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Laughland-Booÿ, Jacqueline, Newcombe, Peter and Skrbiš, Zlatko

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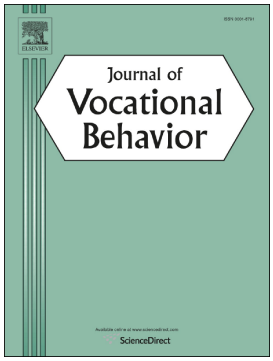

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Jacqueline Laughland-Booÿ, Peter Newcomb, Zlatko Skrbiš

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Authors:
Jacqueline Laughland-Booÿ
School of Social Sciences, Monash University, Australia

Peter Newcombe
School of Psychology, The University of Queensland, Australia

Zlatko Skrbiš
School of Social Sciences, Monash University, Australia

Corresponding Author:
Jacqueline Laughland-Booÿ, School of Social Sciences, Monash University, Clayton, VIC 3800, Australia
email: jacqueline.laughland-booy@monash.edu

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Biographies

Jacqueline Laughland-Booÿ is a Research Associate with the 'Social Futures and Life Pathways of Young People in Queensland' study at Monash University, Australia. Her research interests include the life trajectories of young people living in Australia, and the attitudes of young Australians towards ethnic and cultural diversity.

Peter Newcombe is an Associate Professor in Psychology at The University of Queensland, Australia. He lectures in introductory and developmental psychology and has received awards at faculty, university, and national levels for contributions to teaching psychology internationally. His primary research interest concerns quality of life issues in young people with chronic medical conditions.

Zlatko Skrbiš is a Professor of Sociology in the School of Social Sciences and Vice-Provost (Graduate Education) at Monash University, Australia. He is also Principal Chief Investigator on the 'Social Futures and Life Pathways of Young People in Queensland' project. His research focuses on the question of identities in transition, culture, and migration.

1. Introduction

Looking forward and planning for the future is often considered a normative developmental task for late adolescents and emerging adults (Arnett 2000; Luyckx, Lens, Smits, & Goosens, 2010). Adolescence is a period when young people might be expected to have commenced the steps towards autonomy and independence. For many young people living in industrialised countries, however, the path towards adulthood has been extended. Young people in their twenties are often still constructing a consistent and coherent sense of identity across their many life roles, and are yet to achieve many of the milestones which have traditionally been associated with adulthood. Moreover, they may still be unsure of how their future might unfold (Arnett, 2000; Luyckx et al., 2010; Schwartz, Côté, & Arnett, 2005).

Alongside this extended lead into adulthood, there have also been changes in societal expectations regarding the career trajectories young people might follow (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). Where once there were often considerable structural constraints surrounding what individuals could do when they left school (e.g., gender, familial expectations, social economic status), young people now have more liberty to select for themselves a vocational path (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007). However, with flexibility of options comes increased accountability. While an individual may have more choice, they are also expected to take greater personal responsibility for the decisions they make (Furlong & Cartmel, 2007; Guichard, Pouyaud, de Calan, & Dumora, 2012).

Selecting a vocational path is a fundamental component of overall identity formation for many young people and choosing a career assists an individual in making plans for their future (Arnett, 2000; Crocetti, Avanzi, Hawk, Faccaroli, & Meeus, 2014; Luyckx, Seiffge-Krenke, Schwartz, Crocetti, & Klimstra, 2014). There are, however, a number of elements, which can influence career identity formation – including time perspective. If a person is more focused on their past or present, for instance, their career future may seem unimportant or unimaginable. Alternatively those with a strong future focus demonstrate greater imagination, motivation, and engagement with respect to the career decision-making process (Taber, 2013; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015).

In this paper, we use qualitative methodology to explore the association between career identity formation and the temporal orientations of young people. Drawing on interview data collected from participants in an ongoing study of young people from STATE, Australia, we investigate the interplay between participants' experiences with career identity development, their time perspectives, and future

outlook. The opportunity to interview the young people across time permits a perspective of the non-static nature of career identity establishment that has previously received scant regard. As such, we offer a unique insight into the lived experiences of emerging adults as they grapple with the challenges associated with choosing a career, reflecting on that choice, and preparing for their vocational future.

2. Career Identity

2.1. Identity Status Theory

Developing a firm identity and finding a place in society is considered one of the key developmental tasks and goals of adolescence and young adulthood. To achieve a clear self-definition of oneself is a complex process as it involves various meanings of the 'self' across multiple life domains (Arnett, 2000).

Marcia (1966) identified two processes of identity development – exploration (actively searching and weighing various identity options) and commitment (making a firm choice in an identity domain and engaging in activities towards achieving that identity). He argued the presence or absence of each of these processes results in four identity statuses: *achievement* (exploration followed by commitment), *moratorium* (exploration without commitment), *foreclosure* (commitment without exploration), and *diffusion* (neither exploration nor commitment). Contemporary theorists have expanded and refined this model. Luyckx, Goosens, Soenens, and Beyers (2006) suggest exploration and commitment each have two elements. They believe exploration involves 'exploration in breadth' and 'exploration in depth, and commitment comprises 'commitment making' and 'identification with commitment'. 'Exploration in breadth' is the consideration of various identity options, whereas 'exploration in depth' involves an intensive evaluation of current commitments. 'Commitment making' describes the selection of an identity and 'identification with

commitment' is the acceptance of that identity as a part of one's self (Luyckx et al., 2006).

Furthermore, Crocetti, and associates (e.g., Crocetti, Rubini, & Meeus, 2008; Crocetti, Sica, Schwartz, Serafini, & Meeus, 2013) have proposed a model of identity that emphasises the interchange between commitment, in-depth exploration, and reconsideration. Their three-dimensional model highlights the degree to which young people will continue to actively reflect on their choices, look for new information, and consider possible alternatives. The various combinations of these three dimensions result in five status categories that expand on Marcia's (1966) original identity classifications. They include four consistent with Marcia's model along with the addition of a *searching moratorium* status, which describes an individual with high levels of commitment, exploration, and reconsideration. For this status, individuals who have made an identity commitment are seen to be reconsidering their identity choice and are actively considering alternative options that may better fit their goals and aspirations (Crocetti et al., 2008).

Recently, it has been suggested that postponement should be better acknowledged as a component of the identity formation process (AUTHOR, 2017; Sica, Luyckx, Goossens, Ragozini, & Sestito, 2017). Furthermore, AUTHOR (2017), have proposed the inclusion of postponement as a fourth dimension of identity development. They believe this is a dimension of identity that should be better acknowledged alongside commitment, exploration and reconsideration and that by adding this dimension greater focus might be paid to varying qualitative manifestations of identity development deferral. In research they have undertaken into the experiences of young people undergoing identity development in the domain of romantic relationship formation, they identified an identity status they have labelled

hiatus – characterised by the process of exploration followed by postponement. Young people in hiatus, have commenced the process of identity exploration, but subsequently chose to stop because they believed, due to their current circumstances, neither further exploration, nor commitment were possible. Instead, these young people had decided to defer identity development in this domain until time has passed and their circumstances had changed (AUTHOR 2017)

2.2 Exploring career identity formation in emerging adults

Career is a core identity domain. Well-meaning, yet persistent questions such as "What do you want to be when you grow up", "What do you want to do when you graduate?" or, "What do you do?" reflect societal expectations within many industrial countries that young people should actively strive towards developing a strong and purposeful career identity. However, while some young people are able to negotiate this development task, not all are engaged or know with certainty the vocational path they wish to follow.

Informed by Marcia's identity status conceptualisations and the more recent adaptations to that model, research which focuses specifically on career identity formation has been undertaken. One example is the work undertaken by Porfeli, Lee, Vondracek, and Weigold (2011) to construct a measure that assesses vocational identity status. They argued that exploration, commitment, and reconsideration all have two distinct facets, which should be measured independently of each other – resulting in a total of six processes. These are in-depth exploration, in-breadth exploration, commitment making, commitment identification, as well as two variations of the reconsideration process – career self-doubt and career commitment flexibility. Career self-doubt is used to describe instances when an individual questions their career commitment and is accompanied by uncertainty and concern.

On the other hand, career commitment flexibility reflects reconsideration in the form of an active and open engagement with future change and future possibility. Whilst career self-doubt is seen to be maladaptive, career commitment flexibility is thought to be more adaptive particularly for people who may have multiple career identities in the course of their lifetime. Using samples of high school students and university students, associations were identified between the participants' career identity status, levels of well-being, and feelings about their career future. Those with either an achieved or foreclosed career identity showed higher levels of wellbeing and possessed a more positive outlook. While the moratorium individuals scored moderate levels of well-being and feeling towards their work future, the diffused scored low in these respects. Those students who reported lower levels of well being also scored the highest in the two measures of reconsideration (Porfeli et al., 2011).

3. Temporal Orientations and Career Identity Formation of Young People

3.1. Time Perspective

Time perspective refers to the process by which individuals frame and interpret their lives within the context of their past, present, or expected future experiences (Harber, Zimbardo, & Boyd, 2003; Laghi, Baiocco, Liga, Guarino, & Baumgartner, 2013; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Previous studies suggest that individuals orientated towards the past, allow life experiences (positive or negative) to dictate their actions, whereas those more focused on the present tend to respond to their immediate circumstances, giving little thought to either the past or future (Laghi et al., 2013). A time perspective focused towards the future, however, means an individual is inclined to set goals and act to transform them into reality (Harber et al., 2003; Laghi, et al., 2013; Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

Categorising individual differences in time perspective, Zimbardo and Boyd (1999), observed five variations among a sample of university students: *past-negative*, *past-positive*, *present hedonistic*, *present-fatalistic*, and *future*. Those who demonstrated a past-negative perspective were described as being fixated on unpleasant, sometimes traumatic, past events in their lives whereas a past positive time perspective was characterised by a more nostalgic preoccupation with one's life history. Those displaying a past-positive outlook were less likely than past-negative individuals to demonstrate negative affect and tended to have higher self-esteem. They were, however, highly conservative in their outlook and disinclined to search for novelty in their lives. Present hedonistic individuals were described as being focused on finding pleasure in the present. They reportedly displayed low impulse control and a preference for novelty. A person with a present fatalistic disposition is dissatisfied with their current circumstances, but does not believe they have control over their situation. Finally, future focused individuals were seen as being organised, ambitious, and willing to delay instant gratification in order to reach their long-term aspirations (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999).

3.2 Time Perspective and Identity Development

It is possible that, as Singer and Kasmark (2015, p.358) put it, "identity integrates one's experiences of past, present, and hoped-for future". It is also possible that a person's identity is *influenced* by their perceptions of past, present, and hoped-for future (Luyckx et al., 2010). Considerable research has been undertaken to explore the associations between time perspective and identity development (Laghi et al., 2013; Luyckx et al., 2010; Marcia & Archer, 1993), and while the direction of causality is not clear, it is believed these variables are interdependent and "mutually reinforcing" (Luyckx et al., 2010, p. 243).

3.3. Time Perspective and Career Identity Formation

A number of studies have also focused specifically on the relationship between the time perspectives of young people and career identity development. Crocetti, Palmonari, and Pojaghi (2011), for example, used the Crocetti et al. (2008) model of identity formation, the Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) time perspective model, and measures of well-being to explore the association between these variables among emerging adults with varying levels of job permanency. It was found that young people undergoing in-depth exploration (moratorium) showed a past negative time perspective and low life satisfaction and were more likely to be in temporary employ. This study also suggested associations between education level, time perspective, and well-being. Those with tertiary qualifications, for instance, were more oriented towards the future and reported higher levels of well-being than those with lower levels of educational attainment (Crocetti et al., 2011).

Also using the Zimbardo and Boyd model, Taber and Blankemeyer (2015) focused on career identity formation of emerging adults undertaking their first years of university education. Individuals categorised as being diffused in their career identity showed strong past-negative orientations and were unlikely to be focused towards the future. The authors suggested that it may be difficult for those with negative past experiences "to engage in career exploration or contemplate a vocational future worth pursuing" (Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015, p. 120). Another important observation from this study relates to the time perspectives of individuals with an achieved career identity. Comparing findings presented by Laghi and associates (2013) who argued those with an achieved global identity were orientated toward the future, the Taber and Blankemeyer (2015) study found identity achievement within the career life domain was not associated with a future

perspective but rather a present-hedonistic focus. These findings raise questions regarding the distinctive qualitative characteristics of identity formation within this domain, particularly with respect to how young people perceive their future vocational prospects.

3.4. Time Perspective and the Future Outlook of Young People

The time perspectives of young people have been linked to their future outlook. Exploring the future career and family formation expectations of young people in Britain and Norway, Brannen and Nilsen (2002) proposed three models of temporal orientation which combines time perspective and future outlook: *deferment*, *adaptability*, and *predictability*. Deferment describes those young people who tend to focus strongly on their current circumstances and who avoid looking towards the future. For these young people, the future is a somewhat abstract concept and expectations are vague and lacking specific detail. The future was seen as something as needing to be "at bay for as long a time as possible" (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002, p.522).

The model of adaptability describes those who also focus on the present, but who also see the future as being a state of possibility, which can be actively and creatively negotiated. When obstacles present themselves, other alternatives are considered to be available. Those who exhibit this time perspective take a more proactive approach towards shaping their future, yet have made no firm commitments towards it. Within the context of future career, Brannen and Nilsen (2002, p.526) observed a high degree of exploration and flexibility. The final model they described is predictability. Predictability is described for those young people who look towards the future and speak with certainty about the direction they are heading and the steps

they will take to get there, although they may often be striving to meet parental or normative expectations (Brannen & Nilsen, 2002).

3.6. Research Aim and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to undertake a qualitative exploration of the associations between young people's career identity development, their time perspective, and their expectations for the future. Qualitative research has much to contribute in this regard. It not only brings to light nuance of the lived experience but gives researchers the opportunity to observe and report possible shifts in social phenomena – changes that might then be tested on a larger scale using quantitative methods. The research questions we addressed were:

1. How do young people describe their experiences of past, present, and future career identity formation activity?
2. What is the connection between their experiences of career identity development, and their temporal orientation as it relates to their career pathway?

Our research makes a novel contribution to the existing corpus of knowledge by further dissecting the perspectives and expectations of young people aged in their early twenties as they construct for themselves a career identity. Their personal accounts offer considerable insight into the lived experiences of young Australians whilst forming a career identity.

4. Data and Methods

4.1 PROJECT NAME

The NAME project (XXX, 2017) is an ongoing longitudinal study of young people in STATE, Australia. Also known as NAME, this project follows the social orientations of a single-age cohort of young people as they transition from adolescence into

adulthood. By combining large-scale survey research with in-depth interviewing, the study is assessing the impact contemporary societal patterns are having on the emerging life pathways of young Australians. DETAILS REMOVED.

Qualitative longitudinal research involves the collection of qualitative data across two or more temporal points in order to observe and understand change and continuity in people's lives (Holland, Thomson, & Henderson, 2006). As part of the broader NAME project we have been undertaking an in-depth qualitative longitudinal study with 28 NAME participants – learning about their lives within the domains of intimate relationships, education and career, and family formation (e.g., AUTHOR, 2015, 2017). To date, they have participated in two interviews. At the first interview was in 2009/2010 when interviewees were adolescents attending high school and beginning to formulate ideas and plans about who they might be and what they might do. Six years later in 2015/2016 they were emerging adults and we were able to witness how those plans were beginning to manifest. In this paper, we focus on data pertaining to the participant's discussions on career identity – particularly within the context of their past experiences, current circumstances, and future aspirations.

4.2. Australian Employment Context

By way of contextualising the research environment, in December 2015 the overall Australian unemployment rate was 5.8 % and STATE's rate of unemployment was 5.9% (ABS, 2016b). Employment is forecasted to increase by 8.3 % between 2016 and 2020. For the state of NAME, employment is projected to rise by 7.9%. The six industries expected to make the largest contribution to job growth are: healthcare and social assistance; education and training; retail trade; professional, scientific and technical services; and, construction. Together these industries will contribute over

75% of total employment growth during this period (Department of Employment, 2016).

4.3. Methodology

Our methodological strategy is underpinned by the ontological assumption that theoretical knowledge can be gleaned from the narratives of social actors. With this in mind, the collection and analysis of data was informed by theory relating to the abductive research strategy (Blaikie, 2007), and narrative identity theory (McAdams, 2011; McLean & Pasupathi, 2012).

4.3.1. Abductive Research Strategy

An abductive research strategy involves an analysis of the 'everyday lay concepts, and motives' (Blaikie, 2007, p. 67) which are produced by social actors to explain social phenomena. Theoretical constructs are developed from the accounts of social actors using either existing frameworks of understanding, or by forming new ones. Whilst existing theories serve as a guide when entering the field, the researcher remains open to using, or developing, alternative theoretical explanations if appropriate (Blaikie, 2007). In this instance, we were broadly informed by existing theory relating to the processes of career identity formation, time perspectives, and the future expectations of young people. We were not, however, testing these theories, rather we were open to the possibility that the participants had experienced other lived realities – ones that may, or may not, fit within these existing theoretical understandings.

4.3.2.Narrative Identity Theory

Narrative identity theory also informs our approach to data collection and analysis. Fundamental to this theoretical philosophy, is the argument that subjective understandings of experience play a crucial role in identity formation and that these

understandings are often processed and reinforced via the narrative of one's life story (McAdams, 2001, 2011). Temporality is an important component of this perspective. When people relate a story of self, their perceptions of the past, present, and future are typically used to produce a coherent account.

The construction of life story through narrative is an integral part of identity formation in adolescence and emerging adulthood (McAdams, 2001). Moreover, an important aspect of constructing such a narrative is that a young person must be able to reflect upon and reconcile any changes (and for that matter consistencies), which have occurred across time with respect to their identity formation journey (McAdams, 2001). The narrative identity approach is therefore suited to an investigation of the processes of identity formation. While identity status offers a point-in-time snapshot of identity, accounts from social actors can reveal the explorations individuals have engaged in and the commitments they have made (McLean & Pasupathi, 2012). Moreover, integration of both identity status theory and narrative identity theory can offer insight into how an individual might have come to arrive at a particular identity status at a particular point in time (McLean & Pasupathi, 2012; Syed & Azmitia, 2008). We also believe that adding a longitudinal component to this mode of investigation enhances this goal. Having interview data from the same individuals obtained at two different points in time have provided greater insight into what dimensions of identity development our participants had, or had not, engaged in during their developmental journey.

4.4. Participants and Procedure

In 2009 and 2010, interviews were undertaken with 50 members of the PROJECT NAME[1] cohort who were then aged 15-17 years old. The sample of interview participants was balanced for gender. To achieve a representation of young people

from different socio-economic backgrounds we controlled for school type (state or independent) and parental occupation.[2] Parental consent was obtained and all interviews were face-to-face. These were conducted either at the participant's home or a café. Interview topics included future study and career goals, financial issues, relationships, and views on family formation.

By 2015, 38 of the original 50 interviewees remained active members of the PROJECT NAME cohort. They were contacted via email or mobile text and asked if they were available to participate in a follow-up interview. Twenty-eight individuals responded and agreed. The final sample comprised 14 females and 14 males.

Twenty-five of the twenty-eight participants (89%) either possessed or were studying for a non-school qualification. Fourteen (50%) of those individuals already possessed a Bachelor degree. These figures compare with Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimations that in 2015, 73% of STATE aged 20-24 either held or were studying for a non-school qualification in 2015 and 15% held a Bachelor degree or higher. The ABS also estimates that in 2015, 73% of STATE in the 20-24 age range were fully engaged in formal study or employment (ABS, 2016a). In our sample, seven participants were either unemployed, working part-time with no current study, or studying part-time but not working. This meant there were 21 'fully engaged' individuals in the sample (82%). From this group six individuals were employed full-time on a permanent or fixed term contract. The others who were working were employed under a casual arrangement. [3] Informed consent was obtained prior to every interview. Most interviews were face-to-face and conducted either at the participant's home, university or at a café. Some participants requested a telephone interview due to personal convenience or because of their geographical location (including overseas). All interviews were semi-structured and lasted between one and two hours.

Interviews topics included education, career, housing, travel, intimate relationships, and future parenthood plans.

The data collected from the first round of interviews enabled us to prepare for the second interview and while there was uniformity of topic areas across interviews, each second interview was tailored to the individual. For instance, if the participant originally said that they wanted to study biology and work in Europe, a note was made to follow up on this specific point at the second interview. Furthermore, in the majority of cases, both interviews were carried out by the same interviewer (first author). As McAdams (2011, p. 105) explains, 'autobiographical memory and self storytelling develop in a social context' and is a social interaction. We believe the knowledge the interviewer had of the participant's life story and circumstances, as well the familiarity the participant had with the interview process, made for the construction of a richer more comprehensive narrative.

4.5. Coding of data

For each participant we thematically coded for career identity formation activities and related processes. We used data from the second interview to identify how perceptions of time related to participants' understandings of their career development experiences, and participants' perceptions of their career future.

Our analytical understandings of how identity development processes and identity status categorisations might be inferred from qualitative data were informed by the examples for a semi-structured interview provided by Marcia and Archer (1993). Our initial thematic codes were informed by the descriptions and examples of career identity formation dimensions (career exploration, commitment, and reconsideration) provided by Porfeli and colleagues (2011). We also included the dimension of postponement in the analysis (AUTHORS, 2017). *Career identity exploration* was

seen to have occurred if the individual had attempted to learn about and evaluate the viability of different options open to them. Career identity exploration also involved a reflexive element in that the individual would have deliberated on how a particular career might match their own personal skill set, their interests and their values. Those considered to have made *career identity commitments* were firm in their career direction. They also spoke of how that career choice was compatible with their goals and values. *Career identity reconsideration* was characterised by instances where an individual had made a commitment but had expressed concern about whether that career was a good fit. Reconsideration also included instances where those with commitments did not consider their choice permanent and were open to a change of career in the future. *Career identity postponement* was characterised by the absence of career development activity. Examples included accounts such as: 'I'm not really thinking about it at the moment' or, 'It's not really the right time'.

Four categories of time perspective were coded: *past*, *present*, *future*, and *continuous*. *Past* focussed individuals are more fixated on past experiences (positive or negative). In this instance, we only found one case, which was consistent with the Zimbardo and Boyd past negative description 'I often think of what I should have differently in my life' (1999, p. 1274). *Present* focused individuals concentrated more on their current circumstances. They prioritised their 'here and now' experiences. Those who were future focussed were looking to achieve a long-term objective. They believed careful steps needed to be taken to achieve that goal and that was where their energy was being concentrated. Another perspective was identified in the data, and has been labelled *continuous*. Here we could see little distinction between the individual's past, present and future perspectives. This could be best described as a 'this is what I have always wanted/done, and this is what I will always want/do'

approach. The person expected past experiences to continue in their present and on into their future.

With respect to future career outlook we identified four distinct categories *adaptable*, *controllable*, *predictable*, and *uncertain*. Two categories were consistent with the Brannen and Nilsen (2002) models of adaptability and predictability, and the other two were identified from the data. *Adaptable* described an open, flexible outlook whereas *controllable* was an outlook characterised by a sense of control and self-determination. *Predictable* described an outlook filled with certainty whereas the *uncertain* category was typified by doubt and concern.

The first author undertook coding and analysis. To assess reliability, category summaries and examples were cross-checked against original transcripts by the second author. The goal here was to ensure that the second author agreed with the category descriptions and would assign individual participants to the same grouping (Cresswell, 2014).

5. Findings

To present our findings, we first briefly define the four temporal orientation typologies identified from the data. These incorporate elements of both time perspective and future outlook. We then summarise the career identity journeys identified and link the participants' current career identity statues to those temporal orientation patterns. Interview synopses exemplify these findings and a summary table is provided in Appendix A. For clarity, this section is primarily descriptive and the theoretical implications of our observations are systematically addressed in the discussion section.

5.1. Temporal Orientations

Consistent with previous observations (e.g., Brannen & Nilsen, 2002) we found an association between the interviewees' dominant time perspectives within this domain and their future career outlooks. The resulting temporal orientations are:

5.1.1. Present–Adaptable

The 'present–adaptable' temporal orientation appeared consistent with the model of 'adaptability' described by Brannen and Nilsen (2002). Young people who took this view had no fixed idea of what their long term future might look like, but saw themselves as having the capacity to adapt to future interests and opportunities. This did not mean these individuals presented as not caring about their future, nor were they what Zimbardo and Boyd (1999, p. 1275) might call "devil may care" in their demeanour. Their future career was simply not confirmed and they were open to choosing from a range of possibilities.

5.1.2. Future–Controllable

Young people demonstrating this temporal orientation had already decided what they wished their future to look like and were fixed in their plans as to how it would become a reality. They also presented as being autonomous in their decision-making and the influence of others did not seem to influence their decision making process to any high degree. They aspired to be highly successful in their chosen career and expected, with hard work, to advance in the role over time.

5.1.3. Continuous–Predictable

Other participants possessed a temporal orientation whereby their past, present and future appeared fused. Like the Brannen and Nilsen's (2002) 'predictability' model, these participants did not 'make a strong distinction between being young and adulthood' (p. 529). They were also expecting a stable and secure future. These young

people and had made early commitments to their career identity and the influence of others factored strongly in their choices. They did also did not speak of having aspirations for career advancement. We found that those with this temporal orientation were typically females with more conservative (mostly religious) life views.

5.1.4. Past–Uncertain

One individual was intensely reflecting on her past, regretted her career choice and was contemplating a change. Her attitudes towards the past were neither negative nor positive (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999), rather she reflected upon what, with the benefit of hindsight, she might have done differently. Given she could no longer see a clear path ahead of her, she was uncertain about her future outlook.

5.2 Career Identity Formation and Temporal Orientation

As illustrated in Figure 1, we have identified connections between the processes our participants have engaged in with respect to career identity formation and the identified patterns of temporal orientation. While some resulting identity status categories are consistent with past studies, we have also found evidence that expands upon those understandings.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

5.2.1. Exploration

5.2.1.1. Current Exploration, No Current Commitment

Consistent with past studies there were cases of young people who had made no commitment to a career identity, but were undertaking career exploration – both in-breadth and in-depth (Porfeli et al., 2011). Their identity status within this domain was therefore consistent with the moratorium identity status and the temporal orientation of these individuals was ‘present – adaptable’. The eight participants in

this category were male. A common story among these young men was that after leaving school they had started a tertiary course, but had dropped out having lost interest. They often had jobs allowing them to subsist (e.g., waiting tables, cleaning, data entry), but considered this situation temporary and were trying to decide what they wanted to do in the future. Others had qualified in a broad field (e.g., economics) and were currently searching for employ. They were open to a range of different careers that might complement their qualifications.

Richard

Although at age 16 Richard described how he wanted to study game design, after leaving school, he enrolled in an Information Technology degree. As he later explained, his family felt he would more likely be able to find employment in that area.

> *At the time, when I was young and fresh out of high school, I was 100 per cent into the idea in spite of the industry crashing … I think I was not capable of expressing that strongly enough to my family at the time. So I got pushed off that path by family and their expectations.*

Before completion, however, he dropped out of this program. Although he then considered studying gaming, by that stage his interest had waned. Richard then worked in office administration, but he had been made redundant and was currently unemployed. At age 23, he felt it was time he thought about a career although there was no 'clarity' in his mind as to what that might be. Although he had not yet chosen a career path, he felt the time spent exploring his options had not been wasted given his exposure to various experiences:

> *I'm 23, turning 24. As much as you try not to think about it, there's always that - you're older so you really ought to get on the path now….I don't regret the path that I've taken and everything that's happened. I've learnt a lot of different lessons and I've had a lot of different situations present themselves. I think you're much more able to succeed after you've failed.*

In terms of his career identity, Richard's time perspective was very much in the present and the need to decide what he should now do. He was considering returning to university to study psychology, although remained flexible as to what career direction that degree might take him.

5.2.2. Postponement

Some individuals were neither actively exploring their career options, nor had current commitments. In the past, current postponement of identity exploration and commitment either with respect to specific life domains, or more generally has resulted in an individual being assigned the diffusion status (Marcia, 1966; Crocetti et al., 2008). However, we believe a point of distinction should be made between those who have never engaged in the exploration/commitment process and those who commenced exploration, but subsequently stopped without committing to an identity. As we have argued elsewhere (AUTHOR, 2017), this scenario suggests a very different developmental experience from those who have never at all engaged in these processes. Although no participants in this study appeared to be in the diffusion status (by our definition no history of career identity exploration or commitment), some gave accounts of starting to explore their career identity, but then making the decision to stop that exploration – an identity status we have called hiatus (AUTHOR, 2017).

5.2.2.1 Hiatus (Past Exploration, No Current Exploration, No Current Commitment)

Two participants (1 female and 1 male) described how they had commenced the process of exploration, but later stopped without making a commitment. Both had experienced mental/ physical health issues and spoke of how their current situation was preventing career exploration or commitment. However, both also believed their circumstances were temporary and remained optimistic their situation would eventually improve. Instead of giving up, or choosing an alternate trajectory, both had

elected to postpone the process. With regards to temporal orientations, the young woman showed a future/controllable outlook in that she broadly knew the career direction she wished to eventually follow and the steps required to take her there. The male participant matched the present/adaptable category in that he was focused on his present day circumstances and, when his circumstances changed, expected to be able to explore a range of options.

Simon

Simon had also been interested in a career in gaming and animation while he was at school. He graduated with a degree in this area and had been working, but due to depression found the job too taxing and instead took part-time work doing data entry. While he was still potentially interested in animation and graphics he was also open to exploring alternative careers in other areas. Simon was confident that he possessed ability, however, the problem was managing his illness whilst studying or working. For this reason he was hesitant to engage in the process of career exploration or commitment at that point in time. As Simon explained, a job with few demands would be best for him in the meantime – 'just to keep things safe', but he knew this was 'just a stalling tactic' until he was ready to continue his career exploration. While he felt he had benefitted from postponing any decisions, he was also concerned by his lack of progress. In his words:

> *It feels like I have just been getting by and that's all. I'm not really progressing in anything. I'm not learning anything new. I'm not moving up in a career that I want to be moving up in.*

5.2.3. Commitment

Commitment means having certainty about one's identity choice (Marcia, 1966). In this context, those considered to have made a commitment to their career identity included individuals who had trained and were currently working in that field and

individuals who were undergoing training for a specific career (e.g., medicine, accountancy). However, our analysis revealed qualitative differences among the committed participants. While we found evidence of foreclosure, we also identified three distinct expressions of identity achievement: *temporary*, *permanent*, and *sequential*.

5.2.3.1. Temporary Achievement (Past Exploration, Current Commitment, Expected Reconsideration)

Three females and three males who had committed to a career identity did not see this identity as being permanent and spoke of the likelihood that they would reconsider their choice sometime in the future. They were, however, undecided as to their next career identity, or when they might begin re-exploring other possibilities. Similar to the participants in moratorium, these young people seemed more focused on their present circumstances than looking too far into the future. They were also adaptable as to what their future career outlook might look like.

Eliza

When we spoke to Eliza at age 16 she very much wanted to be a dance teacher. Having been unsuccessful in gaining a place in this area she found herself needing to quickly consider other options and decided to try nursing. Six years later she was working as an enrolled nurse, career that she said she enjoyed. However, when asked what she thought her next career move would be she was unsure. She said was happy in her current situation and was enjoying the stability of regular and reliable employment, but she was adamant she would not be a nurse 'forever'. She would, however, remain in the role until she no longer liked it. Also, she had not yet found another career path that she might enjoy or had 'put too much thought into it'. Instead,

she preferred to focus on the present and wait to see what opportunities presented themselves later:

> *Yeah, but I don't see myself nursing forever. …at the moment I like it. It's good and I can't think of anything else I want to do.*

5.2.3.2. Permanent Achievement (Past Exploration, Current Commitment)

Permanent achievement describes individuals, who after some exploration have made a commitment to a permanent career identity. The five participants in this category were female. They did not foresee any significant deviations occurring from that path and they expected their career choice (or an offshoot career) to carry them forward well into the future. They also believed they had control over their career trajectory and demonstrated high aspirations regarding the direction it would go.

Natalie

Originally planning to study psychology, Natalie had commenced a degree in this area, but found it did not match her interests. Having altered her direction, she was about to graduate with a Masters in Social Work at the time of second interview. She did not regret commencing psychology because it gave her the opportunity to explore her options and know for certain this was an area that did not capture her interest. As she explained:

> *You wouldn't have convinced me out of it anyway. I probably would have done social work wondering if psych would have been a better choice…*

Having gained experience from her course placements she knew the areas she would like to work in and was actively looking for a job. She did however acknowledge she 'can't be too picky' and had to remain flexible as to what job she accepted in order to gain experience. Having quite firm plans for her future, Natalie ultimately wished to build on her current capacities by returning to university to complete a PhD. By age 40, she imagined she would be lecturing at

a university or working as a policy maker. Currently, however, she needed to join the workforce to gain practical experience.

5.2.3.3. Sequential Achievement (Past Exploration, Multiple Current Commitments)

Other participants were committed to a trajectory that would involve multiple planned career identities. The first was often considered to be a safety net or a way of financing a future planned career identity. Moreover, subsequent career goals were seen as requiring time to eventuate. The two participants who had made a sequential commitment to their career identity were both male. They had explored their career options and were committed to two career identities. The first was viewed as an interim identity whereas the next would require more time to achieve. Both individuals demonstrated an orientation towards the future and saw their future as being within their own control.

David

When at school David was hoping to join the Air Force. At that point in time he was interested in clocks and pocket watches. As he explained:

> *I'd like to get a collection. Clockwork, I just like the look of it, how it all works. That's what I've been looking at recently. I might buy one soon.*

Six years later, he was studying industrial design at university. He explained that his aspirations to be a pilot had been quickly 'squashed' due to colour blindness and 'a lack of leaning toward complex maths'. He was, however, happy with his study choice and hoped to gain a role in that area. Like the temporary achievement participants he saw his commitment to industrial design as being temporary, and knew what he wanted his next career identity to be.

> *The plan is I will be working as an industrial designer at some point. Just not for the rest of my life… My ideal goal is to study watchmaking in Switzerland. That's what I want to do if I can.*

The problem was the cost associated with going to Switzerland and completing the course. He saw his current career commitment as being a way of financing the next. It also gave him a 'fall back' solution should his aspirations not eventuate.

5.2.3.4. Foreclosure (No Past Exploration, Current Commitment)

Four women had undertaken little or no exploration within the domain of career identity and yet had made a commitment to their career identity. From an identity status perspective they had foreclosed on their career identity (Crocetti et al., 2008 Marcia, 1966). These individuals all came from conservative or religious backgrounds and expected to follow more traditional and gendered life trajectories. Most were in a relationship and were discussing marriage (or had married), the purchase of a house was also close on the horizon and there was also often talk of children. They had made a choice of career and were currently training or working in that field. They did not, however, speak of wanting advancement or promotion. While they wanted to be in a career they enjoyed, they expected a sense of life satisfaction would come from family and religion. The time perspective of most of these young women was continuous in that they made very little distinction between their career present and their career future. They had chosen their vocation, and from their perspective the present and the future were both one in the same, thus ensuring their future outlook was somewhat predictable.

Cara

When we asked 16 year old Cara where she saw herself in five years time she adamantly responded: 'Married, got a job, early childhood teacher, stable life'. Five years later all of those goals had come to fruition. Having come form a highly

religious family, she explained how these things were important to her. At age 16, motherhood was also a goal however she realised that she needed a career:

> *If I could get paid for being a mum, I wouldn't have a job and I'd just be a mum because that's all I want to do really, have babies.*

At age 22 she was married, working as a teacher and, by her account, was enjoying the stable life she had hoped for. She and her husband were building a house, but realised that if they were to afford it she would need to continue working.

> *I love teaching, but for me I've always wanted to be a mum. If it was up to me, and money wasn't a problem or anything like that, then I'd probably want to have kids sooner. But that's not how it goes and being teachers we're not millionaires so we do have to save and keep working.*

By age 40 she expected that she would still be teaching, with her goal being to 'have a happy healthy family'. When considering her temporal orientation, Cara's present was also her future in that she expected the life foundations she had already established to help ensure that her future life was both stable and predictable. Her career would support that broader lifestyle and she did not necessarily want to advance in that career. Teaching was a career she enjoyed, but also one that would ultimately suit her broader purpose.

5.2.4. Reconsideration of Commitment

5.2.4.1. Searching Moratorium (Past Exploration, Current Commitment, Current Exploration)

We also encountered an individual who had committed to a career identity but was seriously reconsidering her choice and was exploring new options. This person had invested considerable time and effort into qualifying as a professional, but was now beginning to regret her decision. As the following account will show, she was having difficulty seeing forward, expressing confusion and uncertainty as to how her future might look. Instead, she was more focused on the past trying to deconstruct the

motivations for the choices she had made using the perspective to understand and explain how previous decisions had resulted in their present circumstances.

Ellen

While at school Ellen wanted to study medicine, and when asked at the time if she had considered any other careers, she said law might also be an option. As it was, after leaving school she undertook a law degree and when we spoke to her for a second time she was soon to become a fully qualified solicitor. However, she was not enjoying the profession and was experiencing considerable stress. Reflecting back on why she selected law she explained that her motivations may have been misguided since she had been attracted by the prestige associated with the profession, which in hindsight she thought was 'just ridiculous'. As she explained if she could go back she would have made a different decision and wished she had undertaken more exploration at the time instead of committing too early. Recently, Ellen had begun an extensive period of reconsideration, and had spent a considerable time evaluating her current options. Medicine was still a vocation that greatly appealed to her. While acknowledging medicine was also prestigious career, she believed her desire to be a doctor was being driven by a need for self-fulfilment rather than trying to impress others. Teaching was another option she was contemplating, because it might be more conducive to managing a work-life balance when she had family. However, if she decided to return to university, she felt that having completed her law degree would 'feel like a waste'. For Ellen, the feelings of confusion with respect to her future were unsettling. As she explained, she had always been so confident in her life decisions and was now having difficulty coping with the uncertainty:

> *I go around in circles, like the conversation I'm having with you … it's just a circular, confusing conversation …I want to know where I'm going [so] I'm not just kind of dithering around, not really knowing.…*

6. Discussion and Conclusions

6.1 Key Findings

We believe an appreciation of the dynamic between a young person's time perspective, future outlook, and career identity development offers important insight into the degree to which individuals believe they have choice, control, and certainty over their career future. We have interviewed 28 young people about their career plans at two distinct developmental stages in their lives – adolescence and emerging adulthood. Understanding their personal experiences during this time has enabled us to better appreciate the stories behind their current circumstances. We also believe the accounts of these young people have helped expand current theoretical understandings of how young people might negotiate the developmental challenges associated with choosing a career identity.

Regarding the patterns of temporal orientation identified here, our analysis was in large part informed by the work of Brannen and Nilsen (2002). In our data, we identified patterns similar to their adaptability and predictability models. Our analysis suggested that a present-focused time perspective appeared to be associated with an adaptable future outlook. Furthermore, those we identified as having a strong future focus were ambitious and showed autonomous control over their career choices. Here we have labelled the time perspective associated with predictability as being continuous, meaning it appeared to us to be a fusion of present and future – where the person had already put plans in place and did not expect their future to substantively change from their present. As we have explained, this continuous-predictable temporal orientation appears to be associated with a more conservative outlook.

We have also noted an instance of a past-focussed temporal perspective whereby an individual was questioning the choices she had made and was uncertain (and

concerned) about how her future would transpire. We did not, however, find accounts consistent with the Brannen and Nilsen 'deferment' model, which they describe as being characterised by young people who preferred to focus on the immediate and for whom 'serious consideration of the future is deferred or postponed' (2002, p. 520). The young people who had undertaken career exploration in the past, and had now postponed their career identity, seemed happy to anticipate the future. In saying that, we did not encounter individuals who had never engaged in career identity development (consistent with the diffusion identity status). It is possible the temporal orientation of such individuals would be more in line with a present-uncertain temporal orientation – similar to the 'extended present' description referred to by Brannen and Nilsen (2002) – but this requires further investigation. Nevertheless, we believe our observations contribute to understandings of the various ways young people are orientated to time, not only with respect to their future career trajectories, but perhaps also in other life domains.

While we found patterns of identity formation consistent with current theories, we also propose some modifications. Those participants who we categorised as the moratorium group all relayed similar stories of exploration but as yet had not settled on a particular career choice. We noted that none of these individuals reported being particularly concerned about their current circumstances. Yet they had demonstrated active engagement with both in-breadth and in-depth exploration whereby they were investigating different avenues, looking for opportunities to explore, and being reflexive about their preferences and capabilities. On the other hand, we noted qualitative differences within the achievement group. Some described a process of career exploration followed by making a career commitment and identifying to a single permanent career. They spoke of how this choice would form the foundation of

their working life. Others instead described how their current career identity was not permanent and while a commitment had been made for now, it would not be their only career identity. These temporary achievement individuals spoke of expecting to later undergo a phase of career reconsideration which was, in large part, consistent with career flexibility, a term introduced by Porfeli and colleagues (2011), to characterise an expectation that one's career goals and priorities would likely change in the future. Others had already committed to sequential career identities – one that suited their purpose for the present and another for the future. They had already put considerable thought into how both career identities would be achieved and how both careers met their life goals and values.

Differences between those who had explored and subsequently committed to a career identity were also apparent in their temporal orientations. Although the young people falling in the permanent achievement and sequential achievement status categories showed a future–controllable temporal orientation and had chosen a career life plan, those in the temporary achievement category possessed a temporal orientation consistent with those in moratorium. While the point of difference between the temporary achievement and moratorium individuals was the presence of current commitment to a career identity, the point of similarity was a present-centred focus, and flexibility towards the future. The distinct differences in temporal orientation observed among those with an achieved career identity may also help explain variations observed in past studies (e.g., Taber & Blankmeyer, 2015). Not everyone with an achieved career identity status shared the same time perspective or future outlook and we have provided qualitative examples of how those variations manifest in our participants' lived experience. We believe these observations offer

added direction regarding how these differences might be better measured and accounted for in future quantitative studies.

Some of the participants had committed to a career identity without exploration. These foreclosed individuals were all female and wanted to meet expectations with respect to religion, marriage, and the fulfilment of more traditional gender roles. They showed a continuous – predictable temporal orientation where there appeared to be little distinction between their present and future. Moreover, like the Brannen and Nilsen (2002) predictability model, they wanted a stable and secure future and were steadfast in their convictions. Interestingly when we first spoke to these young women while they were still at school, most were focussed on marriage and children rather than having a professional career. As they got older it seemed that their acquired career identity was a means to an end, which would facilitate their aspirations for building a home and family. Over the years they remained convinced that their sense of self and happiness would ultimately derive from the people they loved, rather than the job they held.

Consistent with the searching moratorium status, one of our participants had made a commitment to a career identity, but was actively reconsidering her past decision. As described this individual was struggling with the possible repercussions of changing her mind. Compared to individuals in other identity statuses, Porfeli et al. (2011) have associated lower levels of well-being and higher levels of distress among individuals in searching moratorium and refer to the type of reconsideration associated with this status as being career self-doubt. In many ways, our participant displayed uncertainty and unease associated with this described construct. In her story, however, there was also regret that the choice she had made had not given her

the satisfaction she wished for and that the time and energy she had invested in preparing for that career role might ultimately be wasted.

As has been argued elsewhere (AUTHORS, 2017), the process of postponement requires greater consideration. Postponement might mean a person has made no steps towards exploration or commitment (diffusion) or that a person was exploring, and then made the conscious decision to stop that process without committing to an identity – which we have called hiatus (AUTHORS, 2017). We maintain that young people, who have commenced career identity exploration then deliberately postponed both exploration and commitment, may have very different motivations and outlooks than those who have never engaged in such processes.

Analogous to the argument made by Porfeli and associates (2011) that the career identity development processes of exploration, commitment, and reconsideration each comprise two subscales (resulting in a six process model), we suggest that postponement also has two aspects: career avoidance and career adjournment. Career avoidance is characterised by both a disinterest and unwillingness on the part of the individual to engage in career exploration or commitment (e.g., 'I haven't really thought about it yet') whereas career adjournment describes instances of a person wanting to engage in these processes, but due to current circumstances, feels they are unable to (e.g., 'It's not the right time'). We would expect the elements of career avoidance to be more closely aligned to the diffusion status, whereas measures of career adjournment would be associated with hiatus. The process of postponement and these two subscales now require greater theoretical and empirical attention, as does the longer-term consequences of postponing one's career identity development.

Finally, we return to observed differences among our interviewees in relation to gender. While most of the young women had made permanent commitments to a career identity (permanent achievement or foreclosure), the majority of young men where either in the throes of active exploration or saw their commitment to a career identity as being a temporary arrangement. Studies which have previously focused on gender differences in career identity development suggest females may commit to their identity (foreclosure or achievement) at a younger age than men (Frisén and Wängqvist, 2011). It is argued that identity formation is perhaps a more pressing concern for females than for males and young men in contemporary Western societies may be feeling less pressure to establish a career path and thus bide their time before making a commitment. As Frisén and Wängqvist (2011, p. 215) have argued, 'without firm commitments and with low engagement in exploration, there is not much to lose, and, as a consequence, the individual may be more flexible when presented with new opportunities'. Such a strategy, however, may still not be a luxury that young women who wish to ultimately balance both career and family can afford (Frisén and Wängqvist, 2011). Moreover, if it is the case that young men are making commitments at a later age, then understanding this delayed decision making and its consequences is an area for future research.

6.2 Limitations, Practical Implications, and Future Directions

Our research is not without its limitations. While we were fortunate to have access to 28 young people on two occasions separated by, on average, 5 years, the sample may have been unique in a number of areas. Half of the sample had obtained an undergraduate degree while nearly 90% had completed or were engaged in post-school study. These percentages are higher than ABS (2016a) estimates for the general population of young Australians in the 20-24 year age group. These 'better-

than-average' education levels may explain the lack of young people who were seen to be in the diffused identity status. It is for future research to further explore career identity formation with a sample more representative of the general population.

Although our sample allowed for in-depth analysis of participants' career identity formation and status, there is little doubt that a larger sample would provide a more comprehensive account of temporal orientation towards career identity development. The transcripts from the present dataset offer the opportunity to generate a set of items to tap into the proposed identity classifications. Once generated, it would be necessary to test and validate the set of items with larger samples to arrive at a psychometrically sound instrument that could then be used to more completely understand the career identity paths of young people.

Despite gender differences in career identity development not being a focus of this research, a number of distinctions became evident as the data was collated and analysed. Only males satisfied the criterion for moratorium while only females fulfilled the foreclose identity status with respect to career. Among those young people who were seen to be committed to their career identity, only females could be identified as permanent achievement and only males as sequential achievement. As these observations are preliminary, they do require further consideration in future research. For example, if our findings of foreclosure career identity status evidenced with our female participants can be replicated, then follow-up studies are required to understand this phenomenon further. It may be that the long-held traditional views of wife-mother-homemaker impact the temporal career aspirations of young female adults leading them to consider their future family responsibilities at the expense of further professional career exploration. The extent to which these perceived future

family responsibilities differentially impact the career identity status decision-making of females and males warrants further investigation.

Our research program is ongoing and thus provides opportunities for future exploration of identities across time and domain. Our qualitative longitudinal research has been based to date on two interviews separated by 5 years. As the emerging adults in our program continue to forge their careers over the years, we plan to maintain contact and resume interviews to examine further their (stable or otherwise) temporal orientations towards their career identities. In particular, understanding the long-term outcomes of postponement (career avoidance, career adjournment) through follow-up interviews would provide retrospective insight into the motivations behind present deliberate cessation (versus non-commencement) of career identity. The temporal orientation typologies that we have discussed in relation to career identity may also apply to other domains such as relationships and family and this is an area for future discovery.

Emerging adults face many critical life stage decisions as they prepare for adulthood. Key amongst these is not only establishing a present career identity, but also placing that identity in the context of life in the future. Our research has shown that career identity is not static and that the importance of integrating temporal orientations in our understandings of young people's career identity development should not be underestimated. It has also contributed more broadly to theories of identity development by advocating that some young people make a conscious decision to postpone their (career) identity exploration. Further investigations are now needed to establish the scope and implications of these findings.

Notes

1. For a full description of the PROJECT NAME project and cohort sampling methods go to: PROJECT WEBSITE. Ethics approval for project data collected prior to 2013 was granted from The University NAME Behavioural & Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee. Ethics approval for project data collection carried out in 2013 was granted from the NAME University Human Research Ethics Committee.
2. The participants were purposively selected from members of the PROJECT NAME cohort living in REGION. This area accounts for approximately two-thirds of STATE population and has a mix of metropolitan, semi-rural, and rural areas. To achieve a representation of young people from varying socio-economic positions we controlled for school type (state or independent) and parental occupation.
3. In Australia, permanent and fixed term employment contracts offer fixed hours and entitlements (e.g. holiday leave, sick leave etc.) and usually require notice of employment termination. Casual positions offer no such commitment or benefits and are a daily arrangement only. For more information go to: https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/types-of-employees

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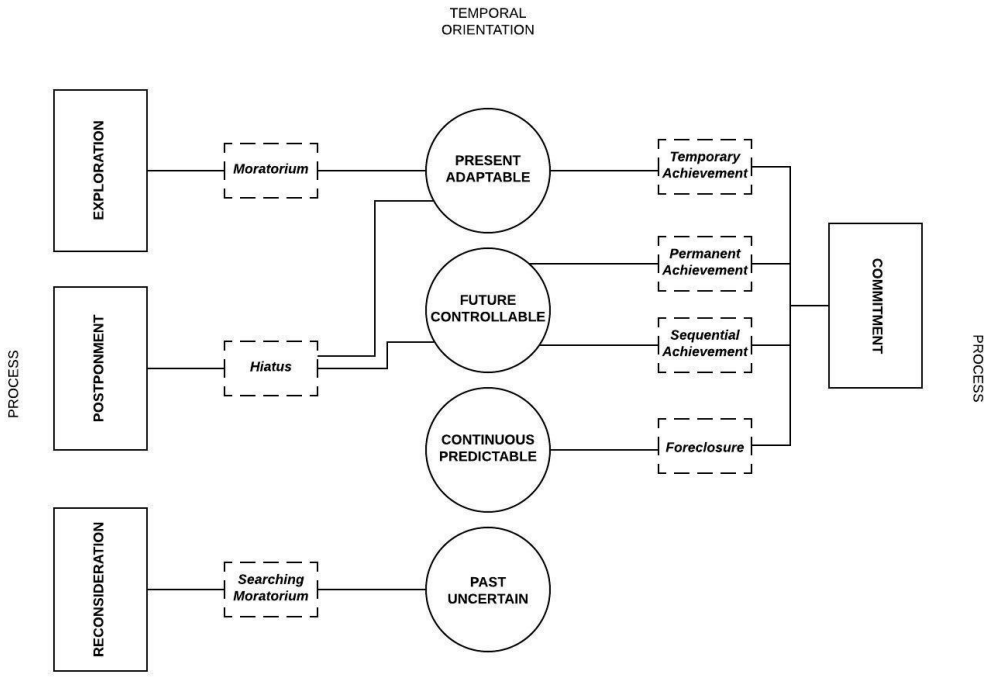

Figure 1. Connections between observed temporal orientation patterns and processes of career identity formation. Note: Although no examples of the identity status diffusion were found here it would theoretically be connected to the postponement process.

Highlights

- Qualitative methods are used to explore the relationship between career identity formation and temporal orientation
- Identification of four temporal orientation patterns
- Inclusion of *postponement* as a process of identity formation
- Identification of identity status *hiatus* in the context of career identity formation
- Observation of three temporally based expressions of career identity achievement