

One young man's encounter with precarious employment: a story from the South-East of Ireland

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Introduction

- Larry, aged 18

There's not a day [cough] that, that goes by that I don't, ye know, think about, so I'm not stressed over work or money. Money always plays a big part like, yeah.



Outline of presentation

- Theoretical underpinnings
- Methodological approach
- Getting a job that's not what it seems
- Financial struggle
- Larry's analysis of his work situation
- Policy implications for young people and work

Theoretical underpinnings

- Rodgers (1989) refers to four dimensions of precarious employment:
 - **Temporality** (uncertainty in continuing availability of work)
 - **Organisational** (control over working conditions)
 - **Social** (in-work-protection and social protection)

Theoretical underpinnings

- Rodgers' (1989: 3) fourth dimension of precarious employment is the **economic**, of which he says '[a] fourth, somewhat more ambiguous aspect is income — low income jobs may be regarded as precarious if they are associated with poverty and insecure social insertion'.
- This fourth dimension of precarious employment is reflected in Larry's story

Methodological approach

- **Narrative inquiry**

- May be structured in a coherent whole (Bamberg, 2012)
- First-order narratives (Elliott, 2005)

- ‘Narratives do political work. The social role of stories – how they are connected to the flow of power in the wider world – is an important facet of narrative theory’ (Riessman, 2008: 8).

Larry

- Larry was an 18-year old single man
 - great self-belief
 - plans for the future
 - radiated energy and hope
 - comfortable with himself and those around him
- Role model
 - member of the local GAA club
 - volunteered at a community project
 - member of a snooker club

Larry

- Applied Leaving Certificate
- Completed a FETAC Level 5 course in Health and Social Care
- Aim was to go to college and eventually to work with young people.

Getting a job

I tried very hard. I, I did. I handed in a CV in every place in the town. An I did the, the, I've done a lot of work experience as well an' I had a good bit of experience and I've worked in, I've worked in other places too ye know. So I had a good bit on my CV and aah I had about 10 places of work between work experience and other places of work on my CV.



Getting a job

I applied for a full-time job. That's, when I went for the interview that's what they told me I was applying for ...



Larry's job

I've been workin part-time. I'm down as full-time but aah I don't ever get a five day 9 to fi - 9 to 5, very rarely. I didn't, haven't got one yet. Most I've got hours, aah like I'd say like, I've got about 30 hours maximum a week but that's the most I've ever got and some weeks it goes down to 3 hours, some weeks it goes down to 6 hours, and 9 hours and so on and ehm, [pause] and eh it's not really reliable.



Larry's job

My current job goes over 7 days and it goes over any hours and there's no, there's no as I said there's no set hour, there's no set day. You just, it's inconsistently ah work. That's inconsistent work and ye just can't rely on any and you can't do nothing. Ye know I can't say oh I'm goin to go here what I used to do a bit of huntin in the night time like. And we used to like go on huntin in the day time an I'm afraid now if I go , if I go, if I'm off on a Saturday an I go somewhere on a Saturday mornin an they ring me ahm can you come in an work.

If I say no-o-o, we can always say no but I, I think that ye know ah, then they think, might think that you're not bothered an I don't want that to give off that vibe. I want to make it look as I'm as eager to do anything ye know.



Larry's job

- *And the thing is on the contract it says that you can be called in at any time and you're obliged to say yes. You know that's what it says in the contract but you're obliged to say yes you're obliged to ye know ah be there eeh available ye know and that's not very fair like, is it?*



Financial struggle

- A major impact on his financial situation.
- Dependent on a combination of pay from his work and Jobs Seekers Allowance.
- Complex relationship between the two and according to Larry this was 'very stressful'.

Financial struggle

L: Yeah, it is a constant struggle. If I had a load of money I'd be organised, ye know, but if, if. But if you haven't got much money it's, it's hard to organise when you haven't got much, ye know.

J: And so, so this week then you only get your dole?

L: My €100 yeah, I didn't get a €100 I got €85 on Tuesday. Yeah on Tuesday I got €85 yeah so and the bills were 75 so that's a tenner [J: yeah] that I had. Fair enough I had money in the bank but if but if it was just that, ye know that if a direct debit had to come this week I was bollixed like, ye know.



Financial struggle

I just have to, to build money if ye know what I mean and I don't like leavin' bills build up, that's the type of person I am. I always pay my bills, that's one thing about me but I leave myself with nothing, if you know what I mean. So the bills are paid but there's no shoppin' or there's no, ye know, there's no, no food like or so on ye know. There's no life, there's no social life ye know.



Larry's analysis of his work situation

- Employers seeking flexibility
- Exploitation – taken for granted and being used
- Poorer social life

Larry's analysis of his work situation

Yeah, they told me that I was full-time but aah [pause] the, the thing is even people that are down there for, for years haven't got a full-time job anymore down there. It's all hours have been cut. And re-, really they didn't have any right in employing more workers. They didn't need them. They just want more flexibility I'd say. I dunno what the idea of that is. Maybe it costs less wages or something but ehm.



Larry's analysis of his work situation

Well I think that they can take young people for granted because they know they're desperate. I'm desperate like, ye know. I was desperate when I went for a job. Ah I wouldn't say I was desperate because I was livin at home but I wanted a job, I wanted money, I wanted my own, I wanted to do me own thing, ye know. I wanted to, ye know live okay like ye know. And ahm I think that when, when you get a job they, they, they do push out the boat a bit, they, ye know they fuckin they, they take you for granted a lot. They know they can use you because they know you're not going to say no.



Larry's analysis of his work situation

*I need the hours but [deep breath]. Ehm
[deep breath] I, I dunno I think, I think aah,
I think they take advantage of it alright
yeah, they use us a bit.*



Larry's analysis of his work situation

When I can, well I, I volunteer in a community ah centre ehm. But ever since I started workin that's kind of, I used to come down more ah, ah, all the time, all the time it used to be open. And but ever since I started workin I ah ehm because I've been workin in the night times that's gone out the window. Ah I used to play sports a lot ye know, hurlin, football, soccer, so on and ah that's all stopped too. ... I don't really be able to do much anymore in compared to what I used to. I don't really see my friends anymore or ehm so yeah, it a, it a. I don't have much of a social life now that I'm workin either no [deep breath].



Policy implications for young people and work

- ❑ Young people's relationship with work
- ❑ Independence/dependence
- ❑ Level of wages/welfare payments and bureaucratic interaction between these
- ❑ Listen to young people