tasked with taking on the majority of diversity work (Ahmed, 2012; Kupenda, 2012; Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019). Additionally, as a gendered group, women were more likely to experience prejudice for having a family in a way that men did not

(Mayer & Tikka, 2008; Collett & Avelis, 2013; Mason et al., 2013; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). For many ECA women, however, especially those on precarious contracts, the concern was when they could have children without disrupting their careers or suffering financially (Ivancheva, 2015).

Regarding gendered difference in subjectivities, imposter syndrome in most literature focused on women, their experience and attitudes toward it (Falkner et al., 2015; Collett & Avelis, 2013); however, there is now evidence to suggest that imposter syndrome is experienced equally but differently by men and women (Badawy et al., 2018). Another significant issue, mostly endured by ECA women, was the various enactments of bias they experienced: structural (political and policy level prejudice); explicit (outwardly bigoted behaviour and harassment); and finally implicit bias (latent prejudices observed in everyday behaviour) (Acker, & Feuerverger, 1996; Dovidio et al., 2002; Mayer & Tikka, 2008 ECU, 2013; Simatele, 2018; Tate & Page, 2018). ECA women who stepped outside these bounds could also be subjected to symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990 [1977]) wherein they exposed the naturalised doxa of sexism within academia. Nevertheless, it is important to note that all subjugated individuals within academia, including ECAs of all genders, could experience this. Regarding the specific response of academic men to oppression and bias, though little literature was available, they appeared to be either perpetuating sexism in academia, mostly through silence or enactment (Armato, 2013) or protesting it, trying to establish a new form of inclusive masculinity (Styhre & Tienari, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2015). Men did experience some form of bias around flexibility and family at work, in that they were presumed to be career-focused (O'Connor et al., 2015); however, this did not disadvantage them at work in the same way a family bias did for women.

After discussing commonalities and differences between gendered ECAs the review moved on to consider resistance within the neoliberal structure of the university and, though it was noted how resistance in academia was easily subjugated and individualised (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Kalfa et al., 2018), it still managed to both exist and persist. Resistance was expressed by all genders within academia, although some approaches had a feminist origin or ideological slant, for example academic kindness, self-care and slow scholarship (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Price et al., 2015; Puāwai Collective & Le Heron, 2019). Other strategies included speaking openly about ECA issues and engaging in collectivism, both as self-formed groups (Macoun & Miller, 2014; Puāwai Collective & Le Heron, 2019; Twitter,

2019a; Twitter, 2019b) and through union action (Bailey & Freedman, 2011; Davies, & O'Callaghan, 2014; Breeze, 2018; Phipps, 2018).

Exploring the intricacies and differences within ECA experience has additionally emphasised the importance of maintaining an intersectional analysis throughout this research. Despite those that might belittle this approach as simply being 'identity politics' or a distraction from matters of material redistribution (Young, 1989; Fraser, 2013). Intersectionality matters as it identifies points of oppression and privilege that occur when we consider all the social categories someone occupies (Crenshaw, 1991; Yuval-Davis, 2006). This review chose to focus on race and class, with gender, as two intersections especially pertinent to this work. Firstly, it was important to look at BAME academics, due to their appallingly low numbers in the sector (ECU, 2019), which further exacerbated feelings of otherness and non-belonging. Secondly, it was also important to look closely at class and gender, both due to the material conditions of precarious work – and the ability of WC academics to endure it – and the subjective dimension, of feeling deficient and once again like an outsider in academe.

Exploring the overriding social context and the specific occupational issues of gendered ECAs has helped this research to achieve two key aims: firstly, how its outcomes fit into the existing literature and, secondly, how they fit within the wider sociological picture. What are the key concerns that affect the subjects of this research and what are the conditions which allow them to occur? This has included a consideration of how ECAs relate to themselves as gendered and academic subjects and how they also relate to the structures they are contained within: the neoliberal university. As a work, this research has further contributed to these conversations, looking at the commonalities and differences in gendered experience while also maintaining an intersectional analysis to appreciate the granular nature of subjective differences.

### 2.6.1. Gaps within the Literature

Through this literature review, I identified some gaps in the literature surrounding ECAs and gender. Firstly, there is only a small amount of literature that addresses how academics' personal lives and professional lives cross over (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra; 2013, Cukut Krilić



et al., 2018), which is important in addressing how the domestic sphere interacts with paid work. While Cukut Krilić et al. (2018) do look at the intersection of work-life balance within ECA lives, neither of these studies cover the particular gender order within the UK. Also, while there is a substantial amount of literature on feminism and women's inequalities in academia, and amongst ECAs, especially within the last 5 years, there is very little addressing academic masculinities (Duan, 2010; Armato, 2013; Styhre & Tienari, 2014; O'Connor et al., 2015). It has therefore been difficult to ascertain from the existing literature the particularities of ECA men's perceptions, their consideration of privilege, their experience of bias, and their perpetuation of it. The literature on imposter syndrome also tends to focus solely upon women's experiences of it within academia (Collett & Avelis, 2013, Falkner et al., 2015). Though Hutchins (2015) compared imposter syndrome among all academics, gender was not the focus of their work. Research directly comparing men's and women's experience of academic imposter syndrome – especially among ECAs, where it is particularly prevalent – would provide more data on how this is experienced as a psycho-social and gendered phenomenon.

Aside from this, there is also little literature available on the intersection between working class and ECA identities of all genders, and also little addressing mental health within academia. It is apparent from what literature is available that mental illness is more statistically prevalent amongst ECAs and women (Kinman, 2001), but also that men overall are less likely to disclose symptoms of poor mental health (Cornwall et al., 2017). The fact that mental health issues in academia are more widespread in certain groups makes it an important area for further study. There also appears to be a gap within the literature on the subject of underemployment in UK academia, and it would be useful therefore to know why individuals take on part-time contracts: are they underemployed or are they using these contracts to address work-life balance? Although there is an increasing amount of literature that looks at harassment of students (1752 Group, 2018; Phipps, 2018), there is little that addresses the particular situation of ECA women and how this interacts with their particular position within the labour market. Finally, there appears to be little research currently – aside from Cukut Krilić et al. (2018) – that addresses the gendered views of ECAs on beginning a family and how this can coincide with the early stages of academia.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter will outline how I have undertaken my research to fulfil its aims and objectives. I will begin by establishing my overall methodology, an ontological and epistemological grounding that values a subjective and interpretative view of the social world, yet also accounts for structural and historical context. Moreover, this will also include a discussion of phenomenological and feminist approaches and how they are connected to the research. Finally, I will move on to describe my methods, my means of data collection: in-depth phenomenological interviews and an online questionnaire, the size and shape of my sample and how I have undertaken the data analysis. In describing my methods, I will also discuss the ethics which have governed my research. Finally, I will discuss some of the issues that presented themselves over the course of the research process.

### 3.2. Ontology and Epistemology

For this research, I have used a subjective ontology. The object of my inquiry is 'experience' and I wish to explore how this is socially constructed, both through social actors' interpretation of their own experience, and how they experience relationships with others. The nature of this research also means that there is no definable hypothesis to be tested, instead the focus is descriptive, concerned with the examination of a particular population set. While, as a group, there will inevitably be commonalities between ECAs, it is also important to consider that no two experiences will be the same. An ontological, descriptive approach by nature is able therefore to account for multiple subjectivities by not seeking definitive answers. As a researcher, I subscribe to the post-positivist view that '...humans play a large part in the 'construction' of knowledge, and truth may be more ambiguous and fluid than once thought' (O'Leary, 2011, 3). In turn, epistemology looks at the way we can discover knowledge and acts as a companion to our ontological viewpoint, the way in which we decide how to seek descriptive knowledge. Employing a subjective ontology therefore leads toward an interpretivist epistemology enabling us to decode and

explore how social actors interpret the world. As Kögler (2011) states, it is important to uncover not only what social agents do, but to also take ‘into account what they themselves think they are doing’ (446).

Nevertheless, an important aspect of this research in both its ontological approach and epistemological actions, has been to account for the specific historical context – a neoliberal university and corresponding gender regime – that my participants find themselves located within. I perceive social actors as being positioned somewhere between two forces, the first, their own agentic ability to influence their own lives, and second, structural influences, institutions (such as the university) and ordering behaviours (the gender order) that can also determine their life chances. For example, Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990 [1977]) idea of habitus considers how individuals work within ‘fields’ of possibility, of how these life chances are constrained and enabled by various structural forces. Another position, and the one in which I have chosen to frame this research, is that of materialist feminism. This is a theoretical approach that also accounts for structural forces that impact gendered experience: localised manifestations of patriarchy and the contingent nature of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), alongside agentic individual experiences that both resist and are informed by these forces. Below, Jackson (2001) outlines how in understanding gendered lives we need more than to understand macro social structure or the subjective accounts of social actors, we need to understand the interrelation between both.

*‘We need also to account for subjectivity and agency; for patterns of gendered interaction in everyday life as well as the institutional hierarchies within which they take place; the ways in which such interaction is endowed with, and shaped by, the meanings it has for participants; the micro levels at which power is deployed and resisted, as well as the macro level of systematic domination.’*

(Jackson, 2001, 287)

A materialist feminist approach, in acknowledging the place of structure, is beneficial in assuaging the feminist fear that too great a focus on subjectivities would obscure focus on oppression, praxis and social justice, ‘that we may stray too far from feminism’s original project’ (Barrett & Phillips, 1992,6). While much of materialist feminist literature addresses women’s inequalities, it is also concerned with the relationships between men and women and the intersectionality of this experience (Barret, 1997; Young, 1997; Jackson, 2001). It is therefore an appropriate theoretical model for this research and a useful approach in

examining gendered subjectivities under the current neoliberal and patriarchal gender order. Materialist feminism while maintaining a focus on oppression, and therefore patriarchy, also seeks to look beyond this and toward other systems of power: racism, hierarchy, classism, that are in operation.

### 3.3 Research Approach

Now that a subjectivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology have been established as the overarching philosophical guidelines of this research, I will outline the selected approaches that guided the methods. Firstly, I have selected a phenomenological approach, to account for the exploration and interpretation of experience, and secondly, I have adopted a feminist research approach, to consider the gendered exploration of oppression and power. Together these both call for a qualitative approach, with the focus being an exploration of the issues at hand as opposed to answering a definitive hypothesis.

#### 3.3.1. Phenomenological Approaches to Research

Within the interpretivist research paradigm there are several approaches that one can undertake, for example grounded theory or action research. I however have decided to pursue a phenomenological approach, one I feel most accurately chimes with my central research aims of exploring and interpreting experience. Phenomenological research involves describing in as much detail as possible the 'phenomena' or experience that is the subject of enquiry while also describing in-depth the subjective viewpoint of the participant, 'an approach that aims to focus on people's perceptions of the world in which they live and what it means to them' (Langdridge, 2007, 4). King and Horrocks (2010) support this as a key to implementing a phenomenological methodology, of emphasising the dual values of 'what it is we experience', and 'how we experience it', which are also termed noema and noesis respectively. As a result, phenomenology directly points towards methodologies through which the exploration of noema and noesis can be conducted, primarily interviews and case studies (Groenewald, 2004; Allen-Collinson, 2011; Bevan, 2014). This has been directly applied to my own research which has considered the experience of being an ECA (noema) and how the particular ECA in question views their

experience (noesis). Another key aspect of a phenomenological approach is arriving at the 'essence' (Allen-Collinson, 2011; Cohen-Shabot, 2016), what it is that makes the research important and/or unique, and the gestalt (Groenewald, 2004), of how all the disparate parts speak to the whole and what it tells us about the larger, sociological picture. This mirrors the materialist feminist approach in accounting for both the importance of subjectivities (essence) and the structures that connect and inform them (gestalt).

Another important aspect of a phenomenological approach is the idea of bracketing, of choosing whether or not to separate the researcher's experience from that of the researched. For example, Husserl (Husserl cited in Eagleton, 2008 [1983]) continually emphasised the idea of returning 'back to the things themselves', to examine experience outside of preconceived notions, a tradition also carried forward by Van Manen (1990) who called into question the researcher's theoretical bias. King and Horrocks (2010) noted this philosophical divide in phenomenology, between the transcendental approach of Husserl which concerned itself with the idea of 'pure' experience and the hermeneutic phenomenologists: Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty who saw personal experience as being inextricably bound up in others. This latter conception of hermeneutic phenomenological research is often the one favoured by social researchers as it reflects the interwoven nature of experience, that 'we cannot stand outside our cultural frame of reference' (Allen-Collinson, 2011, 306). This hermeneutic approach, therefore, is the path I have taken in constructing my methodology. However, the idea of bracketing is not completely redundant and can be useful in helping to make us 'aware of our assumptions and standpoints and to render these explicit' (ibid, 306).

### 3.3.2. Feminist Approaches to Research

As well as my approach being phenomenological it will also be grounded in feminist ideas, both in its exploration of gender as an analytical category and in how the methodology was conducted. Though I have already discussed the materialist feminist approach that has informed my research, here I wish to discuss how a feminist approach relates to methods specifically. While phenomenology specifically points towards certain methodologies (interviews, case studies) a feminist approach does not dictate any particular practice, though there is a tendency within feminist research towards the qualitative (Reinharz &

Davidman, 1992; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Though there is no definitive method within a feminist approach, this being as Reinharz and Davidman, (1992) notes at the discretion of the feminist researcher, there are several common threads which I will discuss herein.

One of the fundamental injustices feminist research sought to address was the use of gender as a legitimate category of analysis and to push the idea that women's lives were also worth serious sociological study (Oakley, 1974; Delphy & Leonard, 1992). It also sought to emphasise that men's experiences were not universal and that differences in the lived experiences of gendered subjects was an important aspect of sociological exploration (Fisher, 2000). Moreover, another important feature of feminist research is its intrinsic desire to challenge knowledge that excludes marginalised groups. Though chiefly concerned with addressing women's inequalities in a patriarchal gender order, alongside other anti-hierarchical approaches such as post-colonial theory (Spivak et al., 1996), a feminist approach has been essential in promoting work focused on subjugated people, the 'critical emancipation' (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000) of individuals across social categories. Feminism has a methodological history of promoting 'margins to the centre' thinking (Hooks, 1984), of examining those at the edge of society and considering what this can tell us about our social behaviours and institutions. This is also commonly known as Standpoint Theory as laid out by Smith (1987), a philosophical approach that has pushed feminism to become increasingly intersectional, encouraging feminist researchers to focus their attention on the most vulnerable members of society. My research in its exploration of ECAs has endeavoured to add to a dialogue of social justice, of exploring what occurs when precarity, gender and bias interact alongside possible means of resistance. Though many ECAs may be privileged, both in comparison to other groups of social actors and to others in various alternate occupations, it is important to emphasise that the sector contains many individuals that are struggling both in terms of redistribution and recognition (Fraser, 2013) and as such are worthy of research.

Another important contribution made by feminist approaches to research has been breaking down the barrier between researcher and researched, that there is a permeable aspect to this relationship, one which questions ideas of power and hierarchy within a research context. Sprague and Zimmerman (1993) for instance, established that there were feminist issues associated with a subject-object split (a research context where the participant has no say in the research process) as it mimics patriarchal power structures.

Building upon this, Harding's (1993) idea of 'strong objectivity' found it essential that researchers acknowledge their own preconceptions and accept that value-free research does not exist. Harding believed that acknowledging positionality as a researcher was far stronger methodologically as it recognised that bias is pervasive and difficult to erase; it is therefore a more accurate reflection of the social world. In having a dialogue with my participants that involved my own thoughts and opinions on academia, this was incorporated into my own research. I will discuss this further when outlining the process around data collection.

Finally, feminist researchers have worked toward overturning the positivist view that emotions are a superfluous aspect of data collection, instead, they have established them as important objects of study and a key phenomenon that can occur within the research process. In traditional research contexts emotions were seen to go against the idea of an ostensibly scientific objectivity (Skeggs, 2008) and rather than being considered valid outcomes, were largely ignored. It was not until Hochschild (1983) that a real 'sociology of emotion' became established, demonstrating that these could be the central focus of sociological inquiry. The interviews, and even survey answers, I gathered as means of data collection were imbued with the emotional responses of my participants, these therefore inform the outcomes of my research.

### 3.3.3. The Feminist-Phenomenological Connection

In terms of alignment, the two approaches discussed here – feminist and phenomenological – have many overlapping aspects in terms of both philosophical overview and praxis. For example, both feminism and phenomenology place a significant emphasis on experience and on the participant's interpretation of it, which in turn values the use of emotions and reflection within research. Secondly, they both value (if we use the hermeneutic/existentialist school of phenomenology) the reflexive and permeable relationship between researcher and participant and refute the notion of value-free research. Lastly, they both concern themselves with linking the essence of experience – of considering the commonalities alongside the differences – to gestalt, bigger sociological questions, themes and structures. This is a practice in line with the feminist refrain, the

personal, is the political, and the ‘critical emancipation’ (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000) that comes from allowing oneself to become an object of discussion and research.

Now that I have established the overarching approach of my research: a phenomenological and feminist paradigm that places a focus on exploring and interpreting experience, a permeable relationship between research and researched, and one concerned with connecting personal experience to the bigger sociological picture, I will go on to outline the practical steps that I undertook to answer my central research question:

What are the gendered experiences of the ECA in UK Higher Education?

This will also include an explanation of how this research defines ECAs.

### 3.4. Aims and Objectives

Below, in Table 1, are the three aims that have contributed to answering the central research question: What are the gendered experiences of early career academics in UK higher education?



Table 1: Aims and Objectives of Research

Aim	Objective
<p>To explore how precarity and neoliberalism are impacting the gendered experiences of ECAs within the UK</p>	<p>Recruit participants for interviews in accordance with inclusion criteria through social media, email and physical advertisements.</p> <p>Conduct in-depth phenomenological interviews with 20 ECAs (10 women and 10 men), alongside 5 senior academics to historicise the phenomena. While largely unstructured, interviews will cover professional history and should uncover any experiences of precarity. This sample should be as diverse as possible to account for differences within experiences of precarity. It should include therefore a variety of academics from different disciplines and BAME academics.</p> <p>Use online survey to uncover ECA experiences UK wide. Specific questions to capture precarity both closed: contract type, number of positions, length of fixed term contracts; and open: experience of the job, enjoyment of the job.</p>
<p>To explore how ECAs have been affected by the gender order within academia</p>	<p>Recruit participants for interviews in accordance with inclusion criteria through social media, email and physical advertisements.</p> <p>Conduct in-depth phenomenological interviews with 20 ECAs, (10 women and 10 men participants) alongside 5 senior academics to historicise the phenomena.</p> <p>An even gender split of ECA participants will help to produce good comparisons on the experience of gender order. While interviews are</p>

	<p>unstructured participants will be asked about how they consider gender, both as an individual social actor and in relation to colleagues. This sample should be as diverse as possible to account for differences within gendered experience. It should include therefore a variety of academics from different disciplines and BAME academics.</p> <p>Use online survey to uncover ECA experiences UK wide. Survey will ask participants to state their gender and state if they perceive gender to have affected their or others' experience in academia.</p>
<p>To explore how the private and public lives of ECAs intersect</p>	<p>In terms of exploring the intersection of ECAs' personal and private lives, this will involve explicitly asking participants, both within the interviews and in the questionnaires about work-life balance, personal relationships (friends, family, romantic) and what they do outside of work or consider non-work (work that is not financially remunerated).</p>

### 3.5. Defining Early Career Academics

Before continuing with the methodology, I wish to address the literature around defining early career academics, of how other researchers have defined this group before setting out my own inclusion and exclusion categories for this research. Defining the parameters of an early career academic is by no means a simple task, it is one inextricably linked to the duties they undertake as well as to the scaling of university hierarchies. As a career stage, it is also one complicated by ideas of precarity (Laudel & Gläser, 2008) and the tension that exists between the idea of the model academic, one with an unbroken career trajectory, and the reality many ECAs today, particularly women, experience (Thornton, 2013). Within the literature, there is also a division between the majority that use the term Early Career Researcher ([ECR]; Bazeley, 2003; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2015; Capewell et al., 2016) and those that use Early Career Academic ([ECA] Hubbard et al., 2015; Bosanquet et al., 2017). Despite the use of different terms, both ECR and ECA in these contributions describe academic roles that undertake teaching and research, whether paid or unpaid. For

the purpose of clarity, this research will use ECA over ECR to clearly account for all the varying contract pathways: teaching, research, dual pathway, scholarship, and academic duties that makeup this initial career stage. Using ECA also addresses the increasing focus in the UK on single-focus teaching and research contracts, with teaching only contracts more common at the ECA level (Locke et al., 2016).

Notwithstanding pathways, there are still several other challenges that come from defining ECAs, for instance, a division between institutions' and research bodies temporal definitions (XX number of years since PhD), and the argument that self-definition better accounts for the variety in ECA experience. Addressing the former, even amongst HEIs and research bodies there is little agreement for how many years post doctorate one can be considered an ECA, the decision appearing somewhat arbitrary and occupying a range somewhere between 4-7 years. Moreover, there appears to be disagreement on whether this should begin immediately post- PhD or on securing one's first academic position (Arts and Humanities Research Council [AHRC], 2016; The British Academy [BA], 2019; University of Kent, 2019; The Social Policy Agency [SPA], 2019).

Other institutions and researchers, however, have deviated from a temporal definition, taking a more flexible approach to defining ECAs. The University of Southampton (2016) for instance acknowledges that ECA/ECR refers to a wide range of individuals at various stages in their research careers (2016), and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2016) acknowledges three distinct stages of being an ECR: doctoral, immediately post-doctorate and transition to independent researcher. Vitae (cited in UCEA, 2015) have stated that they do not encourage the use of the term ECR as they believe it to be too vague, instead preferring to make use of The European Framework for Research Careers (EURAXESS) which places researchers into one of different stages of career development. Laudel & Gläser, (2008) also agree that stages, indicating levels of independence, is the best way of considering one's position in the academic hierarchy with ECAs occupying the 'apprentice' level, one 'that learns to conduct research while working under the direction of others' (390) .

An alternative approach to defining ECAs is the use of self-definition, allowing ECAs to use their own attachment to the term 'early career' as a means of categorisation. The ESRC's (Locke et al., 2016) own study into how they might better support ECAs, concluded that self-definition was useful 'given the lack of a coherent or consistent

definition in this area' (12). Bosanquet et al. (2017) prefer to use self-definition for the same reason, also noting alongside others (Laudel & Gläser, 2008) that labour market precarity has caused a great deal of disruption to the traditional narrative of ECAs' career progression with many spending years in sequential post docs or fixed term contracts. They also argued that self-definition helped to combat what Thornton (2013) described as 'the mirage of merit' of career narratives largely based on male experience which did not account for the career breaks more common amongst women (Bagilhole & White, 2013; Locke et al., 2016). In her work, Bazeley (2006) examined the importance of self-definition to ECRs in foreseeing their future direction, a view also supported by McAlpine et al (2014), that being early career is best considered as an 'identity-trajectory'. As opposed to defined categories, they proposed that progression was the best way for ECAs to frame their experience as it imbued them with a sense of agency.

### 3.5.1. Inclusion Categories for Research

I will now list the inclusion categories for participants included within this research, both interviews and online questionnaires, alongside why I have decided on these particular parameters.

- 5 years post awarding of PhD

I opted for a definition of ECA that was 5 years post the awarding of a PhD. While there is much to be argued in favour of self-definition – especially regarding institutions and funding bodies' denial of money, training or resources – I was concerned with how this would affect the comparison of experience. To illustrate, if two different participants self-identified as an ECA but one had been immediately awarded their doctorate, and another was ten years hence, it becomes more difficult to directly compare the phenomenon of recent entry into the academic labour market. I also wanted to capture the salient experiences of precarity, unemployment, underemployment, and possible move onto a permanent contract, that were more likely to occur in this intense period following the PhD. Having a defined period also allows a better comparison for how the career trajectories of different groups, primarily men and women, has developed. Comparing trajectories was also the reason for choosing a fixed period as opposed to interviewing solely those on fixed term contracts. It allowed a direct comparison of what point

individuals had reached within a defined period and how much experience varied within it. The reason for selecting five years over any other fixed amount was to account for one of the more common, modal average, periods that institutions and funding bodies consider a cut-off for ECAs (Bazeley, 2003; SPA 2019; University of Kent, 2019).

- You must be working within the UK.

This research is based on the very specific, localised context of UK academia and its specific political project and gender regime. Participants therefore were all located within the UK.

- You must be currently participating in the academic job market, whether in work or looking for work.

This was to ensure that those participating in the research were still involved in academia, either within their occupation or their job search. Given the precarious nature of this career stage, I felt it was important to capture ECAs who were currently unemployed.

The senior academics who participated in this research were subject to alternate inclusion categories to ensure their suitability. Senior academics were not included in the online questionnaire, only for the in-depth, phenomenological, interviews.

The inclusion categories for *senior academics* were as follows:

- You must be ten years post PhD

This was to ensure participants had been within academia long enough to reflect upon their own experience of being an ECA and how it had changed since becoming a senior academic. It was also necessary that they were able to compare their own experience to those of current ECAs.

- You must be currently participating in the academic job market, whether in work or looking for work.

Once again, this was to ensure that participants were actively involved in academia and had not left the occupation.

Aside from these inclusion criteria, it was emphasised that participants of all genders, from all disciplines, regions of the UK and from all HEIs were welcome to participate.

### 3.6. Recruiting Participants: Online, Personal and Professional networks

Recruitment for both the in-depth interviews and online questionnaires was achieved almost entirely through the use of online spaces, primarily twitter and also email contact lists for early career groups. The use of social media to recruit participants is now extremely commonplace amongst researchers (Yuan et al., 2014; Burton-Chase et al., 2017) as requests for participation can easily be shared and retweeted. This enabled me as a researcher to reach participants outside of my immediate circles and beyond my geographical reach, a factor that allowed me to secure diversity from the sample. The ECA 'community of practice' (Lave & Weinger, 1991), whereby individuals unite together in a shared learning space is one that is very prevalent online and there are countless Facebook groups and Twitter accounts, where ECAs gather, discuss and assist each other with knowledge and resources. As a researcher this was advantageous, ensuring various avenues from which to recruit participants. Please refer to Appendix 2 for the exact copy used to recruit participants via email, Facebook and Twitter.

A smaller number of participants were recruited through personal connections and through gatekeepers (Bryman, 2012), individuals that assisted me in recruiting harder to reach participants, particularly BAME ECAs and senior academics. Using friends as participants was also a phenomenon that occurred, of which there was little reference within methodological literature. However, Yuan's (2014) research addresses several of the advantages (good rapport, openness) and disadvantages (distraction, lack of boundaries) of involving participants with a close pre-existing relationship to the researcher. Others do discuss how using participants with which you have a personal connection is sometimes inevitable, especially in smaller, intimate fields of study, for example, Giulianotti's (1995) research into football hooliganism, or research that has an auto-ethnographic element like my own (Saltmarsh et al., 2011; Sambrook et al., 2008). As a PhD researcher (at the time of writing), I had the advantage of existing within the field of my research and was therefore naturally connected to participants by occupation.

### 3.7. Data Collection

Data collection for my research was undertaken through two approaches:

- In-depth, phenomenological interviews with ECAs and senior academics
- An online survey designed to reach ECAs UK wide, conducted through Bristol Online Surveys

Together, the use of these techniques succeeded in helping me to fulfil my central aim, of exploring the gendered experiences of ECAs within UK Higher Education. The two methods supported each other in providing rich, subjective data that explored the commonalities and variety of the phenomenon, the interview via in-depth personal exploration and the online survey through further outreach, both regionally and institutionally. The online survey also provided further descriptive statistics that helped to further illuminate the phenomenon under study. Extending the study to more participants via the online survey also ensured that data saturation, the variety contained within ECA experience, was reached (Mason, 2010). Interviews have often been cited as being a natural fit with both the phenomenological and feminist approaches that I have decided to undertake (Cohen-Shabot, 2016; Allen Collinson 2011), however, ‘the interview’ in social research is an extremely varied tool, with a multitude of ways it can be pursued. Here, therefore, I will discuss the various aspects of what makes an interview phenomenological and what makes it feminist, and how I implemented these ideas within my own research process. This section will also outline the practical step I followed in undertaking this research.

#### 3.7.1. The Phenomenological Interview

From a phenomenological perspective, one of the key outcomes of an interview is to ascertain the ‘dasein’ (Kaufner & Chemero, 2015) of a participant, also known as the ‘life-world’, the process by which the researcher captures the dialogue between an individual and their place within the greater social context. This is essential in capturing both the essence and the gestalt of the phenomenological interviews. Another important aspect to consider when undertaking phenomenological interviews is the use of ‘bracketing’, of attempting to separate a researcher’s perspective, or alternately, accepting its permeability

into their participants viewpoint. Ultimately, I have chosen to disclose the full nature of my research and my approach to my participants, so they do not feel deceived in anyway, for instance when work is published. Failing to disclose the complete nature of my work would also go against a key principal of feminist research ethics which rejects any form of deception (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). This use of bracketing has also resulted in me, as the researcher, sharing some of my own perspectives and experiences on issues relating to ECA life with participants when appropriate or when asked directly.

Aside from daesin and bracketing, there are various other ways in which phenomenology can be enacted in the interview context. King and Horrocks (2010) for example, in their review of those undertaking Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), found that most phenomenological researchers implemented a semi-structured approach found in other qualitative interview approaches, albeit with a stronger emphasis on 'detailed descriptions of particular phenomena as they are experienced' (182). They also reasoned that for many phenomenological researchers the interview is not really where the approach is applied, rather that it becomes apparent in the analysis, and how the results are interpreted, uncovering the essence of a participant's experience (Allen-Collinson, 2011). In this research, uncovering the essence of participants' experience has been achieved partly by short interview biographies, section 3.15, and in considering both participants' experience and interpretation of their experience in discussion of the data.

Regarding specific techniques that could be implemented in the course of the interview, Bevan (2014) discusses the use of 'imaginative variation' as a tool which can be used by the phenomenological researcher. This was based on one of Husserl's (Husserl, 1967, cited in Bevan, 2014) approaches, whereby he would ask his students to imagine an object, for example a table, and then ask what they could change so it would still fulfil the idea of a 'table' while being different from other tables. In a social research context, we can implement this same idea by asking participants how they believe the phenomena under examination would be different if some facet of it were changed. For example, in my own research I asked participants how they feel their situation has been affected by their contract, their gender or their institution which pushed them to then consider how their lives might vary if this particular aspect was changed. This is a useful technique as it encourages participants both to share details of their experience and to reflect upon it.



The structure of the interview themselves is yet another way a phenomenological approach can be enacted. For instance, there are several theorists implementing phenomenological techniques who recommend that a researcher conduct several interviews to achieve the best results (Schuman, 1982; Seidman, 2005). However, other theorists such as Bevan (2014) believed that multiple interviews were not an essential element of phenomenological research and that we need to maintain an element of pragmatism. If participants, for example, are vulnerable or have limited time available, such as the ECAs of my own research, the scheduling of numerous interviews has the potential to be off-putting and raise the amount of attrition within the sample. There must, therefore, be some form of negotiation between valid, rich data and a pragmatic regard for the time and needs of participants. As an alternative, Bevan suggests focusing on the interview design and the way a phenomenological approach is constructed. In his own study of patients' experience of dialysis, Bevan outlines the three key stages he implemented in his own phenomenological interviews: contextualisation, apprehending the phenomenon and finally clarifying the phenomenon. As Bevan's approach was one that greatly influenced the structure of my interviews, I will now go on to further explain the three stages of his approach.

- Contextualisation

The first stage of the approach, contextualisation, is the simplest to explain as it sets the framework for the phenomena being studied as nominally suggested. This is the stage at which the researcher will ask the participant to sketch out the details of their life beyond the closer focus of the study, providing a comprehensive depiction of the individual's life world.

- Apprehending the phenomena

Following this stage, the researcher then moves onto 'apprehending the phenomenon' whereby the researcher focuses in more specifically on the phenomenon under examination while also eliciting more detailed description of points raised by the participant.

- Clarifying the phenomenon

The stage where the essence of the phenomena is uncovered, a form of analysis that is often revealed in the coding of the transcript, and also forms an important part of the phenomenological interview. Here, Bevan suggests using the technique of active listening,

whereby the researcher directly engages and responds to the points raised by the participant, also making use of imaginative variation. Clarifying the phenomenon essentially means illuminating how one participant's experience of a phenomena compares with others, what are the commonalities and what are the differences?

Considering all the ways in which one can conduct a phenomenological interview I have found Bevan's approach the most compelling as it aligns with both my ontological and epistemological needs whilst also building in an important practical dimension. Evaluating the needs of my busy research participants, I adapted the structure: contextualising, apprehending and clarifying to one, in-depth, 90-minute (approx..) interview; this can be seen in Table 2 (100). Overall, the structure proved to be the most pragmatic way to conduct phenomenological interviews with this particular group of participants. In scheduling interviews, I allowed ninety minutes as time which would gather significant, detailed data and allow for all three stages of Bevan's approach while still being respectful of ECAs' busy schedules. At the end of interviewing, most interviews fell close to this mark with a small number falling well under this time (around 45 minutes) and some, with the explicit permission of the participant, going over.

### 3.7.2. Feminist Approaches to Interviewing

As well as adhering to phenomenological ideas, it was important that the interviews I conducted observed the guiding principles of feminist methodology. Oakley (1974) was one of the first to outline how structured interviews frequently worked in opposition to feminist ethics, often embodying a one-directional, hierarchical structure whereby interviewers extracted information from interviewees with nothing offered to participants in return. Feminist researchers rightly pointed out that subservience in the research process, replicated the structures of patriarchy and that new methodological approaches were required to address this. It was proposed instead therefore that interviews should focus on rapport and on building relationships. Although approximately half my participants were ECA men, I applied the same values of feminist research to their interviews: non-hierarchical, reciprocal and aware of the researcher in the process.

It is important to remember that despite the close historical links feminist approaches have with this particular methodology, this does not make it immune to replicating patriarchal elements. Preissle and Han (2012) remind us that when we choose a qualitative methodology such as phenomenological interviewing, we often exchange one set of ethical problems for another, ‘a detached, distant, and hierarchical stance for an intimate, close and equitable position’ (22). For instance, in interviews there is a higher risk of emotional harm than strictly quantitative methodologies, and while emotions were something I wished to capture, as an ethical social researcher I also wished to protect my participants from any unnecessary harm. To combat this, in my interviews I maintained a position as a reflexive and empathetic researcher, employing skills such as active listening to ensure full awareness of the emotions and issues being raised over the course of the interview and, if necessary, knowing when to pause or delay the interview entirely. Participants did express strong emotions during the course of some interviews, and it was important therefore to check-in on their desire to continue.

### 3.7.3. Interview Structure

In adherence to Bevan’s approach my interview was based on a semi-structured approach as opposed to a pre-determined set of questions; what I asked was dependent on the participant’s response and where they wished to place the focus. The initial stage of the interview, however, contextualising the phenomenon, did contain a number of set questions and a structure which could easily be replicated as it was necessary to explicitly explore the lifeworld and ‘academic history’ of participants. Table 2 provides an example of how my research structure was enacted with set questions for stage 1 alongside example questions for the second and third stage. A copy of the interview topic guide can be found in Appendix 5.

Table 2: Interview Structure

Interview Structure	Method	Example Questions
Contextualization	Descriptive/narrative context questions	<p>Collection of demographic details:</p> <p>Tell me about your academic career so far</p> <p>What's your work-life balance like?</p> <p>What's it like working at ____ university?</p> <p>What's it like working in your particular department/school?</p>
Apprehending the phenomenon	Descriptive and structural questions	<p>(The following sections are dependent on the results of the contextualization)</p> <p>Would you like more time to work on research?</p> <p>Do you feel your line manager provides you with opportunities to progress?</p> <p>How do you feel about moving further away from your family?</p>
Clarifying the phenomenon	Active listening and imaginative variation.	<p>How does the culture in this department compare to others you've worked in?</p> <p>Do you feel gender/race/class has made any difference to your academic career?</p> <p>How did your experience of sexism make you feel about academia in general?</p> <p>You mentioned feeling privileged... in relation to who?</p>

#### 3.7.4. Other practical notes on interviewing

Just over half of the interviews for this research were conducted in person, my own preference regarding the ability to engage and read participants, and the remainder conducted via Skype. Practical measures of cost and time meant I could not reach every participant in person and thus this was decided upon as a compromise. When interviewing participants in person or via Skype a quiet and confidential space was sought out where the participant felt comfortable discussing the topics in question. This also ensured quality recording of interviews, which were recorded via windows voice software and then uploaded to the Hull university cloud storage system 'Hull Box' before being deleted from the device. At the beginning of each interview participants were asked if they had read the 'interview participant consent form' (Appendix 3) and whether they had any questions or queries regarding the research. Consent forms had been sent to interviewees to fill out and return in advance of each interview, as such they had pre-existing knowledge of its contents and what they were agreeing to. Participants were also reminded that they could pause or stop the interview completely if they so desired and that their consent alongside their data could be withdrawn without consequence.

I also conducted two pilot interviews before the main data collection which assisted me in tailoring my approach and adjusting the interview topic guide (Appendix 6 accordingly). Interviews were only undertaken after approval from the faculty ethics committee had been given (Appendix 6).

#### 3.7.5. Auto-ethnography: Embedded in the Field

Although not my primary methodological approach, it is apparent that there is an auto-ethnographic element to my research. I am a PhD researcher and in many ways part of the Early Career Academic community which I am researching; their concerns mirror my own concerns and I am placed within the liminal space between researcher and student (Winstone & Moore, 2017). Auto-ethnography, much like hermeneutic phenomenological and feminist approaches, embraces the researcher's subjectivity and emotions, although in a

purely auto-ethnographical approach this idea would be entirely at the foreground. My research does however echo Reed-Danahay's (1997) definition that it is 'research (graphy) that connects the personal (auto) to the cultural (ethnos), placing the self within a social context' (2). I am personally and inextricably linked to my research.

As a feminist researcher, I have selected this topic as it pertains to my own passions and interests; my colleagues and fellow students amongst others all form a part of the fabric from which my research question was born. The nature of my research will therefore be very emic, I am inside and a part of the community which I study, and I am very much the subject of my own inquiry. This is of course not a new idea, and one that has a particular prevalence in Higher Education research where researchers are inevitably embedded in their field of study (Sambrook et al., 2008; Doloriert & Sambrook 2011). In my research this has been achieved through valuing the permeable relationships between researcher and researched, of discussing my own hopes and anxieties around academic work with participants where it has been appropriate. For instance, there were several points at which participants asked my opinion on certain topics as a PhD researcher. From both a feminist and phenomenological research perspective, the researcher should always be present and reflexive in their work, in this instance however, the connection was even more pronounced.

### 3.7.6. Conducting an Online Survey

Alongside, in-depth, phenomenological interviews I also undertook an online survey to collect additional data. This was done to extend geographical reach and to help with data saturation (Mason, 2010), to fully understand the variety and possible difference in experience that could exist within the data set. While it would be impossible to account for every unique aspect of ECA experience, this helped to greatly extend the scope. The survey itself (see Appendix 8 for a full version), while containing a number of closed questions: gender, contract type, age, to assist with descriptive information on the phenomena of being an ECA, was primarily focused on open-text questions designed to add to and extend the phenomenological data about experience. Conducting an online survey had several advantages as a companion means of data collection to the relatively labour-intensive nature of in-depth interviews. It was relatively quick to undertake (Ball, 2019) and

also worked well in terms of non-probability sampling, of targeting a specific group, in this case ECAs. As an online method, it could be shared easily within appropriate groups and via social media through the tagging of relevant ECA groups and associations. The use of software, in this case Bristol Online Surveys, also ensured that the survey was ‘contingent question effective’ (Ball, 2019), that should individuals not need to reply to a question – it not being applicable to their experience – it would redirect them to the next appropriate question. Although some highlight ‘coverage bias’ as an issue for online surveys (Bethlehem, 2010), that they are more likely to reach some populations (for instance younger internet literate participants), this was not a particular issue in this research. ECAs are computer literate and also work in close proximity with technology due to the demands of their job. While ECAs experience some intense forms of surveillance, they have some degree in autonomy in how they conduct their day to day tasks and are therefore better able to find the time to complete a survey.

Another advantage of the survey as a companion method, is the way in which it enabled more candid responses through anonymity. Despite all the efforts I made to be an approachable researcher in an interview setting, the participant may have viewed me as a colleague and therefore remained guarded on some issues. The anonymous nature of the online survey helped to balance this by exacerbating what Hardaker and McGlashan (2015) term ‘disinhibition’, the way in which individuals are liberated online, freed from their physically identifying features and from the norms of everyday social interaction. As a result of this, they were more likely to voice honest – or even controversial – opinions with little fear of reprisal. In my research, this expressed itself through online participants’ frank opinions of students and other colleagues.

Undertaking the online survey itself was achieved by adhering to the following the stages:

1. An account was set up on Bristol Online Surveys, the preferred site for academic survey due to its secure data storage and ability to ensure anonymous responses. It also has the capacity to provide a variety of online survey question formats.
2. In creating the survey, itself, questions and topics were influenced by interviews which had already taken place for several months. Themes included what ECAs enjoyed about the job, what they disliked about the job, relocation, relationships with line managers, flexibility, workplace bias and oppression, bullying and

harassment, mentoring, metrics, work-life balance, flexibility, workplace inductions, physical working space, personal relationships and participants' thoughts on leaving academia. This was achieved through both limited selection questions, to gather demographic information, and free text boxes to collect phenomenological, detailed data. There was also some use of the Likert scale to indicate varying opinions on specific topics.

3. A pilot study was conducted with a first draft of the survey sent out to ten known contacts who were able to then provide feedback. As a result of this, many of the questions were amended to emphasise that ECAs should talk about their primary job, the one that is contracted for the most hours, the use of multiple contracts being a symptom of academic precarity.
4. Once the final text of the survey had been confirmed (Appendix 8) and sent for approval to the faculty ethics committee (Appendix 7), the survey was launched in the summer of 2018 and remained open for 3 months. There was a strong response and data collection was stopped at 116 respondents to ensure there was a manageable amount of data to analyse and code.
5. Data was then imported directly into NVIVO where quantifiable results were clearly displayed in the form of statistics and charts. Free text answers were analysed and coded for themes in the same way as interviews.

Online participants were provided with the same information regarding consent as interviewee participants. This was clearly stated on the first page of the survey before any questions (Appendix 8). One notable difference was that due to the anonymised data of the survey (participant responses were received as numbers) data could not be withdrawn once it was provided, I therefore ensured that this was made clear to all that participated.



## 3.8. Sampling

### 3.8.1. Interview Sampling

In establishing a methodology, an important practical step that must be undertaken is to confirm the size and shape of who or what we are going to examine, in my case the ECAs who fit the inclusion criteria. For the purposes of my research, however, there were some further points of stratification in order to best explore my aims and objectives. I therefore undertook non-probability sampling to recruit from a specific group, for a desired 50/50 ratio of men and women participants in order to achieve a comparison of the key phenomena, of what it is to be a gendered ECA in the UK today. Within my sample I also wanted to reflect a range of HE institutions (post-1992 universities, Russell Group universities), disciplines, and take in a variety of intersectional experiences, including various BAME identities, sexualities, and ages. It was important that there was an intersectional range amongst my participants, not as an adherence towards superficial ideas of diversity (Bilge, 2013) but so that the phenomena of what it is to be an ECA in the UK today could be fully explored, and that the multiple oppressions that participants face could be addressed (Crenshaw, 1991).

When discussing samples within qualitative research, perhaps one of the most difficult issues to grapple with is that of sample size. While quantitative and mixed methodologies have a more precise process in establishing suitable numbers, the advice for qualitative research is decidedly vaguer. One way of circumventing this however, as Mason (2013) notes, is to focus on the idea of saturation (Charmaz, 2006). Methodologically speaking, saturation refers to the belief that a study should have enough participants to thoroughly explore the phenomena – and to cover the variety within it – but not so many participants that the additional cohort members, while taking up the researcher's resources (time, money, etc.), fail to provide any new insight. Considering the above therefore, I decided upon a sample of 25 participants for the in-depth interviews, albeit with one drop out, thus a final total of 24 in-depth interviews: 10 ECA women, 9 ECA men, 3 senior academic women and 2 senior academic men. As a researcher, I found this to be a number that was manageable with each case requiring transcription, several levels of analysis and coding. In Appendix 1, I have provided the details of interview participants including: their

pseudonyms, gender, age, ethnicity, discipline, contract and institution type to demonstrate the range within the sample.

### 3.8.2. Survey Sampling

With the survey, while non-probability sampling was accounted for through the framing and emphasis on inclusion categories, with online methods there is no way to purposefully control who or what number of individuals participate. The aim of the online survey sample was to gather more responses from a greater number of ECAs and garner as large a possible sense of variety in the phenomena. Although the categories of participants were skewed in some regard, especially in relation to gender (see issues encountered in the research process 3.13.), the survey was successful in opening up the research to a more diverse group of individuals.

## 3.9. Data Analysis

Analysis is a key point where the use of a phenomenological approach truly begins to emerge, where ideas such as essence – what it is that makes the research important and/or unique – and how it relates to the macro, sociological ideas, the gestalt, can be observed (Cohen Shabot, 2016). This was the point at which the commonalities and the differences between gendered ECAs became apparent.

Regarding data analysis from a phenomenological perspective, Hycner; (1999) provides a pragmatic guide about how researchers might approach it. In his paper, he offers up the following five step process for extracting meaning from research outcomes:

1. Bracketing and phenomenological reduction
2. Delineating units of meaning
3. Clustering of units of meaning to form themes
4. Summarising each interview, validating it and where necessary modifying it.
5. Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary.

In my own work, I have utilised Hycner's approach as it offers up a systematic approach to deriving key outcomes from reams of phenomenological data. While my concept of bracketing is already built into the structure of my work via researcher-participant permeability in my analysis, I consistently moved between steps 2 delineating units of meaning, drawing common trends out of the data, and 3 clustering these into themes. This process was cyclical as I re-read data to code for themes that had been identified and consolidated. Both interview transcripts and the free texts from the survey were analysed and coded in the same way. Step 4, summarising each interview, was achieved by making abridged notes and miniature participant bios on the essence of each individual's in-depth interviews, what was important or unique about their experience and what about them aligned with wider trends in ECA experience. While this was not possible to do with the survey answers, due to the sheer volume and varying amounts of free text data provided, these helped to confirm variety, commonalities and difference within the phenomena. A major step in the analysis of my research project was comparing male and female experience as this relates to my central research question, of ascertaining gendered differences in ECA lives.

The coding of both the in-depth interviews and the online survey was undertaken via the qualitative analysis software NVIVO. This allowed me to easily import and organise both data sets, the interview transcriptions from Word and the online survey data directly from Bristol Online Surveys. As a tool, NVIVO enabled me to code and group various themes across all text. It also allowed quick access to the statistical information provided from the survey. Moreover, it was essential in allowing me to compare men and women's cases.

### 3.10. Ethics

As social researchers, there is a responsibility to ensure that the work we undertake is transparent and that it accounts for the well-being of our participants. Ethics therefore are an integral part of planning a project and ensure that future requests for research are received positively. To inform the ethics of this research project I have adhered to advice from the Faculty of Health Science's internal ethics board, and followed ethical guidelines

from two key sources: the BSA's (2017) statement of ethical practice, and the British Psychological Society's (BPS, 2017) four principles for internet mediated research:

Principle 1: Respect for autonomy, privacy, and dignity of individuals and communities

Principle 2: Scientific integrity

Principle 3: Social Responsibility

Principle 4: Maximising benefits, minimising harm

Below, I highlight some of the main ethical concerns of my research and how I sought to ensure integrity in the process and protection for participants, both through the in-depth interviews and the online questionnaire. To note, interview participants were provided with a consent form (see Appendix 3) and an information form (see Appendix 4) to make them fully aware of the process, what they agreed to, how their data would be used and stored as well as offering sign posting to relevant organisations should they need it. The survey correspondingly had a preamble that also set out how data would be used and guarantees of anonymity (see Appendix 8). Both the in-depth interviews (Appendix 6) and the online survey (Appendix 7) were only undertaken after ethical approval from the faculty ethics board who had been provided with all relevant materials.

### 3.10.1. Accounting for Emotions in the Research Process

When conducting in-depth interviews, there is a chance that traumatic memories could be touched upon, leading to emotional distress for the participant (Preissle & Hans, 2012). In my chosen methodology this could not be avoided completely due to the sensitivity of some of the subjects discussed (precarity, bullying) and strong emotions were demonstrated over the course of the interviews. When this occurred, I was always careful to ask participants whether they wanted to pause the interview, change to a different topic, or stop the interview completely. The onus was on me as an ethical researcher not to pursue avenues that caused distress and to allow the interviewee at any time the chance to either break or end the interview. A risk I did have to prepare for but fortunately did not occur, was the possibility of ECAs being the victim of abusive or criminal behaviour, given the power dynamics at work in academia. This meant being fully aware of organisations which they could be sign posted toward and also supporting the participant in pursuing any action, should they want to (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). While there is no notable risk to

using ECAs within research – they are not a vulnerable group by design, such as children – it is important to consider that they are a diverse group of individuals and some may require additional care. Some participants for instance disclosed mental health issues and it was therefore necessary to approach this with great sensitivity.

In the online survey, though I was not present, emotions were managed by providing participants with information about content and also providing my contact details and those of my supervisors should participants wish to reach out. Another important aspect of the survey was ensuring anonymity and the security of the data. In all these ways I adhered to the fourth principle of BPS's (2017) online ethics, of attempting to minimise harm to my participants. It was also made clear to survey participants that they could skip any question they should want to or enter a 'do not wish to disclose' answer to any of the demographic questions.

### 3.10.2. Informed Consent

My interview participants were fully informed about the central aim of my work and what to expect regarding data collection through the participant information form (Appendix 4). Additionally, they were also fully informed through the interview participant consent form (Appendix 3) of how their data would be used and managed, including how to withdraw both their consent and data should they wish to. This allowed them to opt in to the research fully aware of what they could expect as well as their rights in the process. Additionally, consent forms were provided to participants to read before interviews so they had time to consider their content. They were also read out before the start of interviews to confirm understanding in person. All of this: consent and the use of data, was also fully stated in the preamble to the online survey (Appendix 8). Participants were also made fully aware that due to the anonymous nature of the survey data, this could not be withdrawn on completion. Through this I adhered to principle 1 of BPS (2017) a 'respect for autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities', by ensuring the survey was confidential, anonymous and that individuals had fully consented and opted in to the research, aware of how their data would be used.

### 3.10.3. Anonymity

All participants within this research were ensured the highest levels of anonymity. This is especially important given the candid nature in which some individuals discussed their professional and personal lives. For my interview participants, I have used pseudonyms as is the standard in social research (Corden & Sainsbury, 2006; BSA, 2017). I have also worked to ensure no one should be identifiable from any contextual details within research. To achieve this, I have used broad categories to describe participants and their institutions. For example, I have not referred to specific universities but types (post-1992, Russell Group, University outside of the Russell Group), or to any specific disciplines, dividing them broadly between SSH (social science and humanities), STEM (science, technology, engineering, maths) and those that are interdisciplinary. All participant information and bios have been carefully considered so that collectively this information does not point toward any individual (BSA, 2017). Regarding the online survey, the use of the university approved Bristol Online Surveys tool guarantees both participant anonymity (responses are assigned a random number) and also acts as a secure data storage site. Though some of the answers within the online survey have alluded to particular institutions, departments and persons, it has been my responsibility as the researcher to make sure these are excluded from published data and the participant remains unidentifiable. Once again this ensures that principle one of the BPS (2017) guide has been adhered to as the privacy of participants online has been held to the same high standards as the offline interviews. To further protect the confidentiality of participants, all data: audio files and typed transcripts, have been password protected and then placed within Hull University's secure cloud storage service 'Hull Box' which is then also secured by another, alternate password.

### 3.10.4. Research Positionality and Power

Another issue to consider is how hierarchy and power are expressed throughout the research process (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). As a PhD researcher the participants in my research are technically above me in hierarchy, although they will still share a close affinity to my position. There are however other intersectional aspects to my own identity: white, first-generation academic, female, able-bodied, which may have enabled relationships in some respects (through familiarity of experience) and potentially distanced

me from others (an absence of common experience). The use of a phenomenological approach was useful here in placing the onus on the participant as a way to redress any possible power imbalances and allow them to lead the conversation (Bevan, 2014). A lack of physical presence within the context of the online survey should ensure that research positionality and power here were not a pertinent issue. Providing contact details and being transparent in the nature of the research hopefully counteracted any anxieties participants may have held. There is the potential for misuse of power regarding how data is used, that participants could potentially be exposed or misrepresented, however I have made every effort to ensure anonymity and to ensure views are accurately represented.

### 3.11. Problems Encountered in the Research Process

Despite the efforts made to ensure a smooth data collection process, there is a messy reality to social research (Bryson, 2012) which means inevitably there are some issues that occur. While interviews generally went smoothly, I did experience the following issues (1) moving from an online focus group to a survey when it became clear no one was engaging, (2) having one male BAME participant drop out, and finally (3) the fact that the demographics of those that participated in the online survey were skewed, particularly in terms of gender.

#### 3.11.1. The Attempted Use of ‘Online Focus Groups’

The online survey emerged as a practical alternative to a method that unfortunately, did not turn out as planned, the ‘online focus group’. By this, I am referring to the use of an online messaging board for research whereby questions, points for discussion, articles, videos, would have been used as stimulus for participant discussion (Deggs et al., 2010; Bryman, 2012). These were designed as a companion method to the interviews that would have facilitated discussion and helped to inspire conversation, both in response to the stimulus (the article, questions, topic) and between the participants themselves. It is also a method that is useful in encouraging reflection, an important dimension of the phenomenological approach encouraging participants to consider how their own experience adheres and differs to that of others, a form of imaginative variation (Bevan, 2014).

Although a blog was set up, discussing aspects of ECA life and encouraging respondents to discuss them together, it simply did not work and garnered little interest, even after repeated attempts and targeting different groups of ECAs. Despite working well for other topics, such as Price and Walker's (2015) exploration of chronic illness, it did not engage ECAs. While the reasons for this are chiefly conjecture, we know from the literature review that all ECAs suffer from time poverty and that this continual demand was simply too much. The amount of work it took to set up a word press account and the log in to participate was also perhaps too much to expect. The participants in Price and Walker's research were also different in that many of them had sufficient time available for a method requiring continual participation with many being homebound or having cut down work. They were also a group eager to reach out to others like them, those suffering from the same chronic illnesses. Furthermore, the prevalence of academics on Twitter had resulted in many already having carved out their own 'community of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), their own space to facilitate discussion amongst each other (O'Keeffe, 2019).

### 3.11.2. Issues with Online Survey

A disadvantage of online surveys was the same issue that occurred in traditional offline paper versions, that they attracted far more women than men participants (Smith, 2008; Couper et al., 2007) and far more white than BAME participants (ibid), though this can be in some way attributed to the small number of non-white academics in the UK. It is also conceivable (though impossible to confirm) that the topic of the survey – gender – may have driven away male participants (Groves et al., 2000) due to a possible presumption that it was primarily geared toward women and their experience of inequalities. While with interview participants I had control over the gendered segmentation of the sample, the nature of online surveys meant that this lay largely outside of my control. Though I did put out specific calls for more men and BAME academics to participate it was met with limited success. An additional disadvantages of the online survey was the inability to respond to participants who provided important or interesting data. The responses were completely anonymised and therefore there was no way to follow up with participants. Finally, there were a small number of participants (5) who filled out the survey despite clearly not fitting the inclusion criteria: that they were PhD students or not UK based. There was no real way



to control this, but they had to be removed from the final data set.

### 3.11.3. Drop-outs

Toward the end of interviewing participants, I experienced two dropouts, both BAME ECA men, one of the most difficult groups for me to access. Though a significant amount of time was dedicated to finding replacements only one new BAME male participant was found. As a result, there is a slightly unequal gendered division in interviews: nine male interview participants compared to ten female interview participants.

### 3.12. Describing the Data: Gender and Contracts

To conclude the methodology, I will outline the overarching gendered data that connects participants (both interviews and surveys) to their contracts and primary duties. As determined from the literature review, these are extremely important in determining the lives and anxieties of ECAs and linking the neoliberal political project, such as precarious contracts, to daily experience.

One of the most profound complexities of looking at ECAs, even within the 5-year parameter set by this study, is the diversity in participants' contracts: fixed term, continuous, zero hours, fractional, part-time, full-time; as well as career pathways: teaching, research, teaching and scholarship and combined teaching and research. The combination of employment contract type with pathway is a key factor in determining how an ECA experiences their career alongside their discipline and institution. While this research captures some of the variety in the experience of being an ECA, it is certainly not exhaustive. This study is not generalisable in the statistical sense but adds to a deep understanding and awareness of the field which can lead to 'a transfer of knowledge from a study to a specific new situation' (Maxwell & Chmiel 2014).

With the above caveat I will now go on to provide data on the contracts and pathways of those that participated in this research, and how this is demarcated by gender. Data regarding contract type can be seen in Table 3, and data concerning pathways in Table 4. This data includes 19 ECA interviews, and 106 survey respondents; within this data there

was one trans-male interview participant who has been counted within the male figures and one non-binary survey participant. Where participants held two academic jobs, or more, each of these contracts has been counted in the figures. For example, a participant with two contracts, one zero hours and one a fractional fixed term contract, has been counted in both categories to accurately reflect the number of participants that engaged in these forms of work.

11. If your position is fixed term in your current, or most recent primary role, what is the duration?

In relation to the above example, if participants at the time of writing were on two separate fixed term contracts, they would provide the length of their primary contract, the one with the most hours. Numbers in the below chart may not always reflect the total amount of participants due to the ‘do not wish to disclose’ option within the online survey. I will discuss other descriptive data at other points through the subsequent data chapters.

Table 3: ECA Research Participants, Contract Type

Men *Int. (n9)	Men Survey (n33)	Men total (n42)	Women Int. (n10)	Women survey (n73)	Women total (n83)	Other Int. (0)	Other survey (n1)	Other total (n1)	Total (126)
Full-time									
6 (67%)	22 (67%)	28 (67%)	8 (80%)	51 (69%)	59 (71%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	88 (70%)
Part-time									
2 (22%)	7 (21%)	9 (21%)	2 (20%)	18 (24%)	20 (24%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29 (23%)

More than one academic job									
1 (11%)	4 (12%)	5 (12%)	2 (20%)	12 (16%)	14 (17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19 (15%)
More than one job (outside academia/ self-employed)									
0 (0%)	4 (12%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)	7 (10%)	7 (8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	10 (8%)
Fixed term contract									
6 (67%)	20 (60%)	26 (61%)	7 (70%)	42 (57%)	49 (59%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	1 (100%)	76 (60%)
Permanent Contract									
2 (22%)	7 (21%)	9 (21%)	3 (30%)	24 (33%)	27 (32%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	36 (29%)
Zero hours Contract									
1 (11%)	3 (9%)	4 (10%)	1 (10%)	4 (5%)	5 (6%)	0 (%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	9 (7%)
Unemployed									
1 (11%)	3 (9%)	4 (10%)	0 (0%)	3 (4%)	3 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7 (5%)

\*Int. = Interview

Table 3 demonstrates that most participants in this research worked full-time, with approximately 25% whose primary contract was part-time. Around 15% of participants held more than one academic position, with this weighing slightly towards women. A small number of participants also held jobs outside of academia or were self-employed, another small group were unemployed but in search of academic work.

The most common contract type amongst participants was 'fixed term', accounting for approximately 60% of all participants. Permanent contracts accounted for 29% overall with

a larger percentage of women participants; 32% compared to 21% of men holding these. Those on permanent contracts generally held both paid teaching and research responsibilities although there was a small number of single focus research and teaching contracts within these. Only a handful of participants were on zero hours contracts and these were the least common of all the contract types. Table 4 below, outlines whether participants held paid teaching or research responsibility, or both. While question nine in the survey asks this directly (see Appendix 8), information was also gleaned from and accounted for within the free text boxes of the survey. For instance, there were participants whose primary role was teaching, but who also had a small paid role on a research project.

Table 4: Paid teaching/research responsibilities

Men Int. (n9)	Men survey (n33)	Men total (n42)	Wome n Int. (n10)	Women survey (n73)	Women total (n83)	Other Int. (n0)	Other survey (n1)	Other total (n1)	Total (n126)
Paid teaching responsibilities									
5 (55%)	21 (63%)	26 (62%)	6 (60%)	49 (67%)	55 (66%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	81 (64%)
Paid research responsibilities									
6 (66%)	24 (72%)	30 (71%)	6 (60%)	49 (67%)	55 (66%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	1 (0%)	86 (68%)
Both									
3 (33%)	15 (45%)	18 (43%)	2 (20%)	32 (43%)	34 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	52 (41%)

Around 64% of the total participants had paid teaching responsibilities, with this being similar between genders. In terms of research however it was slightly more skewed towards men with 71% having paid research responsibilities compared to 66% of women. Less than half of all participants (41%) were paid to both teach and research with little difference between genders. This demonstrates that most ECAs were on a contract that emphasised a single pathway despite other research and teaching that might be done outside of this.

Having established the methodological foundations of the research project, the ontology (subjective), epistemology (interpretivist), theoretical framework (materialist feminist), research approach (phenomenological and feminist), and methods (in-depth interviews, survey) alongside an examination of chosen sample, analysis and ethics, I will subsequently provide short biographies of interview participants to provide a sense of what has defined

their experience (essence), enabling the commonalities and the differences between them to become apparent (gestalt). Together, the data outlined in the above tables and the following participant biographies will assist in providing context to the upcoming thematic data chapters: *How do Early Career Academics Engage With Work?*, *Networks of Progression*, *Networks of Progress*, and *Being Read as Academic*.

### 3.13. Participant Biographies

In this section I will provide brief biographies of interview participants: real names have been replaced with pseudo names. As well as providing key demographic details, these biographies have been designed to capture the topics participants perceived as most important: where they placed the most conversational focus, and what marked their experience out as being unique. I have used broad categories in these accounts to avoid any risk of identifying participants.

#### **Annie**

Annie is a female, white, 35-44-year-old, ECA working at a university outside the Russell Group. She has two contracts the first, a zero hours teaching contract, and the other, a part-time, fixed term contract managing an international research project. Annie has two children and is a single mother. Overall, Annie is ambivalent about academia, on one hand having enjoyed the research aspect of the PhD, which she had recently completed, and the close relationship she had with many of her students. On the other hand, she expressed frustration with the precarity of the work and how it often engendered exploitation. Differing to most academics however, she made it apparent that she did not feel beholden to the occupation and that she would comfortably pursue another occupation. As a single mother she felt frustrated by some senior academics' advice, that she should relocate in search of work and produce more publications when she had little time or resource to do so. Annie is a very politically active individual and undertook a lot of work with the union.

#### **Adetola**

Adetola is a BAME, female, 35-44-year-old, lecturer (permanent contract) in an SSH subject at a post-1992 university. She is married with two children. Adetola returned to academia after pursuing other public sector professions and moved to the UK from Nigeria following graduation. As an ECA, Adetola expressed that she enjoyed teaching the most and that while some of the students she taught were challenging, she enjoyed this pedagogical test. Finding the time for research was something Adetola found challenging

with a heavy teaching load and two young children. There were feelings of frustration toward her partner who did not understand the peaks and troughs of academic work. Adetola often had to take on an additional late shift following childcare and housework in order to keep up with paid work. Being both a first generation migrant and a BAME, ECA woman was a mixed experience for Adetola, while a role model for some students she also experienced several daily instances of microaggressions. Regarding colleagues, Adetola felt that she had to challenge narratives of 'positive discrimination' in the drive to create diversity in her department and was forced therefore to continually prove her worth. Overall, however, she felt more condescended as a woman and a mother. While now in a permanent post, precariousness for Adetola was most severely felt transferring from a student visa to a working one, an experience which was tenuous, expensive and time consuming

### **Andrej**

Andrej is a male, white, 25-34-year-old, postdoc in a STEM subject at a university outside of the Russell Group. He is married and has no children. Andrej had secured his position through a boss from a research assistant position and felt he had come a long way in a relatively short time, in respect to both knowledge of his subject and professional development. At the same time however, Andrej also felt isolated and that he had been 'left at sea', that he would have appreciated more guidance and collegiality at work. He acutely felt that at points in his career his mental health had suffered due to a lack of support. Andrej also expressed frustration on the short-term nature of research contracts and the need to constantly garner data and funding for the next project. Precarity also made him feel worried for his future and such milestones as securing a mortgage. Considering academic standards, Andrej also felt that both short-term contracts and REF were responsible for producing research of a lower quality. His partner who is a PhD researcher had moved to join him at his new position and he shared that they were both experiencing a degree of anxiety in being separated from their support networks, friends and family. They also both wanted to start a family but felt one of them needed a more secure position before this could happen.



**Caroline**

Caroline is a white, female, 25-34-year-old, research fellow in a SSH subject teaching at an 'other university'. She is married with no children. Caroline moved from the USA to the UK to pursue her PhD which she expresses as a largely negative experience due to supervisor neglect. Following this experience, she undertook a post-doc and various teaching positions to stay within the sector. While eager to be employed on a permanent contract, she saw the benefits in 'precarious work', that it allowed her to engage and learn a diverse range of academic skills. Caroline is both very ambitious and career driven and as a result, she had become frustrated at seeing others promoted above her. She perceived herself as having 'bad luck' in academia, that she was denied many chances of success, especially when it came to publishing and finding people to collaborate with her. In her personal life, Caroline was frustrated at the difficulties in securing a mortgage on fixed term contracts and expressed envy at the relative comfort and progression she saw in her husband's private sector career. She also expressed regret at not having started a family despite precarious contracts. Caroline found the USS strikes difficult, having come from a working class, unionised family, and yet, feeling unable to participate due to the possibility of a permanent position at the university.

**Evelyn**

Evelyn is a white, female, 25-34-year-old, lecturer in STEM at a University outside the Russell Group. She is single with no children. Having relocated to the UK internationally, Evelyn is very much enjoying her position as lecturer on a teaching and scholarship programme, a pathway which has allowed her to focus on her dual passions of teaching and public engagement. She is generally happy in her work and has a good relationship with her colleagues and with her students. Though Evelyn was able to secure a permanent position relatively quickly in her field, she disclosed that the reason for choosing her particular sub-discipline was because it was more employable, as such precarity did have an indirect influence. Since moving to the UK, Evelyn confessed that she found it difficult to make friends as an adult. Romantic relationships however were less of a concern, and she clearly expressed that she had neither the time nor will to pursue them. Regarding personal identity, Evelyn felt distanced from her working-class family who did not seem to understand academic work. While she had experienced some instances of sexism in

academia, as a lesbian she had more often experienced situations where she was presumed heterosexual. When these came from senior staff, she did not feel secure in challenging them due to the power structures of academia.

### **Haris**

Haris is a male, BAME, 35-44-year-old, ECA working in a SSH discipline on two contracts, the first as an assistant lecturer and the second as a researcher, both at universities outside the Russell Group. He is married with two young children. Haris finds the flexibility of academia extremely beneficial as a parent, it allowing him to be a present father and share childcare responsibilities with his wife. Regarding academic work, he cited a particular enjoyment of writing and publishing as well as learning from eager students. He is also proud of being a BAME academic writing about BAME experiences in a predominately white field. Currently, Haris has a high teaching load and finds it difficult to fit in research. At one point he was waking up at four am to fit in extra research time before his children woke up, however, he quickly found that this was unsustainable. Racism, both explicit and implicit, have unfortunately characterised much of Haris' ECA experience, from being directly questioned on whether he belonged in a university space, to being a Muslim at a conference where the social aspect was focused almost entirely around alcohol. He also noted that when he had raised the experience of racism with students there had been negative reactions. Haris' wife is also an academic which has been beneficial in helping him understand the sexism that takes place within academia.

### **James**

James is a white, male, 35-44-year-old, lecturer on a permanent contract in an SSH subject at a post-1992 university. He is married with one child. Preceding his PhD, James undertook various jobs before eventually returning to academia, he then secured a permanent position relatively quickly after being awarded his doctorate. For James, his PhD was particularly tough as he took this alongside another fractional administrative contract. When his first child was born, he admits to his relationship suffering due to a constraint on time but now feels there is a far better work-life balance than before. As well as a having a job that he perceives as allowing a good degree of flexibility, he has also made

a concerted effort to value time with his family. He did however express some guilt around his wife being the primary caregiver to the children and not having a job, hoping that she felt fulfilled in this role. While extremely grateful to have secured a permanent job so quickly and the peace of mind this offered, James expressed frustration at finding mentorship. This meant he largely had to take career-building responsibilities upon himself as opposed to having any help from the institution. Having come from a privately educated background, James was acutely aware of his privileged position and that he was clearly considered immediately academic compared to some of the experiences of his women and BAME colleagues.

### **Jane**

Jane is a white, female, 25-34-year-old, post-doc working on an inter-disciplinary project at a Russell group university. She is in a long-term relationship with her co-habiting partner; they have no children. Overall, Jane perceived her post-doc experience to be a negative one, that she felt isolated and neglected by her line manager and excluded by a very homogenous, male department. Additionally, Jane felt that she had failed to find a scholarly home for her interdisciplinary project and that the public engagement work being demanded of her required far more time and money than was being allocated. Jane discussed her issues around mental health very openly, and that while the diagnosis existed long before her entrance into academia, it was clear that it was exacerbated by the patterns of overwork inherent within it. Concurrently, Jane found great kindness and solidarity amongst ECA colleagues outside her department and was able to find others dedicated to challenging systemic issues within academia, particularly from a feminist perspective. Despite some positive aspects however, Jane was seriously considering leaving academia, both due to her mental health and wanting to start a family.

### **Jarryd**

Jarryd is a male, white, 25-34-year-old, ECA from a university outside the Russell Group, he has a research assistant role in an SSH subject. In his personal life, Jarryd has a long-term partner, one young child and is soon expecting another. Jarryd appreciates the

flexibility afforded to him by his line manager which allows him to structure his life around his family and other personal commitments; he feels that he has a good work life balance. However, he still feels very affected by his experience of being 'let go' from his job as a teaching fellow due to other academics' criticisms of him for his use of unorthodox teaching styles and approaches. As an individual, Jarryd is extremely dedicated to subverting and resisting the rules of the academic game through supporting and lifting up other ECAs and by making changes to long-set curriculums. Currently, Jarryd is applying to lectureships and is concerned that this would mean either having to temporarily relocate from his family during the week or move, something that he is deeply set against. However, he realises how difficult the job market is and that this is something he might have to consider.

### **Kate**

Kate is a white, female, 35-44-year-old, ECA working in an SSH discipline. She is currently working on two contracts, both as a lecturer, one at a university outside the Russell Group and another at a post-1992 institution. Kate's journey into academia was quite difficult due to family circumstance and mental health issues alongside a PhD that required extensive international field work. While generally enjoying academia, Kate expressed frustration at the number of fractional contracts she had endured, how this often meant working two to three jobs simultaneously to survive as well as the corresponding admin and commuting time. This also meant enduring a continual oscillation between being underemployed and having too much work. She had also experienced work being promised to her only for it to be far fewer hours than promised. In her academic career so far, Kate had experienced frequent instances where she was belittled as a young woman despite her actual age. Though a lesbian, this did not seem to factor much into Kate's academic life as she was not read as one and was only out to a small number of colleagues.

### **Laurie**

Laurie is a white, trans male, 25-34-year-old, ECA working in an SSH subject. Currently, he is undertaking occasional teaching work at a Russell group university alongside other non-

academic jobs. He also spends much of his time applying for other academic work. Laurie is married with no children. The job application process is one he is currently finding frustrating, having narrowly missed out on several opportunities. Laurie is passionate about his research and also really enjoys teaching though he had faced some challenges with senior members of staff who refused to adapt or change methods to better suit students. When coming out as trans he had received a mostly positive response from staff albeit for one teaching mentor who deliberately undermined Laurie by using incorrect pronouns. Experiencing early career academia as both genders however did not seem to make much difference to Laurie; they felt their experience was characterised far more by precarity. Having come from an academic family, Laurie found this engendered a specific kind of stress with parents recommending different courses of actions in order to secure a job. He also did not wish to replicate the harmful, working patterns of his academic father. While he described his living conditions as comfortable, he expressed frustration about not being able to keep up with the activities of friends in other occupations, such as securing mortgages.

### **Layla**

Layla is a female, 25-34-year-old, BAME academic on an SSH post-doc in a Russell group university. She is single and has no children. Layla enjoys her research but expressed some concerns about the lack of structure and ability to quantify the outputs of her work. A downside she found of pursuing a passion was finding it difficult to demarcate academic work from her personal life. As a non-British citizen, Layla expressed great anxieties around applying for work and felt especially precarious, this adding an extra dimension of expense, time and stress to the already difficult ECA job hunt, particularly the Visa process. She finds being separated from her family difficult and Layla admitted this placed a strain upon these relationships. Before leaving her home country, she broke up with her romantic partner as she felt it would be nearly impossible to maintain the relationship. As a BAME woman, Layla expressed that she often felt very conspicuous in certain UK academic situations, for instance conferences.

**Mark**

Mark is a male, white, 25-34-year-old, ECA working in a SSH subject. He works on two different contracts, one as a teaching fellow at an 'other' university, and the other, as a zero hours assistant lecturer at a post-1992 university. He has a fiancé and two young children. As a PhD student, Mark experienced a number of personal difficulties that characterised his experience, at one point taking time out to care for his father before his subsequent death alongside dealing with his own mental health issues. Comparatively, he felt that he had experienced a degree of good luck in securing his first academic position on a comfortable research contract. Working two academic jobs simultaneously, however, was something Mark found stressful due to the time spent commuting. Also, he felt that the zero hours contract he was employed on greatly underpaid for the amount of work he did. While able to spend what he saw as sufficient amounts of time with his family, at one point of the year Mark's work-life balance was relatively poor and there was an admission that his fiancé took on more than her fair share of childcare and domestic chores. Mark expressed that at points where he felt he was struggling, that he experienced a great deal of kindness from his ECA colleagues that allowed him to continue. He also discussed his feelings on occupying both a mixed class position and the idiosyncratic category of the white 'other', how sometimes he experienced a sense of belonging in academia and how at other points he felt like an outsider.

**Miriam**

Miriam is a BAME, female, 24-34-year-old, lecturer in an SSH subject at an 'other' university. She is in a long-term relationship with no children. Miriam enjoyed a comparatively quick and easy career progression into academia following a difficult PhD which involved extensive fieldwork abroad. She enjoys her work, finding the time for both teaching and research and especially appreciates working in a young and diverse department. Her academic experience has been overwhelmingly positive. As an ECA in a dual academic relationship she also feels lucky her partner is able to live in the same city. In comparing experiences of working at two universities, Miriam found a big difference in the student body, both in regard to race and widening participation, her current institution being very diverse compared to her previous largely white, largely middle-class one. She

viewed this as a positive and felt that this made teaching more interesting. While Miriam conceded there were disadvantages to the extreme mobility of academia, she also expressed that she enjoyed visiting friends in new locations.

### **Neeru**

Neeru is a female, BAME, 25-34-year-old, ECA working on an inter-disciplinary subject at a Russell Group university. She has two contracts, one as a post-doc, and the other as a research project co-ordinator. She has a fiancé and no children. Overall, Neeru has had a positive experience on her post-doc and works on a close and supportive research team which has afforded her various opportunities. However, she admits that sometimes as an ECA with few commitments outside of work – and because the job demands it – she has a poor work-life balance. Neeru relocated from outside the UK to undertake her PhD and while her fiancé has moved to join her, they currently live in different towns due to work. This has been a source of frustration. Being involved in an inter-disciplinary project has involved Neeru moving from a woman-dominated to a male-dominated discipline and while she has experienced no significant instances of bias, she has felt less willing to speak out against sexism and racism as the only BAME women in the room. Being the sole BAME woman on the project also meant Neeru was being continually invited on to boards as a diversity representative, a duty she felt not only took her away from her research work but pushed her into difficult conversations. As an ECA, Neeru reported that she found online networks particularly helpful as communities of practice where she could learn from others and ask questions.

### **Paul**

Paul is a male, white, 25-34-year-old, teaching fellow in a SSH subject at a university outside of the Russell Group. He is single with no children. Since his PhD, Paul has worked in academia on various short-term precarious contracts, often working non-academic jobs in order to survive. While previously dedicated to pursuing an academic career, he has decided that if he does not secure a permanent position within a few years he

will begin to consider other avenues. Academia had placed a great strain on some of Paul's romantic relationship due to lack of time and money. He also felt frustrated at not being able to see family and friends as much as he would like for similar reasons. As a positive Paul has found academia, lecturing, has helped him to become more confident and he has found great enjoyment in working with students. A key concern of Paul's was that although he was extremely proficient in teaching (due to a number of short-term teaching contracts), he was deficient in publications, a key factor in securing a permanent post.

### **Peter**

Peter is a white, 25-34-year-old male lecturer teaching in an SSH subject at a university outside of the Russell Group. After many years on precarious contracts, extended lengths of commuting, and working more than one job simultaneously, Peter secured a permanent contract. For him, his ECA experience was characterised by working both academic and non-academic jobs concurrently as well as long commutes to fulfil them. Though happy with his new permanent contract – admitting to a marked difference in anxiety from previous precarious contracts – Peter confessed there were still many disadvantages, for instance he was still overworked and living away from his partner. He also discussed how he felt academia had placed him behind some relatives in important life stages: getting married, securing a mortgage and having a baby. Now that he had more secure work, he was looking forward to starting a family.

### **Polly**

Polly is a white, female, 25-35-year-old teaching fellow in an SSH subject at a Russell group university. She is single with no children. Polly returned to academia after working for a period outside of it and had a mostly positive PhD experience. As a teaching fellow with no paid research time she has however become extremely resentful of her situation. Polly has a poor work-life balance as not only was she undertaking research in her 'free' time but also filling out applications for future work/funding to ensure she was employed when her current fellowship ended. Concurrently, Polly was both critical of the neoliberal and



patriarchal nature of the university and also very entrepreneurial in the way she navigated it, being very focused on career-building. In academia Polly did however find many positive connections and instances of kindness from those that wished to challenge the current structures.

### **Tristram**

Tristram is a white, male, 25-34-year-old, assistant professor in STEM at a university outside the Russell Group. He is married with two young children. As an ECA, Tristram has already secured a relatively secure and high-paying position that is primarily research. Although he teaches occasionally, he admitted feeling averse to this as an introvert and was happy to pursue a career that was primarily research focused, this being his main passion. Tristram came from a privately educated background where many of his friends went into sectors such as finance, he however was determined to do something different.

Comparatively, while the prevalence of fixed term contracts did engender some anxiety (even the relatively long one Tristram was contracted under) he felt he had significantly larger amounts of autonomy and a healthier work-life balance than most of his friends; he was therefore able to be a more proactive father. A concern of Tristram's was that due to the few institutions able to facilitate his particular research area, that he would at some point have to relocate internationally in order to be promoted.

### **Senior Academics**

#### **Dani**

Dani is a white, woman, over 54 years old professor (semi-retired) teaching in an SSH discipline within a Russell Group university. She has a long-term partner but no children. Dani had very much worked her way up from the bottom in academia, teaching at low-level institutions, and slowly working her way up the hierarchy. She was very proud of her publications record and also enjoyed overseeing REF for her school. However, Dani and

many others in her cohort endured a time in the mid-80s when jobs and progression in her discipline became very difficult due to the political climate. At this time, she felt many worthwhile academics left the occupation and that her own success and ability to endure this period was down to good luck and being mentored. Dani also felt that she had benefited massively from woman's groups and her close relationship to senior academics. She perceived these as protecting her from the worst instances of sexism though she definitely both experienced and observed this occurring. Having been an academic over the last four decades, Dani had observed a massive increase in NPM initiatives and bureaucracy. She felt that colleagues no longer had time for each other in the way they once had and that today, she would not choose to enter academia.

### **David**

David is a white, male, over 54-year-old, academic working in an SSH discipline within a university outside the Russell Group. He is now a member of his university's SMT team and an active researcher in his field. He is married with one child. David considers himself very well suited for academic life and very much fitting the traditional image of the academic, dedicated to his work and willing to work on it at all hours. He considers himself to be relatively happy with little socialisation so does not see this as being an issue. Looking back over his time as an academic, David feels that his particular school had a varying record in its attempts to combat sexism, both through implicit bias and through processes such as recruiting. He admitted though instances of explicit sexism had been reduced, implicit forms stubbornly remained. Regarding ECAs today, David perceived that the situation around precarious contracts had become far worse although he considers much of the support for ECAs, training and professional development, to be much better.

### **Diane**

Diane is a white, woman, over 54 years old academic emeritus professor teaching in an SSH discipline at a University outside the Russell Group. She is married with two children. Coming from a working-class family, Diane was a first generation academic. Though a gifted student, both sexism and classism worked against her and ensured that she was

pushed away from pursuing academia. Diane did not return to the occupation until several years later and then worked her way up through several institutions. During this time, she received mentorship from a supportive senior academic woman who provided both financial and emotional support. Though she loves being an academic, Diane had to endure a great deal of sexism throughout her career, both implicit, it being presumed that she would be the mother of the department and care for the students, and explicit, through the behaviour of her male colleagues which included sexual harassment. In response she formed various female collectives in order to survive the university. Today Diane perceived academia to be much more difficult to survive, admitting that she would not enter it today given the choice. Sexism she felt remained, and that it was becoming ever more impossible for working class students to break into the field due to the use of precarious contracts. She also perceived the levels of bureaucracy and admin to be increasingly unmanageable.

### **Karl**

Karl is a white, male, 45-54-year-old academic, that teaches in an SSH role in a University outside the Russell Group. He has two roles which he splits his time between: lecturer and an SMT position. Karl is married with no children. In his interview Karl focused on the challenges of managing both his management and SMT position and allocating appropriate time to each of these. He professed a great love of research and enjoyed being able to undertake this although he felt that he had to fight to protect his research time. As an older academic with no children, he admitted that he had a propensity to overwork and this had occasionally had an impact on both his physical and mental health. He also disclosed that he had been bullied in his current position and how strange an experience it was when being so relatively senior. On the current situation facing ECAs he admitted that he stayed out of conversations around precarity as his position would be compromised, he also argued that the situation was both worse in his own home country and in other occupations, such as the NHS.

**Sophie**

Sophie is a female, 35-44-year-old, BAME lecturer in an SSH discipline in a post 1992 university. She is married with one child. Sophie is an immigrant to the UK and has had a generally positive experience as an academic, enjoying the challenges of both teaching and research. Though she found settling in the UK at first stressful, due to the need to find a job quickly and secure a visa, she now felt settled. Sophie felt she had not really experienced racism in UK academia and that for her gender was the bigger issue, having continually seen male academics from her own cohort promoted above her. As a mother with a young child she had found some aspects of academic life harder to endure, such as work-life balance and attending conferences. Being a younger member of the senior academic cohort, she had risen through the system on precarious contracts, however, she observed that in the last decade, these had become even more severe.

## Chapter 4: 'It's my Dream Job': How do Early Career Academics Engage with Work?

### 4.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will be examining the different ways in which ECAs relate to the idea of work, how they delineate between paid work (their occupation), unpaid work (housework and childcare) and all other activities: hobbies, socialising, relaxing, which this research will term 'non-work'. In addition, I will provide a short introduction to the shape and volume of academic work, as experienced by ECAs, to provide some useful context. This will include discussions of vocational work, of viewing work as a calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Carvalho et al., 2013; Morgan et al., 2013; Vos, 2017; Sotirin & Goltz, 2019) or a personal passion (Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Knights & Clarke, 2014; McKenzie, 2017; Bozzon et al., 2018); what it means when academics resist this narrative, treating work, if even temporarily as 'just a job' (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Kalfa et al., 2018), and how work is viewed as a project, the scaffolding on which to build a career (Bryson, 2004). This will also involve an overview of ECAs' perceptions of luck, a means to consider the interaction between forces within participants' control (agency) and outside of it (structure) in the academic labour market (Loveday, 2018b). Additionally, I will also examine how participants considered luck as relational, of how participants use it to compare their relative success, or lack of it, to their ECA colleagues. In accounting for what is considered work, there will also be a discussion of emotional labour in the workplace, what tasks this involves and how it is gendered (Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Heijstra et al., 2017). Moreover, this chapter will include an examination of how unpaid work, the tasks associated with aspects of social reproduction housework and childcare (Vogel, 1983; Jackson, 1999; Federici, 2012) are considered and divided among gendered ECAs. To contrast discussions of work (both paid and unpaid) I will also discuss here what activities and aspects of lives participants perceive as 'non-work': holidays, hobbies, socialising and how they relate to work-life balance (Acker & Armenti, 2004; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013; Cukut Krilić et al., 2018). Finally, this chapter will examine the responses of senior academics to ascertain what aspects of academic work – including how academics relate to it – have changed and

which aspects have remained consistent.

## 4.2. The Shape of Academic Work

In considering how ECAs relate to work, it is important to first outline what their daily working lives – the tasks and structures they undertake – look like. The majority of ECAs in this study were employed on fixed term contracts, a trend which has been noted in other texts such as by UCU (2016) or Locke et al. (2016). Regarding gender there was very little difference at this stage between contract types, there existing a form of equality whereby men had been drawn into traditionally feminised modes of working, in this case short term, fixed contracts (Standing 1999). Though larger studies, such as that by the ECU (2018), cite statistics that demonstrate the use of fixed term contracts in academia overall to be skewed towards women, more women in this research held permanent positions than men.

However, fixed term contracts are only one example of how precarious contracts were enacted within HEIs. Universities have been notably secretive at providing information on other contractual forms, such as zero hours contracts (UCU, 2016), making it difficult to capture a fully accurate picture.

Overall, more participants at this level were paid to undertake teaching duties as opposed to research duties, a trend which fit with a larger scale examination of ECA working trends (Locke et al., 2016). What was perhaps most notable about discussions surrounding teaching was the enthusiasm expressed for it and the genuine desire ECAs maintained for developing as educators: a passion that was expressed by participants of all genders. The wish to connect with students, share passion for their discipline, and to visualise students' progress were commonly cited as aspects of the job ECAs enjoyed. Whereas teaching might have been 'feminised' in the past, according to accounts of senior academics, when compared to research, that stigma no longer appeared to have such a strong bearing on ECAs. It is, however, also necessary to consider the structural and less altruistic forces that might push ECAs towards this view. Firstly, due to the aforementioned siloing of academic contracts more single-focus teaching employment are available at this career level, and secondly, that due to the top-down implementation of metrics such as the NSS, many viewed teaching and securing good feedback as essential for career-building.

#### 4.2.1. Peaks and Troughs: Flows and Volume of Academic Work

A significant finding from this research was that academia had extreme peaks and troughs of working. When marking and teaching were occurring simultaneously for example, a work-life balance was almost impossible to achieve, while during the summer (for those on one year plus contracts that covered this period) many could achieve a kind of equilibrium. This affected ECAs on all contracts, however, for those undertaking two or more academic jobs the struggle to achieve a good work-life balance was even harder. Though periods where work was less intense were often described as ‘troughs’, they remained periods of work where research and important course planning work could be done, they were simply less intense than some other periods. The lack of consideration given to the flow of academic work, according to ECAs, was the result of work models being decided by those professionally distanced from them, administrative staff or senior academics that were less aware of particular periods of intensity (Kinman, 2001; Kinman & Jones, 2008). Flows of work affected all academics, yet its effects were most acutely felt by precarious academics who often worked many of these hours unpaid. Within the data, it was clear most ECAs were working way beyond contracted hours, a point supported by several other studies and examinations of ECA life (May et al., 2013; Price et al., 2015; UCEA, 2015; Locke et al., 2016). Those on shorter term contracts also had to endure an almost continuous process of applying for work and found that their time was even more constrained (UCU, 2019a).

#### 4.3. Passionate People, Greedy Institutions: Participant Responses to Paid Work

The most common way that individuals in this research related to work was that they perceived it as a vocation, that they were passionately drawn toward it (Morgan et al., 2013; Busso & Rivetti, 2014) and that the rewards for undertaking it were more than material (Dik & Duffy, 2009).

*‘...When you boil away the careerism and you boil away aspirations or senior roles or whatever, it’s just that, pure thrill.’ (Paul)*

As a practice, this was expressed in the way participants related to their occupation through their daily working practices, and, how they perceived HEIs utilisation of this passion, as a means to exploit them. Morgan et al. (2013) noted that the intersection between precarious, competitive, and vocational work was particularly dangerous. Individuals at this juncture were often more likely to be subject to mistreatment and less likely to leave a job they perceived both as difficult to access (due to intense competition) and as a calling. Many participants in this research reported being dedicated to academia as a vocational career, and additionally due to other positive aspects, for example, flexibility and autonomy, despite issues of exploitation at the early career stage.

*‘The main thing that keeps me beholden to this, the main reason I wanted to pursue an academic career despite the huge difficulties it presents is that it offers personal and creative autonomy...’* (Jane)

A typical example of this within the data was the case of overwork, of working beyond contracted hours and ECAs differing perceptions of this. While there were participants who expressed this as being a result, of their own agency...

*‘I work too much, but I enjoy it’* (Survey, female, 45-54)

*‘Sometimes I get really involved to the point that sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ is telling me not to stay up so late and I have to rest at some point.’* (Peter)

...there were also those that acknowledge the structural impacts that pushed ECAs toward engagement with a passionate subjectivity, that it was easier to adhere to an identity as a ‘hard worker’ than to challenge it.

*‘Again, perhaps it’s an idealistic way of thinking about it given all the business structure and marketization imposed on it. Looking at it from a cynical point of view we are “service providers” now and sometimes that’s how it feels, but if I have a moment where I’m not feeling upset about that and I boil it back to what I really enjoy, I really do enjoy being up in front of people, and saying.....ok and what do you think?’* (Paul)

Similarly, to Busso & Rivetti’s (2014) observation of precarious, Italian academics, many of the ECAs in this study used passion as a means of positive self-representation which then encouraged them toward acting as compliant, neoliberal subjects. For participants, engaging in narratives of passionate work often came with awareness and a sense of ambivalence with the practices they were engaging in. This was often expressed via a



comparison with work outside of academia, acknowledging how it aligned with similar exploitative work practices in the greater political project, that it's 'the same out there', and yet, simultaneously acknowledging the particular occupational disadvantages of academia.

*I don't necessarily think academics are overworked in comparison with other employees at a similar level of expertise outside academia, but they are underpaid, undervalued and overexploited.* (Survey, male, 25-34)

Alongside this, vocational work for many participants appeared to be characterised by an extreme permeability between professional and personal lives, a lack of demarcation between hobbies and research. For example, the books ECAs enjoyed reading were often related to their academic interests, particularly in Layla's case, as were many of the events they chose to attend. These were generally undertaken with no request for financial remuneration and framed by participants as a positive choice.

*'...a lot of recreational activities are an extension of my personal life.'* (Layla)

*It's also a bit of a problem as these things are super cool, so I'm happy to give up weekends and evenings to it, but I also know that's not sustainable'* (Neeru)

Another issue of 'passionate work' expressed by ECAs was the risk in basing significant amounts of their self-esteem in vocational careers. As Busso & Rivetti (2014) note, the imbrication of ECA self-esteem with precarious work is a high-risk subjective practice as when the connection to work is severed (termination, end of contract) there is a severe impact to the ego.

*It's my dream job. Hard to think of anything else I want to do. But so hard when you feel you may never get a permanent job.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

The melding of ECAs professional identity and their self-esteem also made it frequently more difficult to address the harms that occurred in the job as they did not want to risk their position. As Gill (2010) argues, this can serve to silence academics who have dedicated themselves to a 'sacrificial ethos'. For participants, a propensity for self-exploitation through passion, ambivalence to working conditions alongside a pressure to not speak out often came at the expense of individual mental health.

*It is a stress being stressed all the time'* (Survey, male, 25-34)

*I do recognise that I may burn myself out' (Survey, female, 45-54)*

The early stages of academia therefore align with some aspects of Hewlett & Luce's (2006) conception of extreme work, occupations that consume large amounts of time, mental and physical capability. Likewise, the university can also be characterised as an institution based on consumption, one which is inherently greedy (Sullivan, 2014) with its never-ending demand for academics' time and capacity to work. In the neoliberal sense they are unrelentingly accumulative (Harvey, 2007b; Bakir, 2015) with little consideration being given on how the constant need for 'more' impacts employees. Though academic work in the past (according to the narratives of senior academics) appears to have been based upon some form of unwritten social contract around additional and unpaid work, of doing a job one loves for pay that is never fully remunerated, this was now viewed as being pushed to breaking point. There was a sense in the data that both precarity with its corresponding financial harms and a sense of reduced autonomy (while still relatively high compared to other professions) had eroded some of the rewards many ECAs desired from academic work.

*I wish I was entering the field 25-30 years ago where academic freedom and autonomy appeared to be much greater! Many more experienced colleagues have expressed agreement with my thoughts on this matter!' (Survey, male, 25-34)*

Both the dual phenomenon of extreme work (in certain aspects: long hours, mental exhaustion) and the greedy institution, seemed to be most severely felt by precarious academics. Jane for example, was an individual driven by passion but also one that found themselves suffering the cumulative effects of short-term contracts, primarily anxiety around finances and poor mental health as a result of overwork.

*I don't feel in the position financially to meet our costs of living unless we can find relatively secure work. I don't think I can stay in the sector and that's very pressing. In terms of my future mental health it is one of the main things I would highlight in relation to precarity.'* (Jane)

Securing permanent work however did not appear to entirely erase ambivalence. These ECAs still expressed that they experienced conditions that pushed them toward overwork, and which took advantage of their attachment to teaching and research. For instance, the below survey participant on a permanent contract still experienced many of the same issues, primarily that their passion was taken advantage of.

*'Once initial secure employment has been achieved, the demands of academic work do not differ much from other employment- what does differ is how much that work is valued, and how willing employers are to take advantage of academic passion research and teaching'* (Survey, male, 25-34)

Considering gender, the themes of engaging in vocational modes of work and passion, both as a means of self-representation and as a pathway to exploitation, were prevalent across all participants. Within this group however, there was a sub-division, between those that had deeply internalised these narratives and those that maintained an awareness of the faults within their occupation while maintaining a passion for it (the vast majority of participants). There were, however, a few notable exceptions which I will discuss within the section on dissenting academics.

To summarize the points covered in this section, a key tension experienced by the participants in this research was being caught at a point between a passion for academic work and the lived reality of labour market precarity, alongside related feelings of precariousness. Together these placed a strain on finances, time, distance (due to relocation), self-esteem and mental health. The intersection, between work that was both vocational and precarious was pinpointed as particularly dangerous (Morgan et al., 2013) as it provided employers with better means with which to exploit workers. Employers are aware that employees are less likely to leave positions they had fought hard to secure and which for many ECA participants were the result of 'sunk costs', both financial and personal (Busso & Rivetti, 2014; Bozzon et al., 2018). Moreover, the fact that many ECAs had so heavily invested their identities in academic work, yet, were also subject to the cruel vagaries of the academic labour market, placed their self-esteem at great risk (Knights & Clarke, 2014). Unemployment, underemployment and being unable to secure certain opportunities therefore was more than simply a loss of income, it was also experienced as an assault upon feelings of self-worth. Through these repeated experiences, alongside factors such as continual judgment and surveillance (Gabriel, 2010; Lorenz, 2012) ECA subjectivities have become increasingly fragile. As Loveday (2018a) posits, this anxiety acts both as an 'effect', as motivator, but also as an affective force, impacting the mental health of ECAs who strive to appear as efficient and hardworking neoliberal subjects. Most ECAs expressed a sense of ambivalence, of knowing they had to play 'the game' to succeed in academia while also admonishing it (Kalfa et al., 2018). They held synchronous thoughts, knowing the university at once to be exploitative yet knowing that they must also

participate in a various career-building exercises – such as overwork and working non-contracted hours – to get ahead.

Being a passionate ECA in precarious work also led some ECAs to centre their subjectivities around being dedicated, vocational ‘hard workers’, seemingly motivated by a love for the work as opposed to material rewards (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Busso & Rivetti, 2014). However, once again this facilitated the exploitations of ECAs, allowing university structures to gain from the free labour that overwork enabled. To note, there were several participants within this research who were on permanent contracts and their experience was notable for two reasons, that they viewed the move to a permanent contract as both a relief and a career defining moment, and that secondly, though less anxious in certain ways (notably financially) their passion for work was still used as a means by which they were exploited. The constant restructuring, reordering and redundancies that characterise the neoliberal university today meant that no one, at any level, felt particularly stable. Regarding the future therefore, as opposed to being able to plan their lives many ECAs perceived it as being impossible to predict; a liquid future, one that could possibly take any shape. Generally, this was viewed upon as anxiety-inducing as opposed to the excitement of possibility, especially as many aspects of society, particularly housing, are tied to stability: in work, and in family life. ECA women particularly expressed concerns around starting a family (Renfrew & Green, 2014; Ivancheva & O’Flynn, 2016; Thouaille, 2017) with this feeling like a high-risk choice to many on precarious contracts. For several ECA women, this was cited as a reason why they would choose to leave the sector.

#### 4.3. Building a Career or Just Dumb Luck? Agency and Structure in Career-building

Alongside passion, a salient theme among participants that expressed a vocational academic identity was how they considered academia as a career. As academics they were continually in pursuit of next steps in their professional project. Typically, this required building and improving teaching skills, securing qualifications, publishing or making connections through networking opportunities.

*I have only been affected in the sense that it has put pressure on me to achieve goals. Sometimes these goals are not very achievable (publishing four articles in a year when I teach 15 hours a week?!) but it gives me something to work towards.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

The majority of ECAs were very entrepreneurial in the way they regarded their work, knowing what it was they needed to advance and how they should do it. In many ways this was the result of the same passion-centred subjectivities discussed in the preceding section, a motivation that pushed them to find a way to stay and thrive in competitive academia. This did however push ECAs to focus on individual as opposed to collective pursuits in order to advance their own careers (Ivancheva, 2015; Connell, 2019). Through the perspective of career-building many ECAs viewed precarious contracts as bridges, temporary routes to more secure employment (Bryson, 2004). Participants on permanent contracts reinforced this narrative by framing their career as having led up to this eventuality, a significant point in their career trajectory.

*'... even though my bank balance might say otherwise at the moment, it feels like I'm getting the full rewards, the fulltime salary for what I'm doing... I'm still really happy I've stuck with it and got this contract now.'* (Peter)

To achieve their career goals, almost all ECAs had relocated at some point to pursue new opportunities and around 15% of total participants had more than one academic job.

*I moved 4 hours away from my husband in order to start my academic job'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

While working two academic jobs concurrently was usually a financial necessity of underemployment a small number of ECAs found the experience beneficial, that it enabled them to act as portfolio workers (Brown & Gold, 2007) and build a range of skills. Caroline particularly emphasised that working on multiple contracts with different remits had made her a better academic.

*'Some good things about it [precarity] are, I am very entrepreneurial about my career, I have not invested in any specific place in such a way that I don't get any return on my CV, you could call that cynicism or entrepreneurialism.'* (Caroline)

Considering work as a project, and taking a proactive approach to career-building, was often what helped ECAs gain a sense of control in a volatile labour market.

*'So, I've had the opportunity to become more independent and work in a project manager role and I think that's been really good for personal development.'* (Andrej)

Though enabling a sense of agency, this approach also exacerbated ECAs tendency for overwork, encouraging them to take on additional tasks and making it very difficult for many to say 'no'. As Heijstra et al. (2017) note, ECAs are eager to build up their levels of symbolic capital and therefore often take on additional tasks and academic housework chores to garner it. The refusal to 'go above and beyond' or being in anyway disruptive ECAs felt could potentially damage their chances of success especially within such a competitive environment (Ivancheva, 2015; Bozzon et al., 2018; Loveday, 2018a). To illustrate, Polly while engaged in challenging the neoliberal university, was also concerned with her career progression, an issue that was brought to the fore in advance of the 2018 USS strikes. While there was a risk posed to securing a permanent position by striking, there was a concurrent risk of possibly alienating her department and betraying her own values (collectivism, speaking out) by not participating.

*'Strike wise.... that's been quite an interesting one. I still haven't decided what I'm going to do. One of the things I'm really worried about is.... a couple of things, it's both how you are understood in your department if you do or don't strike. I've been long-listed for a permanent job here so there's a pragmatic issue there...'* (Polly)

Though most participants adhered to narratives of career-building, there was also a feeling of frustration that the parameters of success were constantly being changed. Academia like other institutions in the neoliberal project is one that subscribes to an accumulative ethos (Harvey, 2007b; Bakir, 2015) in the name of efficiency. It demands more from its ECAs while contributing less, both in terms of pay and institutional support. Even ECAs that had only been in the sector a short time had observed these changes.

*'I have been to interviews for lecturer posts and they all must have at least a monograph to be in line for consideration.'* (Survey, female, 45-54)

*'The hurdles to get into permanent employment are a lot higher than only a few years ago and the transition period is longer.'* (Survey, male, 35-44)

The intense competition required in the academic job market, has increased the base requirements for securing an early career position and ECAs feel the need to stay competitive (Thouaille, 2017). Jane for example, perceived that one of the reasons she

secured her post-doc was having a publication by the time she had been awarded her PhD. In his interview, James also discussed the ‘professionalisation of the PhD’ that had occurred over the last few years with many additional requirements – beside the PhD itself – necessary for gaining entry to the sector. As Bozzon et al. (2018) observed, HE has become so intensely competitive that positions are now secured on a knife edge. Due to this, several participants felt that they were given little opportunity to make mistakes or grow and that their potential for success or failure was massively dependent on their own individual actions. This was a feature of the neoliberal project acknowledged by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002 [1994]), that it transferred risk away from relatively powerful institutions and onto relatively powerless individuals.

*‘I like academia. I love what I do, enjoy both teaching and researching. What I don't like are these constant pressures to perform based on unrealistic indicators and measuring one's success/failure on those benchmarks.’* (Survey, female, 35-44)

The embodiment of the belief by participants, that hard work would result in bridges to better work, was inevitably one that benefitted institutions ensuring the ability to secure extra labour without additional cost (UCU, 2019a). In reality, ECAs success and failure within labour markets were subject to a number of factors, both within and outside of their control, a phenomenon I will now discuss through participants’ perceptions of luck.

#### 4.3.1. Luck be an Academic Job Tonight: Comparison and Chance

When discussing career-building and navigating the academic job market, the concept of luck was a recurrent theme and seemed to provide a framework for ECAs navigating a difficult labour market. Luck acted as a way for participants to consider to what degree agency and macro-level structures determined their fate. Loveday (2018b) also found this to be evident in her own work on fixed term academics, that luck was used to make sense of this same tension. She also found that her participants used luck far more to discuss their success – which punctured neoliberal discourses of enterprise – while failure was more individualised. In my research, while participants did often use luck to refer to instances of success...

*‘I have been extremely lucky; my PhD was entirely and generously funded, and my first contract was signed very quickly after that...’* (Survey, male, 25-34)

*I got very lucky with my job, I got it because it had a digital element and I had some relevant experience' (Survey, female, 25-34, SSH)*

...they also used it to describe their instances of 'bad luck', their misfortunes in the academic labour market. They perceived that on occasion, not getting a job or securing an opportunity was outside of one's own agentic control and due to structural factors.

*'So much is to do with luck. You can do nearly everything right and still not land a job.'* (Survey, male, 25-34, SSH)

*'It feels there's far more luck than skill in being able to make that next step to a permanent contract and that's quite demoralising and frustrating.'* (Adrej)

Overall, however, in line with Loveday's research, there were more uses of luck in relation to success than failure which suggests that participants in this study, like Loveday's (2018b), are more likely to individualise failure. Of course, as evidenced by this research, there are exceptions, those individuals that acknowledged the power of structures in determining life chances. Aside from this tension between agency and structure, the other key way in which ideas of luck was how participants used it to compare their experience to that of their colleagues and peers: how luck was relational. Individuals generally consider an experience to be lucky if something exceptional happens to them that does not happen to most other people (Pritchard & Smith, 2004). In the world of early career academia this can be getting a permanent job or a coveted Postdoc, a pursuit where only one person can be 'lucky' in relation to the majority of unlucky applicants. Some participants expressed that they felt lucky when comparing their own position – while often objectively poor – to others. This was often expressed through sentiments of gratitude and recognition of their 'good' fortune.

*'I'm lucky to be able to walk to work and managed to get a job in the city I was already living in.'* (Survey, female, 35-44)

*'I have three-part-time contracts which I'm lucky to have in many ways, yet it's a substantial workload'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

This gratitude however, though often framed as humbling, often appeared as an excuse for poor working conditions, a professional race to the bottom. Participants such as Peter for instance perceived themselves as extremely fortunate to receive a permanent contract, yet



this had come following years of precarious employment, working jobs simultaneously and long commutes. Peter's perception of himself as lucky therefore was both tied to the normalisation of precarious work (Rubery et al., 2018) and the fact that most others entering academia would not secure such a position.

In the UK currently, there is an awareness amongst ECAs, HEIs and related bodies that there are too many doctorates being awarded for the number of good quality academic positions available (CFE Research, 2014; The Guardian, 2018). Ultimately, this means that despite the efforts many ECAs put into career-building, acquiring skills and securing opportunities, in crude terms, there must be more losers than winners. For participants who perceived themselves as not successful, or not where they wanted to be on their career trajectory, this was expressed through feelings of irritation and disappointment and a sense of being deceived.

*'There were people who were PhD students when I was a post-doc who are now faculty there are people who were post docs in my cohort in a different centre who are now senior lecturer, and I'm still not tenure track so this is a big identity thing for me.'* (Caroline)

In the academic labour market while chance is determined somewhat by numbers: amount of jobs available in one's discipline vs number of applicants, odds can be stacked for and against different individuals dependent on their access to financial and social capital (Styhre & Tienari, 2014; Heijstra et al., 2017), what social categories they occupy (Morley, 2001; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Styhre & Tienari, 2014; Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014; Sang, 2016), and even appearance, how one is read or not read as academic (Fotaki, 2013; Loveday, 2016). The chance for each individual academic therefore is far from equal and in the chapter *Read as Academic* I will discuss how 'luck' can also be used to muddy the idea of privilege and structural disadvantage (sexism, racism) in academia.

#### 4.4. Should I Stay or Should I Go Now? Leaving and Dissenting Academics

The risks of financial precarity and personal precariousness combined with the high odds of securing a permanent contract led a number of participants to question whether having a

job ‘they love’ was worth the proximity to poverty and instability, despite sunk costs. Dorenkamp and Weiß (2018) found that while many of their participants held an ‘affective personal commitment to work’, there was a direct relationship between work stress and academics intentions to leave that forced many away from the sector. In the online survey most participants, 84%, had considered leaving academia at some point. Among the reasons cited by participants for wanting to leave were a lack of rewards – both personal and financial – for their efforts, a fear of burnout, risks to both mental and physical health, alongside a desire to readdress a work life balance. Alongside this, ECA women and BAME academics also cited a culture of sexism and racism that pushed them out of academe. I will discuss the subjective experience and implications of this in Read as Academic.

*Everyone at my stage/ age, young(ish), relatively early career (assistant lecturer) has considered leaving. We talk about it all the time. It's shit. Pressure from all sides, very difficult to maintain work life balance, university admin (i.e. the top dogs, not the fabulous administration staff) making things harder all the time. The marketization/ neo-liberalisation of the academy is viewed with despair by nearly every academic I know. Add to that reduction in pension, below inflation pay rise (i.e. pay cut in real terms), unreasonable expectations in terms of workload, expectation to get big grants but no allocation of time in workload for this (it can take months). I could go on ...'*  
(Survey, female, 35-44)

Considering the connection between gender and leaving academia, a further look into the online survey statistics reveals 78% of men and 84% of women had considered leaving. The sentiment therefore was strong across both genders although slightly more prevalent in women. In Dorenkamp & Weiß' (2018) research they found the relationship between overcommitment to work and strain was stronger for women and as such they were more likely to be pushed out of the profession. It is also apparent from the literature that this point, between ECA and permanent post is where many women are lost from the sector (Herschberg et al., 2018). This, however, was less conclusive in this research with narratives of leaving consistent among all genders; there was a far more marked difference between those on more precarious contracts versus those in long-term or permanent employment. However, there was some gendered variety in the reasons given for leaving, and while

overwork characterised most narratives, the need for better paid work was more prevalent in male accounts...

*'Is any of this worth the effort and the crappy salary/pension? I love the good parts, but the bad aspects may be more influential.'* (Survey, male, 35-44)

...and concerns around starting a family being more prevalent for ECA women.

*'While I now have a longer-term contract, the lack of long-term security is still a challenge. I've had to delay starting a family due to precarious employment.'* Survey, female, 25-34)

This seemed to coalesce with the life stage that the majority of ECAs occupied, of caring for a young family or planning for one (if they desired to!). Traditional gender roles may have had some influence on this outcome, that ECA men were focused on breadwinning responsibilities and ECA women on their rights to maternity pay alongside their role as primary carers for children. Starting a family as an ECA was seen to be a high-risk venture for all genders, but particularly for women as it was more likely to impact their careers (Ivancheva et al., 2019). Caroline particularly expressed regret at being in this position, of wanting to start a family yet anxious about doing so on a fixed term contract.

*'So one of the things we didn't cover in terms of how precarity affects your personal life is that we've had to adjust our family planning, in terms of trying to have a baby, due to precarity, because you are always entitled to your maternity leave in this country, but you are not entitled to your maternity pay unless you have worked more than a year before you take off. Essentially, you cannot be pregnant when you start and you cannot get pregnant for the first 3 months of your job in order to get your pay, you can take your leave...'* (Caroline)

Aside from leaving academia, another strategy for survival apparent in this research was employing a dissenting academic identity, one that strayed from the norm of being invested in passionate and vocational work.

*'I'm not going to work myself to death, and I believe that I'm more productive when I'm happier and when I let myself take breaks.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

*'My line manager is expecting me to be working evenings/weekends on my own book project that I'm not paid to do in my own time- but I rarely do this because I believe work-life balance is more important.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

In its most extreme form this meant treating academia with a ‘clock-in and clock-out’ mentality more indicative of non-vocational work. It also meant treating academia less as a career and more as a means of ‘getting by’ financially. Within the research, there were two interview participants that strongly expressed this identity, Annie and Jarryd, both of whom embodied a deliberately rebellious academic identity. Jane for example, expressed that she felt no particular attachment to an academic career...

*‘I’m not bothered, I’ll work in Tesco if that’s what I need to do, you know. I wouldn’t be ashamed of that, but I do know that for lots of people it feels, really, really different...’* (Annie)

...and Jarryd who while enjoying academic work deliberately sought to make time for his family.

*‘I’ve got quite strong principles anyway. I’ve always put a lot of time into my family and spent a lot of time with my kids and spent a lot of time with my partner and I’m really happy with that...’* (Jarryd)

For most however, a dissenting academic identity was adopted as a temporal means of survival, as a way of dealing with a current change in circumstance, such as having children, or as a way to give priority to other areas in life, for example addressing work-life balance following a period of poor mental health.

*‘Because of my kids I’m not very career driven at the moment.’* (Adetola)

*‘I refuse to do that work unpaid and that’s an interesting shift in my attitudes that I’ve observed over the past year, that I’ve become more sensitive to my own patterns of labour.’* (Jane)

Among participants that expressed this attitude there was an explicit acknowledgement by most that this would compromise their careers due to the intense and competitive nature of academic work. Dissenting identities therefore were almost always temporary, an approach implemented to deal with time sensitive concerns or recovery. Participants were aware that adopting this as a fulltime strategy was risky and would likely result in them being pushed out of academia.

*‘I constantly wonder if I’d have a permanent (or similar) job if I worked more.’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

There was already an admission by several undertaking this approach that they were most likely sacrificing their chances of advancement or promotion, a disclosure which then led to

feelings of guilt. Jarryd for instance while having a strong family commitment admitted that there might come a time when it would be necessary for him to relocate in order to be promoted, however, he had a clear limit and was not willing to accept another temporary contract.

*I remain very radical about it. I'm not applying for any research fellowships, I'm done with it, and if it comes down to applying for another temporary contract, I'd rather leave academia, I'm not doing any more of it. I'm happy with that, it's a decision that me and my partner have made together.'* (Jarryd)

Considering how this aligns with other literature on academic resistance, Kalfa et al. (2018) discuss that one of the most common ways opposition is practiced in academia is through individualistic means, such as neglect or leaving. This is a finding which also fits the pattern of dissenting participants in this research, how in the face of overwhelming structural power individuals sometimes 'act out' by reducing efforts or exiting the sector completely.

So far, this chapter has examined some of the ways in which ECAs approach paid work, as a vocation and ongoing project, with a smaller group of academic dissenters who choose to reject this category, if even temporarily. I will now go on to examine some of the wider ways in which Participants considered work, the different forms this could take as well as what ECAs consider to be non-work. This will begin with a discussion of the varying aspects of emotional and affective labour in the workplace.

#### 4.5. Facilitating Feelings: Emotional and Affective Labour

ECAs discussions of their daily working lives were rife with the various ways in which they undertook emotional labour, through expression and suppression of their own feelings and by affecting the emotional states of others. By using the term emotional labour, I am explicitly referring to how the manipulation of emotions occurs within the workplace as opposed to emotional work which occurs outside of it (Hochschild, 1983). In this research, emotional labour was performed in three main ways: firstly, through pastoral work, the emotional management of students; secondly, supporting other ECA colleagues, and finally the emotional labour required by ECAs to manage workplace relationships. While all ECAs performed emotional labour daily, it was clear from participants responses that this was gendered with women being allocated – and taking on – the majority of this work. To note,

many of the discussions in this section will crossover with what is to be discussed in the following chapter, *Networks of Progress, Networks of Protection* as emotional and affective labour addresses how we manage connections to other social actors. I have stated therefore where issues under discussion will be carried on in-depth at a later point.

To begin, I will address the first form of emotional labour listed and the most common type ECAs cited, pastoral work, the general emotional management of students. This aspect of work was cited by many ECAs of all genders, as being an important daily aspect of their professional lives and one which they enjoyed. While academic mentoring and pedagogy were important, they also derived great pleasure from helping students to overcome personal barriers. This also involved checking in on how students were coping with the demands of the work and sign posting students to services they might require such as mental health or financial support.

*I had a couple of students last year who both had things they needed help with, and I felt quite good, to step up and help them out. Whether that was to find someone for them to talk to or finding out how to get them a refund on books for their student finance. Or if they had personal problems knowing how to get them an extension. It felt good to be able to support and help them through their studies.’ (Paul)*

Though ECAs noted how important this aspect of their work was and that it was intrinsically rewarding, they also expressed how it had the potential to be both time consuming and emotionally draining. This is illustrated below in an anecdote from Kate; an instance where she stepped in to talk to a student who had been misbehaving in lectures.

*‘When someone’s in that place, I was just thinking, I was just... this is not him, something’s happened so we talked it through and we decided that I’d try and get him to meet up, just to chat generally, and it turns out he has been having a bit of a crap time and that things have been going a bit wrong... Just spending time with him and telling him, it wasn’t all negative, I told him that he was a great student in the class, and that what I heard was really out of character and so I just wanted to make sure you’re all right... Part of me is annoyed with myself as I don’t always do that, I don’t always have time to do it...’ (Kate)*

While the situation here was resolved by the additional effort Kate put in, she also admitted to not always having the time or capacity to capture every student she perceived as struggling. This was an issue that many ECAs cited, the balance between being available to and supportive of your students and the fear of succumbing to ‘emotional exhaustion’

(Hochschild, 1983) in a job that was already extremely demanding. Early career academia sits at an intersection between vocational and certain aspects of extreme modes of working (long hours, mental exhaustion) and though ECAs may want to do their best regarding pastoral care there is a danger that they will overcommit and burn out (Kinman & Jones, 2008).

Although ECAs clearly valued pastoral care, its conflation with the ‘student experience’ (Collini, 2017) – the marketization and measuring of students’ time at and perception of the university – as a top-down directive, made this a more complex issue, one interwoven with hierarchical power relations. This can be seen primarily via the implementation of TEF and the NSS which have significant influence on how universities place in national league tables. As a result, within recent years institutions have paid more attention to issues surrounding pastoral care than they have in the recent past (HEPI, 2017; Gunn, 2018). Regarding how this affected ECAs within this research, as well as being invested in pastoral care for altruistic reasons, there was an admission that they also maintained high standards in this area for professional purposes, it now being an important factor of ECA career progression and job security. Analysing participants narratives, the student experience modified emotional labour in two key ways, (1) emotional labour enacted through the management of ECAs’ own emotions when challenged by students and (2) affective labour whereby ECAs attempted to modify emotions in their students. These were both necessary components of avoiding negative feedback and securing positive evaluations. I will address both within the next chapter: *Networks of Progression, Networks of Protection*.

In addition to pastoral care, interacting with colleagues was also recounted as another aspect of working life requiring significant amounts of emotional labour. Again, this can be divided into two main strands, the first the more positive although occasionally strenuous aspects of managing collegial relationships and the second, the more negative emotional labour of managing toxic relationships, particularly with line managers. In addressing the first strand, many participants within this research discussed how beneficial they found the emotional support of their colleagues and how it formed a necessary part of their coping strategy. This occurred both through verbal support and through very practical means, such as offering to provide feedback or share workloads. In many ways this expressed itself as an integral part of maintaining daily, working life. Kindness was viewed by many as an antidote to the institution’s overwhelming promotion of neoliberal values such as

competition, and individualism (Hartman & Darab, 2012; Patzak et al., 2017; Ivancheva et al., 2019).

*'The stuff that I feel most proud of, is the work that I've done that might be invisible, work that might not be suitable for sharing on a CV: academic citizenship, an investment in collegiality and a mutually supportive culture in academia in the face of increasing pressure to withdraw and be competitive.'*  
(Jane)

Facilitating feelings among colleagues also involved the building of solidarity, uniting ECAs under the cause of resisting exploitative practices, which required a great deal of both emotional and affective labour. Participants noted they had to manage their own feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness so they could better manage these feelings in others. It was also felt by some participants that a lack of professional support had left ECAs themselves with the responsibility of caring for their colleagues, as opposed to their institutions.

*'The emotional work labour involved in constantly supporting friends and peers who are not supported by the structures which should [support them]'* (Survey, 35-44, female)

Dealing with colleagues while a burden that was often shared, was very different to how ECAs exerted emotional labour when dealing with their line managers and other senior academics where the downward direction of power relations ensured that they were the ones that had to perform the vast majority of emotional management, they being the ones at risk if a relationship was damaged or not sufficiently maintained. Even when relationships with line managers were positive, which most were, there was an acknowledgement that it required effort to maintain them. Once again, this will be discussed in further detail within the next chapter, *Networks of Progression, Networks of Protection*.

*'I like my line manager and get on with him however he does like to play favourites, something that is widely known in my department'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

#### 4.5.1. This Woman's Work: Gendering Emotional Labour and Academic Citizenship

While all genders undertook significant amounts of emotional labour, especially due to the prevalence of teaching only, student-focused, contracts at this level, ultimately more of it was undertaken and delegated to women. This was acknowledged both by ECA women,



who saw this as evident in their own daily working lives, and by ECA men who observed how this work was delegated, particularly by senior academics.

*It's kind of known now that women, colleagues will take on a lot more and they'll do a lot more pastoral care-based stuff' (Kate)*

Pastoral work is often viewed as being part of 'academic housework' (Heijstra et al., 2017), the various additional tasks of academia that enable it to run smoothly but which usually go unrewarded. Often, this is presented as something women are simply better at, a kind of 'benevolent sexism' (Kuchynka et al., 2018) where women's essentialized qualities, in this case being nurturing, are used against them. ECA women in the data expressed frustration at the uneven distribution of this work, as these tasks took them away from activities directly related to career progression. Though academic housework is intrinsically important to the running of universities (Heijstra et al., 2017) its devaluation appears to reflect the wider stigmatization of feminised work (Cockburn, 1991; Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Acker, 2006).

*In every role I have had women are given more teaching and pastoral work. [Tasks] Which carry less kudos, eat into research time and undermine current promotion tracks.' (Survey, female, 25-34)*

As Morley (1995) writes, women are more at risk if they question naturalised, sexist behaviour and can be subject to symbolic violence for exposing the doxa of academia. Most vulnerable ECA women therefore, while expressing frustration, did not question this gendered allocation of work. As well as the unequal divide of academic housework, women and especially BAME women had to perform additional labour in managing their responses to bigoted behaviour.

*I had a male colleague who said something like "you've got something on your top" and I looked, and it was something, and then he said "oh, is that baby food?" I thought, how dare you think automatically that I have baby food on my top because I'm a woman with a child?' (Adetola)*

The effort placed upon these ECAs to maintain polite, or at least measured, responses to condescending statements was expressed as being extremely taxing. While some did speak up and felt glad for doing so, this was viewed as a risky venture with consequences to one's professional success having to be carefully considered. As Gill (2010) argues, the neoliberal university often silences such objections through fear.

ECA women also reported having to participate more in what Ahmed (2012) calls diversity work. While Ahmed specifically refers to attempts at improving racial diversity in HEIs, this can easily be applied to the additional work undertaken by women via initiatives such as Athena Swan, as outlined by Tzanakou and Pearce (2019). Neeru in her interview disclosed how she felt pushed as one of the only BAME and female representatives, in a very male and homogenous department, to participate in diversity work. She expressed a frustration with this, it being time-consuming and emotionally draining labour that took her away from her research.

*'I've been getting inundated with lots of invitation for BAME staff to join the focus group or speak up in this discussion, etc. etc. But that takes so much time, and that takes so much energy, and they're not paid, and they're not pleasant discussions so I usually don't want to do that.'* (Neeru)

Caroline expressed how she was also aware of this as an issue and would prefer to turn down this kind of work, however, she currently felt unable to as a precarious employee building her career.

*'You know, I have female colleagues in the US who do services on the diversity committee or the student pastoral care working group. They never get to go to the finance committee, and I was just talking to my colleague about that yesterday. Both of us said that when asked to do service in these restricted areas, we'll say this is not a good gendered expectation of me. I mean neither of us has the power at the moment to say that kind of thing so it's just an intention rather than an enacted plan, but we're aware of it.'*

(Caroline)

#### 4.6. 'Just Killing Time?' Non-work and Work-life Balance

An aspect of ECA lives this research sought to uncover, was how ECAs related to aspects of life outside of paid work. This included unpaid work in the home and the idea of non-work: activities one would not consider work – either paid or unpaid – and generally relating to enjoyment and relaxing. The word 'work' is what Komlosy describes as a 'linguistic chameleon' (7, 2018) it can mean many different things to different people, yet, overall we can perceive it as one that consists of both market-based and social reproduction-based activities. Concepts such as 'free time' and the idea of non-work therefore are defined by activities which lie outside of these two main strands of work.

Work-life balance in turn looks at how equilibrium can be achieved between work and non-work through tools such as policy change, flexible work and organisational edicts (ibid).

Principally, due to their perception of themselves as vocational employees, paid work was given priority by most ECAs, this therefore bled into most other aspects of their lives. As such, a common complaint amongst ECAs was that they struggled to ‘switch off’ when engaging in non-work, that they were unable to mentally compartmentalise academic tasks. Participants felt this occurred for two main reasons, firstly the fact that there is a lack of clear-delineation between academic interests relating to paid work and hobbies, and secondly due to the critical nature of academic work, the need to think deeply and problem solve.

*‘... you don’t know where the divide is, and you’re constantly switched on.’ (Layla)*

*‘I think I’ve got an issue with relaxing and enjoying myself generally. Ever since starting the PhD I became utilitarian about my time... is that the right word? Maybe not utilitarian but in the sense that... I measure my time in terms of what I can get done in that time. I find it very difficult to switch from that mind-set to the mind-set of just killing time.’ (Mark)*

For these individuals, work was in some form constant, a kind of academic white noise that could be heard even when participating in other activities. This was in large part due to a perfect storm of neoliberal policies, greedy institutions (Sullivan, 2014) and their tendency towards accumulation (more student hours, more publications) and precarious contracts, particularly single-track teaching varieties that did not allow paid time for research. Time to think critically therefore, was pushed into ECAs non-contracted, non-standard hours.

Those that were best at being able to ‘switch off’ were those occupying dissenting academic identities, however as noted this was the minority of participants. In their research into the work-life balance of ECAs in six different European countries, Cukut Krilić et al. (2018) also found this to be true, that their own participants also found it difficult to stop being ‘on’ academically, that academic work involved ‘always being in your head’ (156).

Being unable to ‘switch off’ appeared to be a common feature of vocational work (Dik & Duffy, 2009) and once again an expression of passion in academia, that one is always considering their work and discipline. Many ECAs expressed that they did not view this as an issue, in fact they enjoyed a romantic attachment to the idea of the dedicated scholar

(Busso & Rivetti, 2014). Nevertheless, there were other participants that perceived this as an issue, that academia had pushed the time for critical reflection into time outside of work, what Locke et al. (2016) term a lack of ‘psychological space’. The reason why so many ECAs found it so difficult to ‘switch off’ appeared to be symptomatic, at least partially, of a lack of time to research on single-focus teaching contracts, with ECAs finding time ‘to think’ at other points in their daily schedule. This appeared to be both a result of academia demanding that both time and mental resources be given over to more immediate activities, such as teaching and admin. Those on permanent contracts however also cited this as an issue with research time always pushed to the bottom of daily tasks and conducted in brief spurts throughout the academic year. Overall, an inability to ‘switch off’ was evident among ECAs of all genders and more dependent on contract type. It is possible to speculate that this may have more of an impact on ECA women though this would require further research.

When asked about work-life balance, a common complaint of participants was how much academic work fluctuated throughout the year, that it was a job with severe peaks and troughs.

*‘My work-life balance is perfect in the summer but from September to May I find that I need to spend more time working and this eats into my personal time a great deal.’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

As a result, there were times throughout the year when participants felt they had a far better work-life balance than others, summer for instance was cited as a time when ECAs felt better able to give attention to aspects of life outside of paid work. On the other hand, times when teaching or marking were intense – or occurring simultaneously – were described as completely unmanageable and periods where any non-work activities and relationships were completely pushed to the side.

For those on precarious contracts that did not cover the summer months, this was further compromised by periods of intense job searches in anticipation of upcoming unemployment; this was a common feature of precarity. It consumed both the time ECAs had available to work on career-building projects such as research and the potential amount of free time they had available to spend on other activities and relationships. The level of anxiety this then engendered also compromised the work ECAs were able to do and how much they were able to enjoy their free time. A recent report by UCU (2019a) highlighted

the need to constantly apply and search for work in ostensibly 'free time' as a significant issue.

*'...and then working all weekend to get the post-doc stuff done.'* (Polly)

*'...the horrible, horrible paradox of academia and being early career is that the job applications take so much time that you don't really have the time to do the stuff that you need to get the jobs.'* (Laurie)

*'For the summer between these contracts, during which I had no paid academic work, I took hourly-paid temp jobs and sofa surfed around friends' houses.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Aside from research there were several other activities that ECAs had to undertake unpaid, as evidenced, to not just build their careers but to simply continue being employed or to secure a job. As we can see, others were also having to apply for work in the non-contracted summer months to simply survive financially, another major distraction from academic work and applications. Due to the short-term nature of many academic contracts many ECAs had little respite from this constant cycle.

#### 4.6.1. Finding the Time: Early Career Academics, Families and Work-life balance

When ECAs were asked to consider what was work and what was non-work, spending time with family was difficult to categorise. On one hand, time spent with one's family was viewed as important respite from paid work and a barrier that prevented them from being completely consumed by it.

*'You've got to hang out together, you've got to do stuff together.'* (James)

*'I'm good at making sure I spend time with my family'* (Jarryd)

On the other hand, there were daily aspects of family life which were very much considered to be work, particularly childcare, which several participants considered a continuation of the working day. For Adetola, this was very much the case, as she perceived the domestic duties that she had to undertake on returning from work as another shift to be completed.

*'Navigating everything that has to do with the kids and then work as well!'* (Adetola)

Mark too, as a father of two young children, framed himself as being pulled between two different kinds of work.

*'On the days I wasn't teaching, I'd usually come in here to do some work, unless I was needed for childcare'* (Mark)

Childcare also affected ECAs work-life balance not only by being work in itself but also through the way it contracted the time available for spending on academic tasks. This often resulted in ECA parents undertaking a second shift of academic work, either late at night or early in the morning when children were sleeping, perceiving this as the only way to keep up with their childless colleagues.

*'There was a period where I was getting up at 4 o'clock in the morning and starting work and then do what I could do.'* (Haris)

As discussed, it appeared that having children at this academic career stage was more achievable for ECA men. The ECA women in this research faced a number of additional challenges to having children including access to maternity pay on fixed term/precarious contracts (Ivancheva et al., 2019), the time required for the physical and mental aftermath of pregnancy, and the increased workplace bias of being family-orientated (Barrett & McIntosh, 1991; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). As a result, there are far more narratives in this research surrounding how ECA men balance childcare with work. Given this, the predominate narrative of ECA fathers was that they were active in their children's lives. Jarryd, for example was actively involved in parenting albeit not to the same degree as his partner, and Haris whose wife was an ECA also took on an almost equal amount of childcare duties. James and Tristram were both heavily invested in fatherhood although their role as breadwinners compromised the total amount of time they were able to spend with their children. What was interesting about fathers' narratives of childcare as ECAs was how flexible they perceived academia to be when compared to other occupations that their friends and families pursued, how they felt less compromised by the SER of typical work hours and continual presenteeism. For Tristram, compared to his friends who had gone on to other forms of extreme work in the finance sector, he perceived his situation as positive, that he was able to spend a sufficient amount of quality time with his children.

*'Compared to my city friends, I get to see my kids most evenings and weekends, quality time. I feel quite lucky in that way.'* (Tristram)

*I like the holidays as well as I have kids, it's flexible so if the kids are ill for example then sometimes I can switch things around so I can work from home. That really helps.'* (Haris)

*'...we have a baby on the way and I can't afford parental leave, who's going to work? But my boss doesn't care if I do the work on a Tuesday or a Thursday, it doesn't matter.'* (Jarryd)

*It is also flexible outside of semester which allows me to meet other commitments related to family life'* (Survey, male, 25-34)

Flexibility while appreciated by female ECAs did not seem to be met with the same degree of enthusiasm, perhaps due to a naturalised association of women with modes of working that allow them to take on both paid and unpaid work duties (Standing, 1999; Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004; Barker & Feiner, 2010). As Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra, (2013) found in their study comparing the work-life balance of Icelandic academics with young families, men seemed to experience more 'individual' flexibility, and therefore greater freedom over their time, whereas the flexibility afforded to women was usually implemented as a way to balance the demands of both constant paid (academic) and unpaid (childcare) work. This appears to align with Adkins (2018) argument that work for women under neoliberalism is less a case of division between the domestic and professional sphere, and more a continual melding of both forms. Though there were only two women interview participants with children, this notion of continuous work, paid and unpaid, did hold true for both. Annie particularly experienced this as a single mother of two children and Adetola as the parent and fulltime academic primarily responsible for domestic duties. For Annie a lack of flexibility was also expressed in her inability to relocate with young children.

*I don't want to move the kids, it's too much hard work to move two \_\_\_\_\_ kids across the country on my own you know?'* (Annie)

Childless participants were better served in many ways to undertake academic work, better able to fit the depiction of the ideal, abstract employee under neoliberalism (Acker, 1990) with no responsibilities outside of their paid role. However, these participants experienced their own issues when it came to maintaining work-life balance on occasion using their childless status as means of justifying additional work and working longer hours.

*I live by myself and don't have kids, so that makes it very easy to take on things, whereas people who have families will quite often prioritise their families.'* (Neeru)

While there may have been other aspects of their lives that prevented a total capitulation to work, being childless certainly better enabled some ECAs to give in to aspects of extreme work, such as working long hours (Hewlett & Luce, 2006; Gascoigne et al., 2015). Apart from children, relationships with romantic partners, family and friends were a key part of ECAs lives which they associated with non-work and that also helped to separate them from paid duties. However, personal relationships were also the first to suffer when work took over. Romantic relationships above all of these were the most resilient and often important in enduring precarity, both financially and in regard to emotional support. I will talk further about how these relationships relate to ECA lives in the next chapter.

#### 4.6.2. No time (or Money) to Relax? Early Career Academics, Holidays and Hobbies

Outside of their personal relationships, other aspects of life ECAs considered to be non-work were holidays and hobbies, activities that had little relation with paid or unpaid work. To address the former, taking time off for ECAs did not seem to be a simple task. Firstly, there appeared to be a number of pragmatic barriers, with many simply not having the financial means or wanting to use savings to fund a holiday. Many, especially those on single-focus contracts, had used annual leave to catch up on work, using it to conduct research and write up papers. While this may have been officially discouraged by departments and school heads, the reality was that this was the only way many ECAs could undertake additional career-building work.

*I use my additional annual leave (above what my partner gets) to write up my PhD papers. While the institution will benefit from me publishing these there is no time allowed in role to write them.'*  
(Survey, female, 35-44)

Another practical barrier in ECAs taking holiday was that in some STEM orientated disciplines the nature of lab work and tending to experiments meant they were unable to take extended amounts of time off. The complicated nature of the work and the risk to results meant many felt unwilling to delegate these tasks to others.

*I'm really the only one that can do it. I can get people to come in sometimes and do really simple things, but if it's a big part of an experiment I'm really the only one that can do it.'* (Andrej)



Regarding their own personal perceptions, many felt anxiety about the amount of work waiting for them on their return and what they would miss while absent. Some also considered holidays worthless as they lacked the ability to switch off and enjoy the time away from work.

*'...this is isn't like other jobs where shifts are covered by others. The same amount of work needs to be done so mentally it is hard to ensure a break truly is a break and not a break thinking about work.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

For a small number of participants there was also a feeling that they had not earned their annual leave. This was usually down to difficulties in being able to quantify work that they had done.

*I think the whole difficulty of this life/work balance thing is I never feel like I've done enough to earn the holiday. Which is really.... I 'm aware of the flaws in that piece of logic!' (Layla)*

Regarding hobbies, these were one of the first aspects of life that suffered from the time constraints on ECAs lives. The fact that participants had little to say on the subject when pressed demonstrated how little they were considered. When they were mentioned it was generally expressed as a sadness, of how little time they had to pursue them. The idea of hobbies was also one that was blurred for ECAs as many viewed their research, and the pursuit of interests relating to it, as a hobby itself.

*'It's years since I had the time for hobbies.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

One participant however, Laurie, did express how important hobbies were to him and that they were unwilling to let this aspect of their lives fall away, viewing it as extremely beneficial to their well-being and something which connected them to their partner.

*'I've got a lot of hobbies and I could give them all up and spend all of my time writing publications but no, they're too important to me.'* (Laurie)

There appears to be little literature which discusses the place of hobbies amongst academics, likely due to its relative absence in their lives. Duan et al. (2010) however do allude to it in their paper on the work-life balance on male counselling psychologists in academia (USA), that many of the participants regretted having to give up time for hobbies due to their occupational demands. This would appear to be symptomatic of occupations

which practice long hours where what little time available is given over to basic functions of survival and maintaining key relationships.

To provide a further analysis – and to consider particularly how experience varied between men and women – while all ECAs experienced a squeeze on their time in the neoliberal university, it is a phenomenon that is inescapably gendered and reflective of what work men and women do and how it is rewarded (Hennessy & Ingraham, 1997; Young, 1997; Jackson, 2001; Barrett & McIntosh, 1991). Female participants continually referred to undertaking work that they felt was not remunerated, either financially or symbolically, such as through promotion. This included emotional work, pastoral work and academic citizenship activities, tasks that were frequently devalued by the university, perhaps due to their feminised association (Cockburn, 1991; Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Acker, 2006). It was also work that was more likely to be allocated to ECA women by senior academics due to benevolent sexism, that they were perceived as better able to undertake emotion and communication-based work (Kuchynka et al., 2018). Inevitably participating in this kind of work shrunk the amount of ‘free time’ available to woman ECAs and the time they had to undertake career-building activities such as research, or even simply partake in leisure activities (Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013). Time and access to it is a feminist issue (Davies, 1989) with ECA women enduring higher levels of time poverty (Zilanawala, 2016).

Alongside this, participants also expressed a sentiment that work was seemingly constant and that there was a collapse between the professional and private spheres (Adkins, 2018). For example, paid work was often conducted at home and unpaid domestic work was conducted either at work, such as communicating with family, or via flexibility through rearranging work time to incorporate home-based tasks. Once again, this was a phenomenon that was more pronounced for women than it was for men, due to women’s lack of free time and primary responsibility for non-work relationships (Duncombe & Marsden, 1995; Heijstra et al., 2017).

Considering time, the neoliberal university ultimately appears to favour the abstract worker as described by Acker (1990), one that dedicates their waking hours to professional pursuits. This worker is one, as described by Acker, often based on male-coded behaviours (risk, confidence) and a life-course trajectory (school, work, retirement) that enable this. The ideal worker is one that has little need for free time or for caring and connecting with family, friends, or any other obligations that lie outside of work: they are entirely dedicated

to their profession (Thornton, 2013). This figure is therefore better able to embrace some of the extreme work aspects of academia (Hewlett & Luce, 2006; Gascoigne et al., 2015). However, while the male worker is the originator of this professional model, and men usually are better able to adapt to it, several ECA women within this research also fulfilled the role of the ideal, abstract worker.

#### 4.7. Historicising the Issue

An important part of this research was both to capture the current working conditions for ECAs in UK academia but also to ascertain how much has changed within the recent history of HE (the last 10-40 years) and what has largely stayed the same. This was achieved by interviewing five senior academics alongside the other ECAs. This better equipped the analysis to examine how changes in state and organisational policy had affected ECAs as well as looking at how gendered experience might have varied over time.

All the senior academics within this research admitted to participating in overwork, that their profession was primarily for them a vocation which had led to poor work-life balance; all gave the impression that this was what they had willingly chosen. This did not mean however that it came with no cost, with Karl expressing that years of overwork in academia had affected both his physical and mental health.

*'I've had periods in my life where I've had ill health, ill mental health and physical health which were very clearly stress related and those stresses were very clearly work related.'* (Karl)

Family and socialising had taken a second seat for most of these participants with all but one being the breadwinners within their households. One senior academic, Sophie the youngest, did stray somewhat from this narrative as she was the mother of a young child and seemed to be willing to make this a priority for the time being

While it would appear universities in some way have always been greedy institutions, the nature of neoliberal reforms and their inherent tendency towards accumulation has also completely changed UK academia, primarily the increasing use of short-term precarious contracts and single-focus contracts. Although many senior academics had begun on fixed term contracts, the length of these had extended to a least a year and covered all academic duties, teaching and research. As competition was also far less severe, it was also almost always implicit that if you performed well, your contract would be extended. The use of

zero hour contracts was also largely unheard of by these senior academics when they began their careers. Passion previously therefore, for the most part, was not tempered quite so heavily by precarity, with this mode of work now being normalised within the sector (Rubery et al., 2018). Though it is also true that there have always been single-focus academic contracts – particularly research – that most new ECAs positions are either siloed into teaching or research pathways is also a new development, one senior academics expressed concern over.

*I know that the world has become harsher and now there's the trend to essentially pay the bare minimum, to cover the teaching and not to employ over the summer and personally I regret that. I do think if we're serious about generating the next generation of researchers and teachers, we need to be serious about it in treating people reasonably well.'* (David)

Some changes however were observed as being positive, for example, the greater investment by HEIs into the training of ECAs, supporting them with the time and resources to secure such qualifications as the HEA fellowship. Several senior academics reported that they had received no training as ECAs, that they were simply placed in a classroom and told to teach. The greater focus placed on the quality of teaching, primarily through TEF, was also welcomed.

An interesting insight from the two older women senior academics was just how much female ECAs in the recent past were expected to take on almost all the pastoral care and emotional labour without question. They were marked as the 'mothers' of their departments and had little choice in refuting this role. For male ECAs at this time, there was little to no expectation that they would take on these aspects of work and it largely went unchallenged. Both Dani and Diane expressed a particular frustration with rising bureaucracy, as having been allocated primary responsibility for this in the past as academic women, they were well placed to observe just how much it has increased. While an unfair distribution for academic housework is still evident among today's women ECAs, as evidenced by this research, it is somewhat ameliorated both through male ECAs sharing the load and by all genders challenging the delegation of this work to women alone.

Regarding work-life balance, Diane expressed how much she had regretted not spending time with her children when they were young due to the professional expectation of the time; that you did not mark yourself out as explicitly female, as a mother, within a male organisation if you wished to succeed. Once again, while this definitely still occurs and is an

issue, there also seems to be more space in which to be more open about family. Diane however, also acknowledged that bias against women with families in academia persisted, particularly younger and working-class women.

*'...but I missed a lot of time with the children as I was so keen to prove that being a woman with children didn't mean you didn't perform as well as your male colleagues, it was a mistake.'* (Diane [senior academic])

#### 4.8. Conclusion

This research uncovered that most ECAs embody a vocational approach to their work, they view it as a passion, a calling, and often have difficulty in considering other occupations. While having love for one's job was generally considered beneficial, HEIs did appear to often exploit ECAs vocational work identities, knowing they were less likely to leave a job they perceived as a passion and that they had often worked hard to secure. For ECAs this often pushed them towards overwork, exhaustion and financial precarity as individuals worked beyond contracted hours. Working in a vocational occupation also caused some to blur the boundary between paid work and non-work, with hobbies frequently crossing over. Though the chance to work daily with what inspired them was a source of enjoyment, it often made it increasingly difficult for them to switch off. The nature of a vocational work identity also meant that for many ECAs their self-worth and identity was tied up in their work, a dangerous practice given the competitive and precarious nature of the occupation. Ambivalence was also prevalent in many ECA accounts with many being aware of how harmful academia could be to their well-being, and that of their colleagues, but persisting all the same. This was prevalent across genders with the main division in participants being between those in precarious employment and those on longer term and permanent contracts.

Of those ECAs that practiced vocational academic identities, there was a great deal of discussion given over to the idea of career-building, of evaluating next steps and taking on any opportunities that would help them advance. The investment of most ECAs in an academic career meant that most saw precarious employment as a bridge to a permanent contract. This was supported by the fact that those ECAs that had secured permanent contracts, while still enduring forms of overwork and exploitation, reflected a sense of

having 'made it'. Throughout discussions of career progression participants frequently referenced the idea of luck to describe the way one navigated a volatile labour market, of how much was due to their own actions (agency) and how much was due to forces external to this (structures). It was also used as a relational concept to consider one's own good/bad luck compared to others and how their chances in a competitive academic labour market may be determined by social categories such as gender or race.

A minority identity expressed in this research was that of the dissenting academic who in some way, or for some period of time, pushed back against some of the ideas inherent in vocational work, for instance their occupation being a foundational aspect of their identity. This was achieved in a variety of ways but primarily through refusing overwork and prioritising friends and family. For most participants, as opposed to being a constant identity this was often a means of survival, an acknowledgement of shifting life priorities, such as children, or to deal with personal crisis, such as proximity to burn out. There was an open acknowledgement by these participants that inhabiting a dissenting identity for too long would significantly damage their career prospects, usually therefore it was a temporary measure.

This chapter was also concerned with uncovering ECAs perspectives on emotional and affective labour, of manipulating emotions in one's self and others for the purposes of work. What became very clear within these discussions was that emotional work was extremely gendered and while male ECAs were taking on an increasing amount of this work it was still skewed towards women. This was often a result of senior staff engaging in benevolent sexism (Kuchynka et al., 2018) and essentialism, perceiving women to simply be 'better' at this kind of work. As a result, ECA women were often pushed toward work that required significant performances of emotional labour such as pastoral work and various aspects of academic citizenship. ECA women also had to undertake additional emotional work in dealing with sexism and were also primarily responsible for the implementation of diversity work (Ahmed, 2012), especially BAME women.

Finally, this chapter looked at how ECAs related to both unpaid work, non-financially remunerated tasks such as childcare and housework, and non-work, the elements of life outside of market-orientated and social reproduction tasks, primarily based on socialising and relaxing. Firstly, it was clear that many ECAs struggled to 'switch off' from academic work due to its all-encompassing nature and that paid work often therefore bled into non-

work, a form of mental background noise. The idea of what was unpaid work and non-work could also be complex, childcare for example could be considered as both according to the perspective of the participant and their related responsibilities, whether they were the primary carer or breadwinner. In this research, there were more narratives of fatherhood as opposed to motherhood, due in large part to the structural difficulties of ECA women having children on precarious contracts. However, it was still apparent that for ECA fathers the flexibility inherent in academic work was highly lauded as a means for achieving work-life balance, and for women while still appreciated it was seen less as a way to achieve personal autonomy but as a way to keep up with both paid and unpaid work. Discussions of non-work also touched upon holidays, which many ECAs found difficult to take due to practical difficulties such as cost and time and subjective issues such as an inability to ‘switch off’ from academic work. The lack of time for hobbies, that sat completely apart from ECAs academic interests, was apparent in their absence from the data.

To contextualise this chapter within the UK academia of the recent past, this chapter looked at how the themes that emerged from ECAs today contrasted with that of senior academics. Similarities in academic work and subjectivities over the last 40 years included: subscribing to a vocational work identity, passion, poor work-life balance, and an initial use of fixed term contracts. There was an admission by most senior academics however of some key differences, the negative being the reduced length and increased prevalence of precarious contracts across academia, the intense competition, the siloing of teaching and research, and increased bureaucracy. Positive changes were cited as an increased investment in training for ECAs and focus upon the quality of teaching. Regarding gender, while it was clear that much had improved, for instance ECA men taking on more pastoral work, there was still disappointment that an unfair distribution of labour persisted. Older women academics also acknowledged that while there was less cultural need in organisations for ECA women to hide their families as they might have done in the past, the structural and implicit biases of academia still made having a young family difficult for ECA women.

## Chapter 5: Networks of Progression, Networks of Protection: Early Career Academics Personal and Professional Relationships

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter will examine ECAs professional and personal relationships and how they are used as both networks of progression, that they assist with ECAs career-building, and how they also act as networks of protection, helping ECAs endure some of the worst harms of academia. Here, I will also discuss the issues and discrepancies within these relationships that advantage some and disadvantage others. Moreover, this chapter will also discuss how though relationships may be approximately divided between professional and personal, that there is a great deal of permeability between these two categories in academia. Regarding professional relationships this chapter will examine the association between ECAs and their line managers, their interactions with other ECAs as colleagues, and students, a group responsible for many of ECAs everyday interactions. In this chapter, I will also discuss mentorship, how important it is to ECA career development and the gendered issues around access to important academic networks. Alongside this, the chapter will also examine ECAs personal relationships with friends, family and romantic partners, how these are frequently categorised into existing either inside or outside of academia and how ECAs struggle – with accompanying feelings of guilt – to maintain these connections in the face of restricted money, time and often increased distance. Finally, there will be a discussion on how personal relationships can matter materially to success in academia.

### 5.2. Looking for Guidance: Early Career Academics and Professional Relationships

To begin, I will first explore a key professional relationship for ECAs, the one they hold with their line manager; the individual directly responsible for guiding ECAs, monitoring their progress and delegating their working duties. These were perceived as key relationships by ECAs, ones which could make or break their chances of an academic career. As Scaffidi and Berman (2011) found in their study of Australian post docs, a good line manager relationship could have a significant, positive impact on an ECA's career, and



a poor one, a corresponding negative impact. Of course, many line managers as complex social actors expressed co-existing good and bad qualities; this section will act as an overview of these.

A salient point expressed by participants in this research was that they often experienced a great deal of discrepancy in relationships with their line managers, a phenomenon they were able to observe through precarity (moving between contracts) and for some, in working at more than one academic position simultaneously. There appeared to be little guidance in the way line managers should act and that for many, it seemed that there was a gap between ‘institutional policy and local practice’ (Locke et al., 2016).

*I work at multiple institutions, so I have three-line managers. My relationship with one is excellent as I knew him when he was still early career and he understands the pressures on ECAs. A second line manager is very technocratic and managerial in her approach. I have not yet developed a relationship with my third line manager as this is a very new role for me.’* (Survey, man, 35-44)

As with any inter-personal relationship in an organisation, these associations existed on a continuum from positive to negative, dependent on the personalities of individuals involved. However, there were also some common actions and approaches which ECAs pointed out as being conducive to positive and negative line manager relationships. Firstly, I will address positive line manager relationships, and how ECAs frequently cited feeling valued professionally within them, that they were part of a team.

*I’ve always found massive amounts of comradery in line managers I’ve worked under, especially as we’re all working toward the same goal.’* (Tristram)

These managers made ECAs feel valued and motivated regardless of difficult circumstances, such as precarity and neoliberal reforms to HE. For instance, the ability of a good Line Manager to make ECAs, despite the casualised nature of their contract, feel like more than someone flown in to teach or research piecemeal. It was important for ECAs that they felt like more than tools for improving metrics. Most ECAs also sought to be positively motivated by reward and encouragement – the carrot – as opposed to external pressures stemming from their line manager’s success in metrics – the stick. Evelyn for instance, benefited massively from a close relationship with her line manager where she felt very encouraged and where they consistently worked together on projects.

*I really enjoy working here. So, my line manager next door, \_\_\_\_\_ he's awesome and we have a great partnership in terms of teaching, and we think along very similar lines, but we come at it from different backgrounds. I'm coming at it through a \_\_\_\_\_ background, and he as a \_\_\_\_\_ so we have different histories and will come at things through at a different viewpoint, but we see eye to eye in teaching design.'* (Evelyn)

Another common thread of a positive line manager experience was that they continually provided opportunities wherever they could, especially in terms of networking with other senior academics (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012) or pointing out new opportunities for publishing, conferences, funding, job applications and promotion (Scaffidi & Berman, 2011).

*I'll come along as the deputy and that's basically how I'm starting to learn how academia works in terms of funding and learning what goes on in decision making processes, so yeah, super. Great supervisor and great ally and feminist which is also quite cool.'* (Neeru)

Many described a good manager as being someone that would not 'pull up the ladder', an expression used to describe an individual acting in opposition to individualistic motivations, that they were eager to bring others up to their level. Several described managers who were therefore extremely understanding of the difficulties ECAs faced, and actively helped them to succeed.

*'The other class, is a smaller group, and an extremely important one, which is the few typically senior, quite often women in my experience but men too, academics who really believe in not raising the ladder up behind them. They take the time and effort to mentor people who are in a precarious situation or like me have basically fallen off the road, who will write me references, who will have an open office policy.'* (Jarryd)

Moreover, a good line manager from the perspective of ECAs, were ones that practiced a degree of flexibility, for instance that an ECA might wish to work from home or around family obligations. Additionally, as was the case for several ECAs, they also needed to navigate the complications and conflicting interests of different contracts, often between different institutions (Jones & Oakley, 2018). Being transparent was also a highly valued quality with several participants expressing disappointment at line managers who over-promised or provided an inaccurate impression of future employment, assurances which in

many cases left them feeling betrayed. The ability to be honest while not falling into pessimism was an important element of maintaining trust in the relationship

Moving on, I will now discuss some of the features and approaches ECAs perceived as being indicative of a negative line manager relationship. For instance, ECAs often cited that in the poor line manager relationships they had endured, the manager in question had not been flexible with immovable parameters around how they chose to work. A key way this was expressed was through expectations around contact and presenteeism. When these were not discussed and desires not met, this could result in ECAs either feeling isolated if they desired guidance, or if overly micro-managed, as if their autonomy was being compromised. Either way, what characterised a bad line manager was the inability to communicate and be familiar with the expectations of the ECA in question (Jones & Oakley, 2018; Sardelis & Drew, 2016; Locke et al., 2016; Thouaille, 2017).

*I often feel left at sea by my line manager.’ (Andrej)*

*I’ve got a manager that’s always micro-managing and picking at my work, and I’m like (in my head unfortunately) fuck off!!!’ (Survey, male, 25-34)*

ECAs also described instances where line managers had made them feel unimportant, as if they were taking up too much of their time, that they appeared to have little interest in their success and development. These were factors Sardelis & Drew (2016) also discovered in their study, with their Post Doc participants citing poor communication alongside a lack of inclination to mentor as key features of a poor line manager.

*I have a PI to go to for advice but there was a lot of things that came up that were very difficult to navigate, and I was on my own in that sense as well, I wasn’t having daily interactions with colleagues, and that certainly did lead to...real difficulties.’ (Jane)*

*I would do research and he would say that he already knew that. Had he said that before, I would not have lost time with researching that. He made no effort to introduce me to other staff members so at the end of the project, I have almost no contacts here.’ (Survey, male, 25-34)*

This feeling of dismissal also extended to line managers delegating ECAs ‘drudge work’ which was likely to take up a significant amount of time but offer little professional development. They were willing, as Heijstra et al. (2017) noted, to take advantage of ECAs

desire to garner symbolic capital through these tasks but were not willing to take the time to develop them as fully rounded academics.

*‘Senior members of staff forcing me to do extra work for no pay under threat of making a formal complaint to the head of teaching. Also using publishing language to describe my commitment if I resist doing extra unpaid work.’* (Survey, female, 35-44)

In a positive ECA, line manager relationship where participants felt trusted and supported, there was the feeling that one could not only learn on the job but also be provided with sufficient and varying opportunities. On the other hand, a negative relationship could make a difficult job impossible for ECAs, and even perpetuate bullying behaviours. Several ECAs mentioned line managers taking out their own stresses and pressures on them: shouting, snapping, knowing that the ECA in question would have little recourse for action. The power dynamics inherent in these relationships alongside strict academic hierarchies also meant that ECAs relied heavily on their line managers, especially in providing further opportunities and references. The consequences of a toxic line manager relationship therefore could be severe. A unique issue in academia as stated by the survey respondent below, is that the occupation is divided into very specific sub-disciplines, particularly in research. A bad line manager, therefore, one with a vested interest in damaging an ECA’s reputation, can have a devastating impact.

*‘Fortunately, I have since had other roles, but resigning put me in the tricky position of having done a Post Doc with someone who I could not ask to be a referee for me; because he is very well known in his field. That has also meant that I feel I could not apply for a role in that field and have had to move sideways into another disciplinary area.’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Wånggren (2018) also warned that requiring so much from line managers was likely to dissuade ECAs from pursuing any ‘pedagogies or politics’ that challenged their ideas. Moreover, the inherent precarity and competitiveness of the academic job market, with ECAs constantly applying for work and thus requiring references, placed a further pressure upon ECAs to maintain these relationships even when they were at crisis point. This had led many ECAs feeling unable to speak out on the poor behaviours of their Line Managers as the personal risk to their career progression was too high.

*‘Not very appreciative of me having an opinion or on me making criticisms. A sense that they are trying to censor young academics from speaking out.’* (Survey, male, 25-34)

This section has outlined the importance of the line manager relationship in determining ECAs future success, of providing networks of progress. To be in a positive relationship is not only to be valued and appreciated as an employee but to also have access to further opportunities. On the other hand, to be in a negative line manager relationship is to be burdened with stress, drudge tasks, an inflexible approach to work, and for that individual to not value the progression of the ECA in question. As a result, these individuals also have to endure the possible repercussions this may have to their career.

### 5.2.1. Outside Looking In: Mentoring and Early Career Academic Progression

The best line manager relationships ECAs expressed, as discussed, encompassed some form of mentorship (Sardelis & Drew, 2016) where career direction and advice were routinely and openly discussed. Mentorship however, in academia often occurred outside of this primary relationship either through official (university sanctioned) or unofficial means.

*I've got some work coming out in \_\_\_\_\_ that's been done by \_\_\_\_\_ and that's come from some early bonds that we made during my masters and the conferences that she's put on and that thing of having a really nice network of people of where you can have a mutually beneficial relationship where they support me in doing things and to get the professional ticks in the boxes at the same time.'* (Polly)

*Now I have a mentor whose specific purpose is that I can ask her weird stuff. Like how long my cover letter is supposed to be. I'm weirdly touched by that, that an academic body cared about us enough to think that was a good idea.'* (Laurie)

As a practice, mentoring in academia refers to a wide range of activities: a transfer of skills and knowledge around a specific discipline, how to navigate academia more generally and offering emotional and professional support, all of which were described by ECAs in this study. These also align with the three key aspects of mentoring identified by Haggard et al. (2011): career development, psychosocial support, and role modelling. Those that mentored ECAs ranged greatly in age and seniority there being as ECAs acknowledged differing advantages to those closer and further (more senior) from their own position in the hierarchy. For instance, an academic just above an ECA's position was adept at being 'a

role model', an aspirational figure, yet one whose career pathway ECAs could readily replicate in terms of next steps (Haggard et al., 2011). ECAs also felt this was a group they could be more candid with.

*'And Jo, who was my mentor in Newcastle and didn't have a PhD, she was much older, she was in her 50s but she had been teaching for so long and just did it because she loved it. And she didn't feel like she needed to go for the higher positions that would be available if she completed a doctorate. She was like, "I don't really see the point? What I do as this level I really enjoy." And I find it easier to relate to those people than an Associate Professor in such and such who also researches and does all that teaching. I'm like, how do you do that, that sounds impossible?'* (Evelyn)

Academics at a more senior level, however, could provide incredible opportunities in terms of networking, publishing, and provide a helping hand in overseeing and securing these. Polly for instance secured a key publication through a senior mentor relationship.

*'One mentor introduced me to someone else and I got introduced to someone at the beginning of the second year of my PhD maybe...? Called \_\_\_\_\_ who's a professor at \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ is almost single-handedly responsible for me having any publications what so ever, so he invited me to be part of a special issue at \_\_\_\_\_ online and then he invited me to be part of a special issue on \_\_\_\_\_.'* (Polly)

Though many HEIs offered mentoring schemes these seemed to vary massively in quality. Most participants therefore had found their mentors at conferences and increasingly on social media where the opportunity to connect with other academics in one's field is limitless (O'Keeffe, 2019). As Lupton et al. (2018) describe, in terms of communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) we can view 'Twitter as a virtual staff room'. Due to the precarious nature of the sector, this seemed to be a natural progression as these relationships were not so severely affected by changing institutions.

*'... a statement on the role of social media in all of this. I find the online support networks and the women in academia support networks really fantastic and helpful and I'm so glad they exist and we have access to them. Where you can ask anonymous questions, or you can see that other people have the same questions! Which is a big relief.'* (Neeru)

Mentoring relationships could begin with either party reaching out to the other with it being expressed that both the mentee and mentor should find the relationship mutually beneficial. This was overwhelmingly the case with senior academics, such as Diane below, viewing the ECA as a collaborator.

*'So, I suppose I still do informal mentoring. I don't think of it as mentoring, usually because there is something we're doing, so I think of it as more collaborative.'* (Diane [senior academic])

As evidenced from the literature and from the participants in this research, mentoring is of central importance to securing next steps in academia. However, the demand for mentorship often outstrips the capacity of the mentor meaning that the process is selective regarding who the mentor chooses to work with. Aspects of this choice were in many cases down to some very pragmatic facets that defined the mentor/mentee relationship, for example having interacted at the same disciplinary conferences or having engaged with the same subject, theoretical or methodological approach. It is often the case however, that these relationships were formed based on a social or professional connection between the ECA and mentor, for example being a friend or colleague of the supervisor. In some instances, therefore, individuals received a helping hand, and others were concurrently excluded for lacking these connections. Social capital (Bourdieu, 1989) and networks therefore had a major impact on success in academia.

Several participants in this research, such as the respondent below also felt that they or others they knew, were locked out of these relationships because of the social categories they occupied. In this research this was primarily expressed through gender, both due to the central focus and the number of women participants, but also through race and class (which I will discuss further in chapter 6).

*I have seen women subtly undermined and overlooked on a frequent basis.'* (Survey, female, 34-44)

In academia where the upper levels in most disciplines are male-dominated, there was a sense by many women in the research that they were being excluded from 'boys club' type socialisation networks due to their gender, that they were still perceived as outsiders in many parts of academe (Fotaki, 2013). Many ECA women observed and complained of senior male academics having, as Polly described, a 'male acolyte' in tow, and of ECA men resultingly being promoted at a more expedite rate. The ECA women who did not receive this mentorship therefore, found that on occasion they were excluded from extremely beneficial networks of progress. Here, social capital was inevitably tied up with symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1989) whereby women, and other marginalised groups, were denied access to certain academic circles and then resultingly viewed as outsiders. It appeared that there was somewhat of what Essed (2004) termed a 'cloning effect' occurring where like

(white man) was being replaced for like (white man), that these senior academic men were in a sense, replacing themselves.

*'I had the sense the department is not very inclusive, both in scholarly terms and also because of its gender balance. There are a couple of male cohorts who seemed to have merged in seamlessly.'* (Jane)

As Van den Brink and Stobbe (2014) observed, while assisting women's structural disadvantage, through gender equality initiatives, was frequently opposed due to the lauding of meritocracy, little account was given to the networks that supported men. In this regard there was a complicity in silence both among ECA men and their superiors who did little to open up these networks. Ultimately, this had the potential to lead women toward networks that were not as 'powerful' academically, in that they did not afford those that participated in them as much chance of success. This was a phenomena Etzkowitz et al. (2001) observed as an issue in STEM communities where success was often dependent on the involvement of senior, male academics.

However, while there were barriers to some mentor relationships, others were formed through the very basis of this exclusion. These were designed to lift up those marginalised by academia: precarious workers, women, feminist, LGBT, BAME and working-class academics, providing space where they could both thrive and be understood. I will discuss these further in chapter 6, *Read as Academic*.

*'I think mentoring is so important, men have always mentored and had some acolyte in tow they're promoting, and I think that's something I learnt from my own experience of being mentored and discussions we had in the woman's caucus of the \_\_\_\_\_ as we got on ourselves, help other women up the ladder and not pull it up after us. That's why I consider it so important that you do help other people. The things that help, like when colleagues are going through promotion just helping them with their CVs and how to present themselves and so on, those sort of things are really important as that's the only way women are going to get help.'* (Polly)

Networks that were primarily reserved for academic women were the most frequently cited in this research. These not only contained all the typical elements of mentoring: career development, psychosocial support, and role modelling (Haggard et al. 2011) but also helped to develop a discourse on how feminist goals could be achieved in academia (Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019) and how to navigate academia as women, for instance, the use of 'whisper networks' to alert other ECAs and post grads to known sexual harassers (1752



Group, 2018).

### 5.2.2 More Than Just Good Colleagues? Relationships with Other Early Career Academics

Aside from line managers, other key relationships in ECAs' professional lives included their colleagues on the same level, other ECAs. As with all relationships, there was a great variety within how these were conducted, though they were not so affected by the power dynamics inherent in interacting with senior colleagues. This does not mean however, that they were not affected by *any* other power structures, such as patriarchy and institutional racism, which I will discuss in the following chapter Read as Academic.

Overall, inter-ECA relationships were overwhelmingly positive, there being for the most part little divide between colleagues and friends. For some, these friendships had begun during postgraduate study, others had formed these friendships within their current institutions, and for some these relationships were made and maintained online (Lupton et al., 2018; O'Keeffe, 2019).

*'I mean, most of my friends are Early Career Academics'* (Laurie)

Aside from this, ECAs were often friends alongside being colleagues due to their innate understanding of the profession. A relief was expressed by many in not having to explain the idiosyncrasies of academic work to other ECAs, work that many of those outside the sector found difficult to comprehend. Other ECAs also understood the difficulties in obtaining academic work despite the long periods of training and investment. Another advantage mentioned by a small number of participants, particularly those that were first generation academics, was being able to openly talk about their research interests without being made to feel pretentious; what Kate termed 'tall poppy syndrome'.

Having a network of other ECAs was also very important in helping participants navigate academia practically by creating 'communities of practice' (Lave & Wenger, 1991), groups united around a shared idea where members then contributed and drew from this shared pool of knowledge. To illustrate, many ECAs reported poor inductions on entering institutions, especially when placed on fractional or hourly paid contracts. They were often therefore dependent on other ECAs who had navigated the particular systems of the HEI in question.

*'...when I was allocated teaching I had a bit of a freak out but there was someone in the year above that I knew and I said "Can you just tell me how you do things at \_\_\_\_?"... So yeah, and in terms of ideas for activities and how to manage discussion and behaviour and interruptions and things like that, that came from other teachers and none of it came from the official training.'* (Laurie)

Communities of practice also allowed participants to pool together both intellectual and physical resources with other ECAs. For several, this allowed them to reduce hours spent on teaching preparation and as such were highly appreciated. This often occurred through informal research groups, collaborating on papers, and providing feedback. As Jarryd put it, he sought to create a network of colleagues and friends to work collaboratively on projects and fight back against the 'publish or perish' narrative of the neoliberal university.

Though overall precarity was considered a negative among ECAs, it did often work to facilitate a feeling of solidarity between them, that there were others that had a profound understanding of both the experience of academic labour market precarity and feelings of precariousness. They also understood intrinsically *why* they chose to pursue it over other careers, and the deeply seated passion they held for teaching and research.

*'In the part-time staff office at \_\_\_\_\_ if there was anyone else in there we'd all share our stories of how we were on hourly paid contracts and isn't this awful and a buzzkill and stuff like this. So, we all bonded over our shared experiences and that also helped with orientation...'* (Peter)

However, this same labour market position alongside the intense levels of competition present within the sector also occasionally placed strain upon these relationships. ECA friends, especially within disciplines, were frequently applying for the same opportunities and many found it difficult to navigate emotionally when their friends secured opportunities and they did not. These were situations which often resulted in reactions of jealousy and frustration. Polly disclosed an incident where she had interviewed for the same job as a friend, and while she secured the position, she reflected on what her feelings would have been, had this not been the case.

*'... she messaged me... I didn't get the \_\_\_\_\_ job, and I was like \*meek voice\* I know I did. I felt really, really, bad but she was so nice about it and she congratulated me and that made me feel worse in a way because I thought if that was the opposite way around, I don't think I would have been able to congratulate you and really mean it...I think I would have been so upset, that I would have found it hard to be genuinely happy for someone else.'* (Polly)

Jarryd also discussed the experience of friends that secured permanent jobs and then left their precarious friends and colleagues behind, both literally and figuratively. The perception being that they now existed as a separate group, apart from the precariat (Standing, 2011). For Jarryd, this left him with the feeling that ECA friendships could potentially disintegrate when one person advanced.

*‘When I lost my job, there was only really one person that asked me about it. And I think, I think I would put that down to precarity, because, even my colleagues and the people that I shared that time with have now got permanent jobs don’t talk to me and I think that it’s because before that line of having a permanent job, and you then cross that threshold, you considered that your life has changed and you put it all behind you. That people get a permanent job and that everything that went before, that they write it off. That was me on the landing strip and now I’m up in the air, it’s all gone!’ (Jarryd)*

For ECAs, friendships with colleagues were both inevitable and important, they served as both networks of progression through communities of practice, and networks of protection, as evidenced in the solidarity and daily support they received from each other. The context of the neoliberal university however, and the intense nature of competition within it, often served to pit friends against each other for jobs and opportunities. Nevertheless, it is despite this that ECAs friendships persevere.

### 5.2.3. Learning on Demand: Early Career Academics and Student Relationships

Within the research, ECAs also talked at great length about their relationships with students and the student-body as a whole. This was undoubtedly the result of a heavy teaching load for many ECAs, and that for some, students were their primary form of social interaction at work. As discussed, students were heavily cited as one of the chief reasons ECAs loved the job; the vast majority taking personal pleasure in assisting students both academically and pastorally. Several also expressed feeling protective over students due to a current rhetoric that positions them both as hyper-sensitive ‘snowflakes’ (Turner, 2018) and as pure consumers (Furedi, 2011; Scullion et al., 2011; Woodall et al., 2014; Collini, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017), especially around an ongoing media furore that universities are supposedly increasing grades to appease undergraduates (Savage, 2019).

*'I don't think it's the same at different universities but...there are a lot of people who talk about snowflakes, they have a go at students wherever they can or complain that they are being placed loco parentis, which they're not, it just gives them an opportunity to punch down.'* (Laurie)

A common factor that ECAs cited as working against their ability to build meaningful relationships with students, was the increasing size of the student body compared in ratio to staff. ECAs felt less able to give students the time they required, especially as more students were not generally accompanied by more paid hours (UCU, 2019a). This was supported by comments from senior academics who had observed the growing number of students per staff member over the years.

*'Like, we have too many students, we have students that shouldn't be there, we have students who we know are in there for other reasons than to learn, finance and just... other reasons, but the push we seem to see at the moment the commercialisation of education, where we're almost, we're made to just carry on and literally turn a blind eye.'* (Adetola)

*'When I started at \_\_\_\_\_ there with colleagues at first it was quite enjoyable, it was quite relaxed but then the pressure started to increase and class sizes started to get bigger and bigger so we were having seminar groups of 20/30 students, it got so you didn't know your students anymore.'* (Dani [Senior Academic])

This then increased the levels of pastoral care and emotional labour ECAs were expected to handle, work that could lead to 'emotional exhaustion' (Hochschild & Machung, 1990) and which was concurrently heavily gendered. Steinþórsdóttir et al. (2018) also observed that this had an additional gendered dimension in women dominated subjects – located within the social sciences and humanities – which were less resourced and therefore subject to higher staff to student ratios than STEM disciplines. This appeared to hold true within this research with those in SSH subjects citing this as an issue, and no mention of this among STEM participants with teaching responsibilities

### 5.2.3.1. The Student as Consumer

The idea of the student as consumer is one that has gained much traction in the last two decades of UK, HE, especially since the introduction and subsequent raising of fees

(Dearing, 1997; Furedi, 2011). As well as being the subject of a great deal of academic literature addressing the behaviours of the modern student (Furedi, 2011; Scullion et al., 2011; Woodall et al., 2014; Collini, 2017; Tomlinson, 2017), it is also a popular topic within HE journalism (Morgan, 2016; Turner, 2018). In its most basic form, the student as consumer describes an individual who is primarily motivated by a marketized, transactional view of their education, a view that has arisen from paying substantial costs in fees. Moreover, it is posited that they view their lecturers and the university itself as service providers and therefore feel they have the vested right to call the quality of the product into question. Many researchers, therefore, have been justly concerned with the impact that this could potentially have upon student behaviour and the pedagogical experience, however, there is evidence to suggest that the student as consumer perspective is often both exaggerated and over simplified. In this research, while there was clear evidence that marketization had some impact on a small number of students, it was in no way totalising or ubiquitous with most ECAs acknowledging most students to be respectful and considerate. As Tomlinson (2017) argues, the motivation students have for learning and securing qualifications are extremely complex, an amalgamation of interests, finances, background, and desired career progression. It was therefore impossible to accurately isolate where student behaviours were stemming from. A way in which the student as consumer narrative undoubtedly did have an impact was through the use of the NSS, the top-down metric using data from students that evaluated their teaching and overall university experience (HEPI, 2017). Several participants reported how this had been used punitively against themselves and their colleagues and how it resultingly affected their relationship with students.

*'Although our subject has done well in the NSS, other departments have not and this has caused stress in the institution as a whole. The university tends to be quite reactive when the NSS brings bad news, favouring structural and procedural change imposed from the top as a 'solution' to bad feedback. I think this is counterproductive.'* (Survey, male, 25-34)

*'Yes. We got terrible NSS evaluations (apparently students notice when you have a huge student to staff ratio and they get the bear minimum). We get told off and then asked how we think we can improve, but apparently hiring more people and reducing workloads doesn't count.'* (Survey, female, 35-44)

This went against much of the official information on TEF which positioned it as a metric designed to evaluate institutions and not people (ibid). However, as a top-down directive, the NSS affected ECAs relationships with their students by introducing a degree of paranoia, making some ECAs increasingly cautious around their general interactions and pedagogical practice.

*'I cannot complain so far but student evaluations are a worry. We do know that student give good feedback to teachers they like... but being liked by the students is not always doing what they need. I feel that it is a shame we now have to always be careful to never upset a student (by this I mean through feedback they might not like for instance--not anything major) for fear of getting bad evaluations.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Those that taught disciplines which engaged with conflict or critical theory also experienced anxiety around addressing controversial issues in the light of student evaluations, for instance subjects dealing with feminism, racism or politics. As Wångren (2018) notes being a feminist scholar, one critical of many mainstream ideologies and institutions, and a precariously employed academic, can place you in a vulnerable position. Haris for instance referenced a teaching anecdote where race was being discussed in relation to a set topic, and how as a cohort, students used this as evidence – by him – of an anti-white ‘agenda’ (due to him being a BAME ECA). They marked him poorly on his evaluation as a result.

*'They'd basically mobilised other people in the class to say that I was racist, me the Muslim, one of the only non-white people in the room was the racist one.'* (Haris)

Other ECAs also referenced how they had either received explicit sexist and racist comments, within student evaluations, or had perceived themselves as being marked lower than male or white colleagues despite being assured of a similar or superior performance.

*'Yes, especially in my first years teaching where comments were invariably about my age and gender rather than teaching. That still happens and has the potential to stop my being promoted.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

*'Not yet but I will start teaching soon and the evaluations are what makes me most anxious - especially as it's proven that women are more heavily judged.'* (Survey, female, 35-44)

This supported a growing body of literature that paints student evaluations as an unjust tool for evaluating lecturers, that they give too much power over to students (Collini, 2017) and that they also encourage sexist and racist biases (MacNell et al., 2015; Martin, 2016), even when work is of a comparable standard (MacNell et al., 2015).

Other impacts of the student as consumer included students challenging ECAs on allocated grades. Though it is conjecture that this is due to a marketized motivation, participants viewed it as coming from a sense of entitlement related to paying for an education. Though relatively uncommon these incidents did have a significant effect on ECA subjectivities with participants feeling that their legitimacy as an academic was being called into question and experiencing a subsequent decrease in confidence. While not directly related to the NSS, knowing that an adverse reaction could lead to poor feedback meant that many ECAs put a lot of emotional labour into managing and absorbing these reactions.

*‘She basically came in here and screamed at me that she didn’t get the marks she wanted and didn’t agree with my feedback.’ (Mark)*

A final impact of the student as consumer narrative on participants was the expectations students had around access: how often and when students could contact ECAs. Several participants disclosed that this made them anxious, especially as other colleagues were answering student correspondence far outside normal working hours. There appeared to be a significant disconnect between the official advice on contact time and what ECAs were actually undertaking. This appeared to stem from the pressure to go above and beyond with students and to meet the new acceptable standard: excellent as the new normal.

*‘To be honest right, I sometimes respond to them. I don’t want to, but I just respond to them and especially if I know the student personally and I know that the student has complex needs or you know... I would respond to them. If it was just a generic one maybe not... but if a student is freaking out about an assignment or something that’s a bit... I was a student not too long ago...’ (Adetola)*

Participants expressed that their motivation to respond to students stemmed from a genuine care, but also admitted to being concerned about feedback if they failed to respond in a short amount of time. This was also a factor enabled by the reduction in space and time enabled by technology and online spaces (Lupton et al., 2018). Though many ECAs

admitted they did not think it was right that they respond to student correspondence or meet with them outside of set hours, many admitted to having done so at some point.

As an aside, negative comments on students and grading appeared more within the survey in a way they did not in the interviews (albeit still a minority of participants) which was perhaps due to the anonymous nature of the methodology. There were clearly some ECAs therefore that did perceive that students were being corrupted by marketization.

*Frankly, I feel the TEF is just toadying to spoil students who expect a degree without having to earn it.'* (Survey, Male, 35-44)

*Worries about shifts in student expectations of degrees as many of our students seem disengaged or disinterested and there's a feeling that it is our job to give them a degree with minimal effort on their part.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

To conclude, a greater focus on the student experience (Collini, 2017) by HEIs has done much to change the shape of academic work for ECAs; there is now a greater focus on teaching compared to the recent past in UK academia. For more ECAs than at any other point therefore, this has meant a greater amount of daily interaction with students (Gale, 2013; Hubbard et al., 2015). In this research, some participants perceived that the marketization of HE had affected students' behaviour, for example, incidences such as students querying grades and a request that ECAs be continually available – and at short notice – for contact. For ECA women, there was an additional complaint that an increased focus on teaching placed them under further pressure due to the already skewed amounts of student pastoral care expected of them (Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Heijstra et al., 2017). However, though some perceived that there had been a shift in expectations toward lecturers, ECAs also recognised their students as complex beings and that they could not accurately ascertain where their motivations were stemming from. If marketisation did have some effect it was not the whole story (Tomlinson, 2017).

The most prominent way in which ECAs relationships were affected was actually from top-down directives such as the NSS and their reliance on student feedback. Though students were pressured to participate in this – and their feedback that could determine ECAs futures – it was mostly a stress enacted through management pressure. There was an insistence from senior staff that ECAs should achieve excellent evaluation results, and that this was the new standard. The data also showed evidence that 'poor' results were being



used to punish departments and individuals. As a result, many ECAs expressed a paranoia around their teaching alongside a concomitant need to not upset students, despite this sometimes being a pedagogical necessity. For example, a number of participants discussed how teaching controversial subjects, such as feminism or racism placed them at risk due to their emotional content and their potential to stoke white and male fragility (Hyslop-Margison & Leonard, 2012; Tate & Page, 2018; Henderson, 2019). For ECA women and BAME academics the anxieties around this were even more pronounced as evidenced had demonstrated these groups to be scored lower by students, a trend confirmed in the literature (MacNeill et al., 2015; Martin, 2016).

#### 5.2.4. Someone Like Me? Early Career Academics, Social Categories and Relating to Students

Notwithstanding ‘the student as consumer’ another key aspect that affected ECA and student relationships was the identity of both in question, the social categories, gender, race, class, that each occupied. For ECAs this had an impact on how they related to individual students as well as relating to the ‘student body’ in its entirety; whether an ECA’s identity mirrored that of a student and whether that identity was a typical or an atypical academic (WC, BAME) all had an effect.

To begin, I will address what occurred in this research when an atypical ECA’s identity mirrored that of a student and the relief some students experienced in having ‘someone like them’ in academia, especially if this was a path they desired to follow. 1997 & Silvester (2015) in their work on BAME leaders’ career reflections found that many of their participants expressed a frustration at the lack of non-white mentors available, these relationships being key in discovering ‘the more covert aspects of organizational functioning’ (1246). This was also reflected in the experience of many working-class students who also sought role models from their own background in order to learn the hidden curriculum– the secret social rules and norms – at work in academia (Alberti, 1995).

Adetola described how many BAME students, especially those from her home country, sought her out, perceiving her to be understanding of their struggles. Annie in turn, though describing her own class identity as ‘mixed’, saw how the perception of her as working-class made her more approachable to students from this background. This was also a trend that applied to women in male-dominated disciplines such as STEM, with Evelyn

disclosing additional female support had been important to her as a student. Though these participants expressed that they were happy to fulfil this role, having benefited from the mentorship of others, a negative of this was the additional amount of pastoral work it required to support these students. Women and atypical academics therefore found that their time was further squeezed, especially when compared to that of their male or more typically academic (white, MC) women colleagues. Adetola also found that mirroring her students' identities had other undesirable consequences whereby students judged her to a stricter standard.

*I have quite a number of Nigerian students, and it's interesting that they sometimes think that either you owe them, as I should know how difficult life is so I should treat them differently, or be especially kind to them, and when I'm not they think I'm trying to sabotage their journey, so I have two experiences! I have one experience where the students think I'm stuck up as I've got a PhD and "she thinks she's better than us" ..... then, I have this other experience with students who think "she will help me, that she's my sister so she will help me." ... (Adetola)*

Alternatively, when an ECA 'differed' to a student's social categories this appeared to have two differing impacts, depending once again on whether the ECA occupied a more traditional or atypical academic identity. For instance, some ECAs such as James acknowledged that they were read as belonging due to their occupation of common social academic categories: male, white and middle class. He described this as being in receipt of 'micro-affirmations', of continually having his academic worth and presence reaffirmed by his students. For those that differed from students but occupied an atypical academic identity, there was an increased likelihood of negative interactions. Women and BAME participants reported experiencing more micro-aggressions from students when compared to their white and middle-class colleagues, micro-aggressions referring to the 'various social and verbal cues, subtle verbal and non-verbal insults that make an individual feel unwelcome' (Simatele, 2018, 2). Cumulatively, these had a real and deeply felt effect on participants including depression, anxiety and lack of confidence (Simatele, 2018; Harris & Moffitt, 2019). This idea of non-belonging and being read as academic is something I will discuss at greater length in the next chapter.

Apart from discussing how they related to individual students through individual identities, ECAs also spoke on how they related to overall HEIs' student bodies, the diversity within the student population. This seemed to be in part symptomatic of precarity, of continually

relocating between institutions and therefore being able to compare experiences with groups of students. The most salient aspect ECAs noted was the difference between student bodies in terms of class and race, a result of various regional and intersecting factors such as university ranking and ‘prestige’ (Nash, 2018). Again, this manifested itself in various ways, and where atypical academics felt more aligned to the student body, they often reported feeling more at ease. Miriam for instance reported feeling far more comfortable in her current, more diverse institution as opposed to her previous, predominately white one.

*‘The student makeup is the most diverse I’ve seen anywhere, like at \_\_\_\_\_ it was much more about international students, but these international students would be from a static background. Whereas in \_\_\_\_\_ I’d meet a lot of inner-city kids from London, Wolverhampton, etc. and I have a lot of black and Asian students, much more than I ever did at \_\_\_\_\_. And different social background as well, it’s not just about saying I had ten black students at \_\_\_\_\_ and ten black students at \_\_\_\_\_. They come from completely different experiences and that diversity is so great.’ (Miriam)*

To conclude this discussion on ECAs and student relationships, in this research it largely appeared to be an increased ratio of staff to students alongside the top-down directive of the NSS that was having the largest affect. Constraints on time and an accompanying fear around receiving poor feedback had led many ECAs to adapt their teaching and behaviour. This was particularly pronounced for ECA women and BAME participants who were more likely to be subject to bigoted comments and biases. Though students did not sit fully either in networks of progress or protections as nominal subordinates, good relationships with them were necessary for allowing ECAs to advance, they were therefore obliquely related to advancement. Regarding individual identities, the social categories ECAs occupied also had a significant impact on how individual students related to them, whether they perceived them as being legitimately academic or not. This also addressed how they related to the wider student body, particularly in terms of race and class.

#### 5.2.5. Academic Hierarchies and Feeling ‘The Squeeze’: Impacts on Cross-Strata solidarity

An important theme that emerged from the data around professional relationships was how academics at all points of the hierarchy felt squeezed, that they were trapped between

two – or more – points and how this curtailed their possibility for agency. Primarily, this applied to ECAs who taught, positioned between the demands of their line managers and their students. Research ECAs who mostly occupied the entry level rung of their projects generally had no one ‘below them’ for which they were responsible. Participants addressed how this pinch-point resulted in many of the frustrations that characterised their professional lives, primarily the complications of affecting change in academic hierarchies and the related risks of speaking out. ECAs also occupied a relatively unique position within the academic hierarchy as they were both responsible for and accountable to their students (Collini, 2017). Though power is multi-directional in academia, especially when we consider the workings of patriarchy and racism at a collegial level, analysing the adjacent pressures above and below are key in explaining ECAs’ position.

To illustrate, a commonly cited way in which the squeeze affected participants, even those with good line manager relationships was how their immediate superiors felt unable to speak out on their behalf, particularly around pay and workers’ rights, without jeopardising their own position.

*‘Also, line managers are bosses but when you need them to support you in getting a new contract, they suddenly say that they don't have power.’ (Survey, male, 25-34)*

ECAs reported that their line managers often expressed a great deal of sympathy but were mostly ineffectual. This was a source of frustration for many ECAs who felt that senior academics and those on ‘permanent’ contracts should take more of the responsibility for speaking up on these issues, being comparatively less vulnerable. There was also a feeling that some line managers were ‘burying their head’ in the sand and not engaging with issues around precarity to assuage their guilt. Though some line manager cited in the research were willing to address feelings of ambivalence and acknowledge they were participating in an exploitative system, others refused to address it at all.

*‘I had heard stories from members of staff that someone worked on a TATA steel plant etc., they sympathised but the underlying message of it seemed to be if you really want it you'll put up with it. Playing Devil's Advocate, I know where they're coming from, but when you're feeling pretty miserable and desperate and poor it's not particularly what you want to bear, you just have to keep your head down and keep going.’ (Paul)*

Some ECAs were also warned by their superiors not to discuss issues around work and exploitation openly. There appeared to be clear attempts from line managers, and by other individuals at all points of the academic hierarchy to control the flow of information within the system. This meant both preventing certain information from reaching the top (for example the use of zero-hour contracts and related financial precarity) and concurrently to stop clandestine information from leaking down (around hiring and firing) and even out of the university. Ultimately this led some ECAs to lose trust in their line managers, perceiving them as working against their best interests.

Though many line managers were honest and transparent about situations and adept at offering opportunities their agency was still massively curtailed in being able to address the macro decisions of the neoliberal university. Individuals had some opportunity for resistance and comradery but were still operating within powerful structures (Jackson, 2001).

In being pinched between their line manager and the students they were accountable for, ECAs were placed in an exceptional position. Though pedagogically responsible for students, they could not exert pressure or demonstrate negative emotion to them in a way that ECAs might experience from their line managers. Though no ECA in this study expressed the desire to do this (and were fully aware of the repercussions that would occur if they did) there was a feeling that they were located on the metaphorical 'shop floor' of academia, caring for students' needs and absorbing their emotions, all while enduring the weakest levels of employee protections. There was also a feeling that as ECAs they often had to absorb emotional stress from both above and below. In occupying the lowest professional point of the hierarchy, many ECAs felt that both organisational stress, and that of their superiors, trickled down and stopped with them. Consequently, ECAs often felt subject to constant pressures: to preform to metrics, to undertake more work in a shorter timeframe, alongside other bullying behaviours.

*'Shifting demands and expectations, responsibility without authority, administrative roles (specifically admissions which is major stressful), diktats from senior managers with very short timescales, finding time to write around teaching and admin.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

In conceiving the workings of power within academic hierarchies, and through the professional relationships of ECAs, it can be useful to employ the political theorist Lukes' (2004) 'three faces of power': issue, agenda and manipulation. The first face, 'issue', relates

to how power is distributed among people and denotes both a clear power relationship and direction of power, it is clear and easily understood. This seemed to relate to most ECAs direct experiences with their line managers and the tasks allocated to them. Where things become more complex and diffuse is through the second face ‘agenda’. This describes how power works in complex organisations (such as the university) whereby it becomes increasingly difficult to see where decisions are coming from, and how they are made. These are circumstances which reflect the frustration experienced by many ECAs, the apparent impossibility of reaching and starting a dialogue with those that make the decisions around their working conditions. The line manager therefore while a key access point to this information is concurrently under pressure to uphold this confusion. Finally, there is the face of ‘manipulation’, similar to the Marxist conception of ideology (Althusser, 1984 [1970]), which relates less to the directions of power but to how ECAs are interpolated to act within them, the manipulated subjectivity of the passionate academic (Busso & Rivetti, 2014). While relationships are dependent on human interaction, as we can see they also relate to and are controlled by the structures they operate within.

### 5.3. Wanting Well-being, Feeling Guilt: The Place of Personal Relationships in Early Career Academic Lives

Personal relationships were described by ECAs as being integral to their well-being, to maintaining a life outside of work and as a means of preventing self-isolation. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the primary way in which ECAs talked about personal relationships was the lack of time they felt able to dedicate to them (Cukut Krilić et al., 2018). Additionally, strain was also placed on personal relationships due to ECAs precarious finances (anxiety due to volatile income and lack of money to travel) and due to distance; ECAs had frequently moved large distances from their support networks in search of work.

*‘Yes, it has made it much more difficult to spend time with friends and to visit my family, they live in another country and my workload means it is hard to find the time to fly back and see them.’ (Survey, female, 25-34)*

*‘I get guilty sometimes about working in the evenings, but I definitely have to make a conscious effort to set aside time to visit friends and family.’ (Survey, female, 25-34)*

The strain placed on personal relationships appeared to be responsible for the prevalence of guilt that existed in many ECA accounts, that they often felt remorse in neglecting the non-work aspects of their lives. Alongside perceiving themselves as having too little time to spend with children, family (particularly older relatives), and friends, many ECAs shared anecdotes of missing important occasions due to constraints on resources or because the distance was too great.

*'I have missed the wedding of a good friend because I couldn't get time off work (which you don't want to make a fuss about because you want to be employed again the following year...)'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Guilt was also present as a force when participants concurrently spent – in their own perception – too much time with family or friends and thus neglected their paid work. Negotiating feelings of guilt therefore was an aspect of emotional work that ECAs endured alongside the emotional labour required in their professional lives (Hochschild & Machung, 1990). Narratives of guilt appeared to be most severely felt in two distinct groups, ECA parents, due to the lack of quality time they perceived as being able to spend with their children, and ECA women. The reason why guilt within ECA women's narratives were more prevalent (particularly when they had no children) were less tangible but perhaps due to women's primary responsibility in the gender order for managing non-professional relationships. Many feminist theorists refer to this as the 'third shift' (Duncombe & Marsden, 1995; Fahs & Swank, 2016) the additional caring and emotional work performed by women in respect to managing relationships with family and friends. Even in dual academic couples with young children, as Rafnsdóttir and Heijstra, (2013) found, it was women that experienced more pronounced feelings of guilt, perceiving themselves as responsible for their lack of time, that they were the ones that chose to have children. ECA women who wanted to start families but felt that they were unable, due to fixed term contracts and the difficulties of meeting a partner when constantly relocating, also expressed intense feelings of guilt about this aspect of their lives. The requirements of the job and the need to push family to the side, had left many with regrets.

*'I'm now in my mid-30s and have been unable to maintain relationships due to these moves. Of course, I am conscious of the impact this has had not only on my emotional well-being but on my reproductive chances. It is very hard to repeatedly start again in a new city where you know very few people.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Guilt appeared to be an emotional symptom in ECA narratives of not being able to fulfil every aspect of one's life to the fullest ability, the impossibility of meeting paid and unpaid responsibilities and finding the time for non-work activities and relationships. It was a pervading and constant feeling, that in undertaking one task, another was inevitably being neglected.

To surmise, in this research most participants disclosed how important their friends, family, and romantic partners were in maintaining a life outside of work, a tether that prevented them from drifting off into overwork or isolation. Participants also discussed how this aspect of their lives helped them to relax and switch off from academic work. Spending time with loved ones was generally noted as being extremely important to mental health and well-being. However, despite this acknowledgement, these aspects of life were often viewed as being the most expendable when work took over.

For many ECAs, the lack of non-work activities and purely non-professional relationships in their lives could lead to a dangerous cycle. To illustrate, an academic may work in their 'free' time neglecting relationships and other activities, and then, as the strength of these connections are then weakened, become better able to pursue academic work with even fewer boundaries and thus become ever more isolated. Through engaging in this cycle, ECAs make themselves the perfect abstract neoliberal worker, completely dedicated to their work with no other commitments (Acker, 1990), however, this frequently came at the expense of well-being and mental health. Though some participants expressed that they were happy to do this, it was difficult to separate out their own notions of agency from a work ethic that pushes individuals to self-present as dedicated (Busso & Rivetti, 2014).

### 5.3.1. One of Us? Romance, Friendships and Families Inside and Outside of Academia

Many participants confessed that overwork and relocation had severely affected their romantic relationships. Paul, for example, in balancing both academic and non-academic job simultaneously had endured the demise of more than one romantic relationship. As a precarious academic who oscillated between overwork and underemployment, he confessed to simply not having the time and energy to invest in them.



*'One or two other relationships suffered because of the precarity of the work and the second job, and it takes time [academic work] to be away from people' (Paul)*

Simultaneously, many ECAs considered their romantic partners of primary importance and that these were the relationships they chose to place the most energy into maintaining. For many they provided a key source of emotional support and practically, allowed them to share resources in terms of housing and wealth. Having a strong romantic relationship helped many ECAs survive early career academia, and as such, many invested their limited time and resources into them.

*'My wife is my rock, and together we are able to make sure the house runs smoothly, that the children are put in bed (with a story!) and that there is always food on the table.' (Tristram)*

Participants conversely who were single often expressed a lack of enthusiasm for dating or investing in new relationship given their lack of free time and the likelihood that they would soon relocate. For them, romantic relationships were viewed as too time consuming and not worth the emotional investment.

*'Well... My tinder/OkCupid profiles used to be set to "short-term" until now because I didn't know where in the country I'd be living from one year to the next... I also I guess didn't want to HAVE to choose between a really good job and a partner or having to only visit them on weekends etc. like some academics do.' (Survey, female, 25-34)*

Within this research there was also a constant categorisation by participants of romantic relationships existing either inside of academia (also known as dual academic relationships [Schiebinger et al., 2008; Morton & Kmec, 2018; Sotirin & Goltz, 2019]) with advantages and disadvantages being attributed to both. For those in romantic relationships where their partner was outside the profession, a clearly expressed positive was a more defined boundary with academic work and as a result being better able to 'switch off'. However, a corresponding frustration commonly cited was that these partners often lacked sufficient understanding about some of the idiosyncrasies of academic work, for example the need to work abnormal hours alongside the annual peaks and troughs in labour.

*'He doesn't understand that the work is still there, and the work is waiting for you, the marking and all of that.' (Adetola)*

In comparison, those in dual academic relationships expressed relief that their partner had an intrinsic understanding of academic work, the wider world of academia with its accompanying norms and social expectations, as well as the precarious nature of academic contracts. There was also a sense that they shared the same passions.

*'My wife is an academic anyway, so she's always been understanding of the precarity...'* (Haris)

*'I'm sure it depends on the individual personalities involved, but it works for us as we understand what the other's going through and we understand each other's world....Trying to think of anything else I have to say about being a dual academic couple? Part of the reason we're together is that we're both enquiring and into learning new stuff.'* (Laurie)

However, a distinct disadvantage of being in a dual academic couple were the practical realities of trying to find two people in precarious and competitive early career academia (often working in very specialised areas) contracts in the same region: the 'two body problem' (Schiebinger et al., 2008; Dean & Koster, 2014). As Morton & Kmec (2018) observed, these couples took on larger amounts of collective, individualised risk: being in a dual academic relationship therefore could also engender a dual sense of precarity. Literature in this area has identified this as being intrinsically gendered (in heterosexual relationships), the female partner often attributed the role of the 'trailing spouse' (Schiebinger et al., 2008) following the career path of the male partner. Academic women have also been evidenced (Dean & Koster, 2014) to be more likely to leave a position and relocate in dual academic relationships. In the data however I did not find much evidence of this, with women participants generally being very protective of their own careers. What I found to be more common, were dual academic couples living separately from their partners. The idea of the trailing spouse, where one secures their partner a position at their institution, also does not really apply to precarious ECAs who are unlikely to hold this influence.

*'My partner is about to relocate for a research job, and we will be living apart much of the time. It's not ideal but hoping it will pay off in the long run...'* (Survey, male, 25-34)

Friendships among ECAs followed a similar pattern to romantic relationships, there once again emerging a pattern of 'inside' and 'outside' academia. Most ECAs felt that having friendships with colleagues was a natural development given that they often shared an intense interest in the same subjects and occupied the same spaces. Like romantic

relationships, ECAs also expressed the frustration of socialising or interacting with friends outside of academia, that they often did not seem to understand their respective lack of money and free time. Conversely, this also meant that many ECAs lacked the necessary hours to properly form or engage in friendships.

*'It can be lonely - sometimes very isolating. I find many people outside academia don't understand why and what I do and inside academia people mostly don't have time to exchange ideas and just talk. I do have a strong little network though and we support each other.'* (Survey, female, 35-44)

A way in which friendships differed to romantic relationships was that they were viewed as far more expendable and the relationships most likely to suffer when it came to work-life balance and time being squeezed. Some participants, such as Polly, admitted that while this was sometimes necessary to keep up with work and applications, there was the corresponding danger that pushing away friendships could lead to isolation and neglected well-being.

*'Like even having someone say would you like me to visit you and bring you lots of prosecco and make you dinner, is still a thing I have to deal with that's still another job, and no, I don't want you to come, just leave me alone. Then the more you're left alone the more you feel isolated and the more unhappy you feel.'* (Polly)

Once again, those that purposefully made time for friends viewed themselves as transgressive as these were not viewed as a priority amongst many ECAs. Ultimately, early career academia endangered relationships that connected academics to the outside world of non-work. With the little time available, ECAs had to prioritise which relationships were worth the most investment with friendships often losing out.

ECAs also frequently cited the heavy turn-over of friends as an issue. The process of relocation inherent in this stage of academia involved a constant cycle; of making new friends, who then left, or being the ECA in question who relocated and then left others behind. Generally, this was described as a depressing aspect of early career lives with support networks continually ripped away and the constant, and as ECAs perceived awkward, pressure of making new friends as an adult.

*'It's really hard to make friends as a grown up!... When you're a kid you'd see someone on the playground and be like, "Hey, you look fun or I like that toy we're going to be friends now.'* (Evelyn)

Though Miriam expressed that she enjoyed having an international group of friends to visit, most ECAs did not have the time or money to maintain these international, or even inter-regional, relationships.

Regarding family relationships (outside of work-life balance and childcare) once again there was an expression of frustration by many ECAs that their relatives did not understand academic work or academia more generally.

*I've had a couple of cousins go to uni but I'm the first doctor in the family ever and that's quite intimidating to me and to them. When I see other extended family, I feel quite alien, that I don't have an experience that reflects their experience... if I try to explain something that has happened to me at work they don't understand.'* (Evelyn)

As opposed to friends and romantic partners outside of academia who were more frustrated with the daily aspects of ECAs tendency to overwork and the pressures on their time, ECA families appeared more frustrated by the difficulties and barriers to career progression. These relatives (ECAs expressed) viewed them as extremely qualified, intelligent and devoted to their work, as such, they were often upset by the slow advancement and poor return on investment. Again, this concern, while well-meaning engendered feelings of guilt in ECAs who did not know how to convey the vagaries of the academic labour market to relatives. This was most severely felt by those in first-generation academic families whose relatives had little understanding of academic career progression, that they perceived their ECA relatives as highly educated and were therefore dismayed that they struggled to find permanent work.

*'They've always told us that they're proud of both of us, but I wonder if they think, why is it taking us so long to get settled in our career paths where as my siblings have almost all got kids now, especially on my dad's side of the family and they've got all the same houses and mortgages which I don't.'* (Peter)

Participants that grew up within families that either had knowledge of academic systems or were academics themselves did appreciate both the knowledge, the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1989), and the advice they were able to provide. Laurie, however, did express some disadvantages of being located within an academic family, that they could sometimes be too directive, too involved, and often upheld harmful academic working practices, as evidenced by his father.

*I also can't bear talking to my family about it, not because they won't understand. I'm quite lucky my dad's an academic married to another academic, my mum's partner is also an academic, it runs in my family. They know that a PhD isn't a guarantee of a job but they'll still persist in asking me how the job search is going, and I feel like saying if I do get a job, I'll tell you. You don't have to keep asking \*laughs\*. It means that they ask, and then I snap, and then they get upset and it doesn't help that relationship.... My dad is a massively unhelpful example as he's a massive workaholic that works until 10pm every night and that's why he's successful, but I can't do that, and I feel extremely guilty about not doing that.'*

(Laurie)

A poignant finding of this research was uncovering the cross-over and divide in many ECAs relationships and categorisation of friends and romantic partners into those inside and outside of academia, as existing on either side of an 'ivory wall'. Due to the long hours of academia and the length of training it requires to become an ECA (masters, PhD), it is understandable that participants would have a significant number of relationships in the same occupation, a common trend in vocational work (Morgan et al., 2013). As well as the convenience of occupying the same space, these individuals often shared a passion or interest based on their discipline or research, a natural basis for a relationship. These connections also had a professional advantage in that they often served to create strong networks of support and development where ECAs could assist with feedback, publishing, and even help others secure work (Carvalho et al., 2013; Macoun & Miller, 2014). They were both networks of protection, offering emotional support, and of progress, of helping ECAs advance in their careers.

The need to explain the vagaries and often exploitative aspects of academia to those 'outside' of it – on the other side of the wall – was often described as exhausting. Several participants had described how much their lives differed from non-academics of a similar age (taking the median age of ECAs) regarding significant points in the life course, such as securing a mortgage or starting a family. Relationships with those who were not academics, however, were valued for other reasons, for example they were described at being better able to assist ECAs in switching off, of creating a divide between themselves and paid work.

### 5.3.2. Dual Incomes and Precarious Work: Personal Relationships and Financial Support

A significant finding of this research was the number of participants whose personal relationships, particularly romantic, allowed them to undertake work as an ECA. Partners, and occasionally family members, that provided financial support frequently enabled ECAs to endure periods of work characterised by unpredictable income and even periods of unemployment. Personal relationships therefore had very real material effects on ECAs ability to endure labour market precarity. As well as a ‘dual wage’ (Vosko, 2010) being increasingly necessary to maintain a sufficient quality of life – particularly where both couples are in low paid work – it was often necessary that one partner hold a stable, salaried job to allow the other to engage with more precarious forms of work. This not only provided a financial bridge but also a mental cushion, that the ECA in question could be assured that if work stopped or a contract ended, they would be able to survive.

*‘I wouldn’t have been able to afford working on hourly paid contracts for 2 years during and after the PhD in London without the support of my family and partner, and the help of my credit card more often than I would have liked.’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

*‘Just able to pay bills; husband in private sector with much larger salary so do-able’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

*‘The only reason I haven’t experienced financial difficulties is because my partner had a full-time job during my periods of low/ no pay, and he could cover the rent and bills’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Regarding interview participants, both Laurie and Caroline disclosed that they were at least partially supported by their partners and that this allowed them to pursue academic work. Being supported by a partner, did seem to be more prevalent among ECA women although there were men that were supported (Laurie) and a number of women breadwinners (Jane, Annie). However, it was undeniable that this was more prominent amongst women in heterosexual relationships, with this being the status of all quoted above. Why this is the case is complex but could be due to women’s association and degree of familiarity with feminised modes of work, such as part-time and fixed term contracts (Standing, 1999; Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004; Barker & Feiner, 2010) and that they feel less shame or anxiety in undertaking them. Additionally, the gendered nature of this division could be due to the persistence of the breadwinner role among men and the gender pay gap,

whereby men overall earn more, due to both vertical (role within organisation) and horizontal (work sector) segregation (Peetz, 2017). Though men in this research did not tend to use the term ‘breadwinner’ specifically, ECA fathers did speak at length about the need to have work which could support their families. Several of the ECA participants that were financially supported, knew that relying on a partner’s income could place them at risk should the relationship end. As Worth (2016) notes, though mutual dependency is a common feature for millennial women in precarious work, it is a state which often leads to feelings of anxiety.

*I just turned 30 and I want to be financially independent from my family and partner, and I want to be able to afford things like holidays and a mortgage - and I don't want to wait another 5 to 10 years for these things!’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Considering what this means for ECAs and academia more generally, the fact that another means of financial support is such an important resource in surviving this career stage has meant that those who lack it bear a higher risk of exclusion from the sector. From participant accounts it appeared much harder to endure early career academia when single with no additional income to support fallow periods, though many of these individuals were incredibly self-reliant, often adept at saving or taking on multiple jobs. However, this once again detracted from the time these ECAs could spend on additional career-building tasks placing them at a disadvantage. Not having access to additional support, or another high-earning stable income, has also served to place working-class and low-income households at higher risk should they choose to undertake an academic career. Annie for example was clear that the inability to support her children as a single mother would likely be the factor that forced her from the sector.

In considering how this relates to the wider political project, this places women in a concurrently advantageous and disadvantageous position. Though they are more likely to be materially supported, women overall are in closer proximity to poverty both due to the gender pay gap and their increased reliance on the public sector, including benefits, under austerity (UK Women’s Budget Group, 2015). As a gendered group therefore, women are subject to greater risk should a relationship – in which they are financially supported – end. Additionally, under the current government active labour market policies (ALMP) that seek to reduce benefits, and increase bureaucracy around securing them, have made being unemployed especially hazardous. The flexicurity, the benefits and state support (Greer,

2016) that would help to bridge gaps in employment have been significantly reduced. Of course, current ALMP also affect working-class and low paid men who are out of work or underemployed.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

ECAs have many relationships they must navigate professionally and personally, all of which are essential to helping them succeed, to progress in their careers and to be protected; guarded from some of the worst aspects of academic life and emotionally supported in order to survive it. The relationships an ECA makes within the hierarchy of academia can be extremely beneficial and there is much evidence of solidarity and kindness on display, particularly through good line management and through the comradery of their ECA colleagues. Conversely, poor professional relationships, particularly with line managers can have devastating consequences to an ECAs career in regard to both opportunities and progression. In addition, mentoring relationships were uncovered as a powerful tool for improving ECA chances in a competitive labour market, however, it also exposed the importance of social capital and how this could act against ECA women and other marginalised academic groups who were not provided with equal access. Though sitting apart from either networks of progression or protection, ECAs also highly valued the pedagogical and personal relationships they had with their students though these had been somewhat compromised by high staff to student ratios (in some disciplines) and the introduction of the NSS. This metric had led many ECAs to be more cautious in their approach to teaching and had also encouraged them toward overwork in order to secure good feedback, for example through increased contact time. Furthermore, the squeeze experienced within academic hierarchies led ECAs to be further compromised in networks of professional progress, feeling stuck with a 'trickle down' of stress and caught in a unique position between students and line managers. This hierarchical pinch also demonstrated the secretive use of power within academic hierarchies and how this resulted in both ECAs and line managers having compromised levels of agency and a related fear of speaking out.

Personal relationships while important to ECAs well-being were most notable in accounts of work-life balance and the difficulties of maintaining them due to limitations in time, money and the additional challenge of distance. This inevitably led to pronounced feelings



of guilt amongst ECAs and the continual rebuilding of social networks to avoid isolation. Another significant finding on personal relationships was the overlapping of professional and personal circles amongst ECAs friends and romantic partners, not only due to the aforementioned restrictions, but also due to a deep understanding of why they chose to be an academic – passion – and understanding the idiosyncrasies of academic work. Finally, it was discovered that many ECAs cite a partner with a high-paying or non-precarious job as the reason they can work in academia. Though there were breadwinners and dependents of both genders, women were more prevalent among those ECAs that were supported, aligning with patterns in the greater gender order. That a dual income was often necessary to endure precarious work demonstrated how much harder it was for certain ECAs, especially those that were single or from working-class backgrounds, to succeed.

## Chapter 6: Being Read as Academic

### 6.1. Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss how ECAs navigate academia through their access to certain forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and how these are then converted into symbolic capital, the prestige required for leverage and advancement in the sector. This will include a concurrent discussion of how a lack of this starter capital (economic, social and cultural forms) and thus symbolic capital, leads to feelings of non-belonging and exclusion, an experience skewed toward ECA women, BAME and WC academics. Additionally, there will also be a discussion of how this relates to luck in a hyper-competitive labour market whereby small instances (access to capital) can increase odds and others (bias) can decrease them. Herein, I will also posit what it is to be ‘read as academic’, a form of symbolic capital garnered through experiences of belonging and legitimacy, how it is accrued through various physical and social signifiers and predicated on initial judgments. This will include the related experiences of ‘not being read’ as academic and the non-belonging that comes as a result, of being illegitimate in academia. Moreover, this chapter will also cover the way bias is expressed and experienced, focusing on sexism and racism, and how implicit bias has become the most common form of expression yet the most difficult to oppose due to its seemingly ‘small’ nature and tendency to masquerade as banter. Relating to this, there will also be a discussion about how all expression of bias (condescension, bullying and harassment) are all expressions of the same downward exertion of patriarchal and racist power. Finally, I will address how despite facing some powerful forces: structural barriers, explicit and implicit bias, non-belonging, and the reluctance of many ECAs to speak up, that resistance in academia and ECAs related agency continues to exist and be expressed in many different forms. These include speaking up to disrupt informational flow in hierarchies, dissenting academic identities and pedagogies, exposing the capital exchange, and self-made and union collectivism.

## 6.2. Converting Capital: Read or Not Read as Academic?

Being 'read as academic, as belonging and the degree in which ECAs experienced this, was an important phenomenon uncovered in the research, a relational practice that hinged on how ECAs were (or were not) accepted and legitimised. This was discovered to be heavily dependent on social categories and the initial visual signifiers (appearance, gender, race) and biases (both implicit and explicit) that accompanied them. In practice, this was expressed through the actions of colleagues and students, but also dependent on the individual ECAs perception of these actions. Being read as academic among participants was largely dependent on what Bourdieu termed symbolic capital, 'a fundamental operation of social alchemy' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2013: 299) which emerges from the conversion of all other types of capital: economic, social, cultural; what I will term collectively in this research as starter capital. In academia, symbolic capital is a kind of recognition and legitimacy inherited from all the other forms and part of a cyclical process whereby the more symbolic capital one accrues, the easier it becomes to gather further amounts of starter capital. In their study into conversions of capital by entrepreneurs, Pret et al. (2016) noted symbolic capital as being particularly powerful, it having the ability to legitimize individuals allowing them to generate trust, and thus allowing them further access to all forms of capital. Heijstra et al. (2017) in their research observed that building symbolic capital was viewed as being of the utmost importance to ECAs, necessary to building and solidifying networks necessary for success. In early career academia where this becomes an issue is how certain social categories (white, male, middle class) that represent traditional academic identities already come imbued with a symbolic status that marks them out as conspicuously academic, read as academic, and therefore belonging. Those that lie outside of these categories then experience various degrees of non-belonging in not being read as academic, incurring instances of symbolic violence and a fight for recognition. Of course, this is massively complicated by issues of intersectional identity which I will go on to discuss.

To illustrate with an example from the data, below James describes how small, cumulative, behaviours either confirm, micro-affirmations, or deny, micro-aggressions (Simatele, 2018; Harris & Moffitt, 2019); one's legitimacy in academic spaces.

*'There's a really good friend of mine who's mixed race and did his PhD at a really good university and did a really interesting PhD yet he would be treated differently and judged more by the students compared to me for example based on how he speaks, looks, dresses. At work I wear a shirt when I'm teaching and you walk into a classroom and say "the reading was this", there's this sense of authority and they accept you as a white and middle class male, that you take on this role, and the further away you are from that, the less easy that will be necessarily, and I'm very aware of that. It's not imposter syndrome, it's just a realisation that I've had it a lot easier than other people would do.... So \_\_\_\_, this friend of mine we've been talking about the notion of micro-affirmations. When you go into a room and it's not necessarily that people doff a cap to you or anything like that, it's in the way... that same way he might get micro-aggressions, I might get micro-affirmations. People not questioning your status and those kind of things...there's this sense of authority and they accept that you as a white and middle-class male, that you take on this role, and the further away you are from that, the less easy that will be necessarily, and I'm very aware of that.'* (James)

Occupying a male, white identity therefore, particularly with a middle-class accent, is more likely to ensure you are read and accepted as academic with little symbolic challenge to your position. James and other male ECA participants such as Paul and Jarryd also acknowledged the 'knapsack of invisible privilege' (McIntosh, 2003) that they carried with them, rendering it visible. They also went some way to addressing bias by speaking of its existence. As Dovidio et al. (2002) propose, this is one of the first steps in tackling biased thoughts. Though the acknowledgement that others were *not* read as academic was positive, there were few that took actual action in furthering these concerns through pedagogical rebellion, a form of resistance I will discuss this later in the chapter.

As noted, as well as using symbolic capital to gain social capital, the cyclical nature of this relationship meant participants used their already existing social and cultural resources to secure even higher levels of prestige. James disclosed that he had benefitted massively from economic (being privately educated), social (networks), cultural (qualifications) and symbolic (being read as academic) capital, and that together these had secured him with connections that could assist him in his job search. This was also the case for Tristram who realised his educational background – while not accounting for everything – had been key in securing his success.

*'Essentially, most of my social capital in academic terms comes from outside my workplace, so I was putting in a job application for another place and they were asking for a whole load of stuff that I'd*

*never done before in academia and the university here can't support me with, so I've been in touch with professors at other universities who have looked at my application for example.'* (James)

*I definitely worked very hard to get where I'm today, but I'll admit I had some help with applications and things.'* (Tristram)

The fact that an individual may lack symbolic capital does not mean that they necessarily feel less deserving of belonging in academia, however, these participants did express how it often felt as if they had to fight harder to get in, and then work harder to not only secure but to maintain their position.

*I identify as a female working-class academic, so I would say my road into academia has been tough but worth it.'* (Survey, female, 45-54)

In considering non-belonging, aside from social categories, precarity and a related sense of precariousness (Butler, 2003) were powerful ways in which one was made to feel illegitimate, not read as academic. Participants described how these modes of work often conspired to make them feel invisible, isolated and as second-tier employees. They were kept from view in their institution symbolically through precarious contracts, never feeling fully integrated with their colleagues, and even physically, through a lack of space or an office in which to work.

*'I've not been on the corridor with colleagues and stuff. Whilst they're still my friends and everything, there's always that feeling of one foot out the door, and maybe I'm projecting? The feeling that you don't belong and the feeling that your identity is bound up with being an academic in this department in this university...'* (Paul)

Even the simple act of getting paid for ECAs on zero hours contracts was cited as a struggle with many having been underpaid or not paid at all due to issues in administrative processing; an act that placed many at risk. Once again, this served to make precarious ECAs feel overlooked within the structures of the university.

Another way in which participants expressed this division were the feelings experienced when others in their professional or personal circles were promoted above them and secured permanent contracts. As well as jealousy there was a feeling of being 'left behind' and of being imbedded in a maligned substratum of academia. Those in the research that had secured permanent contracts expressed that while it was not a panacea, they did feel

significantly more validated and secure. They described a prominent sense of ‘relief’ on securing them. Competition also played a key role in exacerbating this divide as it was clear amongst participants that there was a significant gap between academic jobs available and the number of ECAs within the academic labour market (Ivancheva, 2015). This alongside the sunk costs many had placed into academia meant that all ECA positions, but particularly permanent ones, were fiercely fought over with emotions: jealousy, grief and elation running extremely high. Though I would contest Standing’s (2011) belief that ‘the precariat’ entails a separate class, his theories do point toward those that experience precarity as being a separate and stigmatised group, a denizen as opposed to a citizen (Standing, 2014), both in academia (Ivancheva, 2015; Lopes & Dewan, 2015; Wånggren, 2018) and in the wider political project (Vallas & Prenner, 2012; Worth, 2016). Considering precarity in regard to non-belonging is extremely important as it intersects with many of the cases in this research.

Labour market precarity is not new, neither in academia (Connell, 2019) or in the wider political project (Bourdieu, 1998; Rubery et al., 2018). Interviews with senior academics along with other accounts clearly state that ECAs in the UK have been placed on various forms of fixed term contracts since the 80s; they have always been in common use due to time and grant limited research projects (Balaram & Wallace-Stephens, 2018). However, what has changed is the pace and the normalisation at which precarious work has become entrenched in the sector (Rubery et al., 2018). Senior academics in this research expressed their dismay at the shrinking length of ECA contracts, some accounting for single terms alongside the increasing use of pernicious and unpredictable zero hours contracts (UCU, 2019a). As a meso level institution guided by its umbrella state project, the university has embraced these contracts as a means of cost-efficiency (Love, 2008; Universities UK, 2011; Lorenz, 2012) and to account for an accumulative nature that continually demands more (Harvey, 2007b), more work and more publications despite the consequences to ECAs well-being, mental and physical health. It can be argued therefore the university has become an institution obsessed with profit above all other aspects of the institution, a victim of ‘zombie capitalism’ (Harman, 2010).

Moving on, I will now go on to focus on other discussions of non-belonging, of how it relates to the occupation of certain social categories: being a woman, being BAME, queer, or working-class. Within these discussions I will also cover how these categories intersect with experiences of precarity. As opposed to symbolic capital, these groups often

experience instances of symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990 [1977]) within the university, their bodies and behaviours controlled as not to upset the naturalised androcentric doxa. In academia, certain identities are viewed as abject because they disrupt normality; they let what is normally outside in. As Fotaki (2013) states, they disrupt the ‘symbolic order’ of academia.

Visual signifiers are usually the first way someone is read, or not read, as academic, the most obvious being gender, race, and age as these can be immediately perceived upon entering a room. There are then secondary signifiers that are read while speaking, such as class and confidence, interpreted through body language, colloquialisms and accent. In his account, Mark discussed his own experience of being ‘read’ as working-class and that while it rarely presented any problems for him, it still fed into his sense of being an outsider.

*‘There are times where I’ve been consciously aware of the class difference between me and other people, I don’t think there’s been a time where I felt any kind of active prejudice or snobbery aimed at me... but you can tell, there’s something in the habit....Maybe once... I was with someone from Westminster and he picked me up for continually saying “at the end of the day” at the end of sentences as I was kind of nervous and slipping into clichéd ways of speaking. That made me feel quite sort of uncomfortable, but that’s been a relative rarity.’ (Mark)*

Other incidents experienced by academics, however, were significant and affecting enough to lead an individual to question their place within academia, violent and direct expressions of rejection. In the passage below, Haris describes not being read as belonging on his campus because of his race.

*‘...so, I walk into university one day and this guy starts following me, and he’s following me and following me, and I think I’ve really got to go into the toilet and the guy literally follows me into the toilet when I’m in yeah? When I’m in there he turns round to me and says, “what are you doing here?” and I say, “I’m a teacher here”. I kind of looked him then to say “ok, now get out”. Then what I did is I went upstairs and looked down at him as I wanted to see, am I the only one that he stops? And I literally was.’ (Haris)*

Sexuality as a social category was interesting as it seemed to hinge on whether participants were read visually as being conspicuously ‘queer’, as being seen to occupy that identity without explicitly stating it. One participant, Kate, who identified as a lesbian expressed that it had never really affected her experience as her colleagues did not perceive her as gay,

that she only shared this aspect of her identity with close friends. Conversely, queer ECAs could also be made to feel alienated by being read as straight, as happened to Evelyn (also a lesbian) when a senior male colleague asked, *'if she was on the lookout for a man'*. This comment was at once both sexist, in its presumption that Evelyn's concerns would be with finding a partner, and homophobic in its presumption of her heterosexuality. Having to challenge this narrative is a common experience of queer people in the workplace (Ozturk & Rumens, 2014) where the onus lies with them to challenge colleagues or have their sexuality mis-read. Either option comes with accompanying disadvantages, that ECAs either suppress their identity and exert subjective harm on themselves, or disclose their sexuality and risk being ostracised (ibid). In terms of queer identity therefore if one is not read as conspicuously queer, the onus often, unjustly, falls to the individual to out themselves and risk feelings of non-belonging. Laurie, a trans male participant also experienced being condescendingly and deliberately mis-gendered by colleague, an experience they found extremely distressing, a deliberate misrecognition of their own identity.

*'Then I replied to her and accidentally said 'like' a lot as I'm from the same generation and her response was, "Oh, you're doing it too, it must be a female thing" and I was like "I'm not female". I just sort of stared at her and she went on this sort of rambling rant about how the way she spoke would be perceived as masculine by some people, but "I'm not a man, nor do I aspire to be" and she gave me a sort of pointed eye brow and, yeah it is hilarious, but it was traumatic at the same time.'* (Laurie)

Their experience of transition however was interesting as they felt that gender, for them, was not the part of their identity that was most meaningful to their ECA experience...

*'I sort of thought when I came out as trans, and when I medically transitioned and started being read as male. I thought it would be an amazing insight into whether people treat me differently as a man or a woman in academia and teaching. Unfortunately,...well not unfortunately but unfortunately for this social experiment! I think it's because I've become massively less awkward since coming out so I've had more opportunities and I've enjoyed academia a lot more, but I don't think that's because of people reading me as a male, I think that's because of other stuff about me.'* (Laurie).

Though this research lacked participants that self-identified as explicitly working-class (many however having a low-income) a survey participant who did adhere to this identity disclosed experiencing both exclusionary and condescending behaviour from within their department:



*‘On a personal basis, I perceive a class discrimination within my own department, but this is also complex and maybe a perception rather than the reality. I am never overtly discriminated against but find I am often omitted from meetings (usually ‘accidentally’) and I am told what to do rather than asked what I want to do (for example last year I returned from vacation to find a role I had worked on had simply been taken away without consultation).’* (Survey, male, over 54 years old)

When we consider the possibility of being read, or not read, as academic, it is important to also remember the complexities of multifaceted social identities and that no social actor ever occupies a single category (Crenshaw, 1991; Sang, 2016) and that these are concurrently also dependent on context. The different intersections of identity and place therefore can result in different manifestations of privilege (belonging) and disadvantage (non-belonging). Below, Mark demonstrates how his ethnicity (as a self-identifying white other), his class and his accent could have varying effects dependent on what aspect of his identity was being framed and how this was also reliant on context.

*‘I’ve heard people say you’ve got a strong London accent, or more specifically, and less harshly and more accurately that I’ve got a friend who’s Cypriot and you sound just like him. That’s noticing that kind of accent that London Cypriots have. I think you get it worse in academia if you’re from outside of London, even more so... it’s a kind of that underlying class thing, I do feel it sometimes, on the one hand I come from a background where my dad was a lecturer himself from college and also, it’s not like I came from a background where I didn’t have that idea and I was always going to go to university and do some kind of professional career, on the other hand we didn’t have that much money and grew up on a council estate.’*  
(Mark)

When we consider how one is read as academic, it must be emphasised that there are various intersectional factors at work in this process, as no person occupies a singular category. The experience of belonging, or non-belonging therefore depends on what aspect of identity is being framed (Brown-Glaude, 2010; Ahmed, 2012; Macoun & Miller, 2014; Sang, 2016). Contextual factors including discipline and institution also bear an influence.

Identities, belonging and access to various forms of capital are also often nuanced, and while one might feel belonging in one sense – such as having an academic family – framing another aspect – such as growing up on a council estate – can make you feel alienated. It is also an aspect extremely dependent on a relational element, of who one is interacting with and the different social categories they themselves occupy. As Sang (2016) observed in her

research into black, women and feminist academics, it can be difficult to know what aspect of identity to platform, it being largely dependent on specific professional or personal needs. However, not all social categories are comparable when being read as academic, with some representing more visual and instantaneous signifiers such as race, gender and age and other identities requiring more contextual evidence for example, sexuality and class. This is where participants witnessed others making assumptions about them, true or not, based on an assemblage of other characteristics such as appearance, accent and body language.

### 6.3. Implicit Bias, Luck and the Subtlety of Non-Belonging

In academia, while capital is often what buys individual ECAs entry into the sector, bias is what prevents others from gaining access or being able to stay. Earlier, in the literature review, I outlined three forms of bias that operate within academia: structural, implicit and explicit. Here, I will be focusing on implicit bias, the daily incursions of microaggression (Simatele, 2018) and of doing gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987), as the form most relevant to ideas of non-belonging. Though structural biases (precarity, workers' rights, institutional policies) are incredibly important to this research and their impact on gendered ECAs, these have largely been covered. Additionally, a discussion of explicit bias will follow in subsequent discussions of sexual and racial harassment in academia.

Before continuing, I want to discuss how issues of capital and bias relate to the idea of luck that was mentioned in chapter four, that though luck was an expression of how ECAs negotiated structure and agency in the labour market, it was also relational (Pritchard & Smith, 2004, 15). Unfortunately, success in the sector is only partially determined by an ECAs abilities, it also being decided by their access to resources, and who, what other ECAs, they are up against. In an extremely competitive labour market therefore it only takes small instances of advantage – capital – and small instances of disadvantage – bias – to change the odds. In this way academia becomes a horse race whereby one has higher odds of winning based on their categories and circumstances, if they have access to increased levels of symbolic capital, are white, male or middle-class. Comparatively, one has decreased odds with lower levels of symbolic capital, having a precarious contract, if they are a woman, BAME or some other intersection of all these points.

*'A lot of it is a combination of luck and self-promotion, and maybe structural factors like gender and socio-economics but I don't know if there's anything you can do about it. It's not fair and it's not helping us get rich and diverse departments, it's not helping develop ideas that could be paradigm changing knowledge.'* (Caroline)

Luck (in this sense 'success') depends therefore on who one is playing against and the specific 'odds', these players hold. Those read as academic therefore have more of a chance than those that do not, even when occupying precarious modes of work. The fact that many ECA women cited seeing their male colleagues, who had also begun on precarious contracts, being promoted above them supported this.

Returning to implicit bias, as Schwarz (2010) suggests this stems from three main sources. Firstly, as an information-processing short-cut, secondly from motivational and emotional factors and finally social factors, largely the influence of the media. Implicit bias has largely reduced explicit bias – blatant displays of sexism, racism – within professional workplaces, firstly, due to a lower tolerance for this behaviour (Dovidio et al., 2002) and secondly due to legislation against it, for example, the Equality Act in the UK (2010) which criminalises harassment and discrimination. For participants, the daily experience of bias was endured mostly as microaggressions, daily forms of condescension and exclusion.

*'It's not really any particular incident or discrimination but I feel that young female academics are not taken as seriously as other people'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

An issue with implicit bias, despite its prevalence as demonstrated in this research is its associated invisibility, that these are incidences that sometimes are difficult to directly attribute to bigoted behaviour. They are also often framed as small, minor, and therefore inconsequential. Cumulatively however an individual that endures microaggressions is aware that their experience varies to that of their colleagues who do not. As West & Zimmerman (1987) argue, gendered behavior and expectations at work are created and cemented through continual, small performances.

ECAs that experienced microaggressions expressed frustration that they were not taken seriously, it seeming almost impossible to address this kind of behaviour. It also allowed others to accuse ECAs of playing the victim, that there was little substance to their claims of bias or wrongdoings. Campbell and Manning (2018) for instance argue that microaggressions can both be an overreaction and the result of unintentional action; they

contend therefore that they should not be taken seriously. To frame an incident as ‘unintentional’ however belies a misunderstanding of how bias operates, and to frame a reaction as too extreme discounts individual subjectivities. There were various participants who were concerned with sounding like ‘moaning’ academics when they wanted to address concerns around implicit bias, many did not want to appear ungrateful or appear to be rocking the boat, particularly in the face of precarity.

*‘Another challenge is the negativity in the profession from academics - there are some problems that need to be highlighted, but there is much unnecessary moaning too.’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

This desire by some, to appear compliant and grateful however expressed a form of symbolic violence where subjugated ECAs would participate in their own exploitation, in this case by not addressing their concerns and feelings of exclusion as an issue. Symbolic violence was also expressed here in the form of misrecognition, that cumulative microaggressions served to remind certain ECAs that they did not belong while also simultaneously appearing naturalised, for example microaggressions masquerading as workplace banter.

*‘A Chinese colleague, just post-viva, was in a meeting with faculty admin and one of the permanent admin staff made a joke about her name in relation to a racist song. My colleague was not aware, and the chair of the meeting shut the person down as quickly as they could. I regret not following this up at the time.’* (Survey, female, 45-54)

In the hyper-competitive labour market of academia, which is rife with social congestion (Brown, 2013) and a glut of incredibly qualified and capable individuals, work was frequently secured on a knife’s edge. The capital secured by some academics therefore – those traditionally read as academic – and the biases endured by others – those that experience non-belonging – greatly impacts individual chances within the academic labour market. This then was also compounded by structural issues of precarity, for example working-class ECAs’ ability to endure volatile income (UCU, 2019a), and of regulation, which has a greater impact on women in the wider gender order (Peetz, 2017). Odds in the academic labour market are therefore not even, and some have far stronger hands to play than others. Moving on, I will now discuss how feelings of non-belonging, of not being read as academic alongside implicit bias exacerbated feelings of imposter syndrome in ECA women and other atypical ECA identities.

#### 6.4. Legitimacy and Imposter Syndrome: Perceptions of Confidence

Imposter syndrome as a phenomenon was prevalent among ECAs overall, symptomatic of their perceived ‘low’ placing in the academic hierarchy, however it was more pronounced among ECA women and those occupying atypical academic identities. To firstly address ECA women, the feelings of anxiety they experienced around the quality of their work appeared to be down to a lack of confidence when compared to ECA men, not an objective valuation of their outputs. This appeared to align with wider literature that points toward women’s socialised lack of confidence (Clisby & Holdsworth, 2016) and what some theorists such as Risse et al. (2018) have referred to as a ‘confidence gap’, a term describing how differences in labour market performance are determined by gender and perceptions of capability.

*‘...it’s a massive generalisation you know, but I’ll make it anyway, I think women always find it harder to feel confident and given that the bottom line of being an academic is to be able to talk shit and feel confident about it and there’s a level at which generally women are always going to be on the back foot...’*  
(Annie)

Increased feelings of imposter syndrome among women, and the related lack of confidence in their work, fed into the notion that many ECA women felt of being outsiders in academic circles. Because they were liable to view themselves as less academic, they were also liable to view their outputs and work as less sufficiently capable of fulfilling this category. In turn, from the literature we can see how this feeds into a cyclical process of symbolic capital and bias; women are seen to not possess the value of confidence that is inherent in legitimate (read as) academics and therefore lack confidence because of it, and thus symbolic capital. The inherent paradox is that confidence is a quality that often arises from having increased access to all forms of starter capital that allow one to feel prestigious – of having the symbolic accolade of read as academic – and as a result, better able to exude confidence. Of course, this was not determinative and plenty of ECA women, such as Miriam, Neeru, and Evelyn expressed a great deal of confidence in their work.

For BAME participants, imposter syndrome often stemmed from a perception, by others, that they might be viewed as a ‘diversity hire’, an individual employed to fulfil a quota, usually around race or gender (despite this having been proven to rarely reflect the truth

[EC, 2019]). Adetola disclosed that some of her colleagues gave her the impression that she would never have secured her job solely on merit, that she was employed at least in part because she was black.

*'They would have conversations like we have such a diverse student body and it's good to finally see staff reflecting that, and I was like, I get that, but that shouldn't be... but you should tell me I'm good at my job because I'm a good teacher, not because you're just trying to get more black teachers for the students.'*  
(Adetola)

This feeling of being exposed as a check box hire, was one Stockfelt (2018) also detected among her own black, women academic participants. This appeared to be the result of cumulative microaggressions addressing the 'diversity' of the department and a form of racist implicit bias on the part of colleagues, that a BAME colleague could not have made it on merit alone. Despite BAME participants being generally assured in their abilities, these accusations would occasionally lead them to question their position.

Experiences of imposter syndrome across gender and race are connected by the experience of being an academic outsider; of existing on the peripheries of academia and also experiencing barriers. Though numerically BAME, ECA academics are far more in the minority than ECA women, both groups endured the same microaggressions that led them to question their own experience of bias and both experienced imposter syndrome in occupying a space not traditionally perceived as their own (Fotaki, 2013). Within the following section, I will go on to discuss the particulars of how gendered bias was experienced before moving on to race.

## 6.5. Gender as Non-belonging in Academia, Experiences of Bias

A central focus of this research has been to explore the gendered experiences of ECAs, and as such I will be paying a particular focus to how gender relates to ideas of non-belonging. Throughout, I have discussed how different aspects of academic life are gendered and how women experience bias through their association with pastoral work, the academic divisions of labour, evaluations and also how they are excluded from networks of socialisation. Here, I want to explore not why sexist behaviours exist in academia but how they are expressed and how they are experienced. From examining the responses of

participants, sexist behaviour appears to exist on a continuum, much like the one Kelly (1987) discusses in relation to sexual violence whereby discernibly ‘less’ serious actions, such as unwanted touching, and ‘more’ serious actions such as rape are inextricably connected through a downward exertion of power. I propose that a continuum of patriarchal behaviour also exists within academia, between seemingly benign forms of condescension, bullying, and harassment, and that together these also exert a downward exertion of power on ECA women.

### 6.5.1. Condescension

Condescension was the most frequently experienced form of sexist behaviour, it being very easy to brush off as an innocent misunderstanding or a joke, a typical microaggression (Simatele, 2018). While sustained periods of condescension could constitute bullying (Crawford, 1999), these were mostly expressed without consequence or repercussions. Often, remarks about age, or being perceived as young and therefore inexperienced, were a way in which this patronising behaviour was expressed toward women.

*‘I don't want to share specifics because it isn't my experience but younger female colleagues being belittled by older male academics is reasonably common.’ (Survey, female, 25-34)*

One anecdote by Polly highlighted how this condescension sometimes occurred in the presence of other academics, who were known or friends to the ECA in question, and who were then complicit in their silence. While this particular incident occurred while Polly was a master’s student the agents in the story appeared to be far more concerned with her status as young and female as opposed to her academic seniority.

*‘Anyway, at the pub, there's two \_\_\_\_\_, there's me and there's my friend \_\_\_\_\_, and at this point I think \_\_\_\_\_ was a lecturer level and he's about ten years ahead of me careers wise and I'm just a master's student. He's got a permanent job right.....and this old woman starts going on about how young girls today in Britain, they're just such trash, they don't know how to dress, they walk around looking like trash, with everything hanging out they're such sluts... this is being directed at me as if young girls today dressing like trash is my problem, or that I'm somehow complicit and I'm like one of these young girls that dresses like trash, that I'm one of these common girls. It was this real moment of sexism and classism all in one and I remember being really annoyed at her but I remember being even more annoyed at \_\_\_\_\_ for not saying anything to her because I was not in a position to challenge.’*

On other occasions condescension exposed itself via a presumption of women's closeness with 'family ideology' (Barret, 1991), a biased assumption that women's overriding priority was for their family. This did not seem to be a phenomenon experienced by men with children regardless of the actual amounts of childcare they undertook. Though this may be considered a different kind of bias, that men are more dedicated to their careers, it was one which benefitted them in the world of work.

*I have to deal with comments like "it must be nice to have a family so young" (from a colleague of the same age who already has children and was genuinely shocked when I pointed this out) or the assumption that I'm a student. The cumulative impact is that I often feel like an intern (rather than a colleague) or just that I don't belong in academia.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Undermining skills or actions was another common way to patronise ECA women, leading individuals to second guess themselves, a practice often leading to feelings of imposter syndrome.

*I felt my experience and qualifications were sneered at. If I went to him about student behaviour, he often shrugged and did very little.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Even the very way ECA women were addressed by students appeared to differ from their male colleagues. Though this may have been, as Kate proposes, a hangover from school, it still exposes a more patronising vision of women's authority.

*'They call me miss, which is left over from school, in school is it miss or sir? There's a massive difference between miss and sir, it's not miss and mister, it's sir. Now, for me that automatically establishes some hierarchy between male colleagues and female colleagues.'* (Kate)

### 6.5.2. Bullying

Within the research, though bullying was present in the narratives of all genders – with ECAs at the bottom of the hierarchy most likely to endure these behaviours – it was more prevalent in the accounts of ECA women, matching trends set within the literature (Simpson & Cohen, 2004). This was perhaps due to a bias that presumed women to be weaker, and more likely to remain silent (Pryor & Day, 1988). The gender of bullies



reported in this research however was mixed, with ECAs reporting that both woman and male senior academics participated in these behaviours (Field, 1996). In exerting misuses of power therefore, it appeared that position within the hierarchy held more influence than gender alone.

The line between condescension and bullying is not clear-cut, with persistent condescension in some cases classed as bullying (Crawford, 1999), however in terms of how participants experienced it within this research, it appeared to be a far more sustained and deliberate practice. Examples of bullying behaviour included deliberate exclusions; not inviting ECAs to networking events; forcing ECAs to work late; forcing ECAs to overwork or produce work at a faster rate; making no allowances for flexibility, and pressuring ECAs to undertake unrewarding work tasks. The tone of bullying was also more vindictive and aggressive compared to the belittling quality of condescension. When this bullying was aimed at certain groups, in many of these instances women, we can see how this behaviour then took on a sexist dimension...

*'Our last year's line manager was expecting 9-5 presence in the office, it is a shared office. You could be drinking coffee for hours instead of working, but you had to be there... On top of that, he forcefully demanded 9-5 presence from new junior female academics (e.g. via aggressive emails). He was probably assuming that, being new, we would not find out from others that he is singling us out.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

The consequences of this bullying could be severe as not only did the groups and individuals targeted have to endure a stressful and unhappy working life, but there could also be future repercussions to their career...

*I was bullied by my PI during my Post Doc. He refused to communicate directly with me, contacting the co-PI at a different institution, to relay instructions or comments to me, although our offices faced each other across the street. He suggested to other colleagues I had resigned, although I was still working for him. When I raised this with the appropriate equalities officer, she told me that he had a problem working with women, and had not wanted to appoint me on that basis, but had been forced to by the Research Director as I was the most qualified candidate. She added that other women had put up with his behaviour, so I should as well. She refused to take notes of the meeting or make a formal record of it. I have never had a reference from that institution, and the publications I was working on as part of that team have never made it into print.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Once again, this demonstrates how victims of bullying endure an additional form of vulnerability of having to rely on toxic staff for references and publications, a particular problem in academia with its niche enclaves of research (Wånggren, 2018). As discussed earlier in relation to ECAs professional relationships, research teams with strict hierarchies are often where bullying seems to thrive. Moreover, another factor that connected many stories of bullying was the networked nature of it, that in several incidents the bully was a known perpetrator in the department but that little or nothing was done. This aligned with Simpson and Cohen's (2004) findings that senior professionals could use internal systems as a way to prolong intimidation against their subordinates, for instance, using proceedings to mendaciously clear their own reputation. It also supports Ahmed's (2017) research into how complaint procedures are hijacked and then often enacted against the complaine.

### 6.5.3. Sexual Harassment and Misconduct

Harassment was the least commonly experienced behaviour on the continuum although something several participants had observed. Again, there are cross overs with bullying, harassment as a term can contain bullying behaviour, however the difference lies in the fact that harassment is a form of discrimination that is legislated against and dependent on protected characteristic such as gender, race and age (ACAS, 2019). Many of the anecdotes around bullying shared under the previous heading would count as harassment, however whether it is classed as such depends on whether the protected characteristic is framed as being the reason for the behaviour. Generally, when speaking about sexual harassment this takes the form of predatory behaviour of a sexual nature, an action that is inevitably gendered and informed by directions of power. Sexual misconduct refers to a wider culture and remit of actions that while not legislated against often enables an atmosphere where harassment can easily occur (1752 Group, 2018). It was this culture, and the blurring of lines, that several participants cited as enabling both misconduct and harassment in institutions, for example a blurred divide between male staff dating women students. This was described as creating an atmosphere where boundaries were crossed and where women were frequently sexualised.

*'Male staff dating female students. Male PhD students discussing women'* (Survey, man, 45-54)

Though no participant in this research shared direct experience of sexual harassment as ECAs, they did reveal that they had observed it occurring. This was possibly due to the methodology of this research (one off in-depth phenomenological interviews) with an increased level of rapport – second, third interviews – perhaps increasing the likelihood of ECAs sharing these stories, however, this is speculative. Still, even if ECAs were not directly affected, that this was definitely something young, women students and employees experienced, directly affected their own aversion to the patriarchal university.

*I've witnessed a large amount of low-level unpleasantness and some physical sexual harassment, most of this from older men towards younger women.'* (Survey, female, 45-54)

Jane did share in her interview, an incident she had experienced as a PhD student, a situation whereby she was made to feel unsafe, and at possible risk of harassment, by a student she was mentoring:

*'There was one occasion where my PhD supervisor encouraged me, she asked me to do her a favour, to give some guidance to a male MA student from Iran who was developing a dissertation idea on the module she was convening, she asked if I would just have a coffee with him and talk things through as he was struggling a bit.. . I was asked basically to be somewhere between a mentor and a friend for him and after a while I felt I needed to take a step back which he didn't take very well. He started to send me long, I wouldn't call abusive messages.... I ended up registering this with the university as a complaint of sexual harassment basically, I was scared about staying on campus and in the study building after dark as he seemed very unstable and very angry and I didn't have a sense of what the risks might be, so my partner would come and walk me back from campus, that sort of thing. At the university, he was spoken to by a male head of department as his female supervisor was not able to exert a level of authority that he was responsive to, trying to explain why his behaviour was unacceptable. He eventually ended up being sectioned at an airport in London, suspended his studies, and I thought that would be that, but no one in the university or department informed me that he actually returned and that the first I learnt about it was seeing him on campus months later. I didn't feel, a strong sense, like a really strong sense of personal risk but my concern for his mental health was tied up with like, with difficulties of being harassed of being sexually harassed and there not being a robust international response to that and not being kept informed or in the loop.'*

Here we see how Jane was failed both by a lack of clear action against the perpetrator and by a lack of good communication, a common outcome according to a report by the 1752 group (2018). Whether this is through ignorance, a lack of clear pathway for staff in

reporting this behaviour, or through institutional protectionism is difficult to tell, what is certain is that the women in these cases of harassment were mostly failed. This may also be evidence of the ‘reckoning up’ Phipps (2018) noted in her discussion of the neoliberal university, that HEIs will evaluate organizational damage before deciding what course of action to take, whether punishing the perpetrator or dissuading the student from reporting the incident.

Just as Kelly highlights in her study of sexual violence, that all actions expressing a dominion over women’s bodies are linked (unwanted touching, rape), so too are condescension, bullying and harassment, united as manifestations of patriarchal power in the university gender regime. The culture of academia, the chilly climate (Maranto & Griffin, 2011), often seeks to push women toward the periphery and to control their behaviour, a practice achieved through subtle and constant othering (microaggressions) alongside implicit and explicit threats (bullying and harassment), especially if the ECA woman in question should attempt to speak out, or otherwise attempt to disrupt the naturalised doxa of academia. Through the exertion of this force, the patriarchal gender regime also erects barriers that prevent women from gaining the symbolic capital they need to advance and to infiltrate the upper echelons of the academic hierarchy. While ECA men do experience both bullying and harassment, especially as relatively powerless, precarious individuals, ECA women are more likely to be subjected to this behaviour, perhaps due to a perception that they are more compliant victims (Pryor & Day, 1988). Moreover, it is also important to consider how patriarchal power can be a force exerted by women, particularly when they are in senior positions. When these women are supporting biases and structural barriers that disadvantage women, they are also upholding the same patriarchal, neoliberal gender regime (Acker, 2006).

#### 6.5.2. Boy’s clubs and Bias: Women’s gendered disadvantage in the Neoliberal University

Overall ECA men benefited in academia through access to a patriarchal dividend (Connell, 2005). They had more – and more easily facilitated – access to social networks that afforded them privilege (Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014; Herschberg et al., 2015; Bozzon et al., 2018). This was often experienced as an invisible force by ECA men, that they did not struggle to access these groups but were naturally led into them, as such they did not feel as if they were experiencing a particular advantage (McIntosh, 2003). Moreover, they also benefited from a kind of professional cloning (Essed, 2004), a professional practice

whereby employers hire those that mirror their social characteristics and therefore the professional culture. In the research this masculine advantage was evidenced through the lack of barriers ECA men – particularly white and middle-class men – cited, it was also confirmed in the number of male colleagues ECA women had observed being promoted above them as well as their own difficulties in accessing the male-dominated networks required for professional success. ECA men in academia were the beneficiaries of what Bourdieu (1989) termed symbolic capital, the status and legitimacy that certain social actors are afforded, and which can change in varying contexts. In academia, due to men's cultural and historical dominance of the institution, ECA men were naturally afforded a degree of symbolic capital simply by mirroring the dominant identity. They were also better placed to secure further amounts of symbolic capital by being able to exchange their frequently higher levels of starter capital: economic, social, cultural, for it (Pret et al., 2016). Ultimately, this allowed them to advance at a more expedient rate, using the networks of progress garnered through this capital exchange (Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014) to secure even higher levels of symbolic regard, prestige, through promotion.

Most ECA women in this research reported that they had experienced some form of sexism in their professional lives, ranging on a continuum from the microaggressions of condescension to bullying and harassment. Though no participant explicitly stated having been sexually harassed as an ECA, various participants reported a culture where both sexual misconduct and harassment were easily enabled (1752 Group, 2018). Cumulatively, men were afforded the advantage of increased access to capital while women endured a range of biases. Through this, men were then read as legitimately academic, as belonging, while women, and other more atypical academics were often read as *not* conspicuously academic; as not belonging. To not be conspicuously read as academic was to then endure misrecognition and be subject to symbolic violence (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990 [1977]) to be kept in one's place. Frequently this involved having one's behaviour and actions circumscribed and for this to be viewed as natural. One's position was confirmed by either various micro-affirmations, people immediately reading you as an academic, or denied, by various micro-aggressions, where your position and legitimacy as an academic were continually challenged. It is also important to remember, that some male participants experienced points of disadvantage and other ECA women points of advantage (Styhre & Tienari, 2014). While being ECA men, many participants were also BAME or working-class and experienced some distance from the idea of hegemonic masculinity. Many

endured the same instances of bias that ECA women experienced, practices which also left them with feelings of non-belonging.

## 6.6. ‘The Only Person of Colour in the Room’: Race and Early Career Academics

Although the focus of this research was on uncovering the gendered experience of ECAs, it is impossible to talk about non-belonging without discussing issues around ethnicity. It was also important to consider how these aspects intersected with other social categories, particularly gender. In UK academia overall, levels of diversity in terms of ethnicity are shockingly poor, accounting for only 9.4% of academics overall (ECU, 2019). BAME individuals are also overrepresented on fixed term contracts within academia (ECU, 2019: 139) and in the UK overall (TUC, 2017). When intersected with gender, these numbers become even smaller, with a higher number of academic male staff from BAME backgrounds than female staff (ECU, 2019: 254). As Stockfelt (2018) describes, BAME women become the ‘minority within the minority’ (1014).

This lack of diversity was palpably felt by participants such as Layla. She expressed strong feelings of non-belonging due to her race, often finding herself to be the only BAME individuals at UK conferences, even as a researcher examining topics that directly related to race.

*‘... being a woman of colour in UK academia, the main point, there is there just aren’t any other people who look like you in the room. I’ve got to academic conferences that have largely been around race and been the only person of colour in the room which is really disturbing.’ (Layla)*

Racial diversity, in Higher Education matters not only to ensure that BAME individuals are read as academic but also to ensure diversity and varying perspectives in research. For example, Haris talks about how his identity – as an Asian, British Muslim – was important in pushing forward race-related research in his field and accessing marginalised communities. As Gabriel (2017) argues, a lack of racial diversity in academia also has political and cultural consequences in terms of what is said, whose lives are examined and what questions are answered.

*'Yeah, a bit, what I did was talk about how as a BAME researcher I went to areas where it's very difficult for a non-Muslim to go into like the mosque for prayers... Obviously, it was the fact I was a Muslim, and I lived round that area that made the difference.'* (Haris)

Having only a small number of BAME academics also frequently placed the onus upon these individuals to undertake 'diversity work' (Ahmed, 2012). While this was often well-meaning, it took away ECAs time for career-building work and as Neeru expressed in her interview, pushed participants toward difficult conversations they did not necessarily feel comfortable having. Furthermore, there was the risk that by pointing out racism (despite being asked to share their experiences!) that they could be charged with upsetting others, the risk of exposing 'white fragility' (Green et al., 2018). For Neeru, being on a fixed term contract also made her feel less able to vocalise any actual concerns she may have, either relating to gender or her race; there was a fear of being marked out as a trouble maker.

*'Also, being the only person of colour in the room, do I call out racism, but how much do I risk by that? Is anyone going to stand up for me? I've had to ask myself this question more and more and that can be quite hard.'* (Neeru)

Moving on, I will now examine how BAME participants considered some of the intersectional aspects of their identity, primarily, how did this relate to gender. In considering this, ECAs provided a variety of viewpoints taken from their personal experience. Some BAME women, for instance, viewed gender as being the key issue of progression in their careers, Miriam and senior academic Sophie both expressing frustration that their male colleagues were being promoted above them. Mirriam for example cited an exasperation at the 'chuminess' amongst senior and ECA academic men. Neither Sophie nor Mirriam however felt that they had experienced any notable instances of racism in their academic careers. Others such as Adetola and Neeru had a different experience, feeling that gender or race had mattered more in different instances dependent on context, a position argued by Sang (2016). Adetola expressed that in her interactions as an academic colleague she felt decidedly black, as a mother however, and when academia crossed over with homelife, she felt that her identity as a woman was brought to the forefront. Both aspects of Neeru's identity (being a woman, being BAME) she felt were equally called into question in a very male and very white department and were dependent on who was present and what was being discussed. Layla was the only BAME interview participant that found her experiences of racism were more prominent than those of

sexism. For her, gender had not presented itself so much as an issue, and it was her identity as a BAME individual in white spaces that made her feel most often as if she did not belong. This was highlighted by her visit to the USA where there is far greater ethnic diversity in academia.

*'It was immediately really comforting, as you are a little bit on your guard in the situations where you know you are the only non-white person.'* (Layla)

Though BAME men were asked to consider issues relating to their gender, they chose to reflect upon the inequalities of women in the university as opposed to themselves and their own masculinity.

In terms of how racism was expressed and experienced, this fit alongside the same continuum (Kelly, 1987) discussed in relation to patriarchal power with condescension, bullying and harassment all contributing to the experience of racism in the university. Once again these were behaviours dependent on othering BAME academics and which also acted as barriers to the garnering of symbolic capital. Once more, condescension and microaggressions were the most common experiences...

*'Oh, good on you, you're black, well done!' You know? It shouldn't be if we're really honest, I'm just another human but you still find where people are just a bit too patronising because I'm black, I'm African and I managed to be an academic, it's like they're praising me for that achievement.'* (Adetola)

*'...this woman, who's very pro-refugee and very liberal and all that, she makes some comment about how I would get married to a woman in a burka?'* (Haris)

.... with explicit instances of racism rare, though still unfortunately experienced. For example, the incident described earlier in this chapter where Haris' presence, his very belonging, was questioned on the campus where he worked .

It was possible however to experience belonging in terms of ethnicity within UK academia. Miriam described her current department as being extremely diverse, something that was also reflected in the student population due to the region her institution was located in.

*'Last year it was actually quite white British, and I'm a British Pakistani Woman, and now there's a Syrian guy in a wheelchair and there's a Nigerian woman. The recruitment has helped, I can definitely see in the two years since I've started. Women are more at the assistant lecture level and then it's*



*dominated by males at the top, there's no female professor in my department at the moment, in \_\_\_\_\_.* You can see diversity is something, that it's not just about ticking boxes, they're thinking what areas of \_\_\_\_\_ do we want to focus on? And once they've looked out the box a little bit, they've found people from different backgrounds and different experiences which I think is really cool.' (Miriam)

This drive for diversity as she perceived it actually appeared to be a thought-out structural consideration that aligned with the aims and outcomes of the department and their research needs as opposed to purely being a box ticking exercise. It also had the additional consequence of fostering increased feelings of belonging for BAME staff.

#### 6.6.1. Ranking Precarity: The Case of Migrant Academics Identities

Race and gender, alongside precarity, are categories and states extremely powerful in making individuals feel othered in academia, however, one of the most vulnerable ECA identities uncovered in this research was that of the migrant academic, academics who came from their home nation to the UK for work. Overall, this group makes up a significant amount of the university population, '47% of research only staff are from overseas' (USS Briefs, 2018), it is important to uncover therefore the varying experiences of this particular group. The category of migrant academic has become a risky one to occupy under the government's current anti-immigration policies known colloquially as the 'hostile environment' (ibid). For the migrant ECAs in this research non-belonging was experienced at the macro-level through state policy, at the meso level through the additional university bureaucracy required to process them, and finally felt at the micro subjective level through bias and related instances of racism. Feelings of precariousness, of vulnerability, were therefore very pronounced within this group (Butler, 2003).

*I actually do have a Nigerian accent, I learnt to talk like this [British Accent] when I was working for the \_\_\_\_\_ as I was getting grief from people, who would come in and talk to me about their problems and say "the problem is because of you immigrants who come to our country and take our jobs and all of that." Some of them would openly say they hate Nigerians, that they're cheats, they're frauds.'* (Adetola)

There were also extremely pragmatic consequences for migrant ECAs, primarily the time, cost, and stress of acquiring visas (USS Briefs, 2018). For non-EU immigrants in the UK,

in order to move from a student to a working visa they had to exit and re-enter the country, as was the case for Adetola, Layla, and senior academic Sophie.

*'None of these contracts were long-term at the time and it was very precarious as you weren't quite certain what was going to happen in a few months' time, so you had to keep looking for jobs all the time and keep applying hoping something will happen and when I was a research assistant it was even more precarious as I was still on study visa, well I was on a visa system and when I was applying for jobs I was still on my student visa and it was difficult to get jobs and I couldn't get a new visa until I had a job, so that was very stressful.'* (Sophie [Senior Academic])

*'I think about three weeks after my viva, I heard that I got this job, but because I'm not a UK citizen, it was a bit complicated, it meant I had to go home because my student visa was running out and then reapply for visas and then come back to the UK.'* (Layla)

In both Sophie and Layla's accounts we see the high stakes and anxiety that are involved when you have to rely upon a visa for work, knowing your ability to stay in a country where you have developed both your professional and personal lives may depend upon this. This was then further exacerbated by labour market precarity with the end of a contract potentially, in the worst-case scenario, resulting in expulsion from the country. As with speaking up against sexism and racism it could also act to prevent ECAs from protesting or claiming what was theirs. For instance, though it was possible Layla could have received financial help to pay for her visa, she passed this over for fear it would make her a less desirable candidate. In fact, both Layla and Adetola paid additional fees in order to secure their visas as quickly as possible:

*'In order to get my visa on time to start this job, I actually had to pay extra fees to be fast tracked, so that was a fun added expense, apart from the flights.'* (Layla)

For some, there was an additional fear that their immigrant status and need for a job sponsor made them unappealing as candidates, that they had even higher odds stacked against them in an already competitive labour market.

*'I'm not a UK/EU national, which meant that a lot of my job applications went straight into the rejection pile because the employers weren't willing to sponsor my visa.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

At the time of writing firm answers on the state of migrant workers in relation to Brexit were still in flux, a state that was also causing anxiety among several EU based ECAs.

*'...but I still feel like that with my salary, time demands, and the political instability in the UK (re: immigration, pensions, Brexit ) that I am secure enough to do things like purchase a home or start a family.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Considering the discussions of luck that have taken place within this analysis, migrant ECAs expressed anxiety that their status was one that would decrease their odds of academic success. In the context of the neoliberal university, there was also a risk they would be considered an inefficient option. As a group therefore, migrant academics could be considered the most precarious with not only jobs and wages but also their citizenship dependent on succeeding in a hyper-competitive, precarious labour market. Though UK HEI may present itself as global and international facing, the additional stresses it places upon its non-UK staff highlight an element of hypocrisy at work.

## 6.7. Rebellious, Resisting and Rebuilding the University

It is apparent that ECAs face powerful forces restricting their ability to survive and thrive in academia: precarity, bias, exclusion and isolation to name but a few. The neoliberal university is overwhelmingly powerful and the edicts it practices, of cost-efficiency, deregulation and autonomy appear unstoppable despite the human costs. In many ways, UK, HE has become infected by 'zombie capitalism' (Harman, 2010) 'seemingly dead when it comes to achieving human goals, but capable of sudden spurts of activity that cause chaos all round' (12). In the data, it was evident that the agency and actions of many ECAs were curtailed by intimidating structural forces. Participants frequently expressed that they were too frightened to speak out or act due to perceived risks in career-building, a fear of reducing their chances within a saturated labour market. Most ECAs therefore, who were primarily concerned with career-building activities and in accruing symbolic capital (Heijstra et al., 2017), did not wish to participate in activities that would mark them out as trouble makers and consequently this curtailed their ability to speak out on issues around exploitation, precarity, sexism and racism (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Kalfa et al., 2018).

*I've been quite surprised at the strength of the response in my attempt to work with those senior colleagues internally at an institutional level to help on that basis. The same goes for issues of sexism in Higher Education Institutions, it's very difficult to speak out and if you do speak out there are ways in which you're made to feel vulnerable to consequences.'* (Jane)

Even for participants that practiced resistance, there was often an internal negotiation at play, between a will to demonstrate dissent and an aversion to risking possible advancement. Precarity intensified this inclination toward silence by ensuring ECAs were focused on their own individual activities, tasks they often perceived to be bridges out of exploitative forms of employment (Bryson, 2004). This also ensured most ECAs were averse to speaking up, not wanting to risk their hard-worn routes toward permanent employment. Furthermore, the intense competition at work, and the knife edge by which jobs were secured also ensured that most felt unwilling to challenge the institution, that they were easily replaceable. Together, a perceived lack of agency alongside feelings of vulnerability (Butler, 2003) ensured ECA proclivity toward silence and complicity.

Once again, this affected ECAs ability to participate in solidarity, much of which was done by speaking up on behalf of others. Though ECA men in this research, including the participants and colleagues described in ECA women's accounts, did not appear to participate in any explicit bias or harassment their silence in opposing sexist behaviour made them at least partially complicit. This was particularly apparent when it came to challenging or questioning the behaviour of senior colleagues. While most ECA men symbolically acknowledged the difficulties inherent in academia for ECA women, there was little done to challenge the androcentric culture that made it so unwelcoming for them, for instance ensuring women were also welcomed to the same networks of socialisation. The very notion of solidarity, of speaking up for others was curtailed by the vulnerability felt by many ECAs and the diffuse yet powerful exertion of power that solidified their obedience within the hierarchy (Lukes, 2004).

The outcomes of this research aligned with existing literature on resistance in academia, that as both Kalfa et al. (2018) alongside Knights and Clarke (2014) found, opposition was minimal and when it did occur it was individualistic, for instance, academics leaving the sector or neglecting their work. This research also aligned with this literature in finding that most participants were concerned – at least partially and albeit with ambivalence on the part of many – with playing the game and accruing the symbolic capital needed to succeed (Heijstra et al., 2017). Yet, it is despite this that many ECAs have also simultaneously developed a toolbox of resistance, ways to both survive individually and as collectives, and to also pressure for structural change. The complex nature of social actors meant they were both capable of participating in career-building – what some might term 'playing the game'

– and resisting, whatever degree or form this might take. Though it is true that many ECAs have internalised the more pernicious qualities and subjectivities academia demands of them, the hardships they have experienced have simultaneously inspired many to fight for a better, kinder academia.

Though Kalfa et al. (2018) and Knights & Clarke (2014) both found that instances of speaking out were minimal, this research did uncover several individuals who chose to do this, despite the risk. While still in the minority, this theme was prevalent enough to demonstrate a will for resistance among participants.

*‘...embarrassing some people in power re their unacceptable views on race/ethnicity in UK HE.’*  
(Survey, female, 25-34)

These participants chose to blow the whistle on exploitative working practices as well as instances of racism and sexism, despite some incurring warnings from senior academics to not engage in this behaviour. Social media was also perceived as a useful way in which to communicate dissent or dissatisfaction with the sector and became another tool through which several ECAs sought to do this.

*‘There’s a lot more openness about mental health issues as well, and there are people who are PhD researchers, early career academics as well who’ve been, open about their experience on Twitter which then helped me be more open about my experiences and stop and be open to saying “I’ve got depression, I’m on secaline,” that’s what helps me to keep going on a day to day basis and I’m not ashamed of that. I think that’s something I’ve noticed over the last couple of years, that things are a lot easier in that sense.’* (Mark)

Speaking out was viewed by these participants as an important way to break down the hierarchical squeeze. For some, there was very much a sentiment of ‘nothing left to lose’ and that they would rather speak up than remain silent. Though personally fraught, speaking up was seen as essential to change and moving things forward (Gill, 2010). Even elements such as gossiping and conversing with colleagues and friends were viewed as ways in which to implement this, a subversive way of sharing information that transcended strict hierarchies, for example creating an awareness about toxic line managers and known sexual harassers.

*‘We had a very well-known sexual harasser in our department and was warned off him when I started there.’* (Survey, female, 25-34)

In this way they proposed an alternate narrative to that of the ‘moaning’ academic, that speaking out was a way to move information around hierarchies where it was tightly controlled. As Puwar (2004) argues, individuals can become ‘space invaders’ when they make themselves conspicuous in places where they have previously been excluded, where they make a noise as opposed to being silenced. Moreover, while instances of speaking out may have been isolated, collectively they served to move on a greater conversation. Gossiping, conversing and being open about their experiences, therefore, was a way in which ECAs could work against the strict hierarchies and control of information imposed upon them. This also allowed ECAs to take control of the ‘moaning’ and ‘whinging’ academic narrative, and reframe it, not as a symptom of needless complaint but as a way to add collectively to a much-needed conversation, one enabled via ECA communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Other disruptive practices ECAs participated in included rebellious pedagogies. Jarryd for instance, deliberately challenged the expectations and long-held practices of his institution around teaching.

*I've always had gender equal reading list, my first year I didn't, but I tried to reference women, you learn as you go along, by the time I was in the second-year teaching, I kind of fooled around to get as many women on my reading list as possible... I'm in no doubt that it made a lot of people uncomfortable, and that lot of people thought I was above my station as a Teaching Fellow doing things like that.'*

(Jarryd)

Others such as the survey participant below pushed their institution to make changes that would have a positive impact on those that would later enter the institution.

*'...getting my university to develop a sexual misconduct policy.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Speaking up was also important in making the workings of symbolic violence in academia explicit, of exposing the doxa and normalisation of practices that served to exclude certain groups, this included discussions of sexism and racism but also exposing the structural harms of the sector. This was of particular importance to Jane who was very active in drawing attention to the workings of power in academia and its human cost, the degradation of ECAs mental health, including her own.

*'There was a difficult situation that arose in the department around my efforts to try and help with students around the topic of student mental health which were roundly suppressed by my colleagues. I ended*

*up going on work related sickness basically, a couple of weeks initially and more if I needed it before Christmas.’ (Jane)*

Another very personal way of resisting as discussed was to participate in a dissenting academic identity and make more time for friends and family, what Kalfa et al. (2018) termed work neglect. In framing different aspects of their identity, external to academia, participants self-esteem became less dependent on the idea of themselves as a worker first and foremost. Sometimes, a dissenting work attitude was expressed by not treating work as a constant career-building project and expressing satisfaction to stay at a certain level. Of course, this was usually expressed by those who were on permanent contracts but were still indicative of an attitude that broke with the norm.

*I have a safe job, but I can't see myself reaching any great heights or being a superstar’ (Survey, female, 25-34)*

Furthermore, another way in which ECAs individually resisted was to find possible ways to disrupt and refuse to play the game of early career academia. This was viewed as a way to resist the competitive and individualising behaviours that neoliberalism valued, in whatever small way possible. The use of academic kindness for instance was expressed as a powerful force that allowed individuals to survive and emphasised an adherence to collegiality (Hartman & Darab, 2012; McAlpine & Amundsen, 2015; Patzak et al., 2017). In Mark’s case, his ECA colleagues supported him with his workload when he was feeling overwhelmed.

*I stress that, that both here and at \_\_\_\_\_ that I’ve had really good people who’ve been willing, who I can say I’m struggling a bit with this and have either started picking up a bit of the slack or made sure that I had extra time to get it done.’ (Mark)*

This was expressed as being of the upmost importance by many in the often-ruthless landscape of early career academia, engaging in activities that while not highly regarded for career progression were important in terms of collegiality, support and surviving the everyday. For groups that experienced additional vulnerability: precarious ECAs, ECA women and BAME participants expressions of kindness were particularly important in attempting to readdress the balance of bias and non-belonging.

In this chapter, I have emphasised how important having access to the various forms of starter capital as stated by Bourdieu (economic, social and cultural) and being able to

transform these into symbolic capital, were key to success in academia. I have concurrently emphasised how this cements inequality and non-belonging as those that lack these initial forms of starter capital become excluded: precarious academics, women, BAME and working-class participants. Exposing how this exchange in capital works therefore can be a powerful way of demonstrating its exacerbation of injustice and exclusion. An anecdote from Jarryd demonstrated how one could refuse this exchange to make an important point. Though placed in a situation where he had the opportunity to transfer elements of social capital (difficult to access research participants) into symbolic capital (by putting a group of senior academics in contact with them), he refused, exposing the sexist and exclusionary way in which he perceived the senior academics – who had not invited any women speakers to their event – to act.

*'And then I got invited to a research building day, including their primary investigator on the project, which was a weekend of heavy drinking, a football match, and it was all men and I walked back....I'm not participating in an all-male panel, do you not know any women? And he said well I'd be happy if you could suggest some, we could invite them, and I thought, no, and I just didn't respond frankly at this point, because I'm not taking a weekend away from my kid to spend time with a bunch of blokes getting drunk and share my network with them, and people that I know.'* (Jarryd)

Individual means were but one of the tools that ECAs could use to enact resistance, with collective practices another option that participants utilised, both through unions and through self-made support networks, particularly feminist ones. Advantages of being part of a collective, as expressed by participants that engaged with them, were both safety and power in numbers; that by publishing or expressing demands in a group, they were more protected (Puāwai Collective & Le Heron, 2019) and better able to amplify their voices. As the survey participant below expresses, the USS strikes were useful in pushing enough voices together so that no one person felt too exposed criticising university practices.

*'I think we should talk more. I know that my friends at the same career level experience similar fears and concerns about the job, but the pressure of the job makes us less likely to talk about these concerns for fear of seeming inadequate or vulnerable. I found the industrial action to be quite liberating as, bizarrely, the picket line encouraged us to talk and be more open.'* (Survey, female, 25-34)

Notwithstanding some division around their efficacy in assisting precarious workers (Ivancheva, 2015) many participants still saw unions and collective bargaining as a way to



act against the increased fragmentation of workplace culture and secure real changes in workplace policy.

*'But I do think that maybe I'm just...an old-fashioned lefty, but I do think collectivism is the only way to resist that and we could look at that really traditionally in terms of trade unions and organisation.'* (Annie)

For ECAs that expressed feelings of non-belonging, forming collectives based on a shared cause or social identity was also perceived as an important means of both resisting and surviving. These enabled individuals to share experiences, raise consciousness, and encourage each other's work, a way to negate feelings of imposter syndrome. Spaces such as these offered ECAs some form of respite from the structural bias of the institution and the explicit and implicit biases of the other individuals that inhabit it. They also offered a place in which they could speak back to the university through publications and papers.

*'...it's also about women academics coming together and making spaces in which we can articulate these kinds of experiences and recognise the patterns...'* (Annie)

*'...creating opportunities for ethnic minority PHDs and ECAs within my limited capacity'* (Survey, female. 25-34).

Working within a collective mindset also included offering solidarity to those ECAs and PhDs ascending the ladder below and extending their help towards them. This was an experience often solidified through shared experiences of precarity, sexism and racism a means of demonstrating both empathy and solidarity. Additionally, these groups were also powerful tools in combatting feelings of non-belonging as these collectives frequently reflected the characteristics of their members, making them feel legitimate as academics. They also helped to combat imposter syndrome through mutual support and validation of their members academic work and also offered an antidote to the closed off networks of socialisation and mentoring that women and others struggled to break into (Macoun & Miller, 2014; Sang, 2016). Groups also enable participants to share stories of precarity, racism and sexism openly with less risk, also acting as networks of protection. Together groups were better placed to act as 'space invaders' (Puwar, 2004) a force able to challenge the neoliberal university and speak back to the institution.

## 6.8. Conclusion

This chapter has explored participants' access to symbolic capital, how this is garnered through the conversion of other forms of starter capital: social, cultural, economic, and what it means to lack this, to not be read as academic and to experience non-belonging. Certain social identities, being male, white or middle class had symbolic capital intrinsically attached to them due to their historical connection to academia, these groups were also more likely to have higher forms of the starter capital needed to advance. Other ECAs therefore endured increased challenges – through their relative lack of association and access to this capital – to occupy and feel belonging in academic spaces. They were mis-recognised, through instances of symbolic violence which then cemented feelings of non-belonging. In practice, this occurred through a relational process where participants were read, where they were interpreted according to visual signifiers and associated characteristics, and whereby others then formed judgements, of how they would behave, based on this implicit bias. This was a far more common occurrence for ECA women, and other atypical academic identities such as BAME, WC, migrant and queer academics. Precarious academics, a group which covered all these social categories, also experienced these feelings of exclusion, of being made to feel as a second-class tier of employees, though this was based almost entirely on their contractual status. Moreover, non-belonging was complicated through intersectional identities and how participants were able to frame different aspects of self in various contexts.

In exploring bias, it became clear that the implicit form is the most common kind at work among ECAs today, and while this may not be as conspicuously traumatic as other more explicit forms, it can be a frustrating practice to endure. The subtlety through which this was enacted, particularly in the form of micro-aggressions, and the way these could be easily dismissed by others, as a joke or unintentional, often made them difficult to oppose. Those that experienced it on a daily basis, however, knew it to exist, yet, many did not wish to speak up for the fear of appearing as moaning or ungrateful. Once again, this was exacerbated through the risks inherent in precarious work with participants reluctant to mark themselves out as troublemakers. Furthermore, this had an impact on ECAs' luck in a

hyper-competitive labour market where opportunities are secured on a knife's edge. While symbolic capital increased one's odds, bias conversely decreased it.

In focusing on how non-belonging was experienced via gender in early career academia, there was an exploration of how sexism was experienced by participants, that this occurred on a continuum with instances of implicit bias – condescension – experienced most frequently, but which existed alongside bullying and harassment. These were all connected through downward exertions of patriarchal power and the need by androcentric cultures to exclude those they perceived as symbolically abject. ECA women expressed far more instances of this, perhaps due to a societal bias that framed them as weak and more likely to remain silent when faced with this kind of behaviour, however, it was both senior men and women that exerted this power against them. For BAME participants, they also experienced exclusion through the same downward exertions of power, however, non-belonging was most salient in being a pronounced minority in academia and for women, being a minority in a minority (Stockfelt, 2018). An unexpected finding of this research was discovering just how vulnerable those with migrant identities felt in UK academia, both in pronounced feelings of non-belonging through bias but also within the larger political project due to 'hostile environment' policies.

Finally, this chapter addressed how ECAs participated in rebellion and resistance. Though it was true that most participants remained silent in the face of such strong structural opposition – that they felt exposed on precarious contracts and also ruled by a desire to build symbolic capital – there was still a pronounced theme of both individual and collective action. Speaking up was seen as very important, a means of whistle blowing and moving information around strict hierarchies, disrupting the narrative of the moaning academic. This was accompanied by instances of pedagogical disruption and exposing the exchanges of capital in academia. While individualistic, the use of dissenting work identities was also a way in which ECAs were able to question the neoliberal work ethic. Collective activities through unions, despite caveats on how they could best help precarious workers, and groups based on shared characteristics (feminism, early career, precarious) were also seen as important in providing safety in numbers and being able to effect change. They also enabled ECAs through shared identities to combat feelings of non-belonging and to speak back to the university. Solidarity therefore was an important combative force in the face of precarity, sexism and racism in HE.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1. Introduction

In undertaking this research, I set out to explore the central research question: What are the gendered experiences of early career academics in UK higher education? The key intention being to ascertain the most prominent commonalities and differences between genders, alongside any other marked variations that might arise. A theoretical framework was also applied to the subject matter, a materialist feminist analysis to assist in considerations of agency and structure among gendered subjects (Barret, 1997; Hennessy & Ingraham, 1997; Jackson, 2001; Fraser, 2013). In providing a suitable sociological background in which to place this research, I undertook a literature review to explore, firstly, the macro context of the research, the UK neoliberal political project and gender order; secondly, the meso level of context, how this was enacted in the UK neoliberal university and its specific gender regime; and finally at the micro level, the subjective concerns of the ECA alongside differences in gender experience. Through conducting the review, I became aware of the specific gaps within the research, that there was little examination of how ECAs personal and professional lives intersected and the impact of this (aside from Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra [2013] and Cukut et al's [2018]), an essential aspect of understanding the full picture of ECA lives. Additionally, most literature concentrated on women's inequalities as opposed to comparing gendered experience, there was therefore little consideration of academic masculinities and how these related to an intersectional experience (Styhre & Tienari, 2014). This research also sought to achieve in-depth, personal exploration of points already well explored within the literature: what it is to be precarious in the neoliberal university and how does it feel to be excluded within it? As such, I implemented a phenomenological approach to data collection and analysis, one where both noema, the phenomenon of being an ECA, and the noesis, how the participant viewed their experience were explored in detail (Groenewald, 2004). A feminist aspect was also maintained within the research by considering gender as a legitimate subject for analysis, permeability between researcher and researched and the importance of accounting for emotions. Consideration of context, gaps and an appropriate research approach led me to the final three aims of the project.

1. To explore how precarity and neoliberalism are impacting the gendered experiences of ECAs within the UK
2. To explore how ECAs have been affected by the gender regime within academia
3. To explore how the private and public lives of ECAs intersect.

Following a thematic analysis of the dataset using NVivo, as well as condensing participant interviews into biographies, I was able to ascertain key themes (essence) and consider how they related to the bigger sociological picture (gestalt), as evidenced by the three key data analysis chapters. I then arrived at the key contributions of my research which were as follows: that precarity is the overriding condition of ECA experience and one which colours all other aspects of ECA life; that ECA masculinities while frequently anxious and far from the hegemonic ideal still hold a patriarchal dividend (Connell, 2005); that exclusion in academia, gendered or otherwise, is experienced as being read or not read as academic, as being perceived as belonging or not belonging; that the neoliberal university is one that favours the unburdened abstract worker based on the male life course; that the hyper-competitive nature of academia means 'good luck' and 'bad luck' are secured through small means of advantage, one determined through access to and exchange of capital and disadvantage through bias; that time is squeezed in the neoliberal university by accumulative forces (Harvey, 2007b; Bakir, 2015), but that the constraints on women's 'free' time make this a saliently feminist issue; that though there are limited ways that dissent can be expressed within academia without risk, that these should still be valued as acts of resistance alongside a dedication to collectives, finally, I will examine how maldistribution, inequalities of wealth, and misrecognition, of not being considered as legitimately academic, are both important to ensuring diversity within the profession: of gender, class and race. Below, I will outline these findings in greater detail: the contributions they've made, how they've answered the research question and aims alongside any contribution to gaps. I will then move on to consider unexpected results within the research, the particular risk of the migrant academic in the hostile university, before addressing some limitations and suggestions for future research.

## 7.2. Contributions

### 7.2.1. Fear of a Precarious Planet: Together in Anxiety

Though there are a multitude of influences on ECA lives, they are overwhelmingly characterised by precarity (Bennion & Locke, 2010; Ivancheva, 2015; Ivancheva & O'Flynn, 2016; UCU, 2016; Locke et al., 2016; Thouaille, 2017; Bozzon et al., 2018; Jones & Oakley, 2018; UCU, 2019a). In this research, this applied to ECAs across genders and other social categories; it was therefore a key commonality, a gestalt of the analysis, both the most dominant and unifying experience characterising early career life. In many ways therefore, men had been brought down to many of the traditional working conditions of women, an equality of exploitation (Standing, 1999; Cooke-Reynolds & Zukewich, 2004; Barker & Feiner, 2010). Even participants that now found themselves on permanent contracts found that their subjectivities had been marked by the anxiety of subsequent fixed term contracts in the past (Jones & Oakley, 2018), that it acted as a kind of trauma. To reiterate, though precarity was by no means the only force acting upon ECAs, it was one that most affected their personal and professional lives: not only was precarity a powerful force, it was also a pervasive one, possessed with the ability to infiltrate all other aspects of their lives as evidenced by Beck et al.'s (1994) risk societies and Bauman's (2000) liquid modernity. Everything, from the city ECAs lived in to their romantic relationships, were decided within this overriding context of precarity. It was also a lived condition that created pressure in two distinct ways, firstly, by placing additional pressure on the now, of what one needs to do to survive and to build a route toward stability, for example, the securing of good NSS scores and academic prestige. Secondly, it manifested in an anxiety around an unknowable and distinctly liquid future where nothing: job, location, support network is certain. Together, pressure in the now and fear of the future acted as a crucible adding an emotional intensity to all aspects of life. As individuals, this was a condition that pushed ECAs toward self-commodification in order to accommodate for uncertain futures (Jones, 2019), and that responsibility for their own employment made them workers above all else. By looking at all aspects of ECAs lives, professional and personal, it became more evident to see how precarity as a lived condition became an overriding condition of life; this therefore makes it a key contribution.

Moreover, what also became clear from this research was the link between labour market precarity and feelings of precariousness, of vulnerability, as described by Butler (2003) in her consideration of othering. Precariousness became a feeling many ECAs felt through experiences of misrecognition, of being considered illegitimate, not read as academic, in comparison to their permanently employed colleagues. As Butler (2003) expressed, they became less 'grievable', less worthy of concern. Participants cited a deep-seated separation experienced through various anecdotes: a colleague never saying hello; having no office space; not being invited to departmental social activities. Once again, this research highlighted how the experience of precarity sharpened feelings of vulnerability, of precariousness by showing how this is experienced not only through contracts but symbolic rejection by colleagues and the very institutions ECAs work for.

#### 7.2.2. ECA Masculinities: Anxious Yet Advantaged.

As was apparent in the literature, men in the overall gender order have more of an attachment – a cathexis – to work with a deeply seated identity as providers, a role that became difficult to fulfil when faced with the reality of successive precarious contracts (Connell 2005; Jones & Oakley, 2018). Precarious work therefore could have a particular impact on masculine identities, making them feel acutely compromised (Choi, 2018). ECA men with a breadwinner identity on these contracts therefore, did not just experience anxiety as precarious individuals, but also experienced anxious masculinities exacerbated by the changing world of work and increased proximity to financial precarity (Cornwall et al., 2011; Cornwall et al., 2017; Walker, 2017; Choi, 2018).

Within this research, there were few ECA men that felt they embodied anything close to the gold-standard hegemonic academic male and though many still adhered to various traditional markers of success (access to economic and symbolic capital) it also appeared to be a masculinity that had adapted in various ways, where speaking up against bigotry and exclusion in academia were also prized (Anderson & McGuire, 2010). Albeit, this was somewhat compromised by precarity as many ECA men did not speak up against particular incidences or to senior academics for fear of risking their employment (Kalfa et al., 2018). This supports Armato's (2013) consideration of academic men, that many knew speaking

up against sexism and other injustices could garner one symbolic capital, yet, that they feared the risk of challenging specific instances and colleagues.

Earlier, I described how ECAs of all genders were united by experiences of precarity, however, the patriarchal dividend (Connell, 2005) afforded to ECA men meant that as a group they were better placed to advance, and therefore move away from precarious employment, at an expedited rate. In this research this was evidenced by ECA women continually seeing male colleagues promoted above them and male ECAs failing to perceive access to social networking as a barrier. This is supported by larger statistical studies such as the ECU (2018) which note how fixed term contracts are skewed toward women. The patriarchal dividend in this data was heavily based upon ECA men's more seamless access to networks of socialisation, a phenomenon as Van den Brink & Stobbe (2014) observed was often not called out as a particular advantage. As a contribution, exploring the differences in gendered experience between ECA men and women demonstrated not only how the patriarchal dividend was expressed and how the gender regime was enacted in the neoliberal university, but also how this was experienced. That it was viewed as a frustration and blockage by ECA women and as a 'knapsack of invisible privilege' (McIntosh, 2003).

### 7.2.3. Theorizing Exclusion: Read as Academic

A key contribution of this work has been developing the work of others who theorise exclusion in academia (Ahmed, 2012; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Fotaki, 2013; Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014) uncovering *why* this was the case and *how* ECAs experienced it: the idea of being read as academic. In the data a theme emerged, that those occupying social identities associated historically with the university (male, white, middle class) experienced more of an unquestioned privilege and in turn were imbued with a certain level of symbolic capital and thus academic legitimacy. They were also better placed to exchange different forms of starter capital: economic, social, cultural for others (Pret et al., 2016) having more initial access to them. In comparison, those not traditionally read as academic – primarily women and atypical academics – were not afforded these same amounts of symbolic capital and thus struggled to gather the same opportunities and the same naturalised legitimacy. They instead experienced various negative biases, for instance being



perceived as family orientated (Barrett & McIntosh, 1991), as lacking confidence (Herschberg et al., 2018), and being viewed as weak to criticism (Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). As such, they experienced daily forms of symbolic violence as they continually experienced misrecognition as academics, condescension, and an expectation to act within a certain paradigm – taking on skewed amounts of pastoral care for example. As a contribution, this builds upon existing theories by providing a phenomenological way of how one considers themselves as moving through the university and other organisational spaces (Acker 1990; Ahmed 2012; Fotaki, 2013).

The idea of non-belonging and being read as academic also helped to highlight the importance in maintaining an intersectional analysis, in addressing the commonalities and differences experienced by atypical academics: BAME, working-class, queer, within the data. For instance, it helped to highlight the various intersections of privilege and oppression experienced within the ECA group. Many ECA women for example often experienced privilege and belonging, many from being white, an experience not afforded to the majority of BAME academics of all genders (Stockfelt, 2018). The difference within the sample also acknowledged the complicated nature of social identity, as Sang (2016) notes, that people were able to frame different aspects of themselves in different contexts and that individuals could also experience co-existing feelings of belonging and non-belonging in the same situation. In addressing the central research question, the idea of being read as academic, of legitimacy and its relation to symbolic capital emerged as a significant difference between participants, not only regarding gender but among all those who felt less belonging within the HEIs they occupied.

#### 7.2.4. Absolute Dedication: The Abstract Worker

This idea of the patriarchal dividend among ECA men also had another dimension to it when we consider how academia follows the male life course and the ways in which men have traditionally been able to work, unburdened by the demands of the unpaid, domestic sphere (Acker, 1990; Vosko, 2010). As Acker (1990) describes, the ideal abstract worker in most cases is a male one, a figure better able to participate in certain aspects of extreme work such as long hours (Hewlett & Luce, 2006; Gascoigne et al., 2015). Though this mostly benefited ECA men, who were better placed to perform this role, there were a

number of women in the research who also sought to replicate it by neglecting non-professional relationships and non-work in order to play the academic game. Though more present among men, this form of self-actualization was evident among all in the neoliberal university. To present oneself as a hardworking and dedicated employee, as self-sacrificial, was a narrative common in vocational work (Dik & Duffy, 2009) and often the easiest way to come to terms with exploitation in a job that one loved (Busso & Rivetti, 2014). It became apparent in the research that academia is adept at wearing away the strength of entirely non-professional relationships – those on the other side of the ivory wall – that acted as a tether to a world outside of paid work. Though these ECAs may have been unburdened, many were also isolated. A consequence of this was that ECAs often expressed a preference for those that worked inside academia as romantic partners and friends, as they were better able to relate, to understand the demands of the work on both their time and their subjectivities (Knights & Clarke, 2014; Bozzon et al., 2018). Exploring both ECAs professional and personal lives within this research allowed this to emerge as a clear contribution, of how neoliberal structures work to separate us from our identities external to work in order to best practice efficiency, and that due to a desire of ECAs to self-present as dedicated, they often capitulated with little resistance.

#### 7.2.5. Luck on a Knife's Edge

Another key contribution of this work has been building on sociological ideas of luck and how they intersect with the academic job market. Loveday (2018b) conceptualised this in her own examination of academics on fixed term contracts, that they used luck to conceive of negotiations between agency and structure in the job search, with a tendency to individualise failure and attribute success to 'luck'. I also found this to be true within the data of this research, furthermore however, I also discovered that luck was a form of personal perception based on our relations with others; how we conceive of ourselves as lucky or unlucky in comparison to our peers. In such a hyper-competitive job market like academia, the advantages in capital afforded to some ECAs, and the ability to exchange some forms of capital for others, could raise one's odds in the academic labour market, while the bias endured by others could decrease it. This mattered due to the small amount of good quality and permanent jobs available compared to the number of ECAs seeking

them out. Even small differences therefore could result in significant impacts to ECA lives such as whether they secure a new position or a promotion: they are decided on a knife's edge. This was a finding that helped to uncover how the contexts of neoliberalism and precarity impacted ECAs lives, of how much chance mattered in a hyper-competitive and precarious labour market. It also pointed toward an academic gender regime that benefited ECA men in various and often subtle ways.

#### 7.2.6. Time is a Feminist – and Neoliberal – Issue

A discovery made in exploring ECA lives was the focus upon time as a resource, it being one that ECAs resolutely felt they lacked. This was a commonality that existed amongst many ECAs, that the university was as Sullivan (2014) proposed a greedy institution, one characterised by an accumulative nature and one that consumed ECAs time through overwork. This myopic focus on (cost)efficiency (Lorenz, 2012) was then one that had very real human impacts regarding mental health and burn out (Kinman, 2001; Kinman & Jones, 2008; Morrish, 2019). Many expressed an inherent inability to 'switch off', to not ruminate or consider academic work even when participating in conspicuously non-work activities, symptomatic of the lack of 'psychological space' (Locke et al., 2016) afforded to ECAs in their daily workload. The permeability ECAs experienced between their professional and private lives, whereby their personal interests heavily intersected with their academic ones, also had an impact. ECAs experience of time therefore was that it was a resource stretched far too thin. However, though this was a common experience among all participants, there was a gendered aspect to this which aggravated the experience.

Another impact of neoliberalism on time was how it collapsed the boundary between the public and the private sphere, between home and work (Adkins, 2018). Work now existed as a constant. As a phenomenon this inevitably had a greater impact upon women, as they were most often responsible for unpaid work while also having to balance the demands of paid work. Women were also further disadvantaged by the amounts of unrewarded work they took on in the professional sphere: emotional work, pastoral work, academic housework and various academic citizenship activities (Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Acker & Armenti, 2004; Heijstra et al., 2017). It was clear women experienced a distinct level of time poverty (Zilanawala, 2016) that affected their ability to take on additional career-building

activities. As a structural bias, men were therefore afforded greater amounts of time and women saw their time stretched even thinner, exhausted by the edicts of neoliberal feminism, the idea that they could have it all (Frankel, 2004; Sandberg, 2014). Regarding how this was subjectively expressed, this emerged through narratives of guilt an aspect both ECA women and those with children – including ECA men – most acutely experienced. Guilt was a feeling often expressed in this research as an inability to fulfil every aspect of one's life fully, that by participating in one aspect, a non-work activity such as socialising, work would be wanting, and that by working to build one's career, one was neglecting family and friends. Building upon the work of many other theorists of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007a; Gibbs, 2011; Bakir, 2015) and of feminist ideas of time (Davies, 1989; Rafnsdóttir & Heijstra, 2013; Zilanawala, 2016) this contribution explored both the neoliberal context and how the university's patriarchal gender regime ensured an even further contraction of women's limited time.

#### 7.2.7. Resisting Hierarchies, Moving Information

This research also found in exploring the lives of ECAs, that participants of all genders still chose to speak up against many of the exploitations and injustices they faced and how this was in many ways a quotidian, yet revolutionary act given the risks ECAs faced should they break the silence in the sector (Gill, 2010). Though these were less likely to enact structural changes alone they were still meaningful and were indicative of courage. Gossiping, moaning and whining though frequently frowned upon by others in academe, even other ECAs who presented these actions as 'ungrateful', acted as a way to move information around restrictive hierarchies characterised by diffuse and unattributable directions of power (Lukes, 2004). They also acted as ways in which symbolic violence was exposed, and the naturalised doxa was broken, demonstrating how ECAs' behaviour could not be so easily circumscribed, especially when there was a feeling of nothing left to lose. This was a finding within the research building upon the work of others who examined the power and risks of speaking up in the neoliberal university (Gill, 2010; Phipps, 2018; 1752 Group, 2018) and others who reframed seemingly private experiences such as imposter syndrome as public experiences (Breeze, 2018). Of course, while an important way through which to enact agency, this needed to be conducted alongside collective activity in order to achieve change within the university.

### 7.2.8. The Need to Survive, The Need to Belong: Redistribution and Recognition

Overall, this research has posited that the use of precarious contracts is one of the greatest harms befalling ECAs. The normalisation of this work in the sector has led to a maldistribution in pay and in benefits, ensuring that many ECAs remain at high financial risk, using their limited savings and accruing debt to keep up with the demands of the sector (UCU, 2019a). However, as Fraser (2013) notes, we are far more than ‘reductive economic paradigms’ (160). Participants in this research did not just experience harm due to their economic status but also because they were women, black, Muslim, queer, to name but a few. Experiencing misrecognition was to also experience non-belonging, prejudice, belittlement and harassment. What was clear from the outcomes of this research, is that a full call for equality at work must consider both the harms experienced by both misrecognition – not being read as academic – and maldistribution –of precarious work and proximity to poverty. To illustrate, by considering recognition alone we can fall into a trap of neoliberal feminist practice (Somek, 2011), of valuing individual protections over that of the collective, yet, if we consider redistribution alone, we can fail to consider how some economic practices are in fact affected by gender. For instance, a significant finding in the research was how many ECAs were supported in undertaking precarious work, particularly women, a state due to a multitude of possible intersecting factors of redistribution and recognition such as the gender pay gap or an unwelcoming work place culture that alienated women from higher paid work. In exploring the gendered experiences of ECAs, the importance of both redistribution and recognition were always prominent. Not only were harms experienced from both the neoliberal political project and patriarchal gender regimes, these interrelated in a number of ways.

### 7.3. Unexpected Results

A key point to emerge from the data regarding difference within the ECA experience, and which was not addressed in the literature review was the precarious position of migrant ECAs. As individuals these participants endured various forms of bias: structural bias

through visa stipulations and organisational bureaucracy; explicit bias via xenophobic and racist attitudes, and daily implicit biases through references to accent and notions of belonging. These participants expressed that as well as this lived vulnerability (Butler, 2003) they had to contribute additional personal costs: more money in visas and more time in bureaucracy to simply stay in the country and exist as a UK ECA. They also felt that their chances within the academic labour market were reduced due to an institutional bias toward migrant ECAs as they required more resources (again, time and money) for the university to employ them: they were an inherently less efficient option. In the wider political project, the influence of the 'hostile environment' toward non-UK citizens and the increase in measures and stipulations against migrants exacerbated the anxieties of these ECAs (USS Briefs, 2018). Given the significant number of international employees in the sector, this is a significant issue (ibid). The currently undecided state of Brexit within the UK also served to stoke fears amongst EU academics.

#### 7.4. Limitations

There were some notable limitations within this study, mainly that there was a gendered skew particularly among survey respondents and though this is typical within online surveys (Smith, 2008), perhaps a more targeted sample of ECA men would have helped to address the balance. As a small phenomenological study this research is also only able to speak with confidence with what occurred in the sample and how it relates to patterns discovered in other research. This does not make it generalisable in the statistical sense (Maxwell & Chmiel 2014).

#### 7.5. Future Research

Regarding future avenues of research there have been several interesting points of exploration highlighted by this research. Firstly, the nature of precarious contracts is still very much an opaque issue due to deliberate withholding of data by some HEIs (UCU, 2016) and the inherent complexity of what constitutes a precarious contract. For instance,

though the ECU (2018) may have large scale data on fixed term contracts no such data exists for zero hours contracts or whether academics are working multiple jobs, academic or otherwise. Though the recent UCU (2019) report does make some contribution toward this, it is still relatively small scale. The issue of underemployment is also one which requires more investigation in UK academia as there appears to be little research addressing this. This is important as though we have statistics on part-time work there is no way to tell if this is voluntary or involuntary, especially in an employment context where there are far more fractional than fulltime contracts available (Bell & Blanchflower, 2013). The notion of how aspects of extreme work, such as long hours, work in academia and their related impact on personal relationships, such as the categorisation of them existing as internal or external to academia, would also be another interesting future avenue of research. How does this mirror onto other similar, vocational occupations (Morgan et al., 2013)? It would also be useful to discover how this then contributes to the idea of the abstract worker (Acker, 1990). Furthermore, though there is research on the leaky pipeline that highlights the point between predominately precarious ECA contracts and permanent contracts as a point where a lot of women are 'lost' more research needs to be conducted on why. A contribution on the idea of non-belonging goes part way to explaining this but more specific research of how this occurs in recruitment interviews would be valuable. Though Herschberg et al. (2018) conducted an excellent study of how this occurs within other European nations, a similar study of the UK is required with its particular state context and emphasis on metrics (TEF & REF). Additional research on the idea of 'breadwinning' among those on precarious academic contracts would also be valuable. While this emerged as an interesting theme within this research it would inevitably benefit from a more targeted sample, a direct comparison of both ECA men and women with dependents. Regarding ECAs and students, I feel more work needs to be conducted on the NSS and its impacts on both academic well-being and the pedagogical relationship, given how severely this appeared to impact on both these points in this research. Additionally, though there are several pieces of research that point toward ECAs as being particularly vulnerable to stress and mental health issues (Kinman, 2001; Kinman & Jones, 2008; Morrish, 2019) and research that points toward the impact of precarity upon this (Loveday, 2018a), I feel the literature would benefit from a further exploration of the causes and symptoms and how these are differentiated by gender at this career stage. Finally, there is little published work exploring the effects of the hostile environment on UK university staff, a point of important further exploration given its impacts (USS Briefs, 2018).

## 7.6. Conclusion

The overriding commonality among ECAs of all genders was the experience of precarity, and that there were few participants untouched by this experience, and the related feelings of precariousness that this engendered (Butler, 2003). Precarity was a condition that not only made participants feel lesser but also one that turned up the intensity of living, placing both increased pressure on the now, ‘how can I escape precarity?’ and on an unknowable and distinctly liquid future. Deregulation of work alongside an emphasis on (cost)efficiency by HEIs in the neoliberal project has now resulted in the normalisation of the cheapest and most exploitative contracts in the sector (Rubery et al., 2018). The attrition of trade union power (Trade Union Act, 2016) and the fear many ECAs have of speaking up against their employers – a risk exacerbated by precarity– have resulted in an imbalance of power where it seems little can be done to challenge neoliberal structures. Another commonality among ECAs which further entrenched the harms of precarity, was their vocational attachment to work (Dik & Duffy, 2009) one that made them easier to exploit – that they were less likely to leave their jobs despite harms (Morgan et al., 2013) – and which encouraged them toward self-exploitation – to self-present as dedicated, hard-workers (Knights & Clarke, 2014). In looking at the intersection between public and private lives in this research, we have also been able to see how labour market precarity bleeds into all aspects of ECA lives, the impossibility of planning for a future, how it wears away a tether to a life outside of employment and thus seeks to create the perfect, unburdened, abstract worker (Acker, 1990).

Of course, as was also evident in exploring the gendered lives of ECAs, there were also key differences in experience among participants. Those within the data did not only live in a neoliberal political project but also a neoliberal gender order, within which exists the specific gender regime of academia, one which acts to engender increased feelings of non-belonging among ECA women and other atypical academics. This was achieved both through a downward exertion of patriarchal power (condescension, bullying, harassment) accompanied by an androcentric workplace culture that sought to delegitimise those working within, to posit certain individuals as not typically academic and thus as not



belonging. Though most ECA men may feel far from a masculine hegemonic ideal, they had access to a patriarchal dividend (Connell, 2005) afforded to them by their status within the gender order and related gender regime. Furthermore, typically academic ECA men benefited from frequently having more initial access to starter capital (social, economic, cultural) and were therefore better placed to exchange it for highly sought-after symbolic capital (Pret et al., 2016). Though this research concentrated on gender, it was evident that these same structures were what worked to exclude other atypical academics. Also, there were many ECA women who benefited from belonging (being white, middle class) and men that were disadvantaged from non-belonging, from not being typically academic.

In a hyper-competitive academic labour market both the financial and symbolic harms of precarity alongside biases endured through non-belonging impacted one's odds of success. What was clear from the research was how both Fraser's (2013) ideas of maldistribution, of unequal access to material resources, and misrecognition, of not being considered belonging in academia, both had impacts on individual ECA chances. To address the issues initially set out in the literature review therefore, the leaky pipeline, of how we lose so many ECA women between the stage of precarious and permanent contract (ECU, 2019; Herschberg et al., 2018) and the glass ceiling (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Acker & Feuerverger, 1996; Bagilhole & Goode, 1998; Skeggs, 2008; Gutiérrez et al., 2012), of how we lose even more women as we move up academic hierarchies, we need to address both the structural harms of maldistribution and the subjective experience of misrecognition. Once again, this also applies to other groups, especially BAME ECAs which exist in such small numbers within the university (ECU, 2019) and groups such as migrant academics who are at particular risk.

Overall, UK universities appear better at addressing issues of recognition as evidenced by many HEIs participation in both the ASC and the REC. However, critics of diversity measures have addressed their possible misuses, that they can be performative, window dressing for the university's public image (Ahmed, 2012; Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019) and ineffective in addressing the deep subjective and daily experience of non-belonging. Also, though these initiatives do focus on getting women and BAME individuals into higher paid positions they still focus on social mobility for a few as opposed to the collective justice of distribution for the many (Brown, 2013). As Fraser (2013) warns, it is important to be aware of how recognition can dovetail with a neoliberal feminist focus on individual concerns, better enabling universities to turn the discourse away from workers' rights and

collective action. University initiatives addressing gender and race are far more reticent on how maldistribution exacerbates these inequalities, that we have more women and BAME individuals on precarious and lower paid contracts and that these hamper their ability to progress into the higher paid levels of the sector (Bozzon et al., 2017; Peetz, 2017; Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019).

As I write this more strikes are set for the university sector not just on pensions but also on pay and conditions of precarity, a demonstration of collective will within the sector for change (UCU, 2019b). It is possible therefore to imagine a new, better sector and there have been examples of good practice, for instance Durham University has now banned nine-month contracts, those that do not employ ECAs over the summer (Atherely, 2018). As well as working alongside colleagues to change workplace cultures and reduce feelings of non-belonging, we also need to strive to make academia an occupation where the ability to endure precarity and its economic costs do not become the entry price. There is a risk that we further cement an already existing feedback loop where precarity results in a lack of diversity within the sector and feelings of non-belonging become further entrenched. Ultimately, the consequence of this are a homogenized academia whereby the teaching and research on offer increasingly reflect only those that were able to pay both the economic and personal cost required to survive within the neoliberal university.

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## Appendix

Appendix 1: Table of Interview Participants

<b>Name (pseudo.)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age (range)</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Contract Type</b>	<b>Institution Type</b>
Adetola	Female	25-44	BAME	*SSH	Lecturer (permanent contract)	Post-1992 University
Andrej	Male	25-34	White	**STEM	Post-Doc	University outside the Russell Group
Annie	Female	35-44	White	SSH	Two contracts:  Zero hours teaching contact  Managing research project (fixed term)	Both contracts University outside the Russell Group
Caroline	Female	25-34	White	STEM	Research Fellow	University outside the



						Russell Group.
Evelyn	Female	25-34	White	STEM	Lecturer (permanent post)	University outside the Russell Group
Haris	Male	35-44	BAME	SSH	Two Contracts Assistant lecturer Research assistant	Both contracts university outside the Russell Group
James	Male	35-44	White	SSH	Lecturer (permanent contract)	Post-1992 University
Jane	Female	25-34	White	SSH	Post-doc	Russell Group
Jarryd	Male	25-34	White	SSH	Research Assistant	University outside the Russell Group
Kate	Female	35-44	White	SSH	Two contracts, both 'lecturer'	Contract 1. University outside the Russell Group

						Contract 2: post-1992 University
Laurie	Male (trans)	25-34	White	SSH	Occasional teaching. Currently applying for work.	Russell Group University
Layla	Female	25-34	BAME	SSH	Post-doc	Russell Group
Mark	Male	25-34	White	SSH	Two contracts  Teaching fellow (fixed term)  Assistant Lecturer (zero hours)	Contract 1.  University outside the Russell Group  Contract 2.  Post-1992 University
Miriam	Female	25-34	BAME	SSH	Lecturer (permanent contract)	University outside the Russell Group
Neeru	Female	25-34	BAME	SSH (inter- disciplinary )	Two contracts  Post-Doc  Project co- ordinator	Both contracts at Russell Group University

Paul	Male	25-34	White	SSH	Teaching Fellow	University outside the Russell Group
Peter	Male	25-34	White	SSH	Lecturer	University outside the Russell Group
Polly	Female	25-34	White	SSH	Teaching Fellow	Russell Group University
Tristram	Male	25-34	White	STEM	Assistant Professor (permanent contract)	University outside the Russell Group
<b>Senior Academics</b>						
<b>Name (anonymised)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age (range)</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Dani	Female	Over 54	White	SSH	Professor (phased retirement)	Russell Group University

David	Male	Over 54	White	SSH	SMT role (active researcher)	University outside of the Russell Group
Diane	Female	Over 54	White	SSH	Emeritus Professor	University outside of the Russell Group.
Karl	Male	45-54	White	SSH	Two Contracts  Lecturer  SMT Position	University outside the Russell Group
Sophie	Female	35-44	BAME	SSH	Lecturer (permanent)	Post-1992 University

\*SSH= Social Sciences Humanities

\*\*STEM= Science Technology Engineering Maths

## Appendix 2: Text used for the online Recruitment of Participants

### **Facebook and email text for interview recruitment:**

Hello there,

My name is Laura Shand and I am a PHD researcher at the University of Hull looking at the gendered lives of Early Career Academics (ECAs).

I am looking to recruit ECAs of all disciplines to take part in my research, this will involve participating in an interview about your experience lasting up to 90 minutes.

The interview will explore what it's like to be an ECA in the UK today, covering the impact this has on both the professional and private aspects of ECA life.

Interviews can take place in person in a private location of your choice (suitable for recording audio) or via Skype.

The inclusion criteria are as follows:

- Have been awarded a PHD (no longer a PhD student/researcher)
- 5 years post awarding of PhD
- Based in the UK
- Is actively participating in the academic job market (either currently employed in the academic job market or actively looking for academic work)

The data you provide within this interview will be anonymised, you will be referred to as a pseudo name to protect your identity.

If you are interested in becoming a participant, please do get in touch and I will provide further details.

Kind regards,

Laura Shand

### **Twitter:**

Hello! I am a PhD researcher looking to recruit interview participants for my research into the gendered lives of ECAs. See attached images for inclusion categories and get in touch if interested. All data will be completely confidential and anonymised.

### **Online survey recruitment Facebook and Twitter:**

Hello there,

My name is Laura Shand and I'm a PhD student at the University of Hull, my research aims to explore the gendered experiences of Early Career Academics in the UK.

I am seeking UK, early career academic (that match the below criteria) to participate in this online survey

Before filling out this survey please make sure you fulfil the following criteria:

- You must be based within the UK
- You must have been awarded your doctorate and no longer be a student.
- You must be within 5 years of being awarded your doctorate.
- You must be currently participating in the academic job market, whether in work or looking for work.

#### Guidance

The time taken to complete this survey will be around 20-30 minutes, there is an option to save your answers if you wish to take a break and return later.

If you are currently unemployed, you should refer to your most recent academic role in these questions. If you are post-PhD but have not yet secured a job then please skip any of the questions that cover current/most recent roles. You are still welcome to participate.

If you have multiple academic contracts, please refer to your primary contract (your contract that consist of the most contracted hours) for questions that reference this.

By participating in this survey, you agree to the data and text being used and analysed both within the body of my thesis research and in any future publications arising from it. You also agree to it being stored in a secure data centre.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and participants can leave the survey at any point, however, as data in this survey is anonymised it cannot be withdrawn on completion.

Please address any questions about the project to myself at, the primary researcher:  
l.shand@2016.hull.ac.uk

Alternatively, you can reach out to the supervisors of this project:

Professor Liz Walker: e.walker@hull.ac.uk

Dr Jin Nye Na: j.na@hull.ac.yk

Kind regards,

Laura Shand

## Appendix 3: Interview Participant Consent Form

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### CONSENT FORM

**Name, position and contact address of Researcher:** Laura Shand, PHD Researcher,  
l.shand@2016.hull.ac.uk

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. If I choose to withdraw from the study I am aware that I have the right to ensure that any data provided not be used in the research.
4. I agree to take part in the above study and to the interview being audio recorded.
5. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in future publications .
6. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a secure data centre.

Name of Participant	Date	Signature

Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

## Appendix 4: Participant Information Form

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### Information Sheet

#### **Aims of the Research**

- Exploring the gendered differences in the lives of Early Career Academics (ECAs)
- Exploring the impact of academic precarity (fixed term contracts, zero hours contracts, part-time work/ underemployment) on ECAs

I will record the interview as an audio file which will then later be transcribed into a text document for analysis. The interview will last around one to two hours and participation is completely voluntary. As a participant you can pause the interview at any point or end it completely.

#### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

I will ensure that everything we discuss will remain confidential and in the final version of the research, there will be no way of identifying you as one its participants.

This will include the recording of the interview being transcribed into a written format. At this stage, a pseudonym will be used so that your name will no longer appear on the written version.

The consent form accompanying this information sheet will outline all the separate points which require your agreement. If you choose not to agree to a certain aspect your decision will be recorded and strictly adhered to. You are welcome to ask the researcher questions at this stage and clarify any points about the use of your data and how it will be stored.

Please note however, that if during the course of the interview you disclose information about a crime for which a sentence has not been served, this information will be passed on to the authorities and the above rules governing confidentiality and anonymity will not apply.

#### **Benefits and risks of research**

By participating in this research, you will be helping to contribute to sociological knowledge around both precarity and gender in academia and learn about your own challenges and success in the field. This will enable you to become part of a larger conversation that has the possibility to promote change in Higher Education.

It is possible you may find some of the subjects we touch upon emotional or distressing, in this case you are welcome to pause or leave the interview.

Here are a list of support organisation you can contact should you need to:

#### **For those affected by sexual violence...**



Rape Crisis England and Wales: 0808 802 9999 between 12 noon - 2.30pm and 7 - 9.30pm every day of the year

Rape Crisis Scotland: Phone free any day between 6pm and midnight on 08088 01 03 02 or if you are deaf or hard of hearing on minicom number 0141 353 3091.

Rape Crisis & Sexual Abuse Centre, Northern Ireland: 028 90329002, 12pm- 9pm

### **Discrimination at work....**

Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS):

Telephone: 0808 800 0082

Textphone: 0808 800 0084

Monday to Friday, 9am to 8pm

Saturday, 10am to 2pm

### **Bullying at work....**

Acas helpline

Telephone: 0300 123 1100

Textphone: 18001 0300 123 1100

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

Mental health/family difficulties.....

The Samaritans: UK 116 123

### **Contact Details**

If you have any further questions or wish to contact me, my contact details are as follows:

Laura Shand

School of Health and Social Work

University of Hull

Email: l.shand@2016.hull.ac.uk

### **Project Supervisors**

As a participant if you have any questions or complaints that you cannot address to the me personally please feel free to contact either of the two main supervisors on this project.

Professor Liz Walker: E.Walker@hull.ac.uk

Dr Jin Nye Na: J.Na@hull.ac.uk

## Appendix 5: Interview Topic Guide

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### Interview Topic Guide

#### Project description

I will be conducting in-depth interviews with ECAs of all genders and senior academics reflecting back upon their ECA experience. The idea is to explore the context of their lives both within and outside of academia to uncover how these two spheres intersect. In line with my main research approach, I will be using a phenomenological approach to the interview and have elected to use Bevan's (2014) structure for the phenomenological interview, this consists of three main stages.

1. **Contextualisation:** This will involve establishing the current context of the ECA and the wider picture concerning their life. These questions will be same between participants.
2. **Apprehending the phenomena:** Drilling down into what the participant has already discussed for more detailed description.
3. **Clarifying the phenomena:** The final stage of the interview where it is highlighted how the participant's experience might vary when compared to others. Whilst this stage may contain some set questions it will also allow room for variance.

Whilst the first stage will be the same for all participants and generally be concerned with collecting information about the individual and their lifeworld, the two later stages will be dependent on information gathered in the previous stages. For instance, when I reach the stage of apprehending the phenomena, I will be using the information provided by me in stage 1, contextualisation. When I reach the point of clarifying the phenomena, I will be using information from the previous 2 stages.

The justification for this approach is to allow the participant relative freedom in discussing and giving weight to the topics they feel are most relevant to them. As such, in stage 2 and beyond not all the points may be discussed, or some may be discussed in far more detail than others.

---

#### 1. Contextualisation

Name of interviewee

Gender identity

Age

Current position and institution

Family life and relationships (history, members, cultural activities, occupations)

Academic life (studying, PHD, first job)

## **2. Apprehending the phenomenon**

Successes and challenges in academia

Discipline specific successes and challenges

The impact of academia on participant's personal life (family, romantic relationships, friends)

Work-life balance

Material effects of precarity (finances, mortgages, holidays)

Audit culture: managerialism, REF and TEF

Relationships with other ECAs

Relationships with line manager

Relationships with other senior academics

## **3. Clarification of the phenomena**

How does their experience compare to other UK HE institutions?

How does their experience compare to other disciplines?

How does their experience compare to other ECAs they know?

Issues surrounding gender in academia for ECAs

Intersectional issues in academia (other social categories in academia: race, age, sexuality, etc.)

Senior academics reflecting how do they feel their experience compares with ECAs now

## Appendix 6: Original Ethics Approval Letter

### **PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL**

Laura Shand  
 Faculty of Health Sciences  
 University of Hull  
***Via email***  
 3rd January, 2018

Dear Laura,

### **REF FHS18 Gender and Precarity in UK, Early Career Academics**

Thank you for your responses to the points raised by the Faculty of Health Sciences Ethics Research Committee.

Given the information you have provided I confirm approval by Chair's action.

Please refer to Research Ethics Committee web page for reporting requirements in the event of subsequent amendments to your study.

I wish you every success in your study.

Yours sincerely,

#  


Dr Tim Alexander Deputy Chair, FHS Research Ethics Committee



Tim Alexander | [Research co-ordinator](#) | **Doctorate Course in Clinical Psychology**  
 University of Hull  
 Hull, HU6 7RX, UK  
[www.hull.ac.uk](http://www.hull.ac.uk)  
 t.alexander@hull.ac.uk | 01482 464030  
 @UniOfHull | /UniversityOfHull | universityofhull

## Appendix 7: Ethics Amendment Approval for Survey

### PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Laura Shand  
 Faculty of Health Sciences  
 University of Hull  
***Via email***

17<sup>th</sup> July 2018

Dear Laura

### REF FHS18 - Gender and Precarity in UK, Early Career Academics

Thank you for your responses to the points raised by the Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Given the information you have provided I confirm approval by Chair's action.

I wish you every success in your study.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Tim Alexander Deputy Chair, FHS Research Ethics Committee



**Tim Alexander | Research co-ordinator | Doctorate Course in  
 Clinical Psychology**  
 University of Hull  
 Hull, HU6 7RX, UK  
[www.hull.ac.uk](http://www.hull.ac.uk)  
 t.alexander@hull.ac.uk | 01482 464030  
 @UniOfHull | /UniversityOfHull | universityofhull

## Appendix 8: Online Survey

ECA Survey

Page 1: Page 1

Hello and welcome to the Early Career Academic survey!

My name is Laura Shand and I'm a PhD student at the University of Hull, my research aims to explore the gendered experiences of Early Career Academics in the UK.

Before filling out this survey please make sure you fulfil the following criteria: You must be based within the UK (at least part-time).

You must have been awarded your doctorate and no longer be a student. You must be within 5 years of being awarded your doctorate.

You must be currently participating in the academic job market, whether in work or looking for work.

Guidance

The time taken to complete this survey will be around 20-30 minutes, there is an option to save your answers if you wish to take a break and return later.

If you are currently unemployed, you should refer to your most recent academic role in these questions. If you are post-PhD but have not yet secured a job then please skip any of the questions that cover current/most recent roles. You are still welcome to participate.

If you have more than one academic role, please answer where indicated referring to your primary role.

By participating in this survey, you agree to the data and text being used and analysed both within the body of my thesis research and in any future publications arising from it. You also agree to it being stored in a secure data centre.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and participants can leave the survey at any point, however, as data in this survey is anonymised it cannot be withdrawn on completion.

Any questions about the project can be addressed to [l.shand@2016.hull.ac.uk](mailto:l.shand@2016.hull.ac.uk)

The supervisors on this project are Professor Liz Walker: e.walker@hull.ac.uk Dr Jin Nye  
Na: j.na@hull.ac.yk

---

### Section 1: Demographics

1. What is your age?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

Over 54 years old

Do not wish to disclose

2. How do you best identify in terms of ethnicity?

White British White other

Mixed/multi-ethnic group Indian

Bangladeshi Chinese Asian other African Black other Other

Do not wish to disclose

2(a). If you selected Other, please specify:

3. How would you describe your relationship status?

Single

Married

Long-term relationship

Divorced

Widowed



Do not wish to disclose

3(a). If you selected Other, please specify:

4. How would you describe your sexuality?

Heterosexual

Homosexual

Bisexual

Do not wish to disclose Other

5(a). If you selected Other, please specify:

6. In terms of gender, how do you identify?

Female

Male

Trans male

Trans female

Non-binary

Do not wish to disclose

Other

6 (a) If you selected Other, please specify:

7. Do you have children?

No

Yes, 1

Yes, 2

Yes, more than 2

Do not wish to disclose

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Section 2: Academic Contracts

8. What is your employment status?

9. In your current or most recent role, what best describes your primary contract? You may choose more than one option.

10. In your current or most recent primary role what best describes your academic field?

Humanities

Social Sciences

STEM

Medicine

Education

10(a). If you selected Other, please specify:

11. If your position is fixed term in your current, or most recent primary role, what is the duration?

Less than 3 months

Between 3-6 months

Between 6-9 months

1 year

1- 3 years

More than 3 years

12. Other than your primary role (if you are currently employed) do you have another job?

No

Yes, more than one academic job

Yes, another job (outside of academia)

Yes, also self-employed

Do not wish to disclose

13. In your current (or most recent) primary role, what best describes the institution you work for?

Russell Group

Post 1992

Red Brick

Oxbridge

Other

Do not wish to disclose

13(a). If you selected Other, please specify:

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### Section 3: Perspectives on Academia

14. What are some of the things you enjoy/ have enjoyed about working in academia?

15. What do you feel have been your biggest achievements in academia so far?

16. What do you find challenging about working in academia?

17. Have you ever experienced financial difficulties as a result of an academic contract?

Yes

No

Do not wish to disclose

17(a). Please add any further reflections you may have about financial difficulties experienced as a result of an academic contract here.

18. Have you ever relocated for an academic job?

Yes, once

Yes, more than once

No

Do not wish to disclose

19. In your current, or most recent primary role, how far is your commute to work?

less than 30 minutes

30 minutes - 1 hour

1- 2 hours

more than 2 hours

Do not wish to disclose.

20. In your current, or most recent primary role, how flexible is your employer in regards to you working away from your institution?

Very flexible

Flexible

Neutral

Inflexible

Extremely Inflexible

21. Please add any further reflections you may have about either relocating, commuting or work flexibility here.

22. Have you ever experienced discrimination (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc.) in an academic role?

Yes

No

Do not wish to disclose

23. Have you ever witnessed any form of discrimination (racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, etc.) in an academic role?

Yes

No

Do not wish to disclose

24. Have you ever experienced bullying in an academic role

Yes

No

Do not wish to disclose

25. Have you ever experienced sexual harassment in an academic role?

Yes

No

Do not wish to disclose

26. If you have experienced or witnessed either bullying, discrimination or harassment in academia and would like to say more about your experience, please feel free to do so here.

27. How would you rate your relationship with your line manager?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Terrible

27 (a). Please feel free to add any reflections on your relationship with your line- manager here.

28. Have you experienced any formal or informal mentoring as an Early Career Academic?

No

Yes, formal mentoring

Yes, informal mentoring

Do not wish to disclose

28(a) Please feel free to add any reflections on your mentoring experiences here.

29. Do you feel you have you been affected by the REF? If so, please add any reflections here.

30. Do you feel you have been affected by the TEF? If so, please add any reflections here.

31. Have you ever been affected by any student-led evaluations such as the NSS? If so, please add any reflections here.

32. In your current or most recent primary role, how often do you experience management-led, performance reviews?

Never Monthly

Once a semester

Once an academic year

Other

Do not wish to disclose.

32(a). If you selected Other, please specify:

33(b). Have you ever been affected by any management led performance reviews? Please add any reflections here.

34. In your current, or most recent primary role, how would you rate your work-life balance?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Terrible

Positive

35. Please add any further reflections on work-life balance you may have here.

36. At your current, or most recent primary role, how would you rate your workplace induction?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Terrible

36(a). Please add any further reflections on your workplace induction here.

37. At your current, or more recent primary role, how would you rate your physical working space?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

Terrible

Positive

37(a). Please add any further reflections on your physical working space here.

38. Do you feel that your working life has had an impact on your social relationships (friends, family, romantic)? Please add any reflections here.

39. Are you a member of a union?

Yes

No

Do not wish to disclose

40. Have you ever considered leaving academia?

Yes, once

Yes, several times Never

Do not wish to disclose

40(a). If you have considered leaving academia, please add any reflections here.

41. Have you ever experienced health problems as a result of academic work?

Yes, mental health problems Yes, physical health problems

Yes, mental and physical health problems No



Do not wish to disclose.

42. How do you feel about your future in academia?

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Extremely optimistic

Fairly optimistic

Neutral

Fairly pessimistic

Very pessimistic

42.(a). Please add any other reflections concerning your future in academia here.

43. Please add any other reflections on academic life or being an Early Career Academic here.

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Thank you so much for your time. If there is anything, you'd like to discuss further that was raised in this survey, please contact me at [l.shand@2016.hull.ac.uk](mailto:l.shand@2016.hull.ac.uk)



