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Exploration of the Social Identity Processes in Employed Students

by
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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology
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November 2022

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Vladislav Hristov Grozev

Signature:

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Context statement

This thesis has been prepared as a series of papers for publication. The exceptions to this are Chapters 1 and 6, which serve as the introduction and discussion chapters respectively and are more similar to the traditional thesis formatting. In Chapter 1, I provide an overview of my research, and in Chapter 6 I discuss the implications of my findings for current employed students and prospective university students and offer some recommendations for further research. Chapters 2 and 3 represent papers that have been published in academic journals. The papers that comprise Chapters 4 and 5 have not yet been submitted for publication. Each paper's reference is provided on the title page of each chapter. Given the paper-based format of my thesis, the text within the chapters is identical to that of the prepared or published papers. A single reference list for all chapters is provided at the end of my thesis. All figures, tables, and references have been renumbered so as to be consistent with the chapter numbers. When I refer to Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis within another chapter, I cite them in-text as (*blinded*, 2022a) and (*blinded*, 2022b), respectively. The full references for the papers that comprise Chapters 2 and 3 are presented in the References section. The papers that make up Chapters 2, 3, and 4 of this thesis have two authors: myself, and Dr. Matthew Easterbrook. The paper that makes up Chapter 5 has three authors: myself, Dr. Easterbrook, and Dr. Donna Jessop, both of whom are my PhD supervisors. I am the lead author on all papers, and the corresponding author for each publication submission. I conducted the interviews with employed students which provided the insights for Chapters 2 and 3, analysed the data, and wrote the first draft of each paper. I collected the data for Chapter 4 through liaising with course coordinators in other schools at the university. I also collected the data for each study in Chapter 5 through contacting school coordinators in 354 sixth-form colleges in the country I could find emails for. I also conducted the analyses in Chapters 4 and 5 and wrote the first draft of each paper. Finally, I

included other authors' comments and feedback to create a complete version of each chapter. Dr. Easterbrook provided advice with regards to the study designs and analyses of each paper and analysed 15% of the interviews with current employed students. Dr. Jessop helped through providing advice on the study designs in Chapter 5 and providing feedback on the manuscript. The author order is based on each author's input in each paper.

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In loving memory of my grandfathers to whom this thesis is dedicated:

Slavi Dimov (1942-2017)

Vladko Grozev (1932-2022)

University of Sussex

Vladislav Hristov Grozev

Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

Exploration of the Social Identity Processes in Employed Students**Summary**

Term-time employed students are a growing, yet underrepresented group of higher education students in the UK. Nonetheless, while previous literature has focussed on the practical ramifications of combining employment and study for university students, we explored whether there are additional sources of normative mismatch that plague the experiences of employed students. By drawing on the Social Identity Approach and the Identity Incompatibility framework, in two qualitative studies we found that employed students do experience both practical and identity incompatibility (Chapter 2), and that the experiences of employed students force them to perceive salient intergroup categorisations between themselves, their work colleagues and non-employed students (Chapter 3). Adopting the employed student identity also acted as an inoculating force against negative intergroup comparisons. In Chapter 4, we used multilevel modelling to explore whether certain aspects of the employed student experience become more central or important to the employed student identity if they practically or symbolically differentiated employed students from non-employed students, and the potential antecedents and correlates of this identity. We found that practically differentiating aspects were positively associated with their centrality and importance to the employed student identity, and that the employed student identity was positively associated with students' status in society. In Chapter 5, we explored whether social, academic, and economic factors related to part-time employment at university were associated with sixth-form and college students' university choices. We found that two

factors – anticipated academic struggles with a job at university and the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities – were associated with students' university choices, however an experimental manipulation revealed that the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities did not increase students' willingness to apply to a fictitious university. In Chapter 6, we discuss the practical and future research implications of our work for practitioners, researchers, and universities.

Chapter 1: Overview of Research

Abstract

Term-time employed students are a growing, yet underrepresented group of higher education students in the UK. Previous literature has discussed the extent to which being employed is associated with changes in students' mental and physical health, as well as further indicators of ill health, such as diminishing global wellbeing, anxiety, stress or burnout. Previous literature has also discussed behavioural manifestations of the impact of employment, such as lack of or disrupted sleep, and usage of caffeinated drinks. Socially, employed students suffer from having less time to spend with their friends, attending fewer extracurricular activities and changing the activities that they engage in. Academically, many studies have considered the effect that employment has on students' academic achievement, yet the negative effects of employment extend to the way in which students study as well. Employed students are using more surface approaches to learning, and there is mixed evidence of the effects of employment on student motivation and academic self-efficacy. Altogether, these effects suggest that the employed student experience is qualitatively different from the more traditional experience of non-employed students in the UK.

The results described above paint a saddening reality for employed students, who are disadvantaged socially, academically, and often have worse health-related consequences in comparison to non-employed students. However, less research has focused on the consequences of such comparisons - i.e., what does the realisation that such disadvantages exist mean for employed students' perception of how they see themselves (i.e., their self-concept) and what are the implications of such perceptions for their adaptation at university and the workplace? The first aim of this thesis is to provide answers to these questions, and, in doing so, bridge a gap in the literature which has thus far largely focused on improving the structures and organisations that employed students exist in.

Similarly, the adverse consequences of combining employment and studying at UK higher education institutions (HEI's) I described above are not particularly new and have coincided with the expansion of the HEI sector in the last 3 decades (Metcalf, 2005). This is important because it signals to prospective students that combining working and studying at the tertiary level makes achieving good grades and a good pass at the university level more difficult. Furthermore, as some more prestigious institutions in the UK place higher academic demands on their students, if prospective students expect to combine employment and studying, then attending these HEI's could make their goal of achieving a good pass more difficult to obtain. Therefore, if students expect to have to work for pay at university, are they choosing to go to less prestigious universities where the academic expectations are lower? Answering this question is the second aim of this thesis and its answer could lead to important practical, but also social improvements to the experience of employed students.

Indeed, in the pursuit of this thesis I am aiming to effect positive change for employed students from a micro and macro perspective. From a micro perspective, I am aiming to inform further research that will help the adaptation of future employed students into university life as well as promote the immediate adaptation into university life for current employed students. Completing the research outlined in this thesis can help to provide practical and cognitive solutions that aid the adaptation of employed students into university life, which will then be shared with and disseminated by engaged stakeholders. From a more macro perspective, this thesis aims to, through illuminating the self-referential processes that employed students discuss, spark a bigger dialogue about the needs of employed students and, in turn, change policy and academic processes that will help make the employed student experience at university more normalised and beneficial for students.

Dear Reader,

The thesis you are starting to read has been heavily influenced by my personal experiences of combining employment and studying throughout my undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate research degrees. As such, I wanted to own my insider position to this research from the onset as this has led me to promote the interests of employed students. Through completing this thesis, I am aiming to offer both practical support to future employed students, as well as recommendations for policy changes which serve to improve the social and academic outcomes of employed students. As such, the empirical studies you are about to read of this thesis have been designed and conducted with these aims in mind.

In support of these goals, I have felt it prudent to start this thesis by sharing the motivation behind my insider position towards this research. I have personally felt as though being an employed student confers a disadvantage which is greater than the adverse practical consequences that employed students experience. That is, the disadvantage I have felt is not one that is based on lack of time, nor is it based on not being good enough academically, nor having financial or health problems. While I have experienced all of those practical consequences throughout my time at university, there has also been a hidden disadvantage that has severely impacted my adaptation here. This disadvantage has been one of incompatible normative expectations - I have seen, throughout my university experience, how people who have been close to me were able to do things that I was never able to do both financially and logistically, and yet, those things were expected from me as a student. I envied them, well, not them specifically, but the idea that they were able to do these things and 'get away' with doing such things whereas I had to complete my work commitments. Did my commitments make me stronger in my motivation to pursue my academic achievements? Yes, they did. Were those commitments necessary for me to be able to continue doing what I

loved doing? Yes, they were. But it is what my friends were able to do – making memories together that I were not a part of - that I miss with sincere passion and envy. It was them doing those things that showed me how my experience is incompatible with what being a student was and, in many regards, still is. How they were able to keep in touch, create and strengthen their bonds, and make memories that I, the employed student, was not a part of. It is this niggling feeling of somehow not living up to a standard of life, a standard of what was expected from me as a student that conferred the disadvantage which I aim to familiarise you with through the rest of this thesis.

And yet, I am here - I am almost at the end of my student experience, having seen, experienced and worked in multiple different environments, with entirely different sets of colleagues, who undoubtedly expanded my horizons more than the social things my fellow students would have done. And while I am here - nine years later and with a lot of experience in combining employment and studies - there will be new students who will follow my pathway and seek support in navigating their own journey. This thesis is for them as I have aimed to combine theoretical insights and other employed students' experiences in curating a research programme that sought to raise awareness of the employed student experience for both current and prospective employed students and thus ensure their swift adaptation into university life. And yet, this thesis is also for you, the Reader and ally to employed students and their interests. Whether it is through understanding the incompatible social identities of being a worker and being a student, or through navigating the barriers to applying to high-status universities for prospective employed students, I hope that this thesis initiates a larger dialogue between us about the needs and experiences of future employed students.

Vladislav H. Grozev, October 2022

Who Are Employed Students?

Employed students are students who combine employment with their studies at either the pre-university or the university level (Perna, 2010). This includes students who only work during the school or university holidays as well as students who combine employment and studying during term-time. Depending on their circumstances, these can be mature students who study part-time to further their existing career, or traditional age students (age 18 to 22) who work to fund part or the entirety of their university tuition or maintenance (Wright, 2002). On average, students work around 15 hours per week (Callender, 2008), although her research admits that the hours that students work vary depending on whether they are simply looking to supplement their income (associated with fewer hours worked per week) or whether it is financially necessary for them to do so to pay for their essentials (associated with a greater number of hours worked per week). The number of hours that students may work also varies by location as McGregor (2016) has indicated that students in Scotland work for eight hours per week on average. International students are also limited in the amount of work they can do as the conditions of a Tier 4 (student) visa only allow them to work for 20 hours per week (Student Visa, GOV.UK, 2023). Traditionally, students have been employed in the retail and hospitality sectors (Callender, 2008; Hunt et al., 2004; Robotham, 2009), which offer flexible shifts that work around students' schedules. More recently however, students are also partaking in the gig economy (Hora et al., 2021), which is characterised by lack of secure employment, specific shift times, and having less or none of the benefits associated with a more secure employment (health benefits, access to pensions, holiday time). Such jobs include stewarding at football games, food delivery, stage preparation jobs and many more. Nonetheless, students of traditional age (ages 18-22) or international students might be forced to enter such precarious employment if there are not enough jobs in the region where they study, or if they want employment which is flexible around their studies.

While traditionally there has been a demarcation between students as future occupants of workplace positions and current workers, the fast pace of the modern world has a) necessitated the re-entry of workers into education settings to bolster their skills and thus help their workplaces; and b) illuminated a need for students to pre-emptively enter the workplace due to the high cost of maintenance and tuition fees (Kasworm, 2010, p.23). As such, research in the last five decades (Hakim, 1998) has revealed a steady increase in the number of employed students at universities across the world to the point where being employed is the prevalent tendency at universities in some countries.

Indeed, it has been estimated that almost 75% of US students work while they are at university and the percentages are even higher in some junior colleges (Remenick & Bergman, 2021). This is also the case in many other countries, such as Portugal (Carreira & Lopes, 2020), Romania (Săvescu et al., 2017), Greece (Katsikas, 2013), Italy (Franzoi et al., 2021), the Netherlands (Allaart & Bellmann, 2007), Australia (Manthei & Gilmore, 2005) and, of course, the UK (Curtis & Shani, 2002). In the UK specifically, representative statistics reveal that over half of all university students undertake employment at some point during term-time (Endsleigh, 2015; Hanton, 2017; Quintini, 2015). Thus, nowadays it would be rarer that a UK undergraduate has not worked for pay during their time at university.

However, it is also important to consider the educational, cultural and job market contexts that these employed students find themselves in. Currently in the UK, home students have to pay £9,250 for their tuition per academic year, and this figure increases to £17,500 for international students or students studying on Medicine courses (UCAS, 2022). Similarly, students also have to pay the cost of their maintenance for the duration of their studies which some representative surveys estimate to be around £800 per month on average (Murray, Save the Student, 2021). Importantly, however, the UK government offers means-tested loans to UK and European Union students for their tuition (Student Finance, GOV.uk, 2022).

Similarly, students who have residency in the UK prior to their studies are also eligible to receive means-tested loans for their maintenance costs. As such, the UK educational context offers some, yet largely perceived as insufficient, financial support to higher-education learners (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). This perceived financial inadequacy of the government loans system is likely to have contributed to the increased numbers of employed students in the UK.

There are also cultural factors which facilitate the combination of working and studying in the UK. Firstly, it is not uncommon for parents to ask their children for a financial contribution towards their family budget (MoneyHelper, 2022). As such, if this is imposed on students in further or higher education (if they are living at home), then these students become more likely to look for paid employment in order to contribute towards their family finances. Secondly, some hospitality establishments offer a weekend-shift only pattern for workers, as those constitute periods of intense trading activity for these establishments (Penn, 2001). Thus, and because such a working pattern does not directly interfere with students' immediate academic commitments, some students might see the weekend shift as an avenue to subsidise their maintenance, family income or other expenses. Altogether, these cultural factors are likely to incentivise students to combine work and study and to often do so in the middle of the academic year.

Finally, in the context of higher education, there are also geographical reasons as to why students might or might not undertake employment while they are studying. As some prestigious universities, such as the University of St. Andrews and Keele University, are located in more rural geographical settings, facing a dearth of jobs in close proximity can make it harder for students to combine earning and learning at those universities. This means that, while attending these prestigious institutions can lead to higher average salaries for students after graduation (Graduate Labour Market Statistics, Reporting year 2019, 2020), not

being able to combine paid work and studying can make these universities less appealing for prospective students to apply to and attend.

Altogether, these are some educational, cultural, and geographical reasons which have contributed to the growth of the employed student population in both further and higher education in the UK. Importantly, this growth in the sheer number of employed students in the UK has also allowed scholars to research the different academic, health and social outcomes which employed students experience in comparison to students who are not employed. I aim to outline these different outcomes next using evidence from the UK and other Western educational contexts in order to then illuminate the different theories that describe how the combination of working and studying informs students' self-concepts in more detail.

The Impact of Employment on Employed Students' Academic, Health and Social Outcomes

Research conducted to date has noted that employed students have a different experience from non-employed students with respect to their academic, health, and social outcomes at university (Hanton, 2017; Outerbridge, 2016; Savoca, 2016). Indeed, in terms of academic outcomes, a plethora of evidence has suggested that employed students in the UK suffer from reduced academic achievement in comparison to non-employed students (Callender, 2008; Curtis & Shani, 2002; Silver & Silver, 1997; Winn & Stevenson, 1997). Previous research has suggested that this effect exists due to the time trade-off perspective (Safron et al., 2001), according to which students trade some of the time they would use for their studies to conduct their employment duties. Doing so would then limit the amount of time students have for studying and ultimately result in lower academic achievement. In support of this, a study by Nagai-Manelli et al. (2012) also revealed that working longer hours was associated with less time spent in class. While this hypothesis offers a tangible

explanation as to how and why employed students' levels of academic achievement reduces after commencing employment, Bradley (2006) has argued that the effects of employment on academic achievement need to be considered in line with the contextual factors that surround students' educational settings and their workforce participation. Bradley (2006) also argued that it is only particular types of students (i.e., those studying in STEM courses, those with a high number of hours in paid employment per week, or those working in jobs outside of campus) for whom combining working and studying leads to detriments in their academic achievement. This more nuanced view of the effect of employment has been since supported by Pike et al. (2008) who found that for US students, working for pay for more than 20 hours per week was associated with detriments to their academic performance, whereas those students who worked for less than 20 hours per week noted increases in their academic achievement. Using evidence from Australian university students, Richardson et al. (2013) found that it was Engineering students who struggled the most academically if they combined earning and learning. In addition, Huie et al. (2014) revealed that students who were employed on campus actually noted improvements in their academic achievement.

Nonetheless, the body of literature presented above suffers from two important limitations. For one, any work conducted above that has used the time trade-off perspective as its theoretical framework stems from sociological traditions, and as such has ignored the critical changes in experiences that employed students have. Indeed, the main argument of this thesis is that the different experiences that employed students go through become self-defining, and it is these differences in self-definition that could lead employed students to do better or worse academically. Secondly, the research presented above focusses more explicitly on the work-study contexts that students find themselves in (number of hours worked, place of employment, course of study), yet does not consider the active role that students can have in changing their circumstances (c.f., Huie et al., 2014). In doing so, the

research presented above largely depicts a static picture of the work-study contexts employed students find themselves in but does not provide further insights into how students change jobs, courses of study, or deal with the adverse circumstances of combining employment and studying. To exemplify this, two studies found that employed students do not spend any less time studying in comparison to non-employed students (Fjortoft et al., 1995; Grozev & Easterbrook, 2018). Due to these two limitations, it is important to move away from static representations of employed students' experiences and consider the ways in which they take an active role in changing their circumstances to improve their study experience.

Altogether, the literature above fuels discussions about factors which ameliorate the relationship between commencing employment and academic achievement, although the consensus in the field remains that combining work and study presupposes employed students to suffer from reduced academic performance. Indeed, some studies suggest that commencing employment does not only dictate how many hours students spend learning, but also how they learn (Huie et al., 2014; Tuononen et al., 2016). For example, the work of Tuononen et al. (2016) has revealed that participating in paid work was associated with increases in using surface approaches to learning, which are characterised by rote memorisation and lack of association between learned material and previous material. Similarly, Huie et al. (2014) revealed that for employed students, using a performance-approach goal orientation to studying (characterised by a desire to demonstrate competence relative to others) more than a mastery-approach goal orientation (characterised by intrinsic desire to master the taught material for the sake of learning) was associated with decreases in their academic performance. These two studies propose that, above any direct detriments of paid work on students' academic performance, starting to work can change the way they approach the act of studying and could thus lead to negative indirect effects on their academic achievement at university. Nonetheless, further work needs to be conducted in this area as neither study

conclusively demonstrated that it was the onset of employment specifically that caused employed students to change their learning strategies. Indeed, both studies' results were revealed as cross-group comparisons (between employed and non-employed students) and only Huie and colleagues (2014) measured the learning strategies of students prior to and after commencing employment (yet those results were non-significant). Overall, while this research has shown that employment can change students' learning strategies and can therefore make the learning experience of employed students qualitatively different from the learning experience of non-employed students, more work is needed in this area to explicitly pinpoint the onset of employment as the cause for changes in learning strategies. Indeed, it is equally possible that students with maladaptive learning strategies are more likely to commence employment, which could fundamentally change the way we try to help employed students to adopt more adaptive approaches to learning or mastery goals.

Research has also found that employed university students suffer from detrimental outcomes regarding their physical and mental health. To exemplify this, the combination of earning and learning has been previously found to negatively impact employed students' quality of sleep (Barone, 2017; Savoca, 2016; Teixeira et al., 2012). Roberts et al. (2000) also revealed that the hours students spend in paid employment per week were negatively associated with students' mental and physical health. In line with this, Ting et al. (2006) found that employed students experience more daily stress in comparison to non-employed students. Furthermore, Taylor et al. (2010) found that such increases in stress are associated with the aforementioned changes in employed students' sleeping patterns as well as changes in their diet and exercise regimes. Finally, a systematic review conducted by Owens et al. (2017) revealed that lack of sleep was associated with weight gain, hypertension, diabetes and stress for employed students. Altogether, these results point to a marked decrease in health-related outcomes for employed students in comparison to non-employed students, as

these outcomes are onset by commencing employment whilst studying. Similarly to the research conducted on academic outcomes, however, the majority of studies that examine the health consequences for employed students are of cross-sectional nature, and all of the research cited above has used self-report measures to assess employed students' health-outcomes. As other research into health outcomes has identified (Prince et al., 2008), over-reliance on self-report data in health settings can lead to an artificial increase in the perceived impact of employment on health consequences. Thus, while employment can indeed lead students to negative health consequences (lack of sleep, weight gain, stress), the impact of employment on those outcomes still needs to be examined more closely, and with more modern and objective methods of data collection (pedometers, sleep apps, or cortisol levels; see Hirsh & Kang, 2016).

Finally, research has also revealed detrimental social outcomes for employed students. Indeed, recent studies demonstrate that, on top of reducing their study time, employed students also reduce the time they spend in doing social or leisurely activities (Fjortoft, 1995; Hall, 2010; Lang, 2012). In an unpublished report conducted prior to the commencement of the present program of studies, we discovered that the employed students in our sample from our home institution in the UK spent, on average, ten hours less in social and leisurely activities than non-employed students did (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2018). It is possible that the students in our sample actively chose to curtail their social or leisurely activities in favour of enhanced study time as there were no significant differences in study time between employed and non-employed students (also see Fjortoft, 1995). In support of this suggestion, research has found that employed students also spend less time on campus (Rubin & Wright, 2015) and participate in fewer extracurricular activities (Kuh, 1995). The physical and mental fatigue that stems from the combination of work and studying has also been associated with lower satisfaction with the academic atmosphere (Kutyło et al., 2019). Away from university,

some research has found that students are treated poorly at the workplace, which includes being treated as a disposable workforce by management (Hitlan et al., 2006; Tannock & Flocks, 2003), being given unfavourable shifts by management (Lammont & Lucas, 1999), or being subjected to workplace violence from customers (Brown et al., 2020). Nonetheless, akin to the literatures on academic and health consequences of employment, all of the research above has used self-reported quantitative or qualitative data and has been conducted exclusively from the standpoint of employed students. In doing so, the present studies exclude the perceptions of employed students by their peers, co-workers, and management, who are often responsible for the negative social outcomes demonstrated above. Such multi-stakeholder approach would benefit the cross-group relations between employed students and their peers, co-workers, and management. In totality, however, the studies presented above reveal some, but not all, of the social detriments that employed students incur from combining working and studying and do so largely from the perspective of employed students without recourse to how the social experience of employed students can be improved.

Overall, previous research has clearly outlined some of the academic, health, and social detriments that employed students incur through their combination of work and study. These are of particular importance to the study of employed students' experience at university as some of these factors can then lead to increases in students' drop-out intentions (Moulin et al., 2013), taking longer to complete their degree (Katsikas, 2013), or having lower professional expectations (de Souza-Fleith et al., 2020). Nonetheless, previous research has also suggested some benefits of employment for employed students. For example, working for pay while studying has been associated with creating leadership qualities in employed students (Marshall, 2021), usage of different decision-making styles (Doe et al., 2017), and an enhanced social circle (Curtis, 2007, McGregor, 2015). Apart from the direct

financial incentives to start employment, some students also report increased contact with colleagues (Lucas & Lammont, 1998), which Lundberg (2004) suggests can help to substitute for the reduction in social time with coursemates and friends that other studies have found (e.g., Grozev & Easterbrook, 2018). Other studies suggest that employed students also report increases in motivation for their studies (Outerbridge, 2016) and increased academic self-efficacy as associated with working longer hours for pay (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2017). Post-university, evidence suggests that employed students have better employment prospects in comparison to non-employed students (Geel & Backes-Gellner, 2012) which is probably due to showcasing a variety of acquired skills and broader experience on their CV's (Gbadamosi et al., 2015). Thus, combining employment and studying can largely be seen as a necessary, short-term evil for many students, yet one which aids employed students in their long-term professional development. In spite of the preponderance of research that discusses the negative outcomes of paid employment however, it is equally important to note that employment can change the experiences of employed students for the better.

Despite the evidence presented above pointing to a variety of different consequences for employed students, all of the research discussed so far serves mostly a cross-sectional, descriptive role in illuminating the different experiences that employed and non-employed students have at university. Additionally, most research discussed so far focusses explicitly on the contexts that employed students find themselves in and offers only a snapshot of their experiences without considering the *process* of growing as an employed student at university. Due to its explicit focus on the context and not on the individual, the research presented above thus fails to offer tangible suggestions for employed students on how to improve their own experiences at university or focusses explicitly on beneficial outcomes after being employed. Therefore, I posit that it is equally important to understand how the experiences of employed students come to inform their sense of who they are at both university and the

workplace and, in turn, how they adapt to both of these contexts. To aid in our understanding of how the combination of working and studying is understood and incorporated into the students' sense of self, the next four sections in this Introduction will aim to provide an overview of, respectively, research conducted under the Role Theory framework (Biddle & Thomas, 1966), Boundary Management Theory (Kreiner et al., 2009), qualitative research which illuminates the lived experiences of employed students (e.g., Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Winkler, 2009), and, finally, our chosen frameworks - the Social Identity Approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987) and the identity incompatibility perspective (Iyer et al., 2009).

Role Theory

In its earliest postulations (i.e., Biddle & Thomas, 1966), Role Theory is a framework which stems from the Symbolic Interactionism school of sociological thought (Mead, 1934). Within symbolic interactionism, people are assumed to interact with each other based on a common understanding of the physical world. One's perception of themselves, the self-concept, is thus composed of one's interactions with others and the effect of these interactions on that perception. Symbolic interactionism then paved the way for Role Theory, which deals more explicitly with one's cognitive organisation of their self-concept and their place within society. Central to Role Theory is the concept of a 'role', which refers to a pattern of expectations applied to a specific social position, the likes of which exist independently of the person occupying that position (Merton, 1957). Thus, in this theoretical framework, a person's behaviour is ascribed to them when they choose to occupy a certain social position (i.e., a 'role') within society, and the role is based on their common understanding of the physical world. Each chosen or ascribed role then comes not only with different norms for behaviour, but also with important practical demands for the individual (regarding their time, energy, and relationships).

An important extension of Role Theory to the current thesis is the research conducted on individuals occupying multiple, often competing, roles (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Within early Role Theory research (Gross et al., 1958; Merton, 1957), it was assumed that a combination of different roles (for example, a father, which is an example of a gender role, and a worker, which is a social differentiation category) would lead to an inevitable conflict between those roles in regard to dividing one's time and energy to satisfy the demands of each role. Termed *role overload*, this friction in dividing physical resources between two or more occupied roles can lead to an accumulation of stress (Kahn et al., 1964), or other mental health problems (Rose, 1962) if not dealt with in a timely fashion. Despite this spillover of practical resources (such as time and energy), other role theorists have also suggested that the link between roles may lead to positive consequences. Indeed, Seiber (1974) and Thoits (1983) have discussed how the accumulation of roles (such as worker, parent, and student) can lead to intangible increments in motivation, reduced stress, and improved coping mechanisms through having multiple sources of support. Thus, it is theoretically possible that inter-role facilitation and inter-role overload occur simultaneously, such that the former serves to instil intangible growth mechanisms in the individual whereas the latter serves to deplete one's practical resources in the short term.

Role theorists have then used the work and family roles to discuss how the expectations for the individual's resources can spill over from one domain to the next and cause work-family overload and/or facilitation (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Markel & Frone, 1998). In the context of employed students, it is regarded that they also occupy two different roles in society - that of an employee and that of a student (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006). Indeed, role theorists (e.g., Butler, 2007; Cinamon, 2016) have sought to integrate the lessons learned from individuals who navigate the work-family combination of roles and apply it to employed students. They found that certain aspects of the workplace, such as working longer

hours and not having control over one's work-related decisions can lead to instances of work-school overload, which can then lead to detrimental outcomes such as lower academic achievement and satisfaction (Butler, 2007). At the same time, other workplace factors, such as interpersonal support, financial support, and work-study congruence (the extent to which the job is similar to one's studies) have been found to lead to work-school facilitation, which is then related to positive academic (Cinamon, 2016), social (McNall & Michel, 2017), and health-related (Park & Sprung, 2013) consequences for employed students. The latest developments in the employed student role literature have also considered the moderating role of interpersonal support at the workplace, which can serve to ameliorate the effect of job demands on the extent to which students experience work-school overload (Owen et al., 2018; Wyland et al., 2016). In totality, the role theory literature has illuminated a plethora of important structural factors, which then affect the way in which employed students navigate the workplace and university contexts.

Nonetheless, the extent to which role theory helps us to understand the experience of employed students is limited to the discussion of structural factors which affect the employed student experience. Crucially, role theory presupposes that employed students' behaviour is governed by other people's expectations of them within their roles. However, such an approach inevitably denigrates the role of personal agency in enacting behaviour in the particular role and is depersonalised (Jackson, 1998). Thus, it is possible that two employed students could have different academic or social outcomes due to how they affectively navigate the two different roles and/or the quality of their relationships at the workplace and university. Because the role theory research has largely neglected both how employed students perceive themselves in relation to their two roles and the effect that their social relationships at the workplace and university have on such perception, it was imperative for me to use a different approach to understand how combining working and studying informs

the employed student's self-concept. Nonetheless, role theory provides a good starting point in understanding how employed students might suffer from overlapping practical demands at the workplace and university, which can in turn lead to a sense of practical inter-role overload or facilitation.

Boundary Management Theory

Another related approach to understanding how the different domains could guide employed students' behaviours is boundary management theory (Kreiner et al., 2009). Akin to role theory, boundary management theory explicitly discusses the spillover of demands from one domain to the other, but does so in a more dynamic way, such that individuals can erect the boundaries between domains at any point they so choose (if they want to integrate the roles within their self-concept or to segregate them). Indeed, boundary management theory (Kreiner et al., 2009) discusses four different ways in which individuals can set the boundaries between their work and family roles - those being practical (e.g., building a fence around one's home), behavioural (e.g., not answering work-related calls in the evening time), cognitive (e.g., making the journey back home constitutes a barrier between the two roles) and temporal (e.g., setting times for activities related to different domains). In fact, the employed student professionals in Eller et al. (2016) used all these different strategies creatively to set the boundaries between the different role demands. Of course, boundary management theory also stipulates that certain individuals might also want to integrate both roles, which then helps them reduce the stress emanating from both sets of demands. As Winter et al. (2010) stipulate, such integration is likely to be imperative in the modern, interconnected world. Most importantly, Chu et al. (2021) found that support at the workplace for the chosen strategy (integration or separation of roles) is associated with increases in setting boundaries between the two roles - thus, support for integration or separation at the roles at the workplace can help students to indirectly increase their well-

being or academic performance (Chu et al., 2021). However, in their meta-synthesis of the boundary management literature, Eastgate et al. (2021) discussed how the separation of the different roles seems to be the predominantly chosen strategy by employed students to mitigate the spillover of practical demands.

Overall, boundary management theory explicitly discusses how, by setting solid or permeable boundaries between the two roles that individuals occupy in society, employed students can mitigate the negative effect of the spillover of demands from either role to the other. Therefore, in comparison to the insights from role theory, the boundary management literature offers a more agentic perspective of how employed students traverse the contexts of the workplace and university, and the ways in which they mitigate the practical overflow of resources between roles. In doing so, the boundary management perspective offers a good basis of understanding how employed students relate the different roles of being a worker and a student within their self-concept.

Nonetheless, boundary management research has placed its focus almost exclusively on discussing how employed students situate the different roles within their self-concept and not on the content of these roles (i.e., normative expectations, behaviours, or experiences). While many boundary management studies discuss the content of the different roles (see Chu et al., 2021; or Eller et al., 2016), this is often done in a descriptive way in order to illuminate the need to integrate or segregate the roles. In doing so, boundary management work does not allude to normative behavioural mismatch between roles (c.f., Dumas, 2003) or the relationships that employed students have at the workplace and at university. Due to these omissions, and because I specifically wanted to highlight how, beyond practical considerations, combining working and studying changes the student's self-concept, I sought a different approach of looking at changes in the employed student's self-concept. I then turned to the qualitative literature on employed students' experiences of combining

employment and study and sought specific themes that related to how employed students integrate or segregate the different roles they occupy, but with a specific allusion to any instances where occupying these roles impacts how students perceive themselves.

Employed Students' Experiences of Combining Work and Study

In canvassing the experiences of employed students, my goal was to illuminate those experiences which participants felt identity-defining, that is, how those particular experiences changed the employed student's perception of themselves as a student on campus or employee at their workplace. To illuminate one such theme illustrated by other research, participants in Cheng & Alcantara (2007) felt that combining working and studying was a source of pride for them, through reaching financial independence and feeling as though they have taken the tougher road in reaching their education goals. Thus, the change in how these participants perceived themselves was this sense of pride, which represents an instance of role accumulation having a long-term benefit to their studies. However, participants also reported a lack of social time, which then changed the activities these students engaged in. Akin to role theory, the employed students in Cheng & Alcantara (2007) revealed how some aspects of their employed student experience come into conflict practically, yet other aspects offer protective mechanisms, such as pride, which serve to ameliorate the impact of working on studying. The students' experiences also helped to define how they perceived themselves, which then changed how they adapted to university life.

Nonetheless, the majority of the literature on employed students has not described how the experiences of employed students lead to long-lasting changes in their self-concept. One exception is a study by Hasson et al. (2013) who described how the student nurses within their sample gained familiarity with working in hospitals and wards, which they felt enabled them to be more competitive in the longer term and understand the needs of patients better than non-employed student nurses. Despite these positive changes – as students started

to see themselves as nurses and not just students – this study concerned the highly congruent experiences of being a healthcare practitioner and a student nurse. The majority of employed students, however, work in jobs which have little to no connection to their studies (Hunt et al., 2004; Winkler, 2009). Less literature has explored how the employment experience of students in jobs that are not congruent with their studies informs their larger self-concept and leads to long-lasting changes in their adaptation at university and at the workplace.

Altogether, while students' experiences can lead to both positive and negative outcomes for their own self-concept as they are navigating university and the workplace, the evidence presented suggests that these experiences change how students see themselves during that process. Similar to role theory and boundary management theory, however, the majority of insights from the qualitative literature often served to fill only a descriptive role as to the students' experience of combining working and studying instead of discussing explicitly how these experiences change the student's own self-concept. Thus, in this thesis I sought to build on these approaches to understanding employed students' identity-defining experiences by leaning on the insights from the Social Identity Approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). In the following section, I will discuss the Social Identity Approach in more detail, describe its applicability to the experiences of employed students, and finally, outline the aims of the first part of this thesis in more depth.

The Social Identity Approach

Comprised of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and Self-Categorisation Theory (Turner et al., 1987), the Social Identity Approach discusses how memberships in meaningful groups become part of the individual's self-concept. Central to the approach is the concept of *social identification*, which is defined as 'that part of the self-concept which is derived from participation in a meaningful social group or category, together with the emotional significance of that membership' (Tajfel, 1978, p.68). Thus, social identification

represents the cognitive mechanism through which participation in a social group, an inherently social experience, becomes internalised by the individual and, in turn, forms a new *social identity*. Social identities can be formed via identifying with a tight-knit, interpersonal group, or via identifying with a larger social category (e.g., nationality or gender-based social identities; Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2012). Distinct from the notion of personal identity, social identities are activated only in particular social contexts or environments (Oakes et al., 1994), however, when they are activated, the individual adopts the normative behaviours, values and ethos of that group or category (Turner, 1991). Within this process, the social identity takes precedence over the personal identity as it guides the individual's behaviour and values. Thus, when activated, social identities are very important for understanding the behaviour of group members in all areas of life - for example, social identification predicts helping intentions following natural (Ntontis et al., 2018) and human-caused (Drury et al., 2009) disasters, is a predictor of organisational citizenship behaviours (Van Dick et al., 2006) and intentions to stay at the workplace (Riketta, 2005).

Applied within the realm of education more generally, the Social Identity Approach seeks to promote learning, explain the genesis of learner identities which are important for the process of learning, and take account of the complex learning environments that learners find themselves (Platow et al., 2017). Indeed, increased social identification with one's discipline of study has been found to predict deep approaches to learning (Platow et al., 2013) and academic achievement (Bliuc et al., 2011). More generally, social identification with a school was associated with increases in Norwegian students' academic self-efficacy (Simonsen & Rundmo, 2020). Altogether, the extent to which one identifies with a particular group – and when this group promotes beneficial goals - has been found to lead to positive prosocial, organisational, health, and academic outcomes.

However, in utilising the Social Identity Approach to illuminate the changes in employed students' self-concept, it is imperative to consider whether employed students identify with the social categories of being a worker and being a student. I previously highlighted how employed students occupy two roles in society - that of a student, and that of a worker (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006). While it is tempting to equate societal roles to social identities, there are practical grounds on which it is not wise to do so. To illuminate this distinction, membership in groups becomes part of the self-concept for social identity theorists if and only if that group is meaningful to the individual. As such, belonging to the groups of being a student and being a worker may, for some students, be nothing more than a hollow categorisation stemming from their current commitments. Such lack of self-meaning, however, would not preclude role theorists from maintaining that employed students occupy the two roles of student and worker, in line with the normative expectations and practical demands that these roles ascribe to the employed student (Gee, 2001, as cited in Kasworm, 2010).

In such cases where individuals do not ascribe meaning to these social categories, it is unlikely that the experiences that employed students go through will become identity-defining. Nonetheless, evidence exists that the categories of being a student and being a worker are important social categories for employed students' self-concepts. Obst and White (2007) revealed that students identify strongly as students, reflecting their choice to pursue a university degree. Similarly, in the work we conducted prior to this thesis (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2017), we found that students at our home institution also identified highly as students. I posit that, in line with Obst and White (2007), for employed students, the choice to enter university makes the student identity highly salient at both university and other environments which students frequent (such as living with other students, returning home after starting university in a different location, or using student discounts to pay for

necessities), which could, in turn, make the student identity chronically salient (Oakes, 1987) and make students identify strongly with that identity.

Conversely, there has not been much evidence to suggest that employed students identify strongly as a worker within their workplace. Daniel (2011) examined the levels of co-worker identification and found that employed students identify with their co-workers at levels slightly below the midpoint of the scale, which signified that they neither identified nor disidentified with their co-workers. Other qualitative research (Dumas, 2003; Tannock and Flocks, 2003; Winkler, 2009) also suggest that employed students see themselves as students first and as employees second, which likely results in them putting in less psychological effort into socialising in the workplace (Shkoler & Kimura, 2020).

However, other indirect evidence points to the importance of co-workers in offering crucial social support at the workplace. At large, employed students have reported beneficial relations with their colleagues (Choo et al., 2021; Lammont & Lucas, 1999; Outerbridge, 2016; Patterson, 2016), who can offer social support in solidarity against management (Lammont & Lucas, 1999), direct support with studies where possible (Patterson, 2016), or on-the-job mentorship and alliance (Choo et al., 2021). While indirectly related to co-worker identification, this evidence suggests that higher levels of identification with co-workers could have positive implications for how employed students adapt to the workplace. In line with this evidence, we also found that employed students identified strongly with their co-workers, but less strongly when compared to their levels of student identification (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2017). Therefore, while competing evidence exist as to the importance of co-workers as a meaningful group for the employed student's self-concept, I chose to zone in on this group as, for employed students, their co-workers would, in most cases, be the primary source of interaction at the workplace and would set the norms for how an employee of that

organisation should act (also see Ashforth et al., 2008, and Young & Steelman, 2014, for a theoretical perspective).

Based on this accumulated evidence, we expected that employed students will have beneficial relationships with their colleagues and non-employed students, and that any sense of identity conflict will appear between *identities* within the self-concept, rather than between *groups*. With that in mind, previous research has suggested that social support is offered strictly within group lines (Levine et al., 2005). Thus, if employed students are perceived by their colleagues, their management, or non-employed students as psychologically distinct from them, then it is possible that these groups will withdraw the social support they extend to employed students.

Altogether, in the present thesis, I have chosen to focus on the broader student identity (identifying as a university student) and the co-worker social identity (the extent to which one identifies with their co-workers rather than their organisation as a whole, Van Knippenberg & Van Schie (2000)). My reasoning behind focusing on these particular identities stems from a desire to discuss the adaptation of employed students into the workplace and university through how they perceive themselves in relation to other non-employed students or their work colleagues, that is, in relation to the other members of the groups which are theoretically important to them. Addressing employed students in light of these broader social identities thus allows me to understand how these identities interact within their self-concept and to understand how, through consideration of the interplay of those identities, we can further support the adaptation of employed students at the workplace and at university. Before outlining the first aim of this thesis, however, I will aim to provide an overview of the identity incompatibility perspective, which sheds more light on how different social identities interact in the individual's self-concept.

How Identities Interact in the Self-Concept: An Identity Incompatibility Perspective

Stemming from the Social Identity Approach, the identity incompatibility framework (Jetten et al., 2008) discusses whether the normative behaviours and values associated with either of the identities in the self-concept network are in continuous conflict with each other. If this is the case, adjacent social identities in the self-concept are deemed incompatible, which then lowers identification with the new identity in the self-concept network (Iyer et al., 2009). To exemplify such a conflict between different important identities, consider the reality of being a new university student who comes from an area underrepresented in higher education (Bufton, 2003). This student is adopting the new identity of being a university student, but at the same time also carries their hometown identity which can be at odds with participating in higher education. Such competing norms - to participate in higher education or not - make the two identities (of being a student and hailing from an area with low participation in higher education) incompatible in the self-concept. Indeed, experiencing a sense of identity incompatibility for new university students has been found to lead to lower identification with the student identity over time (Jetten et al., 2008), higher usage of surface approaches to learning and more academic procrastination (Smyth et al., 2019), and lower academic achievement (Easterbrook et al., 2022; Veldman et al., 2019). Models of identity incompatibility have also been utilised in other contexts, such as with Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students (Frings et al., 2020) or concerning the adaptation of women in historically male-dominated workplaces (Morgenroth et al., 2021). Thus, the identity incompatibility framework offers a good theoretical basis for capturing the conflict between normative behaviours or values associated with different social identities in the self-concept.

However, applying this framework to employed students is in its infancy. To date, the only evidence that we have that employed students experience incompatibility between their worker and student identities stem from the two studies we completed prior to the commencement of this thesis (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2017; Grozev & Easterbrook, 2018).

We found that, if students deemed those identities as incompatible, then this was associated with a decrease in their levels of co-worker identification (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2017). In our second study, levels of incompatibility were associated with a decrease in student identification and with the student working longer hours per week in paid employment (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2018). These results suggested that experiencing incompatibility between the worker and student identities can be associated with decreases in identification with either identity and with working longer hours per week in paid employment.

Nonetheless, these results present only the beginning of work examining the effect of their (potentially) incompatible identities on how employed students construct their self-concept and the implications for their adaptation to the workplace or university. The main gap in the literature concerns the kind of incompatibility that employed students actually experience. Akin to the insights from role theory, it is possible that employed students only experience practical incompatibilities, which are based on the draining of cognitive resources (such as time and energy). If they are experiencing identity incompatibilities however, it is possible that there are multiple sources from which these incompatibilities stem.

Firstly, incompatibility between the identities of worker and student could arise from differences in normative behaviours or values associated with those identities (de Vreeze et al., 2018). To exemplify this, it is possible that employed students could be expected to work hard in one domain (as a function of the norms associated with that identity), but not as hard in the other domain. An explicit clash of values in that regard could make the two identities incompatible and reduce the student's levels of identification with either identity. Secondly, it could be that the statuses of these identities could clash as to the way in which they represent who the student is in the eyes of other people. In simpler words, one identity could convey a higher status than the other to the employed student and this could cause the student to see themselves unfavourably if they are perceived by others as representing the lower status

identity. Again, to provide an example, such incompatibility could arise if the employed student is studying for a prestigious profession but is doing a menial, low-paid job as they are doing their degree. While studying for a prestigious profession might be the preferred identity for the employed student, considering oneself as a low-skilled worker could form an incompatibility between identities based on the clash between their statuses (similar to status inconsistency research, see Lenski (1954) and Stryker & Macke (1978)). In such cases, the lower status identity, akin to the notion of the undesired self (Ogilvie, 1987), acts as the employed student's representation of what they do not want to be, and it is likely that the incompatibility causes a disidentification with this identity. Finally, it is possible that the incompatibility arises from lack of representation of other employed students in the focal student's immediate vicinity. While seeing other employed students and their experiences could help employed students to perceive the combination of studying and employment as easy to do (Bandura, 1977), the dearth of such vicarious experiences in combining employment and studying could signal to the student that the combination of identities is incompatible and subsequently reduce the employed student's levels of identification with both identities. This is, of course, not an exhaustive list of the ways incompatibility could arise between the identities of worker and student. However, understanding what incompatibilities exist and how they arise is paramount to bettering the social experience and adaptation of employed students at the workplace and university.

With this latter goal in mind, I am also interested in exploring what strategies employed students have used to mitigate the impact of the experienced incompatibilities. As well as gathering vital information to inform policy and recommendations for future employed students, I am actively seeking to involve current employed students in order to provide an indirect benefit to them through reflecting on their own experiences. Therefore, the combined first aim of this thesis is to:

1. Understand what type of incompatibility (practical, identity) employed students are experiencing (if any) and the strategies that they are using to mitigate the impact of said incompatibility.

Yet, future employed students might also be cognisant of the identity processes I have outlined or at least aware of the difficulties surrounding the combination of paid work and study (Jensen & Jetten, 2015). Such an awareness can cause prospective students to rethink their choices of where to pursue their tertiary education with knock-on effects for their future employability and eventual salary (Hussain et al., 2009). Thus, before presenting the second aim of this thesis, I will outline the literature surrounding the factors which are potentially associated with prospective students' choices of university in the next section.

Factors Associated with Prospective Students' Choices of University

To provide more context, there are three broad types of universities in the UK according to Boliver (2015) - these are low-status universities, high-status universities, and Oxford and Cambridge (collectively known as Oxbridge). The first of these - low-status universities - are either former polytechnical colleges which became universities after 1992 or very new universities. These are traditionally urban institutions which are located in close proximity to a large number of potential part-time jobs for students. These HEI's do not require such high academic achievement from students to get into, tend to place their focus on teaching, and often provide flexible teaching delivery (Kiernan et al., 2015). In contrast, high-status universities and Oxbridge are older universities who place their focus on producing world-class research in combination with undergraduate teaching. These universities also differ as to the extent to which they allow students to undertake paid employment during their studies. A report by Hanton (2017) revealed that high-status universities often provide guidelines for how many hours of employment their current students should undertake so that employment does not detriment their academic

achievement. Oxbridge, however, do not allow their students to combine employment with studying at large and doing so has to be approved by a university official (Skills and work experience | University of Oxford, 2020). Prospective students are often aware of the high entry requirements for all courses (Hutchings & Archer, 2001) and, when they arrive, of the heavier academic workload that these universities would require of them. The latter factor could make high-status universities less attractive for employed students – especially if they do not think that they can successfully combine a heavier academic workload and paid employment as per the university’s guidelines.

Students also combine employment and studying even before university (Reay et al., 2001a). Reay et al. (2001a) suggests that two thirds of their representative sample of further education students from state schools in London were in paid employment as they were preparing to apply for university. The majority of those students also expressed an explicit desire to work during their time at university. This evidence suggests that, first, some students start their employment journeys prior to attending university and, second, that the majority of them have thought about and explicitly desire combining working and studying during their time at university.

Nonetheless, as Reay et al. (2001a) pointed out, students’ choices of where to apply to university are intertwined with their socioeconomic status, academic achievement (as discussed above), sense of anticipated fit at universities, and family and ethnic background. Specifically, while students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds choose universities simply based on future employment prospects and prestige, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may place additional value on processes of anticipated fit and perceive high-status universities as elitist and not for people like them (Hutchings & Archer, 2001). Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019) extended this finding by revealing that low SES students felt less fit and less identity compatibility with high status universities, even after controlling

for grades, which prompted students to apply to low-status universities. This latter evidence illuminates the role of social identity processes in predicting university applications.

However, it also suggests that, for students from lower socioeconomic status, there are salient considerations regarding how compatible their identities are, which then informs whether they will fit in, identify with, and be accepted at high-status universities. Thus, it is not surprising that high-status universities see a dearth of applications from students of lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Jerrim et al., 2015; Pugsley, 1998).

Yet, many studies do not explicitly consider the effect of employment or anticipated employment on students' choices of higher education institutions. Indeed, most studies either deal with the effect of employment on further education academic outcomes (e.g., Cinamon, 2018; Jones & Gerig, 1994) or, as previously stated, on the outcomes of students already at university. However, different studies have found that while prospective students benefit from increased social support from their colleagues at their workplace (Cinamon, 2018), they are also subject to workplace violence (Brown et al., 2020) and suffer from poor sleep hygiene (Teixeira et al., 2006). These results have two implications - while the health and social outcomes of prospective students are similar to the outcomes of students at university, the presence of these outcomes earlier in the education process help prospective students to approximate what their experience at university will entail. Thus, for students who have thought about combining working and studying at the university level, their current experience could serve to inform what their employment experience at the tertiary level would be.

However, the processes through which expecting to work at university exerts pressure on students' choices to attend particular universities are not yet clear. To be specific, I predict that considerations of combining employment and studies at the tertiary level would, through any of the distinct processes outlined below, result in prospective students choosing lower-

status universities than their grades allow. Firstly, as illuminated by Reay et al. (2001a), students who are already employed might need to be employed in order to afford to attend university in the first place. These students might feel that going to a high-status university (some of which are in more rural locations) might entail losing their employment and being unable to secure further employment, specifically flexible employment that would enable them to effectively combine working and studying. Thus, students might be geographically constrained in their options of universities due to their existing employment or need to be close to family. Secondly, it is possible that students engage in a cautious consideration of the impact that employment might have on their ability to do well academically at university (Brooks, 2003). If students do attend high-status universities, they might do so to improve their post-university job prospects. However, as high-status universities often post a heavier academic workload on their students, not getting a ‘good’ degree (or the ‘essential 2:1’; Pitcher & Purcell, 1998) due to combining working and studying would be counter-productive to the goal of improving one’s job prospects. Thus, and rather ironically, enabling oneself to study via commencing or continuing employment could be detrimental to the ultimate goal of securing higher-paid employment. Such considerations could also steer prospective students towards attending low-status universities where the academic workload might be lighter and combining working for pay and studying might be less of an issue academically.

Penultimately, and most in line with the socio-psychological basis of this thesis, I also contend that considerations of future employment could form perceptions of anticipated fit. To exemplify this, working while studying at university might cause students to spend less time with their friends and as such feel less integrated at university. While the same might be true for attending all types of universities, I argue that this might be particularly damaging for students’ applications to high-status universities as these considerations might interact with

students' knowledge about specific guidelines about student employment at university (Hanton, 2017) or processes of identity incompatibility (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019). Thus, the work surrounding this second aim of the thesis is building on the insights of Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019) as I argue that expecting to be employed at university can interact with socio-psychological factors, such as identity incompatibility, anticipated social fit, and the perceived permeability or openness of universities to employed students.

Finally, I also aimed to build on the work of Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019) by considering the perceived descriptive norms of being employed at specific types of universities. Indeed, as Walton & Cohen (2007) contend, students from marginalised groups may experience a chronic lack of fit at universities specifically due to lack of representation (i.e., other students at those universities would not be employed). Such lack of anticipated fit can then result in prospective students eschewing the opportunity to attend these high-status universities due to the fear that people like them do not belong at such institutions. Similar sentiments have also been echoed by UK students, for whom the intersection between lower socioeconomic background and need to work inform their perceptions that low-status universities offer a better fit for them (Hutchings and Archer, 2001; Reay et al., 2010). Thus, if students consider the possibility of being employed at university, they might be additionally concerned that other students would not be employed and thus experience a lack of anticipated fit. As has been previously outlined, low-status universities might be more desirable for employed students at large due to the lighter academic workload, flexible teaching policies, and openness to employed students (Boliver, 2015; Hanton, 2017). Therefore, I am interested in exploring whether prospective students' perceptions of how many students are employed at high- or low-status universities are associated with their choices of university.

Overall, the different factors I outlined above encompass some of the ways in which expecting to work for pay at university could impact prospective students' choices of

university. However, as no previous work has explicitly considered the impact of employment on choices of university, this thesis seeks to explore whether these factors are associated with students' actual university choices. Thus, the second aim of this thesis is to:

2. Explore whether factors related to expected employment at university are associated with prospective students' university choices.

The following final section will now outline the methodology I have used in the empirical chapters of this thesis and then outline the empirical chapters.

Methodology and Chapter Overview

The methodologies I have used in the current thesis reflect the current state of the literature on how employed students' experiences lead to changes in their self-concept. I started this journey by using qualitative approaches – and specifically, reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) - which allowed me to understand how the different identities (of being a worker and a student) were experienced by students and note any existing incompatibilities (both practical and identity-based) within their self-concept in Chapter 2. In Chapter 3, the same students also discussed how they perceived themselves in relation to both their work colleagues and non-employed students, which formed the basis for intergroup processes. Next, because I needed to consider how some aspects of the employed student experience form the emergent employed student identity in Chapter 4, I utilised multilevel modelling approaches (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). For the second part of this thesis, which concerns the potential barriers to choosing high-status universities caused by employment in Chapter 5, I have sought to build on the assertions of Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019) by using structural equation modelling (SEM; Kline, 2015) in Studies 1 and 2 and a between-participants experiment analysed using Analysis of Covariance (Field, 2013) in Study 3.

Chapter 2: Assessing the Phenomenon of Incompatibility in Working Students' Experience of University Life

Because we noted thus far that employed students may struggle with practical, symbolic, or identity incompatibilities, the aim of this chapter was to assess what incompatibilities did employed students experience between the domains of employment and study. The second, but related aim of this chapter was to also note the strategies that employed students used to reduce or deal with the experienced incompatibilities. Therefore, the two research questions (RQ's) of this project were: RQ1. What type(s) of incompatibility (practical, identity, or other) do employed students experience? and RQ2. What strategies have they adopted to reduce the experienced incompatibility? We conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 part-time employed students from a university in the South of England. Using a reflexive thematic analysis, we found that participants experienced practical incompatibilities between their work and study life, as well as between their work and social lives. Importantly, employed students also experienced identity incompatibility stemming from the transition to being an adult which becoming an employed student confers. Although none of the practical (flexible employment pattern, working around friends' schedules, taking less work) or cognitive (compartmentalisation, integration, establishing a hierarchy of priorities) strategies students used removed the source of their experienced incompatibilities, it was important to see how some of them reframed their situation in a more adaptive manner and used their experience to motivate themselves further for their academic tasks.

Chapter 3: The Relationships of Employed Students to Non-Employed Students and Non-Student Work Colleagues: Identity Implications

The same students from Chapter 2 also noted that some of their experiences stemmed from their relations with non-employed students or their work colleagues. These experiences, when pitted in an intergroup context, can be the source of intergroup categorisations, which

lead to detrimental social outcomes for employed students (lack of support, exclusion, loneliness). Therefore, we examined two research questions - RQ1: What experiences and conditions do employed students identify as contributing to a sense that they are a distinct and separate group from a) their work colleagues, and b) non-employed students? RQ2: What experiences and conditions do employed students feel facilitate and/or inhibit their social adaptation and integration at work and university? Using the same semi-structured interviews with 21 part-time employed students from a university in the South of England and a reflexive thematic analysis, we found that when intergroup categorisations were formed due to salient differences in experiences and values, they led to the retracting of social support at the workplace, and to social exclusion at university. This was novel to me, as we, perhaps erroneously, expected that the relationships between these groups would either fuel the incompatibilities discussed in Chapter 2 or offer social support to employed students as previous literature suggested. Being bond under a common fate at the workplace, as well as friends and colleagues having a positive attitude towards the employed student were conditions which facilitated the positive inclusion of employed students into the larger workers' and students' collectives. When this was not possible, employed students sought the support of other employed students.

Chapter 4: Distinctiveness Predicts the Core Aspects of the Employed Student Identity: Antecedents and Correlates

We also found in Chapter 3 that some of the aspects of the employed student experience offered employed students the opportunity to positively differentiate themselves from non-employed students. In turn, doing so formed a self-enhancing employed student identity. Therefore, the first aim of this chapter was to find which experiences of employed students become important and central aspects to the employed student identity and whether it was those aspects which were more suitable to employed students or aspects that made

them more distinguished from non-employed students. The second aim of this chapter was to examine whether the employed student identity was associated with increases in academic achievement and general status in society for employed students. To do so, we examined three research questions (RQ's). RQ1: Do ratings of distinctiveness and suitability of aspects positively predict the aspects' centrality and importance to the employed student identity? RQ2: After controlling for intergroup differentiation, social identification as a student, and social identification as a worker, does the employed student identity positively predict academic achievement and general status in society? RQ3: Are identity incompatibility and superordinate group identification positively associated with the employed student identity, academic achievement, and general status in society?

Collecting data from 215 employed students at a university in the South of England, we examined RQ1 using multilevel modelling (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) and found that satisfying the motive of distinctiveness was negatively associated with aspects' ratings of importance and centrality, whereas aspects which were more suitable to employed students were rated as more important and central to the employed student identity. To examine RQ2 and RQ3, I used structural equation models (SEM; Kline, 2015) and found that identification as an employed student was positively associated with their general status in society after controlling for their co-worker and student identification and intergroup differentiation. Nonetheless, identity incompatibility and superordinate group prototypicality were not associated with increases in employed student identification. The insights will then inform further research and offer the basis for practical support to current employed students.

Chapter 5: Is part-time work a demotivating factor in applying to high-status universities in the UK?

For the second strand of our research, in three studies I investigated whether factors related to part-time employment at university (social fit, permeability of universities to

employed students, perceived percentage of employed students, academic, and money concerns) were associated with the ranking of university that sixth-form and college students wanted to apply to. In Study 1, using data from 282 sixth-form and college students in the UK and using a structural equation model, we found that the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities was positively associated with the students' first university choice, whereas students' anticipated academic and money struggles were negatively associated with their university choice. In Study 2, which served as a replication and an extension of Study 1, we collected data from 357 different sixth-form and college students in the UK. The results of Study 2 once again revealed that the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities positively predicted students' university choice, whereas their anticipated academic struggles were negatively associated with university choice. Finally, in Study 3, I wanted to see whether experimentally manipulating the percentage of employed students at a fictitious high-status university would make students more likely to apply to that university. Participants were presented with either a website that stated no information about the percentage of employed students ($N = 148$), a website that stated that 33% of the students at that university were employed ($N = 149$), or a website that stated that 66% of the students at that university were employed ($N = 141$). The results were analysed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA), yet there was no significant difference between participants in different conditions on their willingness to apply to a high-status university.

Chapter 2: Accessing the Phenomenon of Incompatibility in Working Students' Experience of University Life

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Abstract

University students in paid employment have less time for studying, report more stress, and participate in fewer extracurricular activities than non-employed students. These negative outcomes that result from combining work and study can cause employed students to experience the domains of work, study, and social life as practically incompatible, but also to experience a sense of identity incompatibility. Therefore, we used insights from previous quantitative and qualitative data on employed students and previous work on identity incompatibility to generate two research questions (RQs): RQ1. What type(s) of incompatibility (practical, identity or other) do employed students experience? and RQ2. What strategies have they adopted to reduce the experienced incompatibility? In order to answer these questions, we performed a thematic analysis with a deductive approach on transcripts from 21 UK university students who we interviewed. The students reported two types of incompatibilities: practical incompatibility, which stems from the lack of time, lack of energy, and lack of social contact associated with combining work and study; and identity incompatibility, which emanates from status differences and differences between one's own and others' perception of oneself. In order to reduce or resolve these incompatibilities, the students also developed practical (e.g., taking paid leave) and cognitive (e.g., compartmentalising contexts) strategies. Finally, the students also noted how the experience

of practical incompatibility can reaffirm their values of hard work and productivity and make them resilient learners.

Keywords: Incompatibility, Working Students, Higher Education, UK, Social Identity

Accessing the phenomenon of incompatibility in working students' experience of university life

Research conducted in the last three decades has revealed gradual increments in the number of university students in the UK who engage in part-time employment during their studies (Curtis & Shani, 2002; Endsleigh, 2015; Eurostat, 2016; Lucas, 1997; Sorensen & Winn, 1993). Recently, a large representative survey noted that over 54% of students in higher education in the UK are combining working and studying (Quintini, 2015). This number partly reflects the financial costs of going to university in the UK. On average, UK students spend £810 per month (or £9,720 per year; National Student Money Survey, 2021) on maintenance costs (including rent, food and transport), although this amount varies with the location of their university. To help with these costs and encourage individuals to attend higher educational institutions, the UK government subsidises students through repayable maintenance loans, the amount of which is based on their family's annual income: students from families in the lowest-income bracket receive £9,250¹ per year while students from families in the highest-income bracket receive £4,422 per year ("Living costs for full-time students", 2021). While students perceive the loans as helpful, they also consider them to be insufficient to enable them to live comfortably at university (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). Additionally, students who worry about their current financial situation and future debt are more likely to show negative mental and physical health outcomes (Jessop et al., 2005). It comes as no surprise, then, that the number of students in the UK who work during their studies in order to supplement their monthly income is increasing.

In comparison to non-employed students, students who combine working and studying experience both positive and negative outcomes. These benefits and detriments of

¹ Note that these figures represent the amount of loan that students get if they live away from their parents and outside of London. The figures are correct as of November 2021.

employment act in concert with each other and, respectively, either help or hinder important academic and health outcomes for employed students. Indeed, the presence of beneficial on-the-job factors such as perceived job control (the degree to which one has control over how one does one's own work tasks), congruence between one's job and one's studies, and the presence of social support have been associated with increases in university study satisfaction and academic performance (Butler, 2007; Cinamon, 2016), life satisfaction and academic planning (Cinamon, 2016), engagement and well-being (Creed et al., 2015; Deros & Ryan, 2008), and mental health (Park & Sprung, 2013). Employed students have noted other long-term positives such as improved interpersonal skills, better time management, a boost in confidence and an increased social circle (Curtis, 2007). Upon graduation, students who were employed during their studies are also considered highly employable (Evans et al., 2015; Geel & Backes-Gellner, 2012), often more so than students who have never been employed. Thus, commencing employment can have positive consequences for students' academic, social and health outcomes, as well as serve students favourably in the job market upon graduation. In addition to short-term financial relief, being employed can be of benefit to how students perceive themselves and thus contribute to personal growth.

Nonetheless, employed students also experience adverse outcomes that act to the detriment of their immediate university experience. On the job factors, such as working longer hours and having more demands are associated with lower academic performance (Butler, 2007) and increases in depression (Cinamon, 2016). Working can also impact social and academic integration at university; compared to unemployed students, employed students spend less time on campus (Rubin & Wright, 2015), participate in fewer extracurricular activities organized by the university (Kuh et al., 2007), report skipping lectures and classes more often (Curtis, 2007; Savoca, 2016), and are more likely to submit compulsory coursework late (Robotham, 2009). Combining working and studying can also impact the

way students learn – employed students report increases in extrinsic motivation over time (Huie et al., 2014) and an increased usage of surface approaches to learning (Tuononen et al., 2016). Altogether, combining working and studying can have, under certain circumstances, both beneficial and disadvantageous outcomes for employed students.

Nonetheless, in the present research we move beyond depicting the consequences of combining working and studying for employed students to focus on how employed students *experience* these consequences. To do this, we adopt a student-centric approach (Cameron, 1999) in which we explore this matter from the perspective of the students, through their own voice and as it stems from their own experience.

Previous research into employed students' experiences (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Watts & Pickering, 2000) has suggested that they feel that they are straddling two often competing identities – that of a student and that of a worker. For example, students in Smith and Taylor (1999) noted that they either have to work unsociable hours or else risk their employment timetable clashing with their scheduled university lectures or seminars. Furthermore, students in Watts and Pickering's study (2000) suggested that university staff were intolerant of students undertaking part-time employment and that employers wanted students to work overtime in spite of their academic commitments. Thus, the practical demands of these two identities are often conflicting, which can cause negative outcomes, as described above. This suggests that employed students largely experience work and university as two competing and potentially *incompatible* life domains. In the present research, we broadly define incompatibility as the long-term presence of competing demands on any individual from two or more important domains of life. We deem incompatibility as distinct from an instance of conflict because conflict refers to an often-transitory instance of competing demands, whereas we consider incompatibility as a chronic and long-term lack of compatibility between two domains of life.

We posit that students' experience of the (in)compatibility of these three domains – work, study, and social life – is an important consequence of the competing demands of these three life domains described above and is associated with important academic, social and health outcomes for university students. In the next section, we will outline previous work on practical and identity incompatibility, both of which can lead to deleterious academic and social outcomes for employed students. In the subsequent section, we will discuss some of the strategies employed students may use to reduce or resolve practical and identity-based incompatibilities and thus facilitate their own adaptation into university life.

Types of Incompatibilities Between Work and Study

One obvious practical consequence of working while studying is the strain that work puts on the student's studying time (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Silver & Silver, 1997, Winn & Stevenson, 1997). Indeed, the time trade-off hypothesis (Safron et al., 2001) postulates that work takes away from the time students have to complete their university work and results in lower academic achievement (Clemmensen & Harder, 2015; McGregor, 2015). Previous research in UK higher education has indeed found differences between employed and non-employed students in terms of academic achievement, which favours non-employed students (Callender, 2008; Curtis & Shani, 2002, Metcalf, 2003; National Union of Students, 1999). Working while studying has also been previously associated with inadequate sleeping patterns and lack of energy (Teixeira et al., 2012), and increases in tiredness (Savoca, 2016), tardiness (Robotham, 2009), and stress (Bradley, 2006; Holmes, 2008). Thus, working and studying may be experienced by students as incompatible with each other in a *practical* sense because one simply takes time and energy away from the other.

In addition to practical incompatibilities, there are also *identity incompatibilities* that can influence how students incorporate work and studying into their lives. In the present research, we use the concept of *social identity* that stems from the Social Identity Approach

(Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). Social identification occurs when an individual belongs to a meaningful group and the resulting identity becomes a part of the overarching self-concept. In the present research, individuals who self-categorise themselves as belonging to the category of worker and the category of student will hold social identities that reflect these category memberships, their values, and their norms (Ashforth et al., 2008; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005; Obst & White, 2007). However, if these two social identities are perceived by students as being incompatible with one another - in terms of the norms or values of the two identities - then the student may experience *identity* incompatibility (De Vreeze et al., 2018).

Related previous research has shown that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds in higher education in the UK and Belgium experience identity incompatibility between their identities tied to their lower socio-economic background and the identity of a university student (Iyer et al., 2009; Jetten et al., 2008; Veldman et al., 2019). To illustrate this, previous research has suggested that some university students come from communities where young people do not traditionally go to university, and/or going to university is frowned upon (Aries & Seider, 2005; Bufton, 2003; Reay et al., 2010). Participants in these studies experienced conflict between their social backgrounds and their new identity as a university student, driven by the clash in normative behaviours expected by their family and friends and those that are normative for university students. An increased sense of incompatibility was associated with poorer academic performance (Veldman et al., 2019), less integration, and poorer wellbeing at university (Iyer et al., 2009), and with intentions to apply to lower ranked UK universities (even while accounting for their grades; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019).

Although these findings show that incompatibility between one's identity tied to one's social class background and the identity of being a university student is associated with

poorer academic outcomes, no research has investigated whether employed students experience the identities of being employed and being a student as incompatible.

Nevertheless, scholars have found that employed students limit their participation in social activities in order to save time for studying and mentioned that paid work limits their involvement in social activities with non-employed students and causes them to feel isolated from their peers (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Humphrey, 2001; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Outerbridge, 2016). Therefore, we posit that students will experience their student and worker identities as incompatible because students perceive being employed while studying as non-normative with what students at large do. If this is indeed the case, then it is possible that any practical incompatibilities associated with lack of time and energy experienced by the students can also result in increases in identity incompatibility. As such, the current work will explore whether employed students' experience their identities as students and workers as incompatible and any subsequent implications of identity incompatibility.

Strategies to Resolve Experienced Incompatibilities

It may be, then, that employed students experience a sense of practical incompatibility between being employed and studying, and/or a sense of identity incompatibility because of contrasting norms and values of their two social identities. If employed students do experience any of these types of incompatibilities, do they adopt any strategies to reduce or remove the incompatibility?

Research suggests that employed students seek employment and change their jobs in pursuit of advantageous work-related practical factors - such as work flexibility (Tannock & Fields, 2003), preferred duration of work (Robotham, 2012) and rate of pay (Lucas & Lammont, 1998). Achieving such benefits from employment constitutes an active strategy to reduce or exasperate experiencing practical incompatibility. Similarly, students seek jobs that will allow them some amount of control on the job (Outerbridge, 2016), to be able to relate

their job to their studies (Curtis, 2007) and to receive social support at the workplace from colleagues (Koeske & Koeske, 1989). These important factors facilitate the combination of working and studying (Butler, 2007) and their pursuit allows students to reduce the experienced incompatibility between the domains of work and study. Yet, there may be more cognitive strategies that students adopt, which are specifically aimed at reducing *identity* incompatibility.

One way that students may cognitively reduce incompatibilities is by compartmentalising their worker and student identities so that they do not come into conflict with each other (Amiot et al., 2015). One theoretical framework that investigates the integration of two potentially incompatible identities is the bicultural identity integration model (Cheng et al., 2014). The model suggests that one way that bicultural individuals can cope with holding two often-incompatible cultural identities is to switch their identity and subsequent behaviour depending on the cultural context. Even though the model was not devised with employed students in mind, it has been applied to social class identities within higher education (Herrmann & Varnum, 2018), and we suggest that it might also apply to employed students who may be willing to only activate their student or worker identity when they are in the appropriate context. As practical and identity incompatibilities stem from lack of resources and/or tension between being a worker and being a student, the ability to set cognitive boundaries based on contextual cues between the two identities can help employed students. This, in turn, helps them to enact the behaviour that is relevant and complementary to the contextual cues and reduce the incompatibility that they experience. This cultural frame switching or compartmentalisation (Amiot et al., 2015) is one cognitive strategy that employed students may use to cope with conflicting or incompatible identities. Yet, we do not know whether employed students adopt this strategy, or whether this is the only cognitive strategy that employed students use to reduce or resolve incompatibilities. Therefore, for the

second aim of this paper, we explore whether students adopt strategies to help them cope with potential incompatibilities between being a worker and a student, and, if so, what they are.

The Present Study

The present study explores whether employed students experience different types of incompatibilities between their work, their studies and their social life, and any strategies that they use to reduce or resolve such incompatibilities. To do this, we interviewed 21 employed students and then conducted a thematic analysis with a deductive approach.

Method

Participants

Twenty-one (20 currently employed, 1 previously employed) students from a university in the South of England (6 men and 15 women, aged 18-25 years; 20 undergraduates and 1 postgraduate) were interviewed by the first author. Sixteen of the participants were Psychology students, two studied Neuroscience, two studied Physics and one participant studied International Relations. All participants bar one were unacquainted with the interviewer.

Procedure

Data collection for this project took place between December 2018 and March 2019. We recruited participants through flyers situated at different places across the University. The university itself is a research-intensive university, which places increased academic demands on undergraduate students (Boliver, 2015). However, recent statistics indicate that around 40% of undergraduate students are employed as they are studying at the university (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2018). Additionally, the University is situated in an area of the South of England with above average living costs for students in comparison to other areas in the UK. Thus, we chose to interview students only from this institution as it represents a challenging and dynamic context where students are increasingly combining working and studying due to

increasing living costs but also have high academic demands placed on them by the University. At the same time, the higher costs of maintenance associated with living at the particular location might have inflated the degree of economic necessity our students have reported, which in turn could have affected the degree of incompatibility between the domains of work, study and social life that they have felt. Accordingly, the research reported here represents a case study of one university with particular characteristics and circumstances.

The semi-structured interviews took place in experimental cubicles. At the beginning of the interview, we gave the participants an information sheet stating that the aim of the study was to discuss their experiences as employed students with the goal of improving the employed students' overall university experience. We then presented the participants with a consent form outlining their right to withdraw their data at any stage before the publication of results and assured them of the anonymity of their data (protected by a participant number). The interviews then took place ($M = 42.45$ mins, $SD = 9.07$ mins). The interview schedule (Appendix A) consisted of six clusters of topics: Demographic questions, pre-university employment, current employment, working and studying, working and social life, and studying and social life. At the end of the interview, we gave participants the option to freely state their opinion about anything that they deemed might be interesting for the aims of the study. Following the completion of the interview, the interviewer answered any questions posed by participants and then verbally debriefed them about the purposes of the study. After this, we asked the participants to sign a copy of the original consent form to restate their consent to participate. Participants had a choice between obtaining £10 or four course credits for participation. They were then thanked and dismissed. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee at the hosting institution.

Analytical Approach

The analysis approach of this study was a reflexive thematic analysis (TA) adopting a deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2020). The focus in reflexive TA is on the role of the researchers as interpreters of the data generated from the participants' accounts. In comparison to other methods of doing TA (e.g., Boyatzis, 1998), reflexive TA does not aim to minimise the researchers' position as a source of uncontained bias, but rather to use the researcher's position and their theoretical knowledge as resources to interpret the data. Therefore, the aim of this study was to offer themes, which were analysed using our theoretical underpinnings of incompatibility and associated strategies to reduce it, as outlined above. Nonetheless, we did not want to be constrained by our pre-existing knowledge and allowed ourselves to seek new themes within the data. We do not claim to have exhausted the possible incompatibilities or associated strategies that students may experience. Thus, our approach allowed us to utilise our knowledge of prior literature and relevant theory to scrutinise the interview transcripts, but also allowed us to be flexible so that we could be vigilant about any other types of incompatibilities or strategies that students experience.

Using reflexive TA necessitates us to discuss our roles in the analytical process. To aid the validity of interpretation, it is crucial that the researchers are self-reflexive of their involvement with the collected data and research question (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Elliott et al., 1999). The first author is himself an employed student, thereby possessing an 'insider' perspective into the data. This has allowed him to express empathy and understanding towards the interviewees yet may have narrowed the scope of interpretation (Stiles, 1993). Contrastingly, the second author is a university faculty member and offers an 'outsider' perspective that allows the interpretation of the data to be validated through inter-judge consensus (Packer & Addison, 1989).

The first author conducted the interviews, completed the transcriptions, and analysed the interviews. The second author analysed 15% of the transcripts, which allowed us to

discuss where our perspectives converge and diverge. The first author conducted coding and analysis at this stage. Initially, all transcripts were coded freely – the codes at this stage did not necessarily refer to experienced incompatibilities or strategies. This allowed us to consider novel themes as presented in the data. At this point, we considered the inclusion of the positive aspects of work that employed students suggested helped their adaptation to university life. However, we opted against including these for two reasons: Firstly, we felt that the positive aspects that students discussed were already captured by previous literature (i.e., they were not novel), and secondly, the benefits accrued from work had little bearing on students' experience of practical and/or identity incompatibility. As we placed the focus of the present investigation strictly on students' experiences of incompatibility, we deemed the inclusion of the benefits accrued from employment as tangential to this work and chose to highlight the students' deliberate strategies to reduce or resolve incompatibilities instead. Therefore, we recoded the interviews to refer explicitly to our research questions. We identified codes that referred to experienced incompatibilities and strategies to reduce them. Upon author consensus, we checked the extracted codes for content validity against the textual evidence. Finally, we organized these extracted codes into two overarching themes: practical and identity incompatibilities and strategies to reduce or resolve the experienced incompatibilities. We discuss these themes next.

Results and Discussion

The overarching themes (practical and identity incompatibilities and associated strategies to reduce or resolve them) represent interconnected facets of the lived experience of employed students. First, we outline why students experience the domains of work, study and social life in terms of practical and identity incompatibility. Second, we outline the strategies that students have developed or used to mitigate the impact of those incompatibilities. At the end, we discuss the experience of those students who have a great

necessity for employment and for whom some of the strategies outlined may not be applicable.

Incompatibilities Between Working and Studying and Working and Social Life

Practical Incompatibility Between Work and Study

The students in our sample revealed that work negatively affects subsequent study activities. In Eileen's experience, the time spent and energy devoted to working deplete her cognitive capacities to do independent learning afterwards²:

If I work a work shift, I start at 9 and finish generally between 3 and 4PM, so it's not a super long shift, it's not super strenuous, but I do find it really hard to kind of get back into study for the rest of that day so even though [work] hasn't taken a whole day I do find it difficult to use the rest of that time effectively. (Eileen, female, 2nd year, waiter/housekeeper)

For Eileen, work does not affect study just due to the hours she is at work (akin to the time-trade off hypothesis; Safron et al., 2001), it is also mentally draining and makes her less productive afterwards. In such situations, work has the ability to block an entire day of studying for employed students. Work and study are thus experienced by the student as practically incompatible due to lack of cognitive capacity for further studying.

Moreover, the depletion of cognitive resources and time to complete homework mean that employed students can accumulate stress throughout the term. In Bobby's experience, stress was accrued via rushed submission of homework:

I just went through a lot of stress and doing things at the very last minute and trying to get it done just before the deadline like coming in and sitting right next to the hand-

² In order to preserve participants' anonymity, all names were changed.

in and writing it all out and then giving it in like 10 minutes before it was due. I did not have time to do it in advance; I do not get time to do that really. (Bobby, male, 2nd year, customer assistant).

In line with the time trade-off hypothesis (Safron et al., 2001), work has taken up Bobby's time, which he implies is the normal time in which he would have completed his written submission. He experiences the domains of work and study as practically incompatible because work has rendered his ability to prepare his submission in advance impossible, preparing in advance being the implied norm for non-employed students, and he finds the practical incompatibility stressful.

As the quotes above unveil, going to work creates competing demands on multiple aspects of student learning - it depletes students' time to study and reduces their daily cognitive capacities. The different combinations of these factors meant that every student in our sample experienced the domains of work and study as practically incompatible with each other which can cause stress and potentially has an adverse effect on their quality of written work. This sense of practical incompatibility manifests itself as a choice between the two domains, which students need to make when the demands of both domains are highest. To illustrate this, George discusses the intricate interplay between coursework, academic achievement and work during assessment periods:

If I have uni on one of those days then I wouldn't want to come in [to work] and do essay writing afterwards because I would not be able to focus properly, but in the night-wise if I have loads of coursework due in, then I feel like I can't work, which then affects my lack of money status. So, I either have to let my grades drop or I have to have less money. (George, male, 2nd year, retail assistant)

When George has to submit written assignments, the practical incompatibility between studying and working becomes the most salient. At such points, he has to make a conscious choice - tend to his studies at a fiscal cost or allow his academic achievement to deteriorate by focusing on work. Thus, employed students feel particular strain during examination times, yet, despite their studies becoming more intense, they still experience an economic need for employment and are forced to make a choice that affects them either academically or fiscally. Such choices – a lose-lose situation – can ultimately increase employed students' rates of dropping out from university:

It has been on and off basically, because I was here last year as well, but I just had to just stop my course and just come back this year. (Polly, female, 1st year, retail assistant)

Polly attributes having to stop her course to the practical incompatibility between working and studying:

I would say it was not having that weekend free because I worked the weekends so going from the Friday to the Monday again and not being able to study on Tuesdays. (Polly, female, 1st year, retail assistant)

Polly's experience demonstrates the challenging situation that many employed students face, as well as the realistic threat that they may feel forced to abandon their studies. Her combination of working and studying meant that she was unable to have any time off due to the practical incompatibility between studying and being employed, which was necessitated by her financial need to work.

In summary, employed students perceive that their combination of working and studying negatively affects their learning and is stressful. These outcomes lead students to

experience the domains of work and study as practically incompatible. When the demands of both domains increase, the practical incompatibility forces students to choose between the two incompatible domains. Thus, the experience of practical incompatibility can disadvantage employed students either fiscally or academically, but in extreme cases, such as that of Polly, it can force employed students to drop out of university altogether.

Practical Incompatibility Between Work and Social Life

Moreover, our participants also experienced a practical incompatibility between having to work and participating in social or recreational activities. In line with previous qualitative work on employed students (Savoca, 2016, Teixeira et al., 2012), our participants reported that the physical and mental toll of employment carries over to their subsequent activities (social life, study). An example of this negative outcome is illustrated by Bobby, who cannot physically commit to an out-of-the-house activity following a shift at work:

I am always on my feet at work - I never get to sit down - so I do like 20k at work, like 20 kilometres of walking then I get home and then I am just, I am dead, so I do not want to go outside. I am tired so once I am in, I like laying down, setting the TV or having a drink - I am not going back out to a club. (Bobby, male, 2nd year, customer assistant)

This quote illustrates how work – and the energy required for it - can change the activities that students engage in. Rather than participating in a social activity (going to a nightclub), the student is tired and prefers to enjoy a sedentary one (watching TV). As such, it is important to note that work can have adverse effects on the student experience simply via increased tiredness. For students such as Bobby, engaging in social activities becomes practically incompatible with a long shift at work, even if their schedule allows its combination.

However, oftentimes the practical incompatibility that work creates for students' social life exists due to clashes in schedule. Thus, if students work, they can afford to participate in social activities with friends but do not have the time to do so. If participants do not work, then they cannot afford to participate in those activities. Eileen describes this practical impasse:

If I work, I cannot go out and do things and if I am not at work I cannot afford to go out and do things. I have to choose between do I do work shifts or do I see my friends.
(Eileen, female, 2nd year, waiter/housekeeper)

Akin to the practical incompatibility between work and study, some students are required to work at specific times, in which case their work context impinges on their ability to socialise. As such, a mismatch can arise between the times when one can engage in social activities and the times they are scheduled to work. Experiencing a similar mismatch meant that Anna had to give up on her passion:

So, one example of something I have had to sacrifice for work is I used to, well, I am on the trampoline team, and I was on the committee, but every Sunday we have training from 4 till 6, but work finishes at 4:30, which was also like an hour and a half away, so then that started affecting it. (Anna, female, 2nd year, brand ambassador)

Noticeably, the student is uncertain of their current standing within the trampolining team and attributes this uncertainty to the extent to which work affects her ability to attend practices. Whilst work can fuel other aspects of her social life financially, it can often mean giving up important activities, with extracurricular activities being discarded from their list of imminent priorities (Kuh et al., 2007).

In total, akin to its effects on their studies, the inclusion of work into one's schedule means it can have various impacts on the students' social life. Whether it is through lack of energy or not being able to fiscally or physically participate in common activities, our students found that work could become practically incompatible with their social life. For the participants in this sample, this practical incompatibility meant that they had to give up on their passions or exchange them for other, more compatible activities.

Identity Incompatibility

Our participants also discussed how their job relates to their self-concept. In addition to the practical basis of the incompatibilities described above, students described how the status and meaning conferred by being an employed student related to their own and others' perception of them. For some students, different statuses were attached to employed and non-employed students. Harriet outlines a clear distinction between the identities attached to students who work and students who did not work:

It was nice not to have to make myself go into work - especially to a job I might not like - and it was nice just to know that the only things I had to focus on was getting my university work done and then just going out and having fun. So, it was a good sort of break to just be a normal student and also not having to be like an adult where you have to work. (Harriet, female, 1st year, nursery assistant)

In Harriet's explanation, a notable contrast exists between being a "normal student" and being an "adult", employed student. The former is categorised as focusing on one's coursework and having fun, whereas working is associated with adulthood and incorporating work and financial responsibility into their routine. This contrast also has implications for the students' perception of themselves. In the quote, Harriet implicitly acknowledges that working gives her lower status than being a member of the 'normal student' category as she

focused on the associated priorities of studying and having fun. However, when she experienced economic necessity, she included working in her routine, which signalled a shift for her into the category of being a responsible adult and a (non-normal) employed student. This suggests that employed students do experience identity incompatibility because of the different statuses that their different identities imply – it is not traditionally normative for students to work (even though this is rapidly changing) so the transition to working implies a switch to this new identity, which is not compatible with the normative behaviours of non-working students.

Additionally, the need to work can cause differences in how students perceive themselves and how others perceive them. Florence is aware of these differences and understands how her perception of herself differs from the perception that others have of her because she works:

I do not think [Florence's friends] would specifically say something mean they would just say 'Yeah, you are a hard-working person' and that was cool, it was good to hear that because that was something that I thought as well. I did agree that I am a hardworking person but that was not enough for me to be happy with how I am or whether 'Is that the only thing my friends can say about me?' kind of thing. (Florence, female, 3rd year, translator and shop assistant)

Florence indicates that others agreed with her own perception of herself as hardworking. However, she is aware that the only characteristic that she is ascribed is borne out of her working experience. Florence claims that her friends see her as 'just' hardworking, which she considers incomplete. She experiences identity incompatibility, which is a result of being socially absent to her friends because of her need to work. As such, the restraints of work do not allow employed students to express and enact their various identities to their

friends. They experience a conflict between the self they are able to enact and portray to others during the time they have for socialising and the self they know themselves to be. This represents another form of identity incompatibility: between the employed student's own and others' perception of their wider self-concept.

In sum, adding work into one's routine may not only have financial implications for one's social life - it can also lead to differences in how one perceives oneself in relation to others. Furthermore, in the last two quotes, a common theme emerged - our employed students seemed to consider themselves, their identities, and their perceptions as discrepant from the non-employed student group. These quotes suggest that further research should aim to understand how relations with referent others can relate to the employed students' own sense of self and the difference in self-categorisation such relations can confer.

Strategies to Help Reduce or Resolve the Experienced Incompatibilities

As discussed above, our participants noted that they experience practical and identity incompatibilities, which stem from the competing demands of combining employment and studying (lack of time or energy). To deal with these incompatibilities and thus dampen those negative outcomes, the students adopted different strategies. One strategy to eliminate practical incompatibility was to have a *flexible employment pattern* (Robotham, 2009). In terms of the connection between work and study, Anton discusses how the flexibility of his work helps him to cope with academic stress:

[Work flexibility] definitely helps in terms of the course because I never had to work, because obviously say there was a part of the course that it just got a lot harder, like around deadlines, I would have never had to work during them because I would just choose not to. (Anton, male, Postgraduate Taught, barista)

Being able to choose when and how much one works thus constitutes an active, practical strategy to eliminate the practical incompatibility between work and study.

Although students often do not have control over whether their work allows them to be flexible with their working hours, we maintain that students actively seek employment which allows them to work more during non-examination periods and less during examination periods. Utilising the flexibility that their workplaces offer them, Thomas and Eileen similarly change their work-social schedules around their friends' employment schedules:

A lot of my friends do work part-time, they are friends not from uni, friends in general from college or whatever and they want to do something social, but because they are working they can't, their hours clash with that and so, I don't view it in such a negative way, because I guess you can say everyone is in the same boat. Sometimes, if everyone is working and I am the only one free and want to do something social, I might as well be working then because I will be filling out my time. (Thomas, male, 1st year, pharmacy advisor)

If I do a little bit more work on the week, I will probably go out the other week and [it] also really, really depends on my friends, if my friends are busy, I will do more work or studying. (Eileen, female, 2nd year, waiter/housekeeper)

These participants note the inherent practical incompatibility between working and socialising, and how their friends' availability changes whether they prioritise work or socialising. The understanding that others are employed affects their planning of their own social life. Thus, they structure their own schedule and work around their friends' schedules, which goes some way to alleviating the experienced incompatibility between working and social life.

Most of the students in this sample had fixed weekly shifts, which precluded them from engaging in these strategies. As such, a mismatch can often arise between the times when students can engage in social activities and the times they are scheduled to work. For some of our participants, who had fixed weekly shifts, the strategy of flexible employment and choosing their shifts evolved into taking less paid work all year round:

For my first 2 years - my foundation year and my first year - I worked 14 hours. So, I worked all day Saturday and all day Sunday, but when I came in 2nd year, I reduced my hours to 8 hours because we have a lot of reading. (Monica, female, 2nd year, retail assistant)

Monica acknowledged that a practical incompatibility exists between the demands of studying and work and sought to eliminate it via *reducing the length of her work shifts*. Yet, this strategy is also only available to those students who have enough economic resources to afford being flexible with their working patterns. Also, this practical strategy is implicitly motivated by consulting one's *priorities* - for the student, doing her reading (study) takes precedence over her financial needs (work). Therefore, having (and consulting) one's hierarchy of priorities represents a cognitive strategy, which reduces the incompatibility between one's demands of working and demands of studying by directing decisions in favour of the activity given the highest priority. Yet, such a strategy is only available to those who have sufficient financial resources to reduce their working hours.

In relation to the connection between work and social life, having a hierarchy of priorities is also a viable strategy to reduce the experienced practical incompatibility. For our participants, the desire to participate in common activities prompted the need to work, which in turn reduced the viability of joining those activities because of the time demands of work. Which motivation wins out - to work or to socialise - also depends on the students' priorities,

but in a more dynamic way, as alluded to by George when asked about his order of priorities between work and social life:

Work tends to, but if, for example, I have plans to go out on a Saturday and I am not booked in to work, then they would call me and be like 'Can you work tomorrow?' then it would depend on what it is - depends on the hierarchy of social activities - so if it's someone's birthday, but if it's like going into town to do something and I need the money, then I will take work. (George, male, 2nd year, retail assistant)

In George's experience, the priority between attending work and meeting with friends depends on economic necessity and the importance of the occasion. Therefore, we can conclude that, while all students generally prioritised their studies over their employment, the distinction in priorities between work and social life was not as clear and necessitated a more flexible approach in terms of constructing their hierarchy of imminent priorities and thus reducing practical incompatibilities between work and social life.

Thus far, the proposed strategies reflect deliberate strategies (reducing work intensity, having clear priorities) or seeking beneficial work-related factors (having flexibility), which reduce the incompatibility between work and study or work and social life. Nonetheless, these strategies are only viable if students are economically comfortable enough to be able to choose the work shifts that they take and how much they work each week. Thus, it is also important to consider strategies that students have devised *whilst* combining work and study, and strategies which are useful for students who experience the economic necessity to work. The final set of strategies reflect frameworks that students used to reduce the experienced impact of work on study and social life.

One such strategy to eliminate practical incompatibility is to forcibly leave either domain (work or study) for a specific amount of time. For example, Polly deals with the

incompatibility of working and studying outright by using her paid leave from work in light of upcoming examinations:

I have holidays coming up as well - that is another thing that I try to do - I just schedule holidays around exam time so at least it gives me a free week of no work so I can focus on my exams. (Polly, female, 1st year, retail assistant)

Using her paid leave meant that Polly did not have to experience practical incompatibility during the assessment period. However, in cases where being granted paid leave is not applicable, some different strategies involve restructuring the students' practical approach to studying. Polly integrates her worker and student identities as she uses her work breaks to study:

It can still be quite challenging because I need to be quite aware on maybe the Friday what I need to do for the weekend and what I need to prepare and how I can utilise my time better as well when I am at work so on my breaks [I] just use them as study breaks. (Polly, female, 1st year, retail assistant)

This strategy indicates that the practical incompatibility between work and study can be reduced by adopting a different approach to studying and structuring one's time. Integrating *work and study* offers the student the ability to feel productive and counteract the loss of time that work incurs on her schedule. Notably, however, such a strategy does not work for everyone, perhaps due to activating identity incompatibility:

For me, work is work and university is university so when I am at work I don't want to have to [revise] - occasionally I came to work and I was trying to maybe possibly revise - this was over the summer - for a make-up exam I had to do and a resit. Just thinking about it – a few times I had to do that and I brought my Physics textbook into

work to [revise] - it did not work at least for me, it was just too distracting. (Sean, male, 3rd year, call centre worker)

In scenarios where practical strategies do not work, perhaps because students experience identity incompatibilities based on norms at the workplace, cognitive strategies can be developed and utilised. For instance, *separation (compartmentalisation)* allows the student to consider both contexts (work and study) and actively choose to devote their cognitive abilities to the one that should be prioritised in the specific instance. Sean found the incompatible demands of work and study too hard to integrate, and so adopted this strategy of compartmentalisation to reduce the transfer of stress from one domain (study) to the other (work). Stephanie has also used this strategy:

Because when I am at work, I keep so busy that I can't be stressing about 'I have got this essay to write and what am I going to write it on, what am I going to do'. It kind of just allows my brain to focus on something completely different that is imminent, so I have to focus on it, I can't let my brain wonder too much. So it allows my brain to be turned off from psychology for a while, turned off from studying and just work, and when I come back to it later, my brain is refreshed and not so stressed because I have had a break. (Stephanie, female, 2nd year, student ambassador)

This quote represents a shift in one's current priority. Whilst previous interviewees noted the overwhelming dread of their imminent deadline and how the practical incompatibility between work and study becomes most salient at those times, Stephanie recognises her deadlines yet opts to tend to what is required of her at work. By cognitively *separating* the domains of work and study, she is able to decrease the negative consequences

of incompatibility by utilising her time at work³ in order to *escape* from other responsibilities rather than dwell on them. Compartmentalisation of domains allows her to feel refreshed and tend to her studies later with less stress. Thus, this strategy is similar to the ability of biculturals to switch between their frames of culture (Cheng et al., 2014). Allowing contextual cues to guide one's referent behaviour has allowed employed students to cognitively separate the domains of work and study and, in turn, get a break from their competing demands. While the notion that work provides escapism and a break from university has been discussed before (Lucas & Lammont, 1998; Manthei & Gilmore, 2005; Robotham, 2013; Tam & Morrison, 2005), our evidence explicitly suggests that compartmentalisation of domains allows employed students to reduce the transfer of stress between the domains of work and study and help employed students feel mentally refreshed after their shift is over. Monica seconds this:

It's nice because university is so challenging, it's nice sometimes obviously to just go into work and because it's so boring - you are just folding a t-shirt and you don't have to think - it's kind of nice that if you are doing it for hours to just shut off completely and not do anything at all and not have to think. (Monica, female, 2nd year, retail assistant)

This student alludes to the role that boredom plays in escapism while at work. Monica contrasts a 'challenging' and cognitively demanding university context to a boring and monotonous work context. Because the demands of university are stressful the student uses the monotony of work to escape her study stresses by compartmentalising the domains of work and study and focusing on what is required of her at work. Having a *job that is not*

³ Which is equal to the time that other interviewees spend working

related to one's study subject thus helps by limiting the connections that the student is able to make between her work and study, which allows her to have a break from study and reduce her stress levels via escapism. Notably, while the interlinked strategies of escapism and compartmentalisation do not directly reduce the experienced practical incompatibility between work and study, they allow employed students to mitigate the stress that emanates from their increased study demands.

In sum, our students have noted a plethora of practical (reducing length of shifts, using paid leave, integrating studies into work) and cognitive strategies (having clear priorities, compartmentalising contexts, limiting connections between contexts) which help to reduce or resolve the incompatibilities between work and study and work and social life via mitigating some of the negative consequences (stress, lack of social time with friends) associated with combining studying and part-time employment.

Consequences of Experiencing Economic Necessity to Work

It should be noted that, unless students do not experience a great economic need to work or have beneficial work conditions (flexible employment, periods of paid leave), then most of the above strategies only reduce rather than remove practical incompatibilities, such that the competing demands of work and study are still present and impact the student negatively. Similarly, the experience of identity incompatibility can make employed students feel different from non-employed students either due to differences in status or because non-employed friends do not know the entirety of their identity. Therefore, it appears that employed students in financial need with fixed weekly shifts may struggle to alleviate their experience of incompatibility.

For some of those students however, the experience of combining work and study can act as a motivating force for their studies. For example, Evan outlines how the experience of work helps him to understand the value of pursuing his degree:

I think that's quite an important thing to either have taken that time out to have that real-life experience or being in work or known how that feels. It can be very beneficial to university because it shows you what you are doing here. You are putting 15 grand in a year – what is it for – you need to go to your lectures, you need to get your studies done, you cannot just mess around. (Evan, male, 1st year, shop assistant)

Evan subtly notes his own experience of practical incompatibility and discusses how this experience serves him to understand why he is pursuing his degree. Therefore, employed students such as Evan – for whom the values of hard work and productivity are important – can construe work as an affirmation of those core values. Despite work being a source of practical and identity incompatibilities, it can benefit students by reaffirming and reminding them of what their top priority is (their studies)⁴. Charlotte also acknowledges this and discusses how she is successful in her combination of work and study despite experiencing practical incompatibility:

The fact that I can do both and still do well in both makes me very happy. It makes me very satisfied in myself - and the fact that I have got two jobs, but I can still do well at university is a testament to what I could achieve if I only tried. (Charlotte, female, 2nd year, bar staff and waiter)

Employed students such as Charlotte realise that work is an integral part of their learning experience, often on par with actual learning activities. As such, the presence of practical incompatibilities is acknowledged, yet they pursue their studies *in spite* of the negative consequences of incompatibility. Thus, the realisation that employment and studying

⁴ Note that all students who were asked explicitly stated that their studies take priority over their employment.

are linked becomes a source of resilience for employed students and can enhance their motivation levels for learning.

Altogether, some students who are in financial need to work can find that experiencing incompatibility is omnipresent. For some of these students, combining work and study served as an affirmation of their values of hard work and productivity, and, despite experiencing practical or identity incompatibilities, made them resilient learners.

Conclusion

The present paper explored the experience of students who work while they study at university, with a focus on any practical and/or identity incompatibilities that the students reported between the domains of work and study, and work and social life, and any strategies they used to reduce or resolve these incompatibilities. Students experienced competing demands of combining work and study – such as reduction of cognitive capacities and lack of time – which caused them to experience the domains of work and study as practically incompatible. The experience of practical incompatibility adversely affected their ability to submit written work on time, was stressful, and, in extreme cases, caused them to drop out of university. Similarly, the negative outcomes of combining work and social life – such as tiredness and having no time to see friends - caused employed students to experience the domains of work and social life as practically incompatible. This experience caused students to switch to recreational activities or abandon their hobbies for work.

The present paper also offers initial evidence that the identities of worker and a student are experienced as incompatible. We found that students experience commencing employment as a transition to adulthood, with the associated priorities of making money and responsibility rather than having fun – for them these two identities are incompatible in terms of the status that they confer to them. This delineation of identities has also caused some of our participants to experience who they are as incompatible with others' overriding

perception of them as simply a worker. Thus, experiencing identity incompatibility can make employed students feel different and distant from non-employed students, which could have a negative impact on their adaptation into university life.

We should note that we do not aim to suggest that the incompatibilities discussed are omnipresent. In fact, Florence discussed how she experienced practical and identity incompatibility in her first year at university but the strategies she developed enabled her to reduce the experienced incompatibilities by her third year (time of interview). As such, whilst our design allowed us to discuss students' experienced incompatibilities retroactively, it did not allow us to check how changes in context (academic progression, changing employment) affect students' experience of incompatibility. Therefore, future research should incorporate a second interview that will help to discuss changes in experienced incompatibilities and note at what point students develop strategies to offset them.

Indeed, the experience of practical and identity incompatibility has prompted our students to develop strategies to combat those incompatibilities. We divided those strategies into practical strategies - which included reducing work intensity, using paid leave and integrating studies into work - and cognitive strategies, which included having clear priorities, compartmentalising contexts and limiting the connections between the work and study contexts. These strategies aim to resolve the experienced incompatibilities, or, in the case of compartmentalisation, allow the student to reduce the transfer of stress between the domains of work and study. When these strategies are not available due to students' pressing need to earn money, the experience of working alongside studying can help to reaffirm students' commitment to their studies and make them resilient learners.

Indeed, the above point relates to a direction for future research, exploring in detail the positive consequences of working while studying. The positive consequences of employment were not directly related to students' experiences of identity or practical

incompatibility, so we opted against including them here. Although other research has focused on these positive benefits (Cheng & Alcantara, 2007; Curtis, 2007; Robotham, 2013), future research would benefit from a clear and explicit focus on any potential positive aspects of employment on students' sense of identity and practical incompatibility.

Overall, in this paper we have identified the practical and identity incompatibilities that university students experience when they combine work and study and the strategies the students in our sample have used to reduce said incompatibilities. We hope that this work will inspire future research efforts into this under researched population and build on the knowledge accrued. Additionally, the strategies developed by students can be used for work recruitment purposes or to help aid the transition of employed students into university life via university career advisory centres.

Conflict of Interest

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Chapter 3: The Relationships of Employed Students to Non-Employed Students and Non-Student Work Colleagues: Identity Implications

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Abstract

We explored how employed university students experience their relationships with their work colleagues and with non-employed students. Two research questions (RQs) were considered: RQ1: What experiences and conditions do employed students identify as contributing to a sense that they are a distinct and separate group from a) their work colleagues, and b) non-employed students? RQ2: What experiences and conditions do employed students feel facilitate and/or inhibit their social adaptation and integration at work and university? We interviewed 21 part-time employed students in England and analysed the transcripts using reflexive thematic analysis. We adopted a deductive approach, using the Social Identity Approach as a theoretical framework. In relation to work colleagues, employed students identified a lack of empathy, being looked down upon, and experiencing hostility at the workplace as making them feel distinct from their work colleagues. In relation to non-employed students, employed students identified differences in experiences and values as increasing intergroup differentiation, which then resulted in feelings of not fitting in at university or social exclusion. Identified conditions, which supported social integration in the workplace, were working with colleagues who held positive attitudes towards students, experiencing similar workplace circumstances and a sense of common fate. Employed students felt socially integrated when non-workers had positive regard for them or by

discussing their employment with other employed students.

Keywords: Social identity, Working students, Non-working students, Non-student colleagues, Intergroup categorisations

The relationships of employed students to non-employed students and non-student work colleagues: Identity implications

⁵The number of employed students in UK higher education is slowly rising (Eurostat, 2016), to the point where over half of the student population is engaging in paid part-time work, according to a representative survey (Quintini, 2015). Much research has focused on the reasons why students choose to work (Lucas & Lammont, 1998) or the effect of employment on students' academic achievement (Callender, 2008; Curtis & Shani, 2002), but less research has considered the relations between employed students and the groups that they are in contact with most frequently – non-employed students and work colleagues. Therefore, this paper aims to add more depth to our understanding of the relationships between these groups and how they contribute to the social integration of employed students into both university and the workplace.

Students in paid employment⁶ generally straddle two positions - they are both part-time workers and full-time students. Occupying these two positions might mean that the employed student does not fully belong in either group (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Butler, 2007, Hodgson & Spours, 2001) and thus has a different subjective experience from both full-time workers and non-employed students. Practically, employed students have to deal with a range of problems related to their employment; the need for and refusal of additional shifts (Christie et al., 2002; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006), conflicting work and university schedules (Smith & Taylor, 1999), and often tense working conditions (Tannock & Flocks, 2003). Moreover, in the university domain, employed students have less time for social activities (Kulm & Cramer, 2006; Lingard, 2007; Manthei & Gilmore, 2005) and thus

⁵ The data for this study is not publicly available as no consent was obtained from the interviewees. The interview schedule is described in more detail in (blinded, 2022a). This qualitative report has not been preregistered

⁶ Henceforth employed students

are less able to attend extracurricular events at the university (Kuh et al., 2007). Employed students also feel socially isolated (McInnis & Hartley, 2002), report feeling less socially integrated at university (Rubin & Wright, 2015), have worse mental health (Roberts et al., 2000), and suffer from tiredness (Savoca, 2016), sleepiness (Teixeira et al., 2012), tardiness (Robotham, 2009), and stress (Bradley, 2006; Holmes, 2008). These practical and health challenges demonstrate the different lived experiences of employed students compared to their work colleagues and to non-employed students.

Nonetheless, to the best of our understanding, there has not been a systematic exploration of the relations between employed students and these groups. If these practical and health differences lead employed students to perceive themselves as a distinct group from their colleagues and non-employed students, this perception may fuel intergroup dynamics between these groups. Being perceived – or perceiving oneself – as a member of a distinct group may hinder the adaptation of employed students into both university and the workplace, as social support tends to be given within clearly defined group boundaries (Haslam et al., 2005) and thus employed students may not receive social support from their colleagues and/or non-employed students. The first aim of this study was to investigate what aspects of their relationships make employed students perceive themselves as distinct from those comparator groups and note any detrimental social implications from such categorisation. Additionally, we also aimed to discover the circumstances under which the relations between employed students and the other groups facilitate employed students' social integration. The following sections will first review previous research that has discussed the relations between employed students and their colleagues, and employed students and non-employed students, respectively. The subsequent section will then present our theoretical approach.

Employed Students and Their Work Colleagues

Previous empirical research implies positive relations between employed students and their colleagues. In fact, Lundberg (2004) maintained that the relationships that employed students have with their colleagues could make up for any detrimental effects that employed students may face from being less involved with the academic community. To corroborate, Lammont & Lucas (1999) discussed the role of collegial relationships, which were seen as useful to ‘let off steam’ by talking and moaning about management, providing evidence for the positive effects of social support in the workplace. Conversely, employed students in Outerbridge (2016) and Patterson (2016) report a good, mentee-like relationship with some of their supervisors, which is characterised by emotional support or even practical support with their studies wherever possible. Other studies have also found that support from colleagues and management can help to manage the combination of work and study (Cinamon, 2016; Kember, 1999) and reduce depressive symptoms in the employed students’ group (Koeske & Koeske, 1989).

The literature presented above suggests that, under certain circumstances, employed students perceive their colleagues as sources of emotional and practical support, suggesting they are members of a common ingroup. However, this is not always the case, and other works suggest employed students feel separated from their non-student colleagues (Tannock & Flocks, 2003). Therefore, the first focus of the present study was to explore in further depth which aspects of the relations between employed students and their colleagues cause employed students to see themselves as a distinct group, and the specific conditions under which collegial relationships can offer support for the employed student.

Employed Students and Non-Employed Students

In comparison to the literature describing the relationships between employed students and their colleagues, less is known about the relationship between employed students and non-employed students. One example of strained relationships between

employed and non-employed students comes from a student in paid employment who participated in Christie et al.'s (2001, pp. 378-379) study. She describes how her need to work meant that she was unavailable for her friend's birthday party, which led her friend to become irritated with her. Her explanation for the strained relationship centred on her friend's lack of understanding regarding her employment and the inherent disconnect between the reality of an employed student and a non-employed student. This is corroborated by a participant in Moreau and Leathwood's (2006, p. 34) study who described how her employment makes her own experience at university different from her non-employed peers' experiences, because she cannot join her fellow students in their activities and is ultimately left feeling isolated. A similar sentiment is provided by a participant in Outerbridge's (2016, p. 68) study, who contrasts her experience of employment to that of other female students who spend their free time having fun and describes how this contrast makes her feel sad. She values fun more highly than work, and this contributes to the higher status she ascribes to non-employed students.

In sum, these statements illuminate the social deficit that can be caused by being employed while studying. Perceiving others enacting the behaviours that these participants wanted to do themselves caused them to feel different from non-employed students, and, in turn, sad and worried that they do not fit in at university.

Nonetheless, the presented qualitative evidence does not offer a complete picture of the relations between employed and non-employed students. The quotes above suggest that employed students perceive important differences between themselves and non-employed students; however, there has not been a systematic investigation into whether employed students perceive themselves as a distinct group from non-employed students. Therefore, the current work's second focus is to consider what aspects of the relations between employed and non-employed students cause the former to see themselves as a distinct group, and, like

the relationships between students and their colleagues, find particular conditions under which these relations can offer social support to employed students.

Theoretical Approach

In order to shed light on which aspects of their relationships make employed students perceive themselves as distinct from both non-employed students and their work colleagues, we used insights from the Social Identity Approach (Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979); Self-Categorisation Theory (Turner et al., 1987)). At the core of the approach is the concept of social identity, which is defined as the part of an individual's self-concept that is derived from membership in subjectively meaningful social groups (Tajfel, 1978). Identifying as a member of a particular group motivates the individual to achieve a sense of *positive distinctiveness*, that is, to differentiate their group from other relevant groups in a positive way through beneficial intergroup comparisons. Achieving positive distinctiveness thus helps the individual to evaluate themselves in positive terms (Turner et al., 1987). Identifying as a member of a particular group also motivates individuals to offer and receive social support exclusively within the bounds of the ingroup (Haslam et al., 2005; Levine et al., 2005), which could in turn promote feeling socially integrated at the workplace or university.

Therefore, the Social Identity Approach provides a useful framework with which to understand the conditions under which employed students might receive social support from their colleagues and non-employed students and thus become socially integrated into their workplace and university, respectively. Previous research has found that the identities of being a student (Obst & White, 2007) and a colleague (Ashforth et al., 2008, p.353) could be subjectively important to the employed student as separate identities, thus employed students could, in theory, draw social support from both their colleagues – which supports the qualitative evidence discussed above – and from other, non-employed students. This notion is consistent with the literature on the Social Cure (Haslam et al., 2012; Wakefield et al., 2019),

in which memberships in multiple groups are associated with increases in physical and mental health outcomes, partially due to the beneficial consequences of receiving social support from multiple networks (Wakefield et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, there might be practical and symbolic reasons why employed students struggle to identify and feel integrated with both non-employed students and their work colleagues. For example, employed students may be immersed into either context (workplace, university) less than work colleagues or non-employed students, and so may not experience the same practical benefits that full-time workers (more days off, more job control) or non-employed students (more money, more time off) do. These differences may form the basis for social categorisation processes, whereby the similarities within and differences between employed students, full-time workers and non-employed students become exaggerated (Turner et al., 1987). In turn, these social categorisation processes can lead to employed students being treated as outgroup members by work colleagues or non-employed students. Such categorisations can be particularly damaging for the adaptation of employed students into university life and the workplace as social support may not be readily given to them by members of the other groups.

To exemplify this with a different population, Thunborg et al. (2012) discussed the different experiences of mature learners in Sweden and noted that these experiences made them feel like outsiders in comparison to traditional learners. Although these learners were still successful - they categorised themselves as 'good learners' - this categorisation was formed as distinct from the categorisation of the traditional student group. We suggest that this might also be the case for employed students and that the categorisations into employed students, work colleagues, and non-employed students could make employed students feel isolated.

This possibility is also in line with the Ingroup Projection model (Wenzel et al., 2007) which suggests that members of a subgroup can perceive members of different subgroups as outgroup members if their norms, values and behaviours deviate from those that are perceived as prototypical for the overarching, superordinate group. To apply this to our theorising, the norms, values, and behaviours of non-employed students may be perceived as more prototypical of the superordinate group of students than those of employed students, and so non-employed students may come to perceive employed students as outgroup members and thus withhold social support to them. It is plausible that the differences in experience of employed students compared to non-employed students and work colleagues can be perceived by the comparator groups as indicators of employed students' non-prototypicality, which could then lead the comparator groups to treat employed students as outgroup members and withhold social support, with detrimental consequences for the social integration of employed students at both their workplace and university.

However, it is also possible that employed students actively *want to* perceive themselves as a group with a distinct social identity that is separate from work colleagues and/or non-employed students. Indeed, Sani's (2008) research on schisms within groups suggests a mechanism through which a new identity emerges when the definition of a group's identity changes. Members who perceive the change in the definition of the identity as threatening to the identity rather than enhancing it may leave the group to preserve the essence of the original identity. Returning to employed students, this evidence suggests that employed students may want to perceive themselves as a distinct group if the norms of the comparator groups (work colleagues and/or non-employed students) are dissonant with their conception of being a worker or a student. For example, in the student community, the normative behaviours may be perceived as studying and attending classes. However, if non-employed students place more emphasis on extracurricular or social activities, then employed

students could perceive that as discrepant from what they believe a student is supposed to be. Therefore, employed students could opt to perceive themselves as a distinct group from non-employed students to preserve the essence of what a student is.

Altogether, the multiplicity of identities that employed students possess and that can be activated in the two contexts of the workplace and university suggest that employed students should be able to draw on social support from both their colleagues and non-employed students. However, we postulate that that is the case only if employed students and members of the comparator groups perceive employed students as full members of those groups. When this is not the case, the social categorisation processes that can occur can make employed students feel distinct from these groups and thus sad and/or isolated. Therefore, we explore which aspects of the interactions, conditions, and relationships between these groups employed students identify as contributing or inhibiting their integration into these comparator groups, and the consequences of these for their social integration.

Indeed, if employed students do perceive themselves as a separate group, it is most likely that they receive social support primarily (or even solely) from other employed students. Cooper (2018) and Kiernan et al. (2015) have demonstrated that non-traditional learners in the UK who combine their studies with part-time employment identify strongly with their respective groups (social work students and student nurses) and develop identity-based communities where support is shared. As such, identifying as the distinct category of employed students could be beneficial for employed students if such specific support networks do exist.

The Present Study

To date, no research has explored the relations between employed students, their work colleagues, and non-employed students through the lens of the Social Identity Approach. Therefore, the primary aim of the present study is to investigate what experiences and

conditions do employed students identify as contributing to a sense that they are a distinct and separate group.

A related second aim of this study is to understand the conditions under which the aforementioned relations between the groups can offer social support to the employed student. As evident in some of the previous literature, evidence was present for supportive collegial networks, which may exist only when employed students perceive themselves and their colleagues as part of a common ingroup. However, this may not be the case if employed students describe themselves as distinct from non-employed students because of salient differences in experiences. Therefore, the second goal of this study is to discuss the experiences and conditions employed students feel facilitate and/or inhibit their social adaptation and integration at work and university. However, if employed students do categorise themselves as a distinct group, it is also possible that they receive social support from other employed students as well.

To address these aims we conducted a thematic analysis with a deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as guided by the Social Identity framework. The details of our approach are discussed at large in the Analytical Approach section.

Method

Participants

A sample of 21 (20 currently employed, 1 previously employed) students from a university in the South of England (6 men and 15 women, aged 18-25 years; 20 undergraduates and 1 postgraduate) was interviewed by the first author. One participant requested a timeslot, but never appeared for her interview, all others participated as agreed. Sixteen of the participants were Psychology students, two studied Neuroscience, two studied Physics and one participant studied International Relations. All participants but one had not

been previously acquainted with the interviewer, the other participant was a colleague of the interviewer. No repeat interviews were carried out.

Materials

In order to conduct the semi-structured interviews, an interview schedule was devised by the first and second author. The interview schedule was then pilot tested by the first author with three employed students in order to improve the wording on some of the questions and assure their clarity for the interviewees. The full details of the interview schedule are described elsewhere in more detail (*blinded*, 2022a) as the data for this study formed part of a larger qualitative enquiry into the adaptation of employed students in university life.

Procedure

Data collection for this project took place between December 2018 and March 2019. The place where this research was conducted was a medium-sized university in the South of England, which has a focus on producing world-class research and is in the top 120 of most UK and world university rankings. Participants were recruited through flyer notes, situated at different places across the university, through which they could select a timeslot to conduct the interview in. The one-to-one interviews then took place in experimental cubicles to ensure that the participants were comfortable at discussing their experiences at large. At the beginning of the interview, the participants were given an information sheet stating that the aim of the study was to discuss their experiences as employed students with the goal of improving the overall university experience of employed students. The participants were also told by the interviewer that he is a PhD student in Psychology. The participants were then presented with a consent form outlining their right to withdraw their data at any stage before the publication of results and assured of the anonymity of their data (protected by a participant number). The semi-structured interviews then took place ($M = 42.45$ mins, $SD = 9.07$ mins) and were audio recorded. During some of the interviews, the interviewer made

notes to prompt the interviewee to explain what they meant in more detail. Following the completion of the interview, any questions posed by participants were answered by the interviewer and participants were verbally debriefed about the purposes of the study. After this, the participants were asked to sign a copy of the original consent form to restate their consent to participate. They were then thanked and dismissed. The participants later received their transcribed interviews, but feedback was not sought from them. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee at the hosting institution.

Analytical Approach

The analysis approach of this study was a reflective thematic analysis with a deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2020). Therefore, the aim of this study was to offer both *credible* (as evidenced by previous research) themes surrounding the relationships between employed students and their referent groups, but also to offer novel themes in order to establish *generativity* (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach allowed us to utilise our knowledge of prior literature and the Social Identity Approach to scrutinise the interview transcripts, but also allowed us to be flexible so that new themes could emerge from the data.

Another important facet in qualitative research is the role of the interviewer. To aid the validity of interpretation, it is crucial that the researchers are self-reflexive of their involvement with the collected data and research question (Elliott et al., 1999). The first author is himself an employed student, thereby possessing an ‘insider’ perspective into the data. This has allowed him to express empathy and understanding towards the interviewees yet may have narrowed the scope of interpretation (Stiles, 1993). During the interview process, the researchers were aware of the first author’s position and, as he was conducting all of the interviews, he sought to bracket off his assumptions (Ahern, 1999) and maintain objectivity as he was conducting the interviews. This consideration could have affected data collection, as participants may have not been asked potentially interesting follow-up

questions as those questions could have stemmed from the researcher's assumptions.

Contrastingly, the second author is a lecturer in Psychology, who is further removed from their own experiences of combining working and studying. Their 'outsider' perspective allows the interpretation of the data to be validated through inter-judge consensus (Packer & Addison, 1989).

In terms of data analysis, the first author conducted the interviews and completed all of the transcriptions. He also analysed all of the interviews. The second author analysed 15% (3 interviews) of the interviews. This allowed for convergence and divergence of perspectives. Upon consultation, the authors decided to stop data collection after the twenty-first interview as the accounts of the later interviews conceptually overlapped with those of the earlier ones. All interviews were included in the final analysis.

Coding and analysis were conducted at this stage by the first author using the NVivo 12 software. The relationships between employed students and their colleagues as well as the conditions under which they foster social support are discussed in the following section. The relationships between employed students and non-employed students as well as the conditions to foster social support are discussed in the subsequent section.

Results

Relations Between Employed Students and Their Non-Student Colleagues

Intergroup Interactions

Some of the students in our sample outlined how they were treated by their colleagues at work. Importantly, these experiences of mostly negative treatment stemmed from the students' status as students and were detrimental for the students' adaptation into the workplace. In Participant 2's case, his fellow workers are quite dismissive about the pressures of study:

It is quite a mix; this is more of like an adult job. There's a lot of older people who have already done their degrees and stuff like that, but there are a couple of part-time students, and they understand what it's like 'cause their assignments are in too, but a lot of the adults just kind of like 'Yeah, of course it's hard for you to go to uni', like, yeah, yeah, kind of write you off. (Participant 2, male, Physics, 2nd year, retail assistant)

Participant 2 refers to his older colleagues who have completed their degrees as non-empathetic and dismissive of his and the other employed students' struggles. While other employed students can offer support as they have common experiences, the lack of empathy exuded by older colleagues can encourage the student to differentiate non-student workers from student workers, including himself. Experiencing this difference between groups (lack or presence of empathy) also helps the participant draw the intergroup boundaries – thus, he can categorise himself as part of the employed *students* collective as he and other employed students share similarities (collective empathy) and common fate as employed students (Campbell, 1958).

In another example of negative relationships with colleagues, Participant 16 perceives that she is looked down upon by her fellow colleagues:

I think a lot of [participant's colleagues] see me as below them 'cause they are older, like a lot of the older staff members think they are a lot better than anyone else where actually we are all doing the same job, we are all getting paid the same. (Participant 16, female, Psychology, 2nd year, disabilities worker)

Similar to Participant 2, Participant 16 also describes her colleagues as older colleagues, which allows them to treat her differently and ascribe her lower status at the workplace. In line with the Ingroup Projection model (Wenzel et al., 2007), her colleagues

might see themselves as more prototypical workers and thus ascribe her a lower status due to her perceived lack of work experience. This difference in treatment can also allow Participant 16 to draw intergroup boundaries between her as a student and her older colleagues (as based in differences in work experience).

Indeed, Participant 16 continues by stating that she also perceives hostility from her fellow colleagues due to her student status:

I think [my colleagues] are annoyed that, I think there is like a bit of like hostility that I don't have to be there all of the time whereas they have to be there all of the time 'cause I am a student like so I don't have to be there all the time, like I don't need as much money as they do, so I guess there is a bit of hostility 'cause of that sometimes I feel that. (Participant 16, female, Psychology, 2nd year, disabilities worker)

While the fact that she is a student is not problematic for her colleagues *per se*, the fact that she is not employed full-time also means that she is not able to participate in the work experience on par with her colleagues. This yields a lack of shared experiences for the whole collective, does not allow all colleagues to bond under their common fate as workers, and ultimately forms another criterion on which employed students differentiate from their colleagues – being a part-time worker. Being different then yields hostility towards the employed student.

Treatment from Management

Indeed, the formation of these different collectives (employed students, older colleagues) can also occur in the workplace via different treatment from senior management. To illuminate this, Participant 18 explains how her management treats her colleagues differently:

On the weekend, 'cause we finish at 7:30 on a Saturday, but for example [the management] are allowed to keep us 15 minutes extra if the shop is not up to their standards and on the week day if [full-time workers] finish at 7:30 and like they walk out, the weekday staff won't stay the extra 15 minutes. They are either told they get to leave or they literally walk out the shop so that they are not staying these 15 minutes but like if we did that that would not be something that would be tolerated.

(Participant 18, female, Psychology, 2nd year, retail assistant)

This quote represents the status quo, which Participant 18 outlines at her job; full-time employees are granted work privileges that employed students are not granted, which clearly demarcates the two distinct groups (non-student workers and employed students) through differences in workplace treatment. Despite the actual difference in treatment being benign (15 minutes extra working time), it is enough to serve as an important signifier of differentiation between the two groups and ascribe the non-student workers a higher status in the workplace akin to the dynamic that Participant 16 described above.

Altogether, the quotes above clearly show that differences in the workplace exist and that they are enough for the students in the sample to draw clear boundaries between themselves as employed students and their colleagues. Some of the participants also revealed that they perceive their workplaces as having a hierarchical structure in which full-time work colleagues perceive themselves of a higher status, which could lead them to treat employed students as less prototypical members of the working collective. Additionally, if any experienced hostility or lack of empathy is the behavioural manifestation of the intergroup categorisation, it is likely that these manifestations can enhance the intergroup boundaries further and impede employed students' integration in the workplace.

Conditions to Foster Social Support

Conversely, it is equally important to mention that some students in the sample reported receiving social support from their work colleagues. An interesting juxtaposition can be explored between the preceding quotes and the experience of Participant 20, who experienced positive attitude towards her student identity:

I get a lot of compliments so it's not like I do much, but [participant's colleagues] are like you know 'You got a full week and now you are coming to work, it must be so stressful, you have so many deadlines' and like I know they are giving me sympathy, but ha-ha it's just yeah I think that they are quite positive, they know that I have a lot on my schedule so they understand. (Participant 20, female, Psychology, 1st year, retail assistant)

Participant 20 outlines how the acknowledgement of her studies at the workplace yields sympathy from her colleagues. Although her colleagues are aware of her different status as a student that does not lead to experienced hostility or lack of empathy – rather, it leads to sympathy and understanding. Thus, even if intergroup boundaries in the workplace exist between older, full-time colleagues and part-time employed students, the relationships between these groups do not have to be detrimental to the student's adaptation in the workplace. Indeed, Participant 20 experiences *positive attitude towards their student identity* from non-student colleagues, which can help her to belong to the overarching working collective as opposed to being categorised as both different and inferior to her co-workers.

Therefore, experiencing *positive attitude towards one's student identity* is a condition that can help to foster a more inclusive and less fragmented workforce. Another similar condition can occur when students experience a *sense of common fate* (Campbell, 1958), which makes them feel like they belong to the overarching category of workers. This sense of

connectedness between colleagues – built upon shared experiences at the workplace - allows the student to cope more easily with the negative aspects of their employment:

We spend so much time together all in a very set, in a same environment like we are all very stressed together or we are all laughing together, whereas if a customer comes up towards us we can all laugh at it together so that makes it very easy to talk to people and everyone is quite open about their lives especially people who don't go to university their job is their life almost and that's what you do with your time so people you see at work they are your friends. (Participant 8, female, Psychology, 2nd year, bar staff and waiter)

Even though she makes an explicit reference to her non-student colleagues, the participant perceives them as part of one collective and, most importantly, her friends. In contrast to quotes in which participants felt excluded from their permanent colleagues, Participant 8 outlines a workforce in which openness and communication prompt students to discuss their perspectives. Through shared emotions and experiences, the student feels at ease with their colleagues, who she considers friends. This sense of common fate within the workforce means that any contrasts between employed students and their colleagues are only symbolic in nature and can help the student to receive social support from all of their colleagues. In fact, developing a sense of common fate can foster conditions for creating a meaningful superordinate category of a worker within the workplace (Brewer, 2000).

In summary, the quotes above show that not all intergroup relations – even if salient intergroup categorisations exist – have to be detrimental to the integration of employed students in the workplace. If work colleagues are sympathetic to and understanding of the student's struggles, the intergroup categorisations become symbolic in nature and the student can receive social support from their colleagues. It is also likely that some features of work

itself (shared stress and experiences) can bind the entire work collective through common fate. In cases where students feel as though they fully belong to the working collective, this can help them through receiving social support from all of their colleagues.

Relations Between Employed Students and Non-Employed Students

Differences in Experience

In relation to non-employed students, our participants recognized salient differences in experiences and equality. In light of this, Participant 18 expressed envy towards the non-employed student group:

I guess like yeah [non-employed students] get more time to actually do uni and like for example, when it comes to exams I have to work, I only have 11 days holiday a year and I work on Saturdays and Sundays so if I have an exam for example on a Monday I don't have the holiday to take off the Sunday so I have to work and then go to the exam the next day so I think in that respect I feel jealous that they don't have to deal with that. (Participant 18, female, Psychology, 2nd year, retail assistant)

Whereas Participant 16 also felt frustration:

I just felt frustrated umm not only like do I see my friends a bit less and they saw each other, but also it just annoyed me that some people like can be at uni and not have a job like that must be a lot easier for them and like they can put more time into their studying and then socialise when I would be at work so I guess you have to compensate a lot with work, like with social, sometimes with studying as well.

(Participant 16, female, Psychology, 2nd year, disabilities worker)

These quotes help to elucidate the working student experience. Both participants reported that, due to their necessity to work, they must consider their working days within

their academic calendar and make sacrifices when needed. This was explicitly compared to non-employed students' experience, which elicited feelings of envy and frustration towards the non-employed student group. Akin to participants in previous studies outlined in the Introduction, our participants were explicitly aware that their experiences differ from those of non-employed students, which can make the differences between these groups salient and could be the cause for participants expressing envy and frustration towards non-employed students. Because these differences in experiences are described as aversive, the employed students also ascribe their non-employed friends a higher status within the overarching category of students.

For Participant 15, these intergroup categorisations become salient as her friends consider her isolated:

I think it makes me feel better not to actually talk about [work] to them because I know that some of my friends have been actually complaining with me about the fact that I am not as like available anymore whereas say last year we used to hang out all the time, I mean not all the time but like much more often. Now, some of them have told me that they seem that I am getting like closed into a shell kind of a situation and that they don't really see me anymore so like it's kind of, I am not comfortable to just bring it up and talk about work. (Participant 15, female, International Relations, 2nd year, waiter)

Participant 15's new reality of having to work means that her experience at university is different from her friends' experience – whereas they are able to meet and create common experiences, Participant 15 is not available to participate in these informal hangouts akin to Participant 16 above. As her friends remind her of her unavailability to 'hang out', Participant 15 understands that her work makes her different from her friends and shies away from

discussing her new experiences as an employed student with her non-employed friends. The above quotes suggest that being an employed student can be experienced as a double negative, feeling frustration at having to work and missing out on social activities, while simultaneously being the subject of complaints from unsympathetic non-working students about not being involved in social activities.

Differences in Values

For the students above, explicit differences in equality and experiences can lead them to categorise themselves as different from non-employed students. Similarly, other participants explicitly discussed some of the values of the non-employed group, which help to categorise students into these different groups (employed students; non-employed students). In Participant 13's view, students who do not work are seen as lacking motivation:

It depends on, I mean I don't judge no one really for [not working] but it's when like some of my friends come up to me and they have spent loads and loads of money on really unnecessary things like clothes and stuff and it's their parents' money and they are complaining about not having any money and 'Oh, what should I do?' and 'Oh, I really want this new top that costs a £100.' and it just baffles me that that's what they are spending all of their money on and it's not even theirs so I guess I do judge a bit in that sense, but if they are working hard at uni and they have just got no money because yeah they are not getting any income any other way than obviously no judgment, I think it completely just depends what your priorities are when you are spending. (Participant 13, male, Psychology, 1st year, shop assistant)

Through describing his friends' spending habits, Participant 13 reveals how non-employed students spend money on what he deems 'unnecessary things' yet are not motivated to work to win that money for themselves. By 'judging' his friends, Participant 13

cognitively separates himself from them – whereas they are spending their parents' money, he is working to support himself. As such, the quote above reveals how the perceived values of non-employed students are at odds with the values that employed students embody and can serve as important differentiators between these two groups.

Participant 8 also shares why she thinks non-employed students lack awareness of the value of money and explains how her housemate does not understand her working experience:

I live with someone - my housemate - she lives her whole life with parents giving her money, like loads of things, so she's never really worked, she doesn't understand the value of money so at home she will open the tap, ha-ha like leave it running and go downstairs and I am going like 'That's £4 of water.' Well like she wastes everything - everything is waste waste waste, and like she will throw her money around and she shows it off and if she's worked for it or even like understood where it comes from and her parents have to work hard for that money I don't think she would behave in that way, do you know what I mean, you realize there are consequences to certain actions. (Participant 8, female, Psychology, 2nd year, bar staff and waiter)

In Participant 8's account, she differs from her housemate on an important criterion—the employed student is aware of the value of money, whereas her housemate is not. Most importantly, however, Participant 8 ascribes her housemate's carefree behaviour to her lack of working experience and her unawareness of the financial consequences of her behaviours. This difference in values – understanding the significance of money – then becomes the contrast that differentiates Participant 8 from her non-employed housemate.

Both of these quotes illustrate salient differences in values between employed students and their friends. They illustrate how the behaviours of the non-employed student

group are inconsistent with employed students' values of hard work and earning one's own money. For these participants, the recognition of these salient differences was enough to differentiate themselves from the students they referred to and they ascribed these salient differences to their own experience of being in paid employment. Nonetheless, in contrast to when the comparison centred on differences in experiences, perceiving salient differences in values might serve to positively differentiate employed students from their non-employed friends as the values employed students hold (being motivated or aware of the value of money) are perceived as positive and beneficial. Thus, employed students might be motivated to differentiate themselves as employed students if differences in values are salient in order to achieve positive distinctiveness from non-employed students.

Behavioural Manifestations of Intergroup Categorisations

Thus far, the students in our sample discussed some important differences in experiences and values between themselves and non-employed students. Most importantly, these differences can act as the basis for intergroup categorisations as well as make employed students feel envious of and frustrated with non-employed students. However, of similar importance are the consequences of those categorisations – what are the potential pitfalls for employed students of categorising employed and non-employed students into different groups? To delve even deeper, what are the behavioural consequences to the employed student when categorisations between groups are salient and their friends are (predominantly) not employed?

For students in such positions, they can feel that they are not fitting in at university. Participant 11 elaborates on how having to work made the differences between employed and non-employed students salient for her, with implications for her self-concept:

I guess, you know what I mean, people wouldn't say like 'Oh, you are so lame because you are working something' but that's just how I felt whenever I met up with

my friends and they would be just saying about like 'I had a nice day and I did this and that' and the only thing I could talk about was my job because that was like the only thing that I was doing which is making sandwiches. (Participant 11, female, Psychology, 3rd year, translator and shop assistant)

In this situation, the student experiences a conflict between who she currently is and who she can be. Not being able to join in non-work-related activities with fellow students yields a lack of shared experiences, which creates the perception of being different and inferior to one's peers. Indeed, lacking common experiences with non-employed students can enhance the intergroup categorisation into employed and non-employed students and make the student feel lonely. Indeed, Participant 11 felt that she did not fit in during her first year at university:

I definitely felt very lonely and very isolated and I felt like I don't really fit in because at that time I felt like none of my friends were working 'cause that was 1st year, I don't know if that's a thing maybe that's just my experience with the people I knew. They always went out, they were constantly partying and I was constantly working so I kind of felt, they never said it specifically, but I kind of felt like I am kind of lame for, you know, doing the responsible thing instead of just like brushing it and just going outside and having fun and maybe that was just like, you know, me telling myself that I am this kind of person. (Participant 11, female, Psychology, 3rd year, translator and shop assistant)

In line with the earlier quotes, Participant 11 reported feeling isolated from her non-employed student peers, but she goes beyond this to state how having to work made her feel lame, or of lower status in comparison to her peers. Participant 11 then alludes to the continued effect of the intergroup categorisation – she tells herself she is a particular kind of

person (lame) and alludes to her lack of shared experiences with her non-employed friends as the defining factor for that categorisation. As such, the categorisation is what drives Participant 11 to feel isolated from her friends even further.

As seen so far, the quotes from our participants reveal that they often do not fit in with their non-employed peers and that this is accompanied by feelings of lower status. Indeed, as the quote by Participant 15 above showed, sometimes employed students even go as far as to not discuss their employment with their non-employed peers:

Some of [participant's friends] have told me that they seem that I am getting like closed into a shell kind of a situation and that they don't really see me anymore so like it's kind of I am not comfortable to just bring it up and talk about work.

The quotes above suggest that for some of the participants in our sample, the non-employed experience is idealised but is not attainable due to their own economic reality, which in turn drives them to feel different from their non-employed peers. Such categorisation into distinct groups of employed and non-employed students then causes employed students to feel of lower status in comparison to non-employed students and/or to not discuss their employment with them. Furthermore, these consequences of intergroup categorisations are unlikely to help employed students' integration into university, as they do not facilitate the reception of social support from non-employed peers and likely extend the intergroup boundaries even further.

Friends Having a Positive Attitude Towards Work Fosters Positive Distinctiveness

Nonetheless, not every employed student in the present sample felt that being a worker confers lower status to them. In fact, some of the participants experienced pride that they were working. Participant 12 describes how having a *positive opinion about oneself* from non-employed students allowed her to feel pride from being an employed student:

I mean my friends back in [participant's country] they haven't worked, so they see me working as something like really, really nice and like something that's extraordinary in a way that they find it quite interesting, but obviously here as everyone works it's not something which you would consider as a big deal, but then people who haven't worked find it really interesting and just like you know proud - that proudness sensation. (Participant 12, female, Psychology, 3rd year, student mentor)

Because working is associated with a variety of inherent inequalities (lack of time, tiredness, etc.), it could be hard for employed students to achieve a sense of positive distinctiveness as compared to non-employed students. Yet, if non-employed students acknowledge the employed student's hard work ethic (as in Participant 12's experience), then being an employed student can in fact be a source of positive distinctiveness or a metaphorical badge of honour for the student and improve their wellbeing and self-concept. In such cases, even though intergroup comparisons might be salient, affirming the self through external recognition of one's hard work can mean that the category of being an employed student can enhance how one feels about themselves.

Other Employed Students as Sources of Social Support

Similarly, participants in our sample were able to escape any negative comparisons with non-employed students by spending time and discussing their employment with other students in paid employment. As Participant 12 describes, her employed friends offer the ability to corroborate their experiences and offer support:

I: And so with your friends can you talk to them about what it is like at your job?

P: Yes, because a lot of them have work as well, so they kind of sort of understand what my experience is as a working student, so they can sort of relate to it as well because they are in the same position as me.

I: And you mentioned that they can relate – are they supportive in that sense?

P: Yes, I guess if they know what I am doing, if I am talking to someone who has a sort of similar experiences I guess they are supportive in a way that they can understand me, but I guess if they haven't been in the situation, if they haven't worked while they are studying I don't think they would sort of relate to it.

(Participant 12, female, Psychology, 3rd year, student mentor)

Having friends who are workers (even if not at the same workplace) helps the student to bridge the gap between her friends and her employed experience. Similar to having positive relationships with colleagues, *having friends who are workers* enables employed students to share their experiences with others, in turn bonding through common fate (Campbell, 1958). Importantly, other employed students can offer targeted support for the employed student that non-employed students cannot. This shows that being an employed student is a meaningful social category for our participants as it offers social support from other ingroup members. Indeed, most of the participants in our sample preferred to discuss work with other employed students.

In sum, our participants expressed how the salient differences in possessing resources or different values prompted the creation of intergroup categorisations. These intergroup categorisations manifest in employed students ascribing the non-employed group a higher status and envying their resources. Finally, the salient categorisations can, in turn, make employed students feel like they do not fit in at university or hide their employed identity altogether. However, not all employed students associated their employed experience with a lower status than the experience of non-employed students. If participants felt that there was a positive attitude about their working identity from non-employed students, then employment served to positively differentiate the participant and they experienced pride in

their employment. Similarly, employed students sought and received crucial social support from other employed friends.

Discussion

In this sample of employed students, the two referent groups that were discussed by our participants were their work colleagues and non-employed students. In terms of the former group, the employed students discussed how older colleagues' lack of empathy, hostility towards employed students, and differences in how the groups are treated in the workplace created categorisations between oneself as a student and others as workers. These categorisations were also created if management treats those groups differently. Yet, if students experienced a positive attitude towards their student identity from their colleagues, and/or felt connected to their colleagues through shared experiences and a sense of common fate, then they felt like they received social support from their colleagues. Showcasing one's student identity in the workplace, then, could lead to either increased intergroup differentiation or to positive relations with and interest from colleagues (see Haslam & Ellemers, 2005 for discussion of this debate). This is likely to depend on the norms of the workplace, the history of students working at the particular workplace, and the stereotypes that exist surrounding student participation at the particular workplace. Future research can adopt an ethnographic approach and consider what aspects of the relationships at a particular workplace serve to delineate students as a distinct group and whether they receive social support.

Regarding their relations with non-employed students, employed students discussed differences in values and resources between employed and non-employed students, which seem to form the basis for intergroup categorisations. In terms of differences in values, our participants noted that non-employed students exhibit a lack of motivation and a lack of awareness about the value of money, which they contrasted with their own experience.

Indeed, employed students perceived that their non-employed friends did not fully comprehend the working experience. Akin to the relationships between employed students and their colleagues, this lack of understanding can harden the lines of categorisation between employed and non-employed students. These results are in line with Sani's (2008) work on schisms within groups as it is possible that these differences in values serve as the comparison point between employed and non-employed students, based on which employed students achieve positive distinctiveness while still maintaining their valuable membership in the larger student category.

The differences in experience and inequalities in treatment also facilitated intergroup categorizations into employed and non-employed students, which in turn evoked feelings of envy and frustration in employed students. For employed students such as Participants 11 and 15, whose friends were non-employed, these categorizations were particularly salient and led to feelings of not fitting in and them actively choosing not to discuss their employment with non-employed students. This acts as a double detriment for employed students – not only are they not physically able to participate in shared activities with non-employed students due to the necessity to work, they are also tacitly told that *that is not what students do*, which can form the basis for a sense of identity incompatibility between being employed and being a student. Altogether, intergroup categorisations stemming from lack of resources led to employed students feeling 'isolated' and 'lame', and thus hindered their adaptation to university life.

Additionally, some participants in our sample felt that being an employed student could confer a lower status in comparison to non-employed students (associated with less free time and resources and strain on interpersonal relationships). Having a lower status due to being an employed student means that the non-employed student experience can serve as an upward goalpost for employed students' idealised conception of university experience – an

experience that is not within the bounds of their own economic reality. It has been suggested previously that groups with higher status can serve as the prototype for a combined, superordinate identity (Onu et al., 2016; Wenzel et al., 2007). In line with the Ingroup Projection Model (Wenzel et al., 2007), employed students may perceive non-employed students as the most prototypical members of the superordinate category of a student, and aspire to become a member of that group. In cases where that is not possible due to salient differences in experience (and perhaps norms), the boundaries of the non-employed group can become impermeable (Ellemers et al., 1990), which can then lead to employed students being treated as less prototypical members of the overarching student category. However, future research is needed to explore in more detail the extent to which the non-employed university experience is preferable and idealised, as this may not be the case for all employed students. Results from such research can aid in our understanding of how the working experience differs from the non-working one and provide practical strategies for employed students' adaptation to university, all with respect to employed students' economic situation.

Nonetheless, our results exist in a backdrop of increased student participation in the workforce in recent years (Quintini, 2015). As more students are employed, students might not perceive the working experience as abnormal for students at large. Indeed, newer UK higher education institutions tend to have higher rates of employed students than older institutions, which could mean that the working experience is not as alien to students at these universities (Hanton, 2017). To this point, not all students in our sample felt that being employed indicated a lower status in comparison to non-employed students. In fact, some of our participants were proud of being employed and the work ethic it indicated and/or found social support and acceptance from other employed students. These positive feelings were facilitated if employed students interacted with non-employed students who had a positive opinion about their employment. Despite salient categorisations into different groups

(employed students, non-employed students), interacting with non-employed students who had positive opinions about employment, laid the foundation for the students in our sample to receive social support from other students. Despite this, the majority of our employed students in our sample preferred to discuss employment-related issues with other employed students. By talking about similar or shared experiences, the students in our sample were able to openly discuss parts of their worker identity with other employed students and form identity-based connections that facilitate social support. In short, employed students tended to reap positive benefits and received social support only when their fellow students voiced positive opinions about their working identities, and/or when they received social support from other employed students. As more and more students combine employment with studying in the UK and worldwide, it is possible that the working experience becomes more normalised so that employed students receive more positive opinions about their working identities and/or more support from other employed students.

As employed students categorise themselves as a distinct group from the two aforementioned groups (non-employed students, non-student colleagues), the results also give preliminary evidence for the presence of a combined employed student identity. First, these intergroup categorisations have shown to not only have distinct affective consequences for employed students, but to also prompt changes in the employed student's identity-related behaviour (for example, not discussing employment with non-employed students). Second, this paper touches on different traits that are important to employed students (pride in work, conscientiousness, motivation, awareness of value of money, promoting student status as more desirable than working). All of the above traits or actions form the meta-contrast evaluative dimensions on which employed students are forging their own social identity (for a theoretical discussion see Turner et al., 1987). Finally, the participants in our sample discussed their experiences with other employed students in which they receive targeted

social support, which as mentioned in the Introduction is given within strict ingroup lines (Levine et al., 2005). Thus, our results suggest that identifying strictly as an employed student could be beneficial for employed students so that they achieve positive distinctiveness from colleagues and/or non-employed students and receive targeted social support from other employed students.

However, we contend that the presence of and strength of identification with the employed student identity depends on the motivation and comparative context. If the particular workplace is populated mostly by fellow student employees, then the employed student identity might be cognitively overlapping with the student identity in that context, making the employed student category redundant. Similarly, if the workplace is mostly populated by non-student colleagues, and the student perceives positive attitudes towards their studies, then the category of being an employed student could overlap with the worker identity. If, in line with the Ingroup Projection model, the full-time employees at the workplace are treated as a higher status group, then it is likely that employed students could be treated as less prototypical members of the overarching category of workers, which could lead to the detrimental categorisations described in the Results section. Therefore, in comparison to full-time employees, the employed student identity could help fellow students offer support to each other through empathy and understanding, yet it could serve as a devalued identity at the workplace.

Identifying as an employed student in comparison to non-employed students may rather be a function of one's motivation to do so. If the comparison is salient because of differences in values, then it is likely that employed students may identify as such in order to achieve positive distinctiveness from non-employed students. As Sani (2008) contends, leaving the overarching group of students may be detrimental to employed students, but reimagining the boundaries within this overarching category can help employed students to

achieve positive distinctiveness through adopting some of the positive traits discussed above (i.e., conscientiousness, awareness of money). However, if the comparison is salient due to differences in experiences and inequality in treatment, then our results suggest that identifying as an employed student is linked to having a lower status within the overarching category of students and negative, isolating consequences.

Altogether, identifying as an employed student could have positive effects for the student, such as receiving social support from other employed students or achieving positive distinctiveness from non-employed students, if the context emphasises differences in values between the comparator groups. In contrast, if the comparative context emphasises differences in experiences and inequalities in treatment between the groups, then the employed student identity could be a devalued identity. Similarly, the value of identifying as an employed student at the workplace likely depends on the norms and attitude that their work colleagues hold towards employed students. It is, however, the work of future research to discuss empirically the extent to which the employed student category is an important feature of students' self-concept and, subsequently, to investigate the correlates of this identity.

Limitations and Considerations

One key limitation to this data is the lack of input from full-time workers and non-employed students. Including data from these groups can a) enhance our understanding of their relations with employed students; b) validate the intergroup perceptions which employed students depicted (West, 2016); and c) allow us to discuss and explore additional perceptions of employed students. Specifically in terms of full-time workers, this omission meant that we were unable to corroborate the categorisations in the workplace suggested by employed students. If non-student colleagues do not perceive their workplace as divisive, it is possible that simply the *perception* of division at the workplace is detrimental to employed

students' adaptation there. Even if one's colleagues are sympathetic and helpful, the perceived division, especially if reinforced by management, can alter how students perceive their colleagues and prevent the forging of shared experiences. Altogether, further research should consider collecting data from full-time workers and non-employed students to describe their relations with employed students in further detail.

Our dataset is also limited, as we did not seek to inform our understanding of the relations employed students have with other employed students. Although the students in our sample discussed how they receive social support from other employed students, this was discussed *in light of* the inability of non-employed students to provide such support because they do not fully understand the working experience. As such, and because the relationships between employed students were outside the scope of this work, future research should investigate in more depth the relationships between employed students and whether they provide evidence for the presence of an employed student identity.

Finally, the participants in our sample were predominantly students who received lower amounts of government maintenance loans and international students. These students experienced higher need for employment and thus were subject to spending more time at work and less time with their friends. In turn, this could have made the intergroup categorizations more salient for the participants in our sample. Therefore, our results should be interpreted with caution if other employed students are not working out of necessity but to earn extra money alongside their studies.

Conclusion

In summary, this paper sought to discuss the relations between employed students and their referent groups (non-employed students, non-student colleagues). In turn, we found that differences in treatment led to self-categorisation as an employed student, intergroup differentiation between employed students and work colleagues, and negative workplace

consequences for employed students. Yet, shared experiences and a sense of common fate with work-colleagues could lay the foundations for a shared workplace identity and the receipt of social support. Similarly, the perceived differences in values and resources between employed and non-employed students led to in intergroup categorisations, which manifested as differences in status and in feelings of envy and frustration towards non-employed students. For some, this led employed students to not discuss their employment and/or feel isolated and alone. Having pride in one's working identity and the work ethic it symbolises, and receiving social support from other employed students, offer avenues through which employed students can gain a sense of positive distinctiveness.

Chapter 4: Distinctiveness Predicts the Core Aspects of the Employed

Student Identity: Antecedents and Correlates

Grozev, V.H., & Easterbrook, M.J. (2022). Distinctiveness predicts the core aspects of the employed student identity: antecedents and correlates. Unpublished manuscript.

Abstract

Adopting the employed student identity is an important strategy for employed students to deal with negative intergroup comparisons to non-employed students and to seek social support from other employed students. However, it is currently unknown how aspects of the employed student experience become important and central to the employed student identity, and more generally, what are the antecedents and correlates of this identity. To address these gaps in understanding, we explored three research questions (RQ's). RQ1: Do ratings of distinctiveness and suitability of aspects positively predict the aspects' centrality and importance to the employed student identity? RQ2: After controlling for intergroup differentiation, social identification as a student, and social identification as a worker, does the employed student identity positively predict academic achievement and general status in society? RQ3: Are identity incompatibility and superordinate group identification positively associated with the employed student identity, academic achievement, and general status in society? We conducted a cross-sectional online study with 215 employed students from a university in the South of England, who provided 1,944 identity aspects. Regarding RQ1, using a multilevel modelling analysis, we found that motives which satisfied the motive of distinctiveness became less central and important to the employed student identity, whereas aspects which were more suitable to employed students than non-employed students became more important and central to this identity. Regarding RQ2, using structural equation

modelling, we found that employed student identification was associated with increases in students' status in society, but not academic achievement. Regarding RQ3, identity incompatibility and superordinate group prototypicality were not associated with increases in employed student identification. We then present the practical and theoretical implications of our work for improving the experiences of employed students in higher education.

Keywords: working students; employed student identity; social identity; motivated identity construction theory; multilevel modelling; status in society

Distinctiveness Predicts the Core Aspects of the Employed Student Identity:

Antecedents and Correlates

Combining working for pay and studying is a phenomenon that is rapidly growing in the UK (Endsleigh, 2015; Quintini, 2015) as well as in Australia (Chu et al., 2021), the US (Eastgate et al., 2021), and many other OECD countries (OECD, 2012). As the sheer number of employed students has increased, researchers have considered the negative impact that the combination of working and studying has on employed students' academic achievement (Callender, 2008; Curtis & Shani, 2002; Richardson & Woodley, 2003), students' social life (Curtis, 2007; Kuh et al., 1995; Robotham, 2013), and on mental and physical health outcomes (McGregor, 2015; Roberts et al., 2000). Altogether, the majority of work conducted on employed students has rightfully placed a focus on how employment negatively impacts students' adaptation to university.

Nonetheless, much of the aforementioned work has largely neglected to discuss how the larger social contexts that employed students find themselves in change how employed students perceive themselves and the processes through which such change occurs. Although employed students immerse themselves into two domains (that of work and of university; Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006), surprisingly little work has considered the relations between employed students, their colleagues and non-employed students as predictors of students' adaptation to university life (Christie et al., 2001; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Outerbridge, 2016). Participants in those studies reported how experiences of exclusion due to combining employment and studying are *self-defining*; that being *employed* meant that they were not able to participate in student-normative social activities with their friends. As such, we can infer that, beyond practical detriments, being an employed student can carry with it a social disadvantage that is based on the perception that employed students are not 'typical' students.

Despite these findings, our previous work has also indicated that identifying as an employed student can carry certain advantages when employed students compare themselves favourably to their work colleagues or non-employed students (*blinded*, 2022a; *blinded*, 2022b). Indeed, if employed students experienced severe financial necessity to work, then being employed acted to remind themselves of their core values of studying and hard work (*blinded*, 2022a). Similarly, in comparison to non-employed students who valued fun, employed students took solace in their productivity and in studying hard (*blinded*, 2022b). Due to these results, we posit that the employed student identity can act as a protective mechanism for employed students' larger self-concept when students define themselves in terms of core positive aspects of their employed student self-concept.

At this point, however, little is known about how all these different aspects of the employed student experience become important or central to the employed student identity. Similarly, we do not know whether adoption of the employed student identity is associated with increases in important academic (academic achievement) or comparative (general status in society) outcomes and whether other self-defining factors (identity incompatibility, superordinate group prototypicality) can enhance the adoption of the employed student identity. As such, the present research sought to address these gaps in the literature. The following sections outline literature that suggests employed students become motivated to identify as employed students, and the potential correlates and antecedents of this emergent identity. We then report the results of a rare empirical investigation into this topic.

The Social Identity Approach

Within the social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987), social identification is the process which stems from being a member of a meaningful social group and integrating the group as part of one's overarching self-concept. The resulting social identity is achieved as the individual is motivated to achieve *positive distinctiveness* (Tajfel,

1978), that is, if the group compares positively to relevant outgroups, identifying with the group can then enhance one's own self-concept and provide a sense of self-esteem. Social identities are context-dependent in that they become salient and relevant due to contextual factors and positive distinctiveness can vary according to which outgroups are salient and relevant within the particular context (Oakes et al., 1994). When a social identity does become activated in a particular context, the individual embodies the norms and the values of the group (Turner, 1991). In the case of employed students, the student might have their employed student identity activated if work colleagues or non-employed students (as important outgroups for employed students) are discussing events that the employed student was not present for (Outerbridge, 2016), or, if the student is speaking to other employed students about their experiences at work (Kiernan et al., 2015; Ziskin et al., 2010). In such situations, identifying as an employed student can help the student to positively distinguish oneself from members of the other groups, or seek social support from other employed students (*blinded*, 2022b).

How Do Aspects Become Central to the Employed Student Identity?

Identifying as an employed student is dependent on whether employed students feel that some aspects of being an employed student can positively differentiate them from non-employed students and work colleagues. Thus, it is critical that certain aspects of the employed student experience become meaningful to the employed student and as such, become central and important to that identity. However, the mechanisms behind how aspects of the employed student experience become central and important to that identity are currently unknown.

In order to shed more light on this issue, we used insights from motivated identity construction theory (MICT; Vignoles et al., 2006; Vignoles, 2011). Although MICT discusses identity construction more broadly, we have chosen to lean on the insights from

MICT to discuss social identities exclusively here. Within MICT, potential identity aspects become important or central to a person's social identity if those aspects satisfy one or more of six key identity motives: the motives of *distinctiveness* from and *belonging* to a group, achieving *self-efficacy* through group membership, deriving *meaning*, deriving *self-esteem*, and ensuring *continuity* of the self-concept (Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2012). To provide an example, Easterbrook and Vignoles (2012) measured those six different identity motives within first-year university students in order to find whether they predict identification with a novel interpersonal group (i.e., their flatmates) or with a larger social category (i.e., their halls of residence). They found that satisfaction of the motives of self-esteem, belonging, and efficacy were associated with increases in identification with their flat, whereas satisfaction of the motives of meaning, self-esteem, and distinctiveness were associated with increases in halls of residence identification.

Thus, if the social identity associated with a particular group membership fulfils the satisfaction of any or all of these six identity motives, that social identity will become subjectively important and central to the person's self-concept. At present, MICT has also been applied to many different social identity formation contexts; some examples being the formation of an Anglo-Parish priest identity (Vignoles et al., 2002), and in the formation of a sports team identity (Thomas et al., 2016). In total, satisfying the six identity motives outlined above has been found to lead to the incorporation of new social identities into the self-concept.

Therefore, by drawing on the Social Identity Approach and Motivated Identity Construction Theory, we expect that identity motives that distinguish employed students from non-employed students may be more important and central to their overall self-concepts. To do so, we focused exclusively on the motive of *distinctiveness*, that is, the degree of differentiation that the individual has from members of important outgroups (Brewer, 1991).

We chose to focus solely on the *distinctiveness* motive as, in accordance with our previous research (*blinded*, 2022b), we theorised that when the employed student identity becomes activated, this is in response to, or in the presence of, non-employed students and work colleagues. Thus, the first goal of our current research is to explore whether those identity aspects that help employed students to positively differentiate themselves from these important outgroups become more important or central to the employed student identity. In doing so, we depart from more traditional underpinnings of MICT (e.g., Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2012), which investigated motive satisfaction as a predictor of the formation of a particular identity and place our focus on exploring how the different identity aspects which employed students select become central or important to their employed student identity.

Motivation to Adopt an Employed Student Identity Through Intergroup Differentiation

Nonetheless, the global motivation behind employed students identifying strictly as *employed students* (instead of identifying as *colleagues* or *students* in those respective domains) is not as clear. In the workplace, one can easily see the benefits of employed students foregoing the *student* part of their self-concept – when both full-time colleagues and students identify as workers, they can disparage or complain about their management (Lammont & Lucas, 1999). Similarly, if social support is given strictly within group lines (Levine et al., 2005), then identifying as a worker is key to receiving such support from one's colleagues (*blinded*, 2022b). In the university context, identifying as simply a student could, in spite of their practical commitments to work, help employed students feel as though they belong to the overarching category of students, which might be the identity they strive to fully adopt (*blinded*, 2022a; Dumas, 2003).

However, we contend that the employed student identity can also have a protective function for the employed student's self-concept in their relations with their colleagues or with non-employed students. For example, if an employed student is reminded of their

student status in the workplace by their colleagues (perhaps due to being scapegoated for poor workplace performance, Agervold (2007)), then the employed student identity can serve to remind the student of their long-term education goals and the transitory nature of their current employment (*blinded*, 2022b, Winkler, 2009), providing solace and affirmation. In the university context, while employed students could be at a social disadvantage due to restricted participation in social activities with non-employed students, we have previously found that identifying as an employed student stems from perceived differences in values between the two groups (*blinded*, 2022b). Indeed, some of the participants in our previous work discussed how understanding the value of money or having more motivation were important employment-related factors which positively differentiated them from non-employed students. Altogether, the different social identities that employed students possess (student, colleague, employed student) can help to either foster beneficial social relationships with their colleagues or non-employed students, or, conversely, have a protective function against frictional relations with colleagues and serve to positively differentiate themselves from non-employed students. These situations showcase the complexity of the employed student experience and demonstrate how these three identities can have different social consequences for the employed student.

Furthermore, these situations display how the extent to which employed students feel distinct from non-employed students – defined here as intergroup differentiation - could play a role in producing important social, academic and comparative outcomes. Previous research supports this role of intergroup differentiation by revealing how feelings of overall distinctiveness from non-employed students through differences in experiences can lead to employed students feeling a sense of isolation and lack of adaptation at university (Christie et al., 2001; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006; Outerbridge, 2016). Thus, a higher sense of

intergroup differentiation is another factor which can lead employed students to experience detrimental outcomes during their time at university.

Nonetheless, the literature thus far has only discussed the social implications of the three identities (*blinded*, 2022b) and intergroup differentiation (Outerbridge, 2016). Therefore, our current investigation serves to close this gap and discuss two potential academic and comparative outcomes of identification and intergroup differentiation – academic achievement and general status in society – which will be discussed in the following sections.

Academic and Comparative Correlates of the Employed Student Identity

Academic achievement has received continued prominence in the literature on employed students (e.g., Bradley, 2006; Callender, 2008; Curtis & Shani, 2002; Etcheverry et al., 1993; Hawkins et al., 2005; Huie et al., 2014). However, all existing literature has thus far focused on the effect of working longer hours for pay on academic achievement, or on comparing the academic achievement of employed and non-employed students. In doing so, previous research has neglected exploring whether the strength of identification as either a student, a colleague, or as an employed student can be beneficial for employed students' academic achievement. We theorise that, in particular, identifying as an employed student could be an importance source of resilience for employed students, and as such be linked with increases in employed students' academic achievement. Therefore, we wanted to explore whether identifying as an employed student was associated with increases in academic achievement, after controlling for any effects of colleague identification, student identification, and intergroup differentiation on academic achievement.

In contrast, the employed students' social status has not been discussed at large in the literature thus far. Indeed, if the main reason behind employed students attending university (and undertaking employment while doing so) is to improve one's career choices and

increase their status in society (Savić & Kresoja, 2018), then it is important to explore whether endorsement of the employed student identity is associated with increases in one's perception of their general status in society. Indeed, employed students in Blake and Worsdale (2009) indicated that a main reason for them commencing employment was to increase their status in society through the accumulation of finances. Nonetheless, employed students' social status has not been empirically tested at large in previous studies. The only exception to this has been a study by Creed et al. (2020), who found that job precariousness was associated with lower social status for employed students. As such, the second aim of the present research was to explore whether the employed student identity is associated with increases in social status for employed students. We theorise that due to the unique challenges that employed students face and subsequently base their employed student identity on, adoption of the employed student identity would be associated with increases in students' subjective social status, even after controlling for identification as a worker or a student and employed students' levels of intergroup differentiation.

Antecedents of the Employed Student Identity

If adoption of the employed student identity is indeed associated with the positive academic and comparative outcomes discussed above, then it is also of importance to discuss factors which could benefit employed students' identification with the employed student identity. Our previous research (*blinded*, 2022a; *blinded*, 2022b) suggests that two such factors – superordinate group prototypicality and identity incompatibility – could increase the adoption of this identity.

Stemming from the ingroup projection model (Wenzel et al., 2007), superordinate group prototypicality refers to the extent to which individuals believe that their group, and not a relevant outgroup, is best representative of an overarching category that combines both groups. To exemplify this, as both employed students and non-employed students belong to

the overarching collective of students, superordinate group prototypicality refers to the extent to which either of these two groups believes that their group best represents the category of students. Indeed, our previous research suggested that employed students used positive differences in values to claim prototypicality for the employed student identity and as such identify with the employed student identity (*blinded*, 2022b). Thus, it is likely that if employed students perceive themselves as more representative of what a student is about, then that would boost their identification as an employed student.

Conversely, identity incompatibility (Easterbrook et al., 2022; Iyer et al., 2009) can refer to a long-term conflict between the norms or values of two adjacent identities in the self-concept. Within the education literature, the identities of students who come to university from lower socioeconomic backgrounds can often be incompatible with what is expected of students at university due to clashes in normative behaviour (Iyer et al., 2009). This can occur in part because the former value togetherness and working in groups whereas universities often champion individual work and building one's own skills (Stephens et al., 2012). As such, students are caught between a conflict of normative behaviours, which then reduces their identification with the new identity (being a student). Similarly, our research (*blinded*, 2022b) suggests that employed students who work and thus spend less time with non-employed students, are also told that that is not what students do. This signals to employed students that, beyond the practical detriments of work on their social time, being a worker is considered incompatible with the student ways of having fun together. However, as we consider the employed student identity to be a protective function against negative comparisons between employed and non-employed students, it is possible that experiencing a sense of identity incompatibility between the student and worker identities could benefit the adoption of the employed student identity. Thus, we sought to explore whether experiencing

a sense of identity incompatibility is positively associated with adoption of the employed student identity.

The Present Study

RQ1: Do ratings of distinctiveness and suitability of aspects positively predict the aspects' centrality and importance to the employed student identity?

As the first focus of the present research was placed on the identity aspects rather than on the employed student identity *per se*, we sought to differentiate between how identity aspects *distinguish* the employed student from non-employed students and how *suitable* the identity aspects were for employed students rather than for non-employed students⁷. We posit that, while some identity aspects can distinguish employed students from non-employed students in a more symbolic manner and thus be deemed as more important or central to the employed student identity, other aspects might be deemed more suitable to the employed student experience and thus, through practical exposure, become more important or central to the employed student identity. Thus, in line with our first research question, we investigated whether the ratings of distinctiveness and suitability would positively predict how central and important⁸ the identity aspects were to the employed student identity. As identity aspects are nested within the employed students who provide the ratings of suitability, distinctiveness, importance, and centrality for each aspect, we conceptualised the ratings of the identity aspects as ratings on the within-person level in order to keep their effects statistically independent from the effects of the people providing those ratings (conceptualised as the between-person level).

⁷ Because our previous research (*blinded*, 2022b) did not suggest that employed students compare themselves to work colleagues to the same extent as they did to non-employed students, we zoned in on the relations between employed students and non-employed students as the key comparison in the current study.

⁸ Although we treat centrality and importance as two separate outcomes of how aspects achieve *key*-ness in the employed student identity, it is possible that there is a high degree of overlap between these two constructs. This is discussed further in the Method section.

RQ2: After controlling for intergroup differentiation, social identification as a student, and social identification as a worker, does the employed student identity positively predict academic achievement and general status in society?

For the second aim of the present research, we wanted to explore whether the three identities (colleague, student, and employed student) and intergroup differentiation were positively associated with students' academic achievement and their subjective status in society. As such, we aimed to establish whether the employed student identity serves an important role for employed student beyond protecting them from negative intergroup comparisons or serving as a vehicle for getting social support from other employed students.

RQ3: Are identity incompatibility and superordinate group identification positively associated with the employed student identity, academic achievement, and general status in society?

Finally, we also explored whether the effects of superordinate group prototypicality and identity incompatibility were associated with increases in the adoption of the employed student identity, academic achievement, and general status in society. If so, then the employed student identity might serve an important mediating role between the self-referent processes and key academic and comparative outcomes. The full details of our present investigation follow in the Method section.

Method

Participants

Using G*Power 3.1.9.7 we calculated that we would need 150 students to find an effect size of $r = .10$ with 80% power to answer research questions 2 and 3. We chose the arbitrary effect size of $r = .10$ as the smallest meaningful effect size as discussed by Cohen (1988). At present, calculating sample size to sufficiently power multilevel modelling studies requires simulation capabilities, which we felt were not appropriate for the exploratory scope

of this study, and thus we did not compute the necessary sample size needed to calculate power for RQ1. To fit these goals, two-hundred and twenty UK university students were recruited between February and November 2021⁹ to take part in an online questionnaire about how they feel as employed students in comparison to their non-employed friends. Five participants opted to exclude their data from the final dataset, which left us with 215 employed students. The remaining participants were between 18 and 54 years of age ($M = 22.29$, $SD = 6.03$). The sample was predominantly female (83.30%, $n = 179$), 14% ($n = 30$) of respondents identified as male, and 2.70% ($n = 6$) of respondents identified as other gender. The majority of the students in the sample ($n = 167$, 77.70%) were studying Psychology and were either in their first ($n = 60$, 27.90%) or second ($n = 101$, 47%) year of study. The students in our sample were working 15.58 ($SD = 10.20$) hours per week on average.

Procedure

All participants were recruited via an online link, which was either distributed in classrooms on campus in the form of a QR code, or via an online study participation system (SONA). Recruitment was further boosted by asking lecturers to give the online link to their students in seminars. Ethical consent for this study was granted by the researchers' home institution. All data was handled in accordance with the University's data regulation protection principles. At the beginning of the questionnaire, all participants indicated that they gave their consent to participate and their rights to confidentiality were presented. Then, the main blocks of the questionnaire were presented in the order outlined in the Materials section below. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were thoroughly debriefed about the purpose of the study and invited to include their email for one of the four £50 prizes. At this point, participants could also specify if they wish to withdraw their data from analysis.

⁹ As per our pre-registration plan (<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/T37VF>), we intended to close data collection in June 2021. However, we opted not to do so, as we did not reach our pre-specified amount of 200 employed students and wanted to enrich the dataset.

Materials

Every participant completed an online questionnaire using Qualtrics, which assessed the constructs described below. Furthermore, the questionnaire formed part of a larger study and, thus, only the variables that were used in the current analyses are presented. The full measures are included in the supplementary online material (Appendix B).

Demographic Information

Participants were asked to indicate their age, gender, study course, and year of study as well as which UK university they attended. They were then asked to indicate how many hours did they work per week on average (participants were asked to combine all of their hours if they were employed at multiple workplaces).

Free-Form and Preselected Identity Aspects

Participants were asked to provide five identity aspects of the employed student identity by answering the question “Who are you as a working student?”. This procedure was adapted from Vignoles et al. (2011), who, by altering the original Twenty Statements Test procedure (Kuhn & McPartland, 1954), asked their participants about the identities that they used to define themselves. For the purposes of the present investigation, we altered the wording of the question “Who are you?” to ask our participants about the identity aspects that comprise their employed student identity. We did so by telling them that:

In the numbered spaces below, please write 5 characteristics that define you as a working student. You can write these characteristics as they occur to you without worrying about the order, but together they should summarise the image of yourself as a working student. You might include characteristics that other people know about, as well as your private thoughts about yourself. Some of these characteristics you may see as relatively important, and others less so. Some may be things you are relatively happy about, and others less so.

We then listed five identity aspects (being motivated, being hardworking, having fun, having money, and pride in work) that our previous research (*blinded*, 2022b) indicated were relevant to employed students. Employed students then rated these ten aspects (the five they selected and the five we preselected) on the four aspect-level variables described next. Thus, every employed student produced forty ratings on the aspect-level variables of interest, which we considered appropriate in order to prevent participant fatigue, but still have sufficient quality of data (and in line with Thomas et al., 2016).

Centrality of Aspects for Employed Students. The participants were then asked to answer the question “How much do you see these characteristics as central or marginal to your identity as a working student?” by rating the ten identity aspects on an 11-point Likert scale with anchors [1] *Extremely marginal*, [6] *Neither marginal nor central*, and [11] *Extremely central*.

Importance of Aspects for Employed Students. The participants were next asked to answer the question “How important is each of these characteristics to your identity as an employed student?” by rating the ten identity aspects on an 11-point Likert scale with anchors [1] *Extremely unimportant*, [6] *Neither important nor unimportant*, and [11] *Extremely important*.

Distinctiveness of Aspects from Non-Employed Students. Next, participants were asked to answer the question “How much do you feel that these characteristics distinguish working students from non-working students?”. The employed students rated the aspects on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from [1] *Working students are extremely similar to non-working students on this characteristic*, [6] *Working students are neither more similar nor more different than non-working students on this characteristic*, and [11] *Working students are extremely different to non-working students on this characteristic*.

Suitability of Aspects to Employed Students. Finally, participants were asked to answer the question “Are these characteristics more suited to non-working students or working students?”. Employed students rated the aspects on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from [1] *Non-working students are extremely more like this than working students*, [6] *This characteristic applies equally to working students and non-working students*, and [11] *Working students are extremely more like this than non-working students are*.

Strength of Identification

Strength of identification was measured using the Postmes et al. (2013) single-item measure “I identify with X”. We opted to use this measure in order to reduce the cognitive load on our participants. We asked employed students to rate their strength of identification as an employed student using the question “I identify with working students” and as a worker using the question “I identify with workers from my work organization”. The participants also answered the question “I identify with my fellow university students” and all questions were answered on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from [1] *Strongly disagree* to [7] *Strongly agree*.

Identity Incompatibility

Participants were then asked three questions adapted from Easterbrook et al. (2022) to measure their sense of incompatibility between the student and the worker identity (e.g., “I am afraid being a worker is incompatible with my identity as a student”). All questions were answered on a 7-point scale ranging from [1] *Strongly disagree* to [7] *Strongly agree*. The scale had an acceptable internal reliability ($\alpha = .72$), and the responses were averaged to form an index of identity incompatibility as per our pre-registration plan¹⁰.

Intergroup Differentiation

¹⁰ Our pre-registration plan can be found at <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/T37VF>

To measure the extent to which employed students felt as though they differed from non-employed students, we appropriated the pictorial measure of self-other discrepancy as devised by Aron et al. (1992). Participants could select from seven pictures of overlapping circles (one circle representing the self as an employed student, and the other circle representing non-employed students). The degree of overlap between the circle indicates the extent to which participants perceived non-employed students as more distinct from themselves with less overlap between the circles indicating higher sense of intergroup differentiation. Participants felt closer on average to non-employed students than not ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.49$).

Superordinate Group Prototypicality

Participants were then asked to answer the question “Do non-working students or working students represent better what being a student is about?” as a measure of the prototypicality of the employed student group for the overarching student identity. Participants answered the question on a 7-point Likert scale with anchors [1] *Non-working students represent what being a student is about much better than working students do* to [7] *Working students represent what being a student is about much better than non-working students do*. On average, participants felt that non-employed students represented the overarching category of students slightly better than employed students did ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.30$).

Academic Achievement

Penultimately, participants were asked “What was your average module result in the autumn term? (Please provide an estimate if you are not sure)”. In order to prevent false or disingenuous responses, we specified drop-down responses from [1] *40 or under* to [61] *100*.

Status in Society

Finally, participants were asked about their general status in society. To do so, we adapted a pictorial ladder measure from Adler et al. (2000), which is often used to identify participants' subjective socioeconomic status (e.g., Tan et al., 2020). In the ladder measure, the higher the rung of the ladder is selected, the higher one's status in society is, and participants could select from [1] *Zero status in society* to [10] *Utmost status in society*.

Data and Transformations

First, in line with our pre-registration plan, we checked whether there were strong correlations between the distinctiveness and suitability ratings, and between the importance and centrality ratings of all identity aspects, respectively. This was not the case as the distinctiveness and suitability ratings had only a medium-sized correlation ($r(1906) = .28, p < .001$). The importance and centrality ratings also had a medium-sized correlation between each other ($r(1929) = .44, p < .001$). Because of the size of these correlations, we opted to keep the distinctiveness and suitability ratings separate from each other as well as to keep the importance and centrality ratings separate from each other. In line with our pre-registration plan, the ratings of differentiation and suitability were group-mean centred in order to keep the effects of level-1 and level-2 variables statistically independent. The following analyses used the group-mean centred indices of distinctiveness and suitability as predictors of importance and centrality. We also used full maximum likelihood as our method of estimation in all following analyses as per our pre-registration plan. Doing so allowed us to remove all missing values from the constructs of interest. Next, in order to investigate whether the employed student identity was associated with students' academic achievement and status in society, we created two structural equation models (SEM) using R 4.1.1 and the *lavaan* package (v0.6-9, Rosseel et al., 2020). Finally, the descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between all constructs of interest which were measured at level-2 (i.e., between participants) are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for All Constructs of Interest in Chapter 4.

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlations							
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Employed Student Identification	197	5.73	1.14	1							
Student Identification	197	5.07	1.44	.24***	1						
Worker Identification	197	5.05	1.42	.20**	.25***	1					
Intergroup Differentiation	178	2.85	1.49	.01	-.44***	-.13 ⁺	1				
Identity Incompatibility	197	2.79	1.32	-.03	-.31***	-.26***	.45***	1			
Group Prototypicality	194	3.71	1.30	.09	.19**	.08	-.13 ⁺	-.25**	1		
Academic Achievement	178	66.42	8.52	-.03	-.07	-.10	-.04	.03	.09	1	
Status in Society	171	5.91	1.81	-.20**	-.04	-.05	.03	.14 ⁺	-.15*	-.24**	1

Note. ⁺ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Results

Does Satisfying the Motives of Differentiation and Suitability Make the Identity Aspects More Central and Important to the Employed Student Identity?

RQ1: Do ratings of distinctiveness and suitability of aspects positively predict the aspects' centrality and importance to the employed student identity?

In order to answer RQ1, we first fitted an unconditional multilevel model with Importance as the outcome variable and a random intercept (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). This model used 1,944 identity aspects from 196 employed students. Fitting this model allowed us to calculate the intraclass correlation, which suggested that 24.30% of the variance in Importance ratings was located between participants (i.e., at level-2). Then, we included the fixed effects of Distinctiveness and Suitability as predictors of Importance in our next model. Due to missing values, this model used 1,902 identity aspects from 193 employed students. Although the models were not nested due to missing values in the second model, the model comparison statistics revealed that the second model was an improvement over the unconditional model ($\Delta AIC = 185.2$, $\Delta LL^2 = 94.6$). The model then revealed that both Distinctiveness ($B = -.06$, $p = .01$), and Suitability ($B = .06$, $p = .03$) were significantly associated with aspect Importance. This meant that aspects which differentiated employed students from non-employed students were also less important to the employed student identity, which was contrary to our predictions. However, aspects which were rated as more suitable to employed students rather than to non-employed students were also rated as more important to the employed student identity. This suggests that the importance of the employed student identity is formed by the experiences that are unique to employed students, rather than experiences which make them feel different from their non-employed peers.

Despite this theoretical assertion, the effect sizes of the results described above are considered negligible-to-small as advised by Cohen (1988).

Next, in order to explore how aspects become central to the employed student identity, we fitted an unconditional multilevel model with Centrality as the dependent variable and a random intercept. This model used 1,891 identity aspects from 192 employed students. The intraclass correlation suggested that 37.40% of the variance in Centrality scores was located between students (at level-2). We then included the fixed effects of Distinctiveness and Suitability as predictors of Centrality in the next model. Due to missing values, this model used 1,891 identity aspects from 192 employed students. Although the models were not nested due to missing values in the second model, the model comparison statistics revealed that the second model was an improvement over the unconditional model ($\Delta AIC = 495.3$, $\Delta LL^{-2} = 249.6$). The model revealed that both Distinctiveness ($B = -.11$, $p = .001$) and Suitability ($B = .27$, $p < .001$) were associated significantly with aspect Centrality, suggesting identity aspects were more central to the employed student identity the less those aspects distinguished them from non-employed students. This meant that aspects which differentiated employed students from non-employed students were also less central to the employed student identity, which, akin to the similar finding with Importance as the dependent variable, was contrary to our predictions. Again, aspects which were rated as more suitable to employed students rather than to non-employed students were also rated as more central to the employed student identity. These two findings suggest that, similar to the basis of importance, it is aspects unique to employed students that are rated as more central to the employed student identity rather than aspects that differentiate employed from non-employed students. The effect sizes reveal that Distinctiveness and Suitability had small and small-to-medium sized effects on Centrality, respectively.

Does the Employed Student Identity Predict Academic Achievement and Status in Society?

RQ2: After controlling for intergroup differentiation, social identification as a student, and social identification as a worker, does the employed student identity positively predict academic achievement and general status in society?

Next, in order to answer RQ2 we modelled the relationships between intergroup differentiation, the employed student identity, the worker identity and the student identity to both academic achievement and their status in society within a structural equation model¹¹. We included intergroup differentiation, the employed student identity, the worker identity and the student identity as the exogenous (observed) variables in the model and we specified the covariances between them. Next, we included regression paths from all of the exogenous predictors to both academic achievement and status in society as dependent variables and we specified the covariance between the dependent variables as well. As per our pre-registration plan, we estimated the model using maximum likelihood estimation, which allowed us to remove any missing values from the dataset. Therefore, the full model used 154 complete cases from the dataset. We also used bootstrapping with 10,000 samples to correct for any violations of multivariate normality within our data (Field, 2013). Post-hoc analysis of the sample size (obtained using *pwrSEM*; Wang & Rhemtulla, 2021) revealed that the model has sufficient power (.80) to detect the significant results obtained in the models discussing RQ2 and RQ3 below.

The results revealed that none of the exogenous predictors significantly predicted academic achievement. Thus, the full model accounted for only 1.6% of the variation in academic achievement scores. However, the employed student identity was significantly and

¹¹ Although we did not specify in our pre-registration plan that we will include both sets of relationships in one model (between academic achievement and the exogenous predictors, and between status in society and the exogenous predictors, respectively) to simplify the model.

positively associated with status in society scores ($b = .23, p = .01$). This meant that the more employed students endorsed the employed student identity, the higher they thought their status in society was. The standardised coefficient of .23 is classified as a small-to-medium sized effect following the guidelines of Cohen (1988). None of the other exogenous variables were significantly associated with status in society. The full model accounted for 5.4% of the variation in status in society scores. The full model can be seen in Figure 1 below.

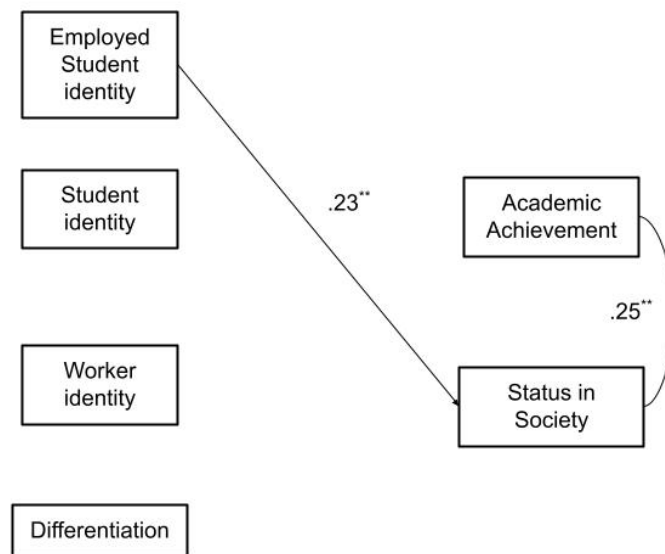


Figure 1. Structural Equation Model of Whether the Three Identities and Intergroup Differentiation Predict Academic Achievement and Status in Society. $N = 154$. The covariances between the exogenous predictors were specified in the model but are omitted from the figure for brevity. Only significant paths are presented.

*** $p < .01$*

Do Identity Incompatibility and Superordinate Group Prototypicality Predict the Three Identities, Intergroup Differentiation, Academic Achievement, and Status in Society?

RQ3: Are identity incompatibility and superordinate group identification positively associated with the employed student identity, academic achievement, and general status in society?

Addressing RQ3, we then wanted to explore whether superordinate group prototypicality and identity incompatibility were associated with the three identities and intergroup differentiation, and subsequently, associated with academic achievement and status in society. To do this, we extended the model in Figure 1 by including identity incompatibility and superordinate group prototypicality as exogenous predictors and specified the covariance between those two constructs. We then included the regression paths from identity incompatibility to the three identities, intergroup differentiation, academic achievement, and status in society. Finally, we also included the regression paths from superordinate group prototypicality to the three identities, intergroup differentiation, academic achievement, and status in society. Due to missing values, we used 154 employed students in this exploratory model and used maximum likelihood estimation to remove the missing values listwise. The model was then bootstrapped using 10,000 bootstrap samples.

As in the previous model, none of the specified predictors were significantly associated with academic achievement. Similarly, neither identity incompatibility nor superordinate group prototypicality were significantly associated with employed student identification, suggesting that neither more conflict between the identities of worker and student nor more endorsement of the employed student group as better representative of the overarching group of students made employed students endorsing the employed student identity more. However, employed student identification was still significantly and positively associated with status in society scores ($b = .22, p = .01$), suggesting that the more employed students endorsed the employed student identity, the higher their status in society was. Superordinate group prototypicality was also significantly, positively and directly associated with status in society scores ($b = .17, p = .043$), suggesting that the more employed students thought employed students represented the overarching group of students better, the higher their status in society was. Identity incompatibility was significantly and positively associated

with intergroup differentiation scores ($b = .45, p < .001$), suggesting that a higher sense of conflict between the identities of being a worker and a student led to employed students feeling more different from non-employed students. Similarly, identity incompatibility was significantly and negatively associated with student identification scores ($b = -.26, p = .003$) and with worker identification scores ($b = -.27, p = .001$), indicating that the more sense of conflict employed students feel between the identities of being a worker and a student, the less they endorse either identity. The standardised coefficients presented above are classified as small-to-medium effects following Cohen's (1988) guidelines, with the exception of the effect of identity incompatibility on intergroup differentiation, which is classified as a medium-to-large effect size. Altogether, the model explained 2.7% of the variance in academic achievement scores, and 10.00% of the variance in status in society scores. This model is illustrated in Figure 2.

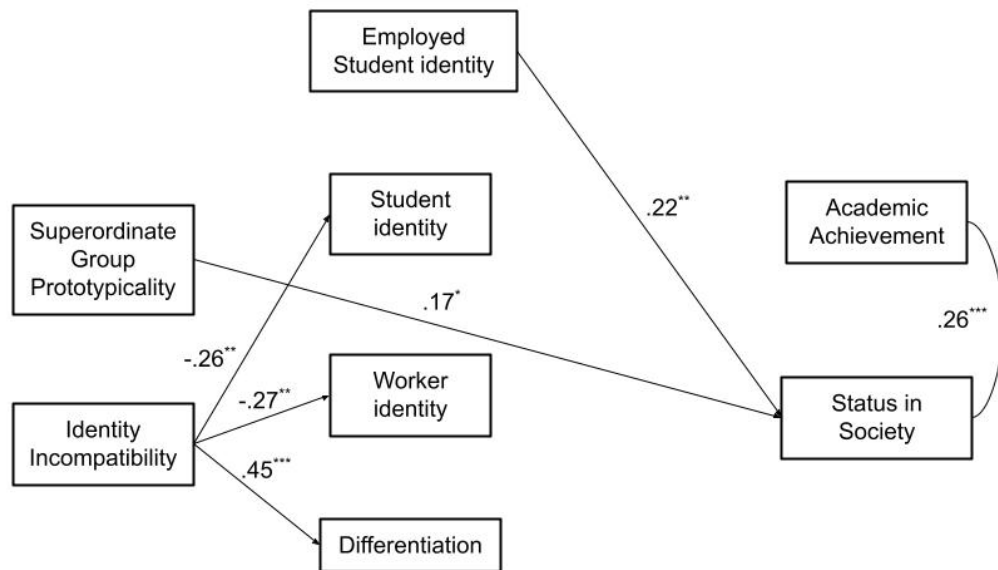


Figure 2. Structural Equation Model of Whether Superordinate Group Prototypicality and Identity Incompatibility Predict the Three Identities and Intergroup Differentiation. $N = 154$. The covariances between the exogenous predictors, as well as the covariances between the three identities, and between those and intergroup differentiation were specified in the model but are omitted from the figure for brevity. Only significant paths are presented.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Discussion

Within a sample of 215 employed students in the UK, the present study sought to explore whether aspects of the employed student experience which satisfy the motives of distinctiveness and suitability were positively associated with those aspects' importance and centrality to the employed student social identity. Considering the differences between

employed students, we were also interested in exploring what the antecedents and correlates of the employed student identity are.

Regarding the first aim of our research, our results revealed that ratings of aspects' distinctiveness were negatively associated with ratings of aspects' importance and centrality. Therefore, our results suggest that if aspects of the employed student identity make employed students more distinct from non-employed students, then these aspects are also rated as less important and central to the employed student identity. Although this is a surprising finding, we can offer a potential theoretical explanation for this effect. Because students might find themselves distinct from non-employed students due to differences in experiences, normative behaviours, or values, it is likely that they often experience such differences as aversive and, in fact, *want* to view themselves as typical, non-employed students. This proposition is supported as the employed students ranked the non-employed student group on average as more representative of the general student populace. As such, if the non-employed experience is preferred and desirable for employed students, then it is understandable that aspects that differentiate the two groups in a more symbolic manner are experienced as less important or central in the employed students' self-concept. Thus, future research should consider more explicitly whether employed students actively *want* to be distinctive from non-employed students, or whether certain aspects of their experience simply allow them to protect their self-concept against negative intergroup comparisons. It should be noted however that because the effect sizes of distinctiveness as a predictor of both importance and centrality were negligible-to-small, considering aspects that distinguish employed students from non-employed students to a greater extent might not mean that such aspects become much more important and central to the employed student identity.

Conversely, our results revealed that aspect suitability ratings were positively associated with their centrality and importance ratings. This and the previous result paint an

interesting picture – whereas aspects which differentiate employed from non-employed students in a more symbolic manner are experienced as less central and important to the employed student identity, more practical aspects of the employed student experience become more important and central to that identity. Thus, we opine that those aspects to which non-employed students are less or not privy to at all could form the protective mechanisms that shield employed students from negative intergroup comparisons. Thinking ahead, the results indicate that future research and employment practitioners should focus more exclusively on discovering aspects of the employed student experience which are deemed more suitable to employed students. Due to the negligible-to-small effects of suitability as a predictor of both importance and centrality however, we advise that finding more suitable elements of the employed student experience may only lead to small increments in the extent to which these aspects are felt as important or central to employed students. Nonetheless, in line with our previous research (*blinded*, 2022b), such aspects could serve a vital protective role against negative intergroup comparisons and associated detrimental social consequences such as exclusion, loneliness, and leaving university.

Shifting our focus to the between-participants level, our results revealed that the employed student identity was positively associated with subjective social status in society scores. Thus, this result suggests that the employed student identity does not only serve a protective function against frictional relations with colleagues or negative comparisons with non-employed students, but that it is also linked with an enhanced view of oneself in society at large. As such, adopting the employed student identity can have long-lasting effects for how students view themselves in society even beyond their time at university and promote a larger narrative around employed students as resilient members of society. Thus, we implore future research to investigate this effect further as it could lead to positive implications for the adoption of the employed student identity and for the different way in which employed

students could perceive their standing in society. At present, however, the results of our models indicate that the employed student identity only has a small effect on increasing employed students' status in society, which suggests that fostering employed student identification could be undertaken in conjunction with other strategies to increase employed students' status in society.

Nonetheless, none of the three identities or intergroup differentiation were significantly associated with academic achievement in our initial model. This result suggests that adoption of the employed student identity, at least by itself, does not offer employed students a resiliency which they can apply to their studies. The same was the case for the larger student identity - as per our postulation, the student identity is a general identity which is based on the student's relationship with other students. In contrast to discipline identification (Smyth et al., 2017), which refers to the behaviours and norms associated with being a student in a particular discipline; the larger student identity does not necessarily lend itself to positive study behaviours and norms, which could help to explain why this, and the employed student identity were not associated with employed students' academic achievement.

Contrary to expectations, our final analysis did not suggest that employed students' sense of superordinate group prototypicality or identity incompatibility were associated with employed student identity scores. The lack of relationship between superordinate group prototypicality and employed student identification is rather surprising as our previous research suggested that ascribing the employed student group a higher status within the overarching student collective could lead to further identification with the employed student identity (*blinded*, 2022a). Our explanation for this null result centres around a familiar premise – if employed students strive to be perceived as similar to non-employed students, then that would not lead them to identify more strongly with the employed student identity.

We suggest that this is especially the case if the employed student experience is devalued in comparison to the non-employed student experience as in this scenario being an employed student could be a devalued identity. Nonetheless, as we did not measure whether employed students actively strived to be similar to employed students, we are not able to shed additional light on this proposition. Thus, we implore researchers to prioritise exploring whether this is the case, and what are the social, academic, and comparative implications of employed students striving (or not) to be similar to non-employed students.¹²

Nonetheless, one silver lining in our results was that superordinate group prototypicality was found to work in conjunction with the employed student identity as both were positively associated with status in society scores. Thus, even if ascribing the employed student group a higher status did not lead to increases in identification, ascribing one's own group a higher status signals a positive view of who the employed student is in society at large, albeit to a small extent as evidenced by its small effect size. We encourage further research into this area as the mechanisms through which employed students come to recognise their group as a better representative of the overarching student populace are as of yet unknown. Such an exploration however could serve to indirectly promote the self-view of employed students as important members of society via superordinate group prototypicality.

Similar to the superordinate group prototypicality finding, identity incompatibility was not linked to employed student identification. We originally theorised that the tension between the worker and student identities in the self-concept could be beneficial for the adoption of an integrated identity, however, our results seem to suggest that identification as an employed student is an independent process from the other relationships between identities in the self-concept. Altogether, as we were not able to provide conclusive evidence for

¹² We also implore other researchers to be cognizant of the financial situation of employed students – although striving to be like employed students might be a goal for a lot of them, we opine that doing so might put these students at a further, and in some cases, unsurmountable financial disadvantage.

superordinate group prototypicality and identity incompatibility as antecedents of the employed student identity, we urge other theorists to consider other factors which could encourage or limit the adoption of this identity. As elucidated by the results of this study, doing so could have important knock-on implications for employed students' status in society.

Nonetheless, identity incompatibility was importantly associated with small-to-medium effect size decreases in the strength of identification with both the student and the worker identity, as well as increases in intergroup differentiation from non-employed students. The first two results point to the importance of normative conflict which arises from adoption of both the colleague and the student identities – in line with Iyer et al. (2009), the adoption of two incompatible identities in the self-concept network lead employed students to identify less strongly with either of them. Indeed, lower identification with either the student or the colleague identity could be associated with not attending extracurricular activities (Kuh, 1995) or increased isolation and loneliness (Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). Looking ahead, these results showcase the importance of reducing the normative conflict between the colleague and student identities. Although combining studying with employment is becoming increasingly normative at the tertiary level (Quintini, 2015), researchers and practitioners could look at different ways of decreasing incompatibility in order to boost or maintain students' levels of identification with their colleagues and other students.

A heightened sense of identity incompatibility was also associated with medium-sized increases in intergroup differentiation. This result points to a self-other cycle of differentiation – we posit here that the differences in norms between the two identities can lead to increased perception amongst employed students that they are different from non-employed students, and consistent with behavioural confirmation effects (Snyder & Swann, 1978), could cause employed students to perceive the identities of being a worker and being a

student as further incompatible. Admittedly, however, such a postulation is beyond the scope of the current research and as such we urge future researchers to examine potential bidirectional effects of identity incompatibility on intergroup differentiation as, through the experiences of employed students, such research could prove valuable in bridging the gap between self and intergroup identity processes.

Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

Our results could have been impacted due to three methodological considerations. Firstly, we diverged from previous studies and split the *distinctiveness* motive into measuring the aspects' distinctiveness and suitability for employed students, respectively. In doing so, however, we acknowledge that our measure of suitability should be interpreted with some caution. Although we aimed to emphasise the comparison between non-employed and employed students when measuring how suitable an aspect is for employed students, our measure does not discriminate between whether an aspect is suitable at all for employed students or whether it is more suitable to either group. To exemplify this, our preselected aspect *Having fun* was ranked as more suitable for non-employed students (see Appendix C for more information), yet our measure does not allow us to ascertain how suitable that aspect is for employed students only. We thus implore future research to separate the comparative aspect of suitability from its valence aspect methodologically in order to provide more evidence for the effect of suitability on aspects' importance and centrality.

We were also not able to establish the order of causation between the different constructs measured in the current study as our research employed a cross-sectional online survey. Thus, although the link between distinctiveness and importance and centrality in identity construction has been previously established (Becker et al., 2012), we cannot confidently state that it is not their importance and centrality that predict how distinctive the identity aspects become to the employed student. Similarly, although we positioned the

employed student identity (as well as the other identities and intergroup differentiation) in the centre of our nomological network, it is equally likely that employed students' perceptions of their status in society drive the increase in adoption of the employed student identity, or that adopting the identity is a necessary condition for believing that one's group is best representative of the larger student category. As such, we suggest that future research examines these relationships longitudinally (akin to Easterbrook & Vignoles, 2012) in order to provide further evidence for the results obtained in the current study.

Finally, we also focused on just the motive of distinctiveness from the six different identity motives for identity construction (Vignoles et al., 2006). Our results then suggested that distinctiveness was negatively associated with both importance and centrality ratings – as such, it is possible that employed students *want to* be treated similarly and actively belong to the non-employed student collective. If this is indeed the case, then future research should also consider measuring the motive of *belonging* (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). We suppose that, if employed students do want to be treated on par with non-employed students, then identity aspects that satisfy the motive of belonging (but not distinctiveness) could be cognitively experienced as more central and important to who employed students are.

Conclusion

Using data from 215 UK university employed students, this study sought to investigate whether satisfying the motives of distinctiveness and suitability made these identity aspects more important or central to the employed student identity. Through the use of multilevel modelling, we found that aspects which satisfy the motive of distinctiveness were negatively associated with their importance and centrality to the employed student identity whereas the suitability of aspects to employed students was positively associated with their importance and centrality to the employed student identity. On the between-participants level, we also wanted to explore what the antecedents and correlates of the

employed student identity were. Our results revealed that only the employed student identity and superordinate group prototypicality were positively associated with status in society whereas identity incompatibility was positively associated with intergroup differentiation, and negatively associated with the student identity and with the colleague identity. The combination of these results has thus offered important theoretical underpinnings for future research. Firstly, we have advanced the discussion of identity aspects in the formation of the employed student identity and offered an extension of current theoretical avenues for social identity formation. Secondly, we have revealed the importance of enhancing the employed student identity and superordinate group prototypicality in promoting employed students' sense of their status in society. Finally, we have also highlighted the possible role of identity incompatibility in increasing intergroup differentiation, which could result in a self-other circle of differentiation. It is our hope that future research will explore these considerations in further detail, all with the aim of improving the experience of employed students and its social, academic, and comparative outcomes.

Chapter 5: Is Part-Time Work a Demotivating Factor in Applying to High-Status Universities in the UK?

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Abstract

Previous research has largely neglected the role that anticipating needing to have a part-time job while at university could have on sixth-form and college students' choices about which prospective universities to apply to. To address this gap in the literature, in

Studies 1 and 2 we investigated whether economic, academic, and social factors related to part-time employment at university were associated with the league table position of 16–18-year-old students' first choices of UK universities they intended to apply to. The results of Study 2's structural equation model ($n = 260$) revealed that anticipated academic struggles were negatively associated with university choice, whereas the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities was positively associated with university choice. In Study 3, we presented the website of a fictitious high-status university and manipulated the percentage of students who were employed at this university – we provided either no information about employed students ($n = 148$), information stating that 33% of the current students were employed ($n = 149$), or information stating that 66% of the current students at that university were employed ($n = 141$) - in order to experimentally test the effect of whether seeing such information affects students' desire to apply to that university. However, the results of Study 3 revealed no impact of the manipulation on students' willingness to apply to that university. The combined results of these studies point to a need to consider important social and academic factors related to part-time employment together to understand sixth-form students' university choices.

Keywords: working students, UK, university choice, academic struggles, percentage of employed students, willingness to apply

Is Part-time Work a Demotivating Factor in Applying to High-Status Universities in the UK?

Going to university in the UK is one of the ways in which upward social mobility is achieved (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006). Those who go on to acquire an award from a tertiary education institution earn a median income of £34,000 per annum (Graduate labour market statistics, Reporting Year 2019, 2020), compared to £25,000 per annum for school-leavers. Furthermore, if one attends a more prestigious university, this sum rises to £40,960 at peak earning age in comparison to earning a degree from a less prestigious university (£35,520). Coupled with better job prospects after graduation (Hussain et al., 2009), places at more prestigious universities in the UK should be highly sought-after and ultimately lead on to a high social status and fulfilling jobs (Ehrenberg, 2005, as cited in Hazelkorn, 2013).

However, students' actual university choices do not necessarily reflect such aspirations for upward social mobility (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019). For example, students from higher socio-economic backgrounds (characterised by higher levels of parental education and upper bracket of family income) are more likely to apply to high-status universities in comparison to students from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Jerrim et al., 2015; Jetten et al., 2008; Pugsley, 1998; Reay, 1996). Findings such as these reveal that applicants of lower socio-economic status often choose not to apply to the top-ranked universities in the UK, even if they have the academic credentials to do so. This begets the question - if top-ranked tertiary institutions in the UK offer the highest potential for upward social mobility, why are students of the highest need bypassing the opportunity to achieve such a standard of living? Thus, this area of research is underlined by a key question - what aspects of the experience at top-ranked universities are discouraging students from applying to them?

One factor that could contribute to this disparity in applications to high-status universities is the need to undertake paid employment during university (Curtis & Shani, 2002). Whilst hardly a new phenomenon (Hakim, 1998), recent representative statistics suggest that over half of the undergraduate student population in the UK is engaged in some kind of part-time paid work (Quintini, 2015). However, some qualitative evidence suggests that students are more likely to work at low-status universities (Hutchings & Archer, 2001; Reay et al., 2010) as most low-status universities offer flexible teaching delivery and cater to the needs of non-traditional students (Cooper, 2018). Therefore, considering undertaking employment whilst studying at university could make prospective students choose low-status universities as best suited for them to combine employment and studying.

The current research aims to investigate whether factors related to having a paid job at university could deter prospective students—especially those who expect to be employed—from applying to top universities. In the following sections, we will present the social and economic factors related to part-time employment which could impact prospective students' university choices.

Types of Universities in the UK

Universities in the UK can be broadly divided into three distinct categories. Firstly, there are Oxford and Cambridge, which are traditional universities that were established in the middle of the last millennium. These universities attract students with high academic achievement at A-level and are at the top of most established rankings for nearly all subjects (University League Tables 2020, 2019). They also have the largest endowments of all universities in the UK (£3 billion each) whereas all other universities have a combined endowment of £2 billion (Salek, 2013, as cited in Boliver, 2015).

The second category comprises those highly selective universities in the UK (from here on - high status) from the Russell Group and the now-defunct 1994 group. Access to

studying at these institutions requires students to achieve high A-level grades or equivalent awards and these institutions score near the top in most rankings for study subjects (Boliver, 2015). Students who attend these universities also have higher academic demands placed on them in comparison to students who attend lower-status universities.

Finally, the last group of universities are commonly referred to as post-1992 universities (from here on - low status). These are relatively new universities who pride themselves on teaching quality (as opposed to producing world-leading research) and, in some cases, their flexible approach to teaching delivery (Boliver, 2015).

Differences between these categories of universities could help to explain why students might apply to low-status universities. For students who consider combining employment and studying at university, having flexible contact times and a lower academic workload at university could make low-status universities more attractive to apply to. Furthermore, the differences between the types of universities could also prompt students to consider social factors which are related to employment. We outline these social factors next.

Social Reasons to Not Attend High-Status Universities

Social Fit

Combining employment and studying at university has been previously found to result in lower participation in extracurricular activities (Kuh et al., 2007) and feelings of being excluded by other students (Christie et al., 2001; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006). Therefore, students might feel like they will not *fit socially* at university, particularly if they expect to have a heavy academic workload, which is the case at high-status universities. The work of Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019) revealed that anticipatory social fit at a high-status university was positively associated with students' intentions to apply to that university, even after academic grades were taken into account. However, if students expect to not fit in socially at university due to combining employment with studying, then they might choose to

apply to low-status universities which they may perceive as being less academically demanding. We predict this to be specifically the case for students who expect to work for pay during their time at university.

Permeability of Universities Towards Employed Students

Similarly, the perceived attitude of high-status universities towards employment could also be associated with students applying to low-status universities. In his report, Hanton (2017) discusses how high-status universities from the Russell Group offer guidelines for how many hours their students should work for pay per week to reduce any negative effects on their academic achievement and satisfaction. Even more strictly, Oxford and Cambridge (collectively known as Oxbridge) strongly advise their students against part-time work and students have to gain the permission of their academic advisors to combine work and study (Skills and work experience | University of Oxford, 2020). While it is evident that the different types of universities have different stances on combining employment and study, these differences in *permeability* towards employed students—that is, whether universities are perceived as being open to students who are employed while they study—could make students feel that combining employment and studying is not encouraged at high-status universities and could negatively impact students' decisions to apply to them. Thus, in our present research, we sought to explore whether perceived permeability towards employed students would be positively associated with students' university choices for students who expected to have to work for pay at university.

Employment as a Normative Behaviour at University

Because high-status universities may deter students from combining working and studying, it is also possible that students may perceive that more students are employed at low-status universities than at high-status universities. Thus, the number of employed students could also serve as an important *social norm* for how appropriate it is to combine

employment and studying at high- and low-status universities (Cialdini, 2001). In support of this assertion, Reay et al. (2001a) reveals how such information is shared amongst students in further education institutions, which we posit could create a norm among students who expect to work for pay at university of applying to the universities that are commonly known to support employed students, most of which are low-status universities. Indeed, previous literature suggests that low-status universities attract more employed students (Hutchings & Archer, 2001; Reay et al., 2010). Therefore, prospective students who expect to work for pay may view low-status universities as more desirable due to having a larger proportion of employed students, who are likely to be more similar to themselves. In order to explore this assertion, we asked prospective students in the current research what percentage of students they thought were employed at low-status universities, but also at high-status universities. We predict that the percentage of employed students at low-status universities will correlate negatively with their university choice. We also predict that the percentage of employed students at high-status universities will correlate positively with their university choice. We also predict that these correlations will only hold for prospective students who would expect to be employed at university – that is, we expect that the percentage of employed students would be only important to students who expect to hold a paid job during their studies.

Academic and Economic Concerns

In addition to social factors related to employment, students also have to weigh up the financial cost of university and the academic cost of having a job (Callender, 2008; Hanton, 2017). In terms of the latter, a considerable amount of research in the UK has linked part-time work at university to negative academic achievement (Broadbridge & Swanson, 2006; Clemmensen & Harder, 2015; Curtis & Shani, 2002; Silver & Silver, 1997, Winn & Stevenson, 1997). Combined with evidence that some students commence employment as early as secondary school (Reay et al., 2001a), it is proposed here that students will a) be

aware of the academic cost of having a job at university and b) weigh up the academic cost of having a job and choose their university according to best fit. In support of the latter, Brooks (2003) reveals how students' concerns about their academic workload at university increase if they are thinking of applying to a high-status university. As such, we posit that if students are already concerned about having a high academic workload at high-status universities, then having to work for pay could deter even high-achieving students from choosing high-status universities. Therefore, if all students anticipate that they will struggle academically with a job at university, we predict that they will choose to apply to a low-status university in order to have a lighter academic workload. Such considerations might also be of increased importance for students who actively expect to work for pay while at university as struggling academically may be even more of a concern for them when they apply to high-status universities.

Monetary concerns may also influence students' choices of universities to apply to. As alluded to above, whilst having a job could impede their academic progress, not having a job could severely impact the funds students in the UK have to pay for their bills, transport and food (Barke, 2000). According to a UK-wide representative survey (Murray, Save the Student, 2021), students currently spend on average, around £800 per month, which means that only the maximum government loan which only students from the most humble backgrounds receive (£9,706) would cover an average student's monthly expenses. As such, students may also factor anticipated money struggles in their decision to apply to certain types of universities. This is especially pertinent for students who would expect to work for pay because attending local, low-status universities allows them to keep their existing job (Reay, 2001b). Thus, students may choose low-status universities in order to engage in cost-cutting behaviours (such as living with parents or studying locally to preserve their current

employment) if they are not sure they will be able to work at high-status universities which are located away from home (Kaye & Bates, 2017).

The Present Study

At present, no study has looked at whether factors related to getting employment at university act as a barrier for students to apply to high-status universities. To address this, in Study 1 we explored whether anticipated social fit, perceived permeability of universities towards employed students, perceptions of the number of employed students (all three measured separately for Oxbridge, high-status and low-status universities), as well as anticipated money and academic struggles at university as a whole impacted prospective students' decision to apply to high-status universities. We also test whether these factors were more important for the university choices of students who expected to combine employment and studying at university. A conceptual model of our investigation is presented in Figure 3.

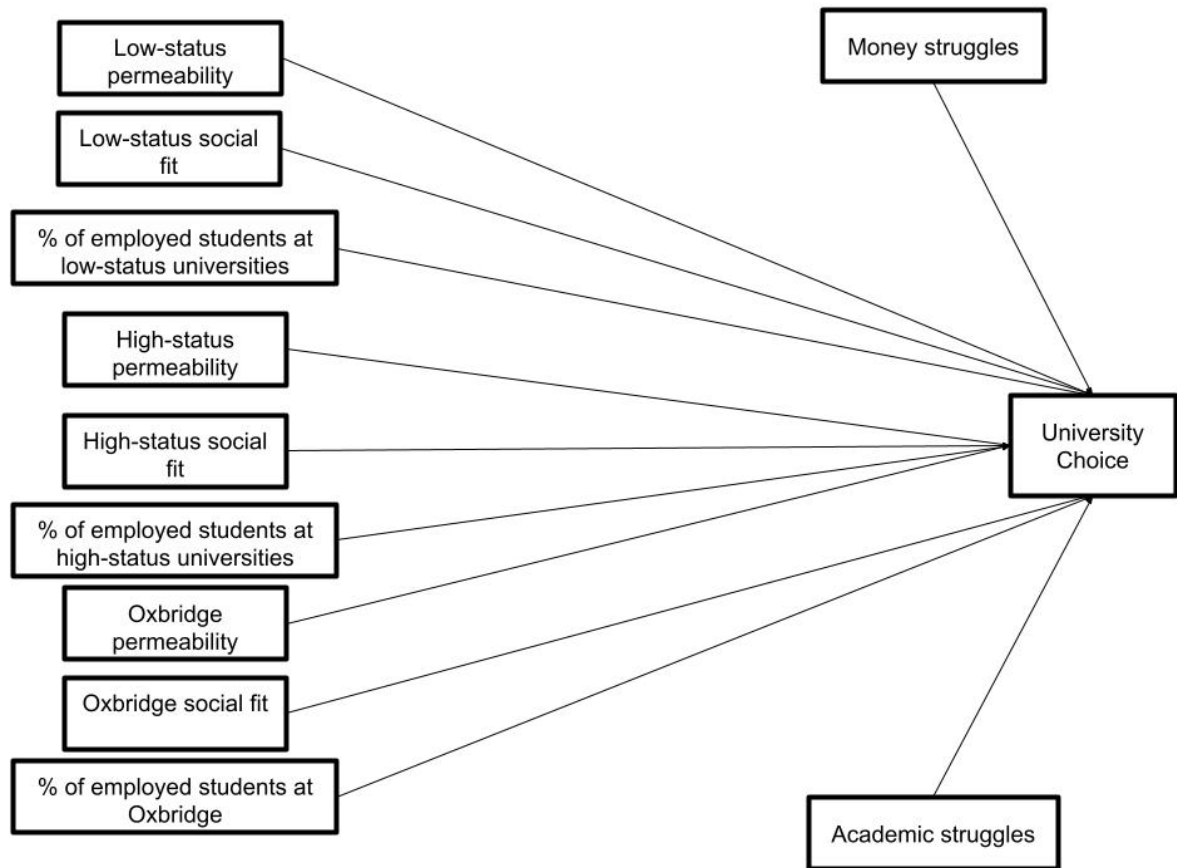


Figure 3. Conceptual Model for Study 1. Note. Age, Gender, Parental Education and Current Working Hours are included in the model as control variables but omitted here for brevity.

Study 1

Method

Participants

Four hundred and fifty-one UK sixth form and college students (typically 16-18 years old) were recruited. Firstly, all cases which had no data on their choices of university were excluded from the data, resulting in a dataset of 282 unique cases. The remaining 282 participants were between 16 and 61 years of age ($M = 17.39$, $SD = 2.74$). The sample was predominantly female (72.70%, $n = 205$), although 25.20% ($n = 71$) of respondents identified as male and 2.10% ($n = 6$) as another gender. The sample was also predominantly composed of White-British participants ($n = 230$, 81.60%). One hundred and sixty-two participants indicated they are currently employed (57.90%) and an additional 33 participants stated that they had previously held a paid position (11.80%). Participants who were currently employed averaged 12 hours of paid employment per week ($SD = 6.68$). When asked whether they will get a job at university, 46.10% ($n = 130$) of all participants answered *definitely yes* and a further 33.30% ($n = 94$) answered *probably yes*.

Materials

Every participant completed an online questionnaire using Qualtrics. The questionnaire was composed of nine blocks of questions.

Demographic Information. Participants were asked to indicate their age, gender and ethnicity.

Socio-economic Status. Participants' subjective socio-economic status was measured through two items ("What is the highest academic qualification your mother has obtained?" and "What is the highest academic qualification your father has obtained?") (Rubin & Wright, 2015). Participants answered those items on a scale ranging from "No formal education" to "Doctoral degree (PhD/DPhil) or equivalent". An additional scale point "I don't

have a father (mother)/ I don't know” was used if the question was not applicable to the participant. For all analyses, father’s education was used first and mother’s education was used only if the respondent did not know their father’s education.

University Choice. Participants were asked to provide their first three choices of universities (compulsory) and additional two choices (if applicable). The choices were then transformed into a numeric value based on the place of the university in the Complete University Guide’s 2019/2020 table (University League Tables 2020, 2019) with higher scores indicating a better position in the table. For all analyses, we were interested in respondents’ preferred destination, so used only the ranking of the respondent’s first choice of university.

Current Working Hours. Participants were asked to indicate how many hours per week they worked (“How many hours per week do you work on average?”) and respondents could input a numerical value. If respondents were employed at multiple places, they were told to add up all of their working hours. All current non-working students were assigned a value of 0 in the final dataset.

Anticipated Money Struggles. Participants were asked three questions about their anticipated struggle for money if they did not have a part-time job at university. This scale was built based on a previous financial concern scale in anticipation of university expenses (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019), however the questions were rewritten to relate to the lack of part-time employment specifically (e.g., “Compared to going to university and having a part-time job, how much would you struggle to find money to socialise if you went to university and did NOT have a part time job?”). The students answered each question using four-point scales with appropriate anchors (e.g., “I would struggle very much more without a part-time job” [1] to “I would struggle about the same without a part-time job” [4]). The resultant scale had an adequate internal reliability ($\alpha = .73$), and a mean score was calculated for each

participant with a higher score indicating greater anticipated financial struggles if the student were not to hold a part-time job at university.

Anticipated Academic Struggles. Participants were then asked four questions related to their anticipated academic struggles if they had a part-time job at university. This scale was also built as based on a similar scale in Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019) and the questions were rewritten to pertain to having a part-time job at university. An example question from this scale is “Compared to going to university and NOT having a part-time job how much would you struggle with the academic work at university if you DID have a part-time job?” and the students answered each question on a four-point scale with appropriate anchors (e.g., “I would struggle very much more with a part-time job” [1] to “I would struggle about the same with a part-time job” [4]). The resultant scale had an adequate internal reliability ($\alpha = .73$) and a mean score was calculated for each participant with a higher score indicating a greater anticipated academic struggles if the student were to hold a part-time job at university.

Perceptions of Working at University. In this scale, participants answered three questions about how normative they perceived part-time employment is at three different types of universities (low status, high status, Oxbridge). Firstly, we told participants about the differences between the three types of universities in the following manner:

Universities in the UK are often described as being either high-status, low-status, or Oxbridge.

Higher-status UK universities, such as the Russell Group of UK universities, usually require high-grades to get into. They tend to be well-established, heavily focused on research, and prestigious.

Lower-status UK universities usually require lower-grades to get into. Many lower-status universities used to be polytechnic colleges, becoming full universities after a

change in legislation in 1992. They tend to be less established, less focused on research, and less prestigious.

Oxford and Cambridge - known collectively as Oxbridge - are world-leading elite universities. They are among the oldest universities in the world. They require extremely high grades to get in, are very prestigious, and extremely well-established.

Then, in three slider measures (ranging from 0 to 100%), the participants inputted the percentage of undergraduate students they believed are working for pay whilst studying at these universities. An example question was “Considering the information above, what percentage of undergraduate students do you think are employed during term-time at low-status universities?”

Permeability of Universities Towards Employed Students. In this scale, participants were asked three questions which related to the extent with which they agree with statements about the perceived openness of the given type of university (Ellemers et al., 1990) towards employed students (e.g., ‘*High-status universities are open to students who work*’). The questions in this subscale (with different wording) were asked for every type of university (low status, high status, Oxbridge) resulting in three Permeability subscales. Participants answered each question on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. All of the three resultant subscales indicated good internal reliability – low-status permeability ($\alpha = .71$), high-status permeability ($\alpha = .73$) and Oxbridge permeability ($\alpha = .78$). For each subscale, the mean score was then computed and a higher score indicated that students perceived the type of university as more accepting of employed students.

Anticipated Social Fit. In this scale, participants were asked to what extent they agreed with four questions, which were related to employed students’ anticipated fit (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019) at a given type of university (e.g., “Students who work would feel left out of things at high-status universities”). Similar to the Permeability of Universities

scale, the questions in this scale were asked for every type of university (low status, high status, Oxbridge) resulting in three Anticipated Social Fit subscales. As in the Permeability of universities scale, participants answered each question on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. All of the three resultant subscales indicated good internal reliability – low-status anticipated social fit ($\alpha = .75$), high-status anticipated social fit ($\alpha = .82$) and Oxbridge anticipated social fit ($\alpha = .83$). For each subscale, the mean score was then computed and a higher score indicated higher anticipated fit at the given type of university.

Procedure

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the researchers' home institution. Data collection took place between 15th April and 15th May 2019. A recruitment email, which outlined the purposes of the study and contained an online link to the questionnaire, was sent to all sixth-form colleges in England and their respective school coordinators, who were invited to forward the link to our study to their students. Data protection was handled in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2016) principles. The anonymous results of this study will be presented to all participating schools. At the beginning of the questionnaire, all participants indicated that they gave their consent to participate and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity were presented. Participants could also withdraw their data at any point until the results were analysed, but none did so.

Then, the main blocks of the questionnaire were presented in the order outlined in the Materials section. Within each type of university cluster (low-status, high-status, Oxbridge), the two subscales for that cluster (permeability and social fit) were presented in a counterbalanced order. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were debriefed about the purpose of the study and invited to submit their email in a separate survey for one of the four £25 prizes.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

All descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between the constructs of interest are presented in Table 2. All structural equation models were fitted using R 4.0.2 and the *lavaan* package (v0.6-7, Rosseel, 2012). All analyses were performed using maximum likelihood estimation. However, we found that the assumption of multivariate normality in structural equation models (as an extension of the linear regression model, Field (2013)) was not met. Thus, in order to robustly estimate the standardised errors of the parameters in the model and control for the violation of normality, we performed a bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations for every model specified.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for All Variables in Study 1

	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Age	407	17.71	4.00	-															
Gender ^a	407	1.74	0.48	-.01	-														
Parental Education	407	6.59	8.64	.01	.01	-													
Working Hours	407	3.16	1.47	.22***	.03	-.09 ⁺	-												
% Low-status working students	307	64.68	18.44	-.23***	-.10 ⁺	.06	-.05	-											
% High-status working students	307	46.09	19.53	-.11 ⁺	-.05	.05	-.12*	.30***	-										
% Oxbridge working students	302	28.20	22.53	.01	-.04	.00	-.09	-.07	.52***	-									
Oxbridge Permeability	188	3.65	1.37	.01	-.01	-.07	-.06	-.18*	-.17*	.39***	-								
Oxbridge Social Fit	188	3.80	1.35	-.10	-.09	.01	.04	.01	.18*	.35***	.69***	-							
High-status Permeability	289	4.24	1.19	-.15**	-.11 ⁺	-.06	-.07	.04	.26***	.15*	.72***	.44***							
High-status Social Fit	287	4.48	1.20	-.12*	-.13*	.04	-.11 ⁺	.01	.10 ⁺	.02	.22**	.49***	.47***						
Low-status Permeability	282	5.55	1.03	-.05	.08	.09	-.04	.18**	.12*	-.11 ⁺	.04	.06	.25***	.21***	-				
Low-status Social Fit	281	5.21	1.03	-.07	.04	.03	-.07	.17**	.00	-.16**	.06	.13 ⁺	.25***	.39***	.54***				
Money Struggles	340	2.76	0.84	-.01	.00	-.14**	.22***	.08	.00	.08	.04	.05	-.10 ⁺	-.24***	-.06	-.11 ⁺	-		
Academic Struggles	313	2.45	0.78	.18**	.15**	-.02	.00	-.10 ⁺	-.14*	-.04	-.07	-.24**	-.24***	-.30***	-.12*	-.18**	.05	-	
University Choice	282	102.84	30.02	-.02	-.04	.09	-.11 ⁺	.06	.13*	-.02	-.09	-.11	-.02	.06	.03	.09	-.19**	.07	-

^a Coded as 1 for males and 2 for females. ^b All non-employed participants were assigned a value of 0. ⁺ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Model which Includes All Students

As there were less than 10 participants in ethnic categories other than White British and White Other, we excluded ethnicity from the overall model. We also excluded those respondents who did not know the education of either of their parents as well as 3 participants who identified as non-binary. Age, gender, current working hours and socio-economic status were specified as control variables in the model and were allowed to covary between themselves. The covariances between the three percentage of employed student variables were also specified in the model. We also included the covariances between Oxbridge permeability and Oxbridge social fit, high-status permeability and high-status social fit, and low-status permeability and low-status social fit. Finally, we also specified the covariance between anticipated money struggles and anticipated academic struggles.

The specified theoretical model showed a very poor fit with the data ($\chi^2(48) = 240.02$, CFI = .46, RMSEA = .23, SRMR = .16). Due to the high levels of missing data on the Oxbridge-related variables (possibly due to participant fatigue), the model only used 73 cases. This is too few for a structural equation model, so we decided to remove the Oxbridge cluster variables (percentage of employed students at Oxbridge, Oxbridge permeability and Oxbridge social fit) from our analysis. In addition to decreasing the statistical power of the model, these variables did not emerge as significant predictors of university choice.

After removing the Oxbridge cluster variables, the new model ($N = 225$) showed a subpar global fit with the data ($\chi^2(24) = 135.61$, CFI = .67, RMSEA = .14, SRMR = .09). As high-status social fit and permeability and low-status social fit and permeability did not emerge as significant predictors of university choice, we opted to attempt to improve the fit by omitting them from the model. In addition, we omitted any non-significant paths from the control variables to the remaining endogenous variables. This allowed the model to be as parsimonious as possible.

The resultant model ($N = 248$) showed a good global fit with the data ($\chi^2 (12) = 14.46$, $CFI = .97$, $RMSEA = .03$, $SRMR = .03$). Additionally, the model showed a good local fit as all standardised residuals were between -3 and 3 (Kline, 2015). Therefore, Figure 4 presents the final model of Study 1.

Anticipated money struggles ($b = -.18, p = .005$) were significantly associated with university choice whereas anticipated academic struggles ($b = .11, p = .07$) were marginally associated with university choice. In addition, the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities ($b = .14, p = .04$) was also significantly associated with university choice. Finally, as parental education ($b = -.17, p = .007$) and current working hours ($b = .20, p = .002$) were significantly associated with anticipated money struggles, we looked at whether anticipated money struggles was a mediator of the relationships between the former two constructs and university choice. All of the above constitute small-sized effects as discussed by Cohen (1988). We then found a marginally significant indirect effect of parental education on university choice via anticipated money struggles (indirect effect = $.03, p = .06$) and a marginally significant effect of current working hours on university choice via anticipated money struggles (indirect effect = $-.04, p = .07$). Altogether, the model explained 8% of the variance in university choice.

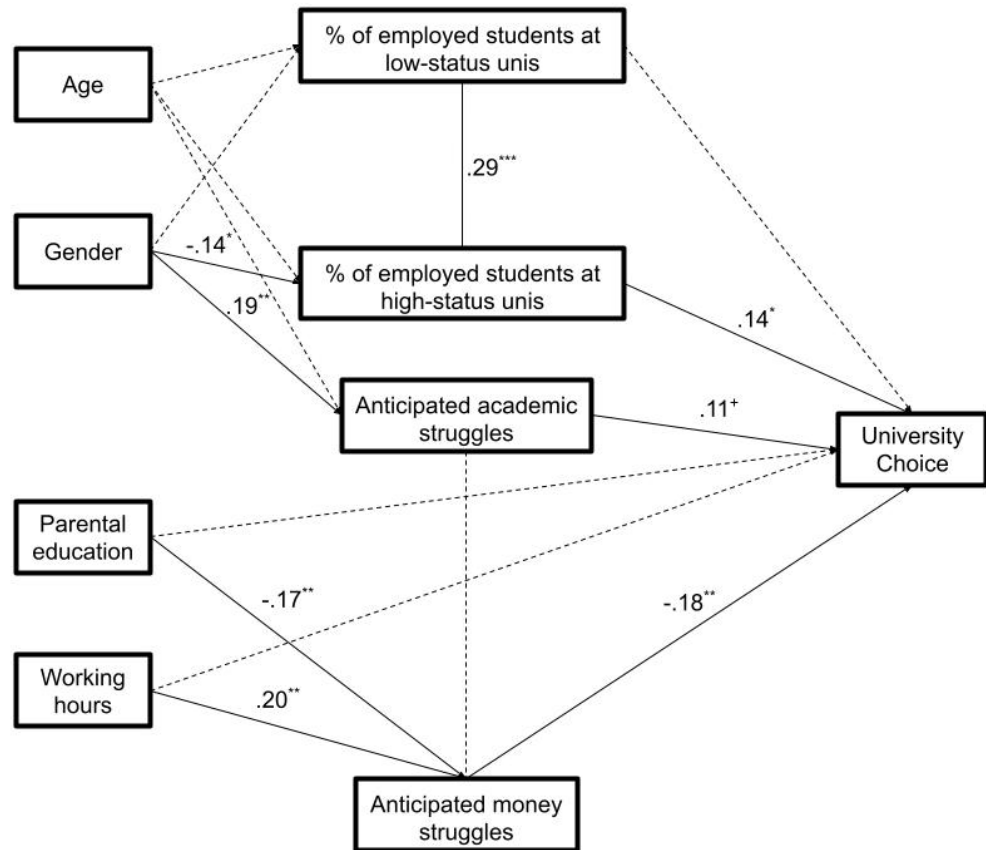


Figure 4. Final Structural Equation Model in Study 1 for All Students. $N = 248$. All path estimates are standardised coefficients. Covariances amongst all exogenous variables were specified in the model but only significant ones are presented.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Model which Includes Only Students Who Intend to Work at University

In order to test whether these correlations were stronger for students who intended to work for pay at university, we tested the final model above with only those students who answered *definitely yes* or *possibly yes* to the question of whether they intended to be employed at university. The resultant model ($N = 199$) showed a good global fit with the data ($\chi^2(12) = 12.44$, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .01, SRMR = .04) and a good local fit as all standardised residuals were between -3 and 3 (Kline, 2015).

We again found that anticipated money struggles were negatively associated with university choice ($b = -.15, p = .02$). The perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities ($b = .18, p = .009$) was also significantly associated with university choice. Parental education was negatively associated with university choice ($b = -.16, p = .03$) whereas current working hours were positively associated with university choice ($b = .16, p = .04$). All of the above indicate small-sized effects as discussed by Cohen (1988). Nonetheless, the indirect effects of parental education ($b = .02, p = .14$) and current working hours ($b = -.02, p = .21$) on university choice via anticipated money struggles were non-significant. Altogether, this model explained 8% of the variance in university choice for students who intended to work at university.

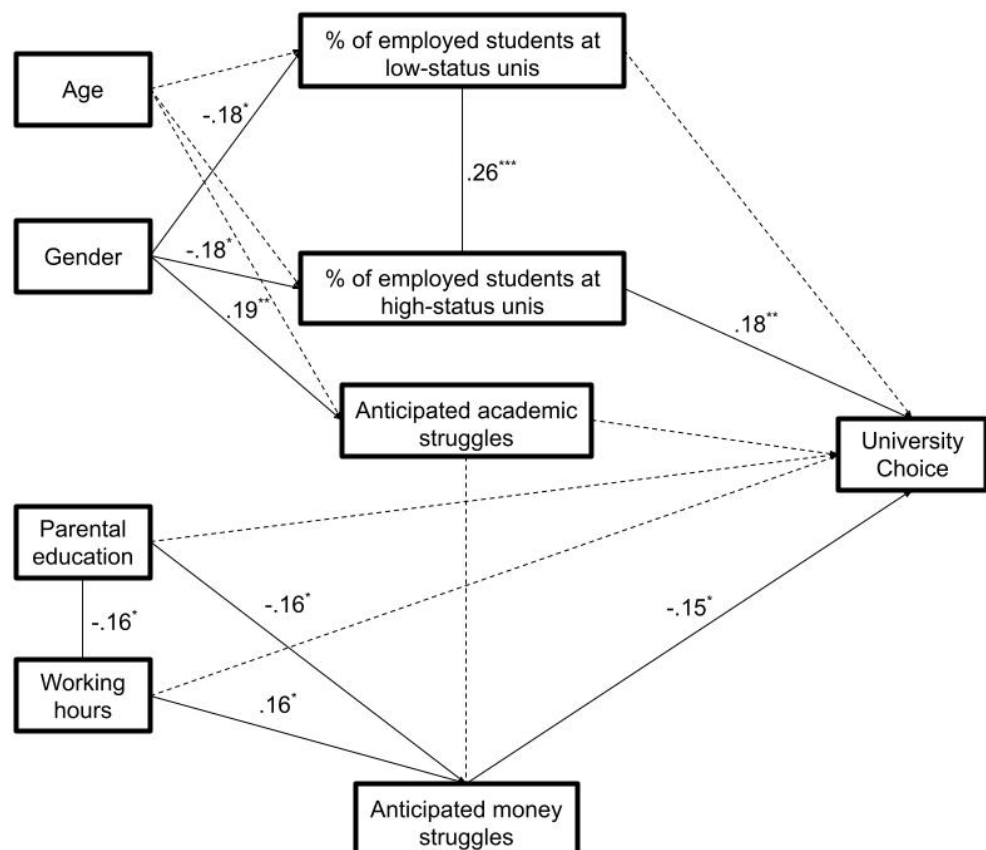


Figure 5. Structural Equation Model in Study 1 for Students who Intend to Work for Pay at University. N = 199. All path estimates are standardised coefficients. Covariances amongst all exogenous variables were specified in the model but only significant ones are presented.

** $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$*

Discussion

In Study 1, we found that anticipated money struggles were negatively associated with university choice both for all students and for those who intended to work for pay at university. Similarly, we found that the perceived percentage of employed students was positively associated with university choice in both models. We also found a marginally significant effect of anticipated academic struggles on university choice in the model which contained all students.

However, two limitations of Study 1 include a) that we did not control for prior academic achievement and b) that we did not measure the impact of having a job on participants' anticipated social struggles at university. In terms of the latter, current research has identified that having a job impacts university students' social life at university (*blinded*, 2022a; Hanton, 2017; Kuh et al., 2007) through the sacrifice of time with friends, extracurricular activities or recreational time. We conceptualised such social struggles as distinct from our measure of social fit in Study 1 as the latter refers largely to a sense of belonging, whereas the former refers to the practical issues that having a job imposes on students' social life. Additionally, and in line with Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019), we sought to include prior academic achievement in order to control for its effect on participants' university choice.

In order to address these limitations, we conducted Study 2. In Study 2, we omitted measuring social fit and permeability altogether as well as measuring the percentage of

employed students at Oxbridge as these did not emerge as significant predictors of university choice. However, we included measures of anticipated social struggles at university and controlled for participants' self-reported scores on their General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) exams, which UK students undertake at completion of secondary school (age 15-16). As such, Study 2 served as a replication and extension of Study 1. We then specified five hypotheses. H1. Perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities positively predicts university choice; H2. Anticipated money struggles negatively predict university choice; H3. There is an indirect effect of parental education on university choice via anticipated money struggles; H4. There is an indirect effect of current working hours on university choice via anticipated money struggles; H5. Anticipated academic struggles positively predicts university choice. We again sought to test these hypotheses separately for all students and only for those students who intended to work for pay at university.

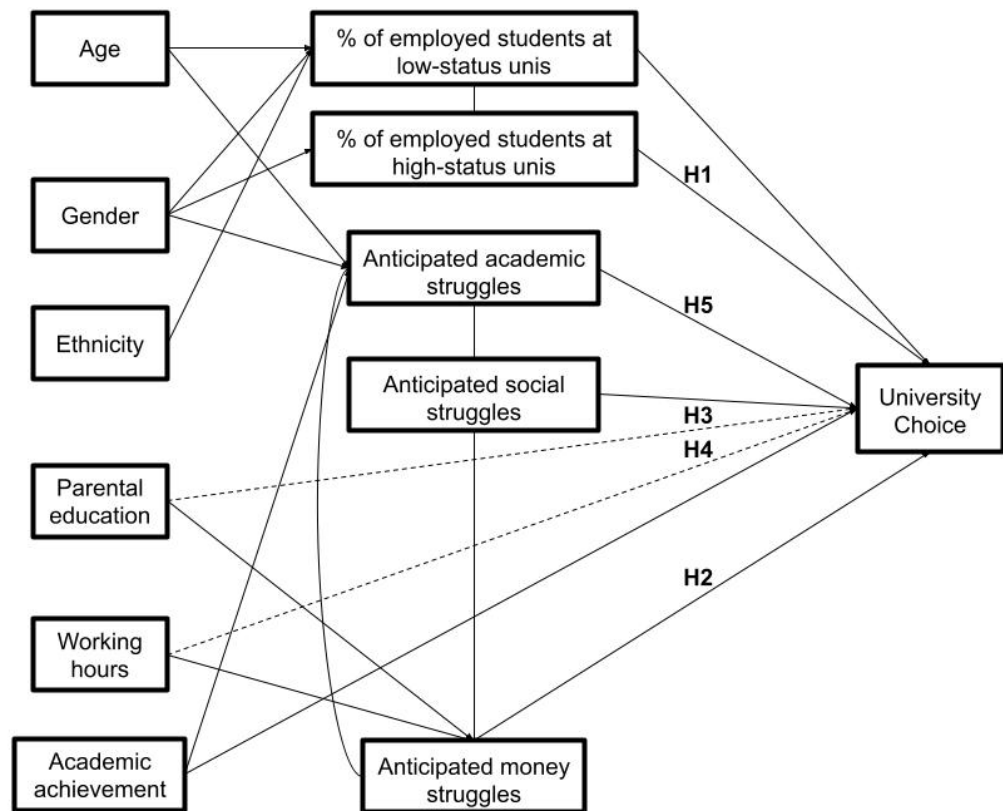


Figure 6. Theoretical Model of Study 2. The covariances between the control (exogenous) variables are specified in the model but omitted here for brevity.

Study 2

Method

Participants

Using the lower end of Kline's (2015) rule of 10-20 participants per parameter in structural equation modelling, we calculated that we have 46 parameters in our model. Multiplying by the lower end of the Kline's (2015) rule - 46×10 - we estimated that we need at least 460 participants for our statistical analysis to yield reliable estimates for our hypotheses. Therefore, we recruited four hundred and eighty-six UK sixth form and college students via an online link, which was sent to their school coordinators. At this point, all cases which had no data on students' choices of university or did not know their parents'

education levels were excluded from analysis, resulting in a dataset of 357 unique cases. The average age of the remaining 357 participants was 17.40 years old ($SD = 2.33$, range – 16- to 35-year-old). The sample was predominantly female (75.10%, $N = 268$) with another 24.40% ($N = 87$) of respondents identified as male and 0.60% ($N = 2$) as another gender. The sample was also predominantly composed of White-British participants ($n = 287$, 80.40%). One-hundred and ninety-five participants indicated that they were currently employed (54.80%) and an additional 85 participants indicated that they had previously held a paid position during the school year or the school holidays (23.90%). Participants who were currently employed averaged 10.34 hours of paid employment per week ($SD = 6.21$). When asked whether they will get a job at university, 54.60% ($n = 195$) of all participants answered *definitely yes* and a further 30.80% ($n = 110$) answered *probably yes*.

Materials

Every participant completed an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was composed of eight blocks of questions. The first three blocks of questions containing questions about participants' demographic information, choices of university and current working hours were identical to those used in Study 1. Thus, we only present the final five blocks of questions.

Anticipated Money Struggles. The same scale from Study 1 was used but two additional questions were included which asked participants about their concerns about rent and food as influenced by the findings of concurrent research (*blinded*, 2022a). All 5 questions in this scale were reverse-scored and the new scale revealed an excellent internal reliability ($\alpha = .83$).

Anticipated Academic Struggles. The same scale was used as in Study 1 and the four items created an internally consistent scale ($\alpha = .82$).

Anticipated Social Struggles. In this study, we added an additional scale, which measured the anticipated impact of working on students' social time and sense of belonging with friends at university. Four items asked participants about their expected ease of socialising if they were to have a part-time job at university (akin to the academic struggles scale). An example question includes "Do you think that having a part-time job at university would make it easier or harder for you to make university friends compared to not having a part-time job?" to which participants could answer on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "If I had a part-time job, I would find it very much harder to make university friends [1]" to "If I had a part-time job, I would find it very much easier to make university friends [4]". All items were reverse-scored prior to analysis. The four items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .74$).

Perceptions of Working at University. In this block of questions, participants were presented with the same information about the types of universities in the UK as in Study 1. They then answered the same two questions from Study 1 about how normative they perceived that part-time employment is at low and high-status universities. The order of the questions in this block was counterbalanced between participants in order to prevent response characteristics.

Prior Academic Achievement. Three questions asked participants about their GCSE grades in English language, English literature and Mathematics, respectively. The three grades were answered on a 1-9 scale with higher scores indicating higher academic achievement and then combined to form a composite score of GCSE academic achievement. The three items formed a reliable scale ($\alpha = .74$).

Procedure

Ethical consent for this study was granted by the researchers' institution. Data collection took place between 30th January and 23rd July 2020. We followed the same

recruitment strategy as the one outlined in Study 1; however, different sixth-form colleges took part in Study 2, which ensures that the same respondents did not complete both Study 1 and Study 2. At the beginning of the questionnaire, all participants indicated that they gave their consent to participate and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity were presented. Participants could withdraw their data at any point until the results were analysed, but none did so. Then, the main blocks of the questionnaire were presented in the order outlined above. At the end of the questionnaire, the participants were thoroughly debriefed about the purpose of the study and invited to include their email in a separate survey for one of the four £25 prizes. Data protection was handled in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2016) principles.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Firstly, we transformed students' first university choice to a numeric value as based on their overall rating in the Complete University Guide's University League Tables 2021 (University League Tables 2021) and then reverse-scored those values so that high-status universities would have the highest values (i.e., University of Cambridge's value was 131). All descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations between the constructs of interest are presented in Table 3. Akin to Study 1, the assumption of multivariate normality was not met, thus we performed bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations to control for the violation of normality in the data and robustly estimate standard errors. However, a post-hoc power calculation (Wang & Rhemtulla, 2021) revealed that the sample size contains only 60% power to detect the results discussed below. The analysis was performed using maximum likelihood estimation. The structural equation model was fitted using R 4.0.2 and the *lavaan* package (v0.6-7, Rosseel, 2012).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations for All Variables in Study 2.

	N	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Age	445	17.32	2.12	-									
Gender ^a	445	1.75	.45	-.03	-								
Parental Education	445	3.13	1.38	-.06	-.06	-							
Current Working Hours ^b	445	4.99	6.75	.07	-.02	-.13**	-						
Grades	371	6.59	1.21	-.15**	.01	.11*	-.09 ⁺	-					
Money Struggles	408	2.78	.79	-.14**	.04	-.19***	.20***	-.16**	-				
Academic Struggles	389	2.21	.72	.09 ⁺	.05	-.06	-.09 ⁺	-.03	.07	-			
Social Struggles	373	4.53	.84	.11*	.05	-.02	.06	.05	.04	.38***	-		
% High University Choice	373	45.36	20.28	-.03	.09 ⁺	.01	-.06	.08	.01	-.06	-.14**	-	
% Low University Choice	373	65.69	16.46	-.02	.13*	-.01	.02	.03	.12*	.04	-.09 ⁺	.15**	-
University Choice	357	101.70	28.48	-.06	-.02	.08	-.05	.43***	-.06	-.12*	-.07	.12*	-.08

^a Coded as 1 for males and 2 for females. ^b All non-employed participants were assigned a value of 0. ⁺ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Model which Includes All Students

As there were less than 10 participants in ethnic categories other than White British and White Other, we again excluded ethnicity from the overall model. The specified theoretical model ($N = 304$) showed a subpar global fit with the data ($\chi^2(23) = 57.87$, CFI = .84, RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .05). However, since we were testing specific hypotheses, the global fit of the model was not our primary concern. Additionally, the model showed a good local fit as all standardised residuals were between -3 and 3 (Kline, 2015). Figure 7 presents the final model.

H1. Perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities positively predicts university choice.

We found support for H1 as the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities ($b = .11$, $p = .04$) was significantly associated with university choice, which suggests that the more employed students that students thought there were at high-status universities, the higher their choice of university to go to was. In contrast to Study 1, the perceived percentage of employed students at low-status universities was also marginally associated with university choice ($b = -.09$, $p = .06$), suggesting that the more employed students that students thought there were at low-status universities, the marginally lower their choice of university to go to was.

H2. Anticipated money struggles negatively predict university choice.

However, the effect of money struggles on university choice was non-significant, suggesting that anticipating having more money struggles without a job at university did not lead students to select a lower-ranked university with their first choice.

H3. There is an indirect effect of parental education on university choice via anticipated money struggles and H4. There is an indirect effect of current working hours on university choice via anticipated money struggles.

The indirect effects of working hours and parental education on university choice via money struggles were also non-significant, which suggests that being employed for more hours per week and having parents with advanced degrees did not lead students to experiencing more or less money struggles, and, in turn, to choose lower-ranked and higher-ranked universities, respectively. However, in contrast to Study 1, parental education had a direct effect ($b = .10, p = .04$) on university choice, which suggests that having parents with more advanced degrees led students to select more higher-ranked universities with their first choice.

H5. Anticipated academic struggles positively predicts university choice.

The effect of anticipated academic struggles on university choice ($b = -.15, p = .02$) was also significant, but negative, which suggests that anticipating to have more academic struggles with a part-time job at university lead students to choose lower-ranked universities with their first choice.

Finally, as predicted, students' GCSE grades were also significantly associated ($b = .41, p < .001$) with university choice, suggesting that students who had higher grades at completing school chose higher-ranked universities with their first choice. Together, all variables explained 25.5% of the variance in university choice, however this is largely driven by the medium-to-large effect of GCSE grades on university choice as all of the other effects discussed above are small-sized effects (Cohen, 1988).

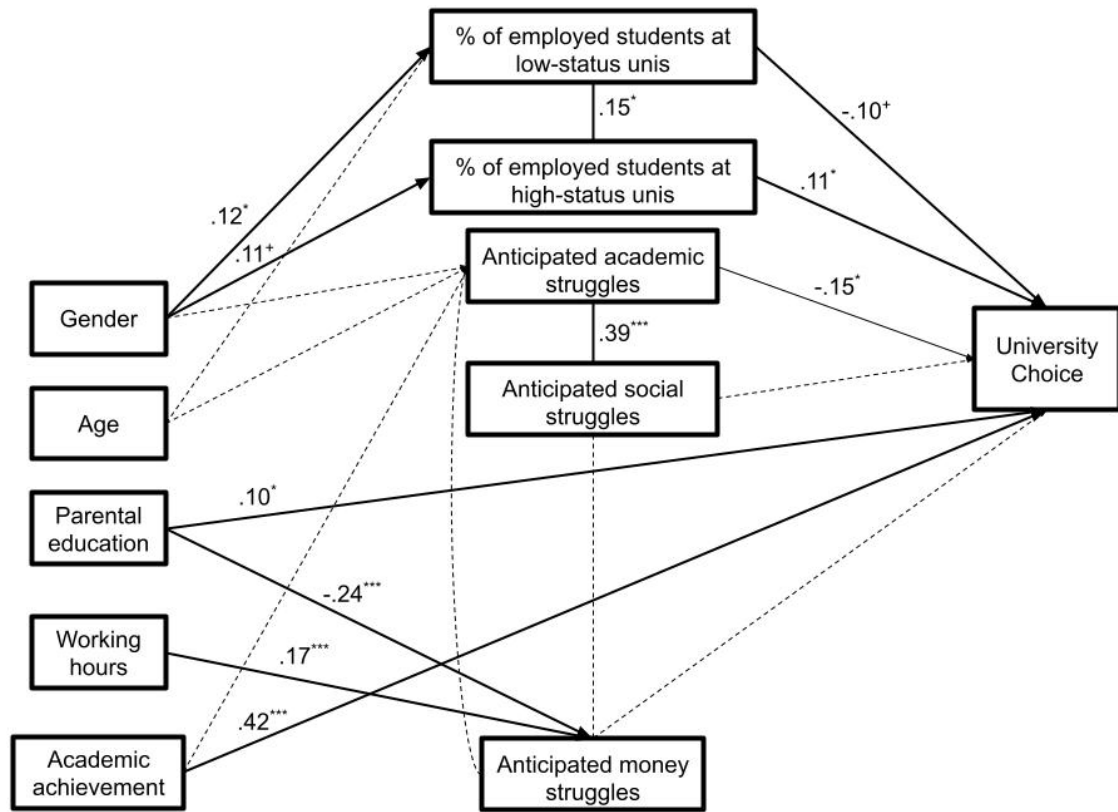


Figure 7. Structural Equation Model for All Students in Study 2. $N = 260$. All path estimates are standardised coefficients. Covariances amongst exogenous variables were specified in the model but omitted from the figure for brevity. The direct paths from Age, Gender and Working Hours to University Choice were specified in the model but omitted here for brevity (all are non-significant)

⁺ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Model which Includes Only Students Who Intend to Work at University

Akin to Study 1, we sought to investigate whether the effects found for all students were stronger for those students who intended to work for pay at university by testing the model in Figure 7 with only those students who answered *definitely yes* or *possibly yes* to the question of whether they intended to be employed at university. The resultant model ($N = 260$) also showed a subpar global fit with the data ($\chi^2(23) = 51.98$, CFI = .84, RMSEA = .07,

SRMR = .06) but a good local fit as all standardised residuals were between -3 and 3 (Kline, 2015).

H1. Perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities positively predicts university choice.

The effect of perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities ($b = .09, p = .12$) was non-significant, suggesting that, for students who intended to work at university, expecting that there are more employed students at high-status universities did not lead to choosing higher-ranked universities.

H2. Anticipated money struggles negatively predict university choice.

The effect of money struggles on university choice was non-significant ($b = -.003, p = .96$), suggesting that, for students who intended to work at university, anticipating to have more money struggles without a job at university did not lead students to select a lower-ranked university with their first choice.

H3. There is an indirect effect of parental education on university choice via anticipated money struggles and H4. There is an indirect effect of current working hours on university choice via anticipated money struggles.

Parental education ($b = -.23, p = .001$) and current working hours ($b = .11, p = .04$) were associated with anticipated money struggles as in Study 1, suggesting that having parents with more advanced degrees and working more hours per week, respectively, led students to anticipate having more and less money struggles without a job at university. However, the indirect effects of parental education ($b = .001, p = .96$) and current working hours ($b = -.001, p = .96$) on university choice via anticipated money struggles remained non-significant, suggesting that, for students who intended to work at university, being employed for more hours per week and having parents with advanced degrees did not lead students to experiencing more or less money struggles, and, in turn, to choose lower-ranked and higher-

ranked universities, respectively. Akin to the model with all students included, parental education was positively associated with university choice ($b = .10, p = .05$), again suggesting that having parents with more advanced degrees led students who anticipated getting a job at university to select higher-ranked universities.

H5. Anticipated academic struggles positively predicts university choice.

The effect of anticipated academic struggles ($b = -.07, p = .25$) on university choice was non-significant, suggesting that, for students who expected to work at university, anticipating to have more academic struggles without a job at university did not lead to them choosing a higher-ranked university.

Penultimately and as expected, we found that GCSE grades were positively associated with university choice ($b = .46, p < .001$), suggesting that, for students who expected to work at university, having higher grades when completing school led to them choosing higher-ranked universities. In contrast to the model with all students included however, anticipated social struggles were negatively associated with university choice ($b = -.13, p = .05$), suggesting that, for students who expected to work at university, anticipating to have more social struggles (in making friends, attending extracurricular activities, etc.) led to them choosing a lower-ranked university. Altogether, the model explained 27.80% of the variance in university choice for students who anticipated getting a paid job at university. Again, this variance was mainly explained by the medium-to-large effect size of GCSE grades on university choice, as all other discussed effects were either negligible or small in size.

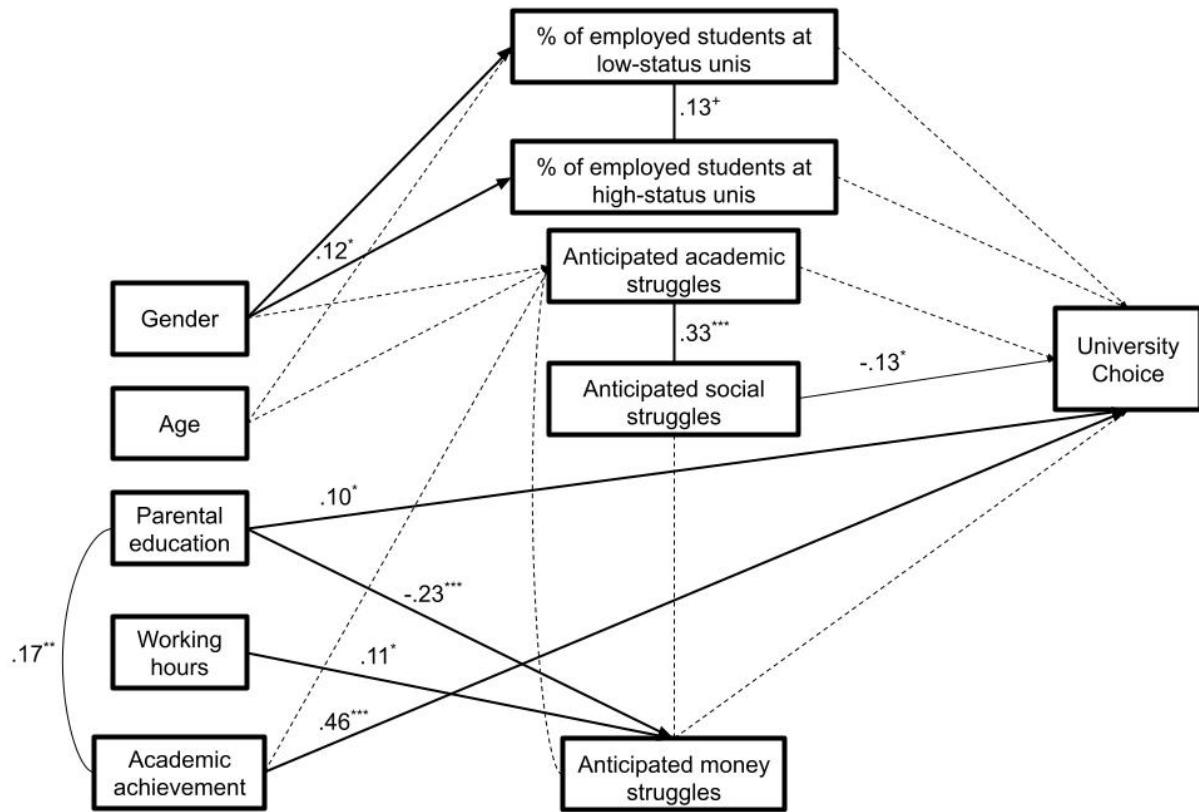


Figure 8. Structural Equation Model for Students who Intend to Work at University in Study 2. $N = 260$. All path estimates are standardised coefficients. All covariances amongst exogenous predictors were specified in the model but only significant ones are presented.

⁺ $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Discussion

The results of Study 2 revealed that, after controlling for the positive effects of academic achievement and levels of parental education, the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities was positively associated with students' university choice, but only in the model with all students included. As such, this result suggests that prospective students' decisions about attending a high-status university could be enhanced if the students think there are more employed students at their institution of interest.

Nonetheless, our correlational analyses could not imply whether it is the perception of the percentage of employed students that influenced university choice, or vice-versa. It is equally plausible that students' choices of university could cause them to inform themselves about the percentage of employed students at that particular institution as part of their preparation to attend said institution. Similarly, we were also not certain of whether students were aware of the actual percentage of employed students at the different types of universities or whether they were offering an informed guess about the percentage of employed students at these institutions. Finally, as both Study 1 and Study 2 discussed the category of high-status universities rather than a specific university, we sought to explore whether seeing the percentage of employed students at a particular high-status university would make students more likely to apply to that specific university.

In order to fill these gaps in our understanding, we conducted Study 3. By focusing entirely on the percentage of employed students at high-status universities – as this was the only result that was partially replicated in Study 2 – we sought to shed more light on whether using the percentage of employed students at high-status university in recruitment materials would help to attract prospective students to apply to these institutions. We chose to see whether experimentally manipulating the percentage of employed students at a fictitious university would lead to an increased desire to apply to that university. We chose a fictitious university in order to control for students' preferences towards attending a university in a specific geographical location, and to prevent against any negative bias that students might have towards a specific real UK university. We then specified two research questions. RQ1. Would presenting the percentage of employed students at a fictitious, high-status university lead to an increased willingness to apply to that university in comparison to not seeing such information? and RQ2. Would presenting a higher percentage of employed students at a

fictitious, high-status university lead to an increased willingness to apply to that university in comparison to presenting a lower percentage of employed students at the same university?

Study 3

In order to empirically investigate these research questions, we conducted Study 3. Study 3 was conducted as a between-participants experiment, where we created three versions of a website of a fictitious university (the University of Efford). The websites were identical other than that they manipulated the number of students presented as being in paid employment and included either no information about employed students, that 33% of the students at Efford were currently in paid employment, or that 66% of the students at Efford were currently in paid employment. We then examined two related hypotheses. H1. Participants who saw the experimental conditions would be more willing to apply to the University of Efford in comparison to participants in the control condition, and H2. Participants who saw that there were more employed students at the University of Efford (66%) would be more likely to apply to the University of Efford than participants who saw that there were less employed students at the University of Efford (33%).

Method

Participants

Using G*Power 3.1.9.7 we calculated that we would need 432 students across the experimental conditions to find an effect size of $d = .15$ (similar to the effect size found in Study 2) by having 80% power. Six hundred and seventy-six UK sixth form and college students were recruited using the same recruitment strategies from the previous two studies we conducted. Of those, 29 students opted to remove their data from the final dataset and thus their responses were not eligible for inclusion in the analysis. Another 124 participants did not provide any data on their willingness to apply to the University of Efford and they were

also excluded from the analysis. Finally, we also excluded the responses of 85 students who stated that they did not intend to attend a university in the UK.

The remaining 438 participants were between 16 and 61 years of age ($M = 17.01$, $SD = 2.11$). The sample was predominantly female (77.85%, $n = 341$), 17.81% ($n = 78$) of respondents identified as male, 3.20% ($n = 14$) as another gender, and 1.14% ($n = 5$) preferred to not disclose their gender. The sample was also primarily composed of White-British participants ($n = 218$, 49.77%). One hundred and fifty-eight participants indicated they are currently employed (36.07%) and an additional 75 participants stated that they had previously held a paid position (17.12%). Participants who were currently employed averaged 11.69 hours of paid employment per week ($SD = 7.99$). When asked whether they will get a job at university, 39.95% ($n = 175$) of all participants answered *definitely yes* and a further 24.20% ($n = 106$) answered *probably yes*.

Procedure and Materials

Ethical consent for this study was granted by the researchers' home institution. Data collection took place between 16th December 2020 and 4th December 2021. Data protection was handled in accordance with Data Protection Act 2018 principles. Every participant completed an online questionnaire using Qualtrics. At the beginning of the questionnaire, all participants indicated that they gave their consent to participate and their rights to confidentiality and anonymity were presented. Then, the main blocks of the questionnaire were presented to participants in the order outlined below. As the measures presented here form part of a larger enquiry into whether seeing the percentage of employed students predicts students' university choice, only the measures that were pertinent to this analysis are presented next.

Demographic Information. We collected demographic information in the same manner as in Studies 1 and 2.

Experimental Manipulation. The participants who stated that they would attend a university in the UK were then asked to look at the website for the fictitious University of Efford (see Appendix D):

At this point we encourage you to check the website of the University of Efford.

Please imagine that the University of Efford is in your preferred location to study and that you will meet the entry requirements. Please spend some time inspecting its website and then answer the following questions and statements.

Although the three websites of the University of Efford (one for each condition) were similar (Appendix D), we included the experimental manipulation information in the main red banner in the middle of the website. We chose to do so as we thought that the bright red colour would alert participants to the importance of the message yet still preserve the feel of a typical university website. Participants in the control condition ($n = 148$) were then told that a rare cricket (*Oecanthus fultoni*) was found in the neighbouring Efford woods. Participants in the low condition ($n = 149$) were told that 33% of the current University of Efford students were employed part-time as per the results of a conducted report. The information for participants in the high condition ($n = 141$) was the same as for the participants in the low condition, with the exception that they were told that 66% of University of Efford students were currently employed.

Willingness to Apply to the University of Efford. After the experimental manipulation, participants answered four questions about their willingness to apply to the University of Efford. In order to ensure that the participants knew that the university is fictitious, all questions were prefaced with the introductory words ‘If it were real’. The first three items asked participants how likely to apply, motivated to apply, or attracted they were to the University of Efford (e.g., “If it were real, I would be attracted to the University of Efford”) and were answered on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to

strongly agree. The final item “If it were real, would you apply to the University of Efford?” was included as a more direct measure of participants’ willingness to apply to that particular university. Participants answered this question with either *Yes, as my x choice* (with x ranging from one to five, a smaller number indicating more desire to apply to Efford) or *No*. The item was then reverse scored prior to analysis so that higher scores indicate more willingness to apply to the University of Efford. Reliability analyses then revealed that the four questions formed a reliable scale in each condition ($\alpha_{\text{control}} = .89$, $\alpha_{\text{low}} = .89$, $\alpha_{\text{high}} = .90$) and as such we averaged these four items into a single measure of willingness to apply to the University of Efford.

Manipulation Check. In order to ascertain whether participants in the experimental conditions paid attention to the information about current employed students at the University of Efford, one item asked participants what percentage of students were currently employed at the University of Efford. Participants could then choose from seven drop-down options – 0%, 16%, 33%, 50%, 66%, 83%, or 100%. In contrast, participants in the control condition were asked for their opinion as to what percentage of current University of Efford students were employed using the same seven drop-down options. The modal response from participants in the control condition was 66% ($n = 40$).

Results

Preliminary Analyses

First, we checked whether participants in the experimental conditions passed the manipulation check. However, we found that only 62 (41.61%) of the participants in the low condition and 57 (40.43%) of the participants in the high condition passed the manipulation check by correctly identifying the percentage of employed students at the University of Efford. Due to these low numbers of participants who have passed the manipulation check,

we opted to include all participants in the conducted analyses. The main analysis was then conducted using R 4.2.0.

Does Seeing the Percentage of Employed Students at a High-Status University Make Prospective Students More Likely to Apply to that High-Status University?

H1. Participants who saw the experimental conditions would be more willing to apply to the University of Efford in comparison to participants in the control condition.

Next, we tested H1 and H2 by conducting two between-participants Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests. The results revealed that there was no significant difference between participants in the control ($M = 3.76$, $SE = .11$) and the experimental (low - $M = 3.67$, $SE = .11$; high - $M = 3.71$, $SE = .11$) conditions ($F(2, 413) = -.56$, $p = .58$; $d = .002$) on their willingness to apply to the University of Efford. This suggests that students who saw that 33% or 66% of all students at the University of Efford were employed students were not more likely to apply to the University of Efford than students who did not see any employed students-relevant information.

H2. Participants who saw that there were more employed students at the University of Efford (66%) would be more likely to apply to the University of Efford than participants who saw that there were less employed students at the University of Efford (33%).

The results also revealed that there was no significant difference between participants in the low and high conditions ($F(1, 271) = .31$, $p = .76$; $d = .001$) on their willingness to apply to the University of Efford. This suggests that participants who saw that 66% of all students at the University of Efford were employed were not more likely to apply to the University of Efford than participants who saw that 33% of all University of Efford students were employed.

General Discussion

The program of studies described above presented our exploration into whether various social, academic, and financial factors related to anticipated part-time employment at university were associated with prospective students' first university choice. Study 2 confirmed the results of Study 1 by revealing that the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities was positively associated with students' university choice, even after controlling for the positive effects of parental education and previous academic achievement. However, the results of Study 2 were also in contrast to the results of Study 1 – whereas in Study 1 anticipated money struggles were negatively associated with university choice, there was no significant association between these constructs in Study 2. Similarly, whereas the results of Study 1 indicated that anticipated academic struggles were positively associated with university choice, the results of Study 2 revealed a negatively-valenced association between these constructs. The pattern of results also varied when we excluded those students who would not or were not sure whether they will work for pay at university. When we did so in Study 1, we found that anticipated money struggles and perceived percentage of employed students were associated with university choice, however, in Study 2 we found that anticipated social struggles, parental education, and academic achievement were associated with university choice.

As the positive, albeit small-sized, association between perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities and university choice was the only corroborated effect in Study 2 (and only in the model with all students included), in Study 3 we experimentally manipulated the percentage of employed students at a fictitious high-status university in order to establish causal inference. Nonetheless, presenting the percentage of employed students (either 33% or 66%) versus having no information about the percentage of employed students did not produce a significant difference in participants' willingness to

apply to the University of Efford. Similarly, presenting that more students were employed (66%) did not produce a significant difference in participants' willingness to apply to Efford in comparison to those participants who saw that only 33% of students were employed. Altogether, the results of Study 3 suggested that simply presenting that a larger percent of students at a high-status university were employed did not lead to a higher willingness to apply to that university.

Overall, the results of this program of studies suggest that anticipated academic and social factors related to part-time employment at university could influence students' university choice. Taking these results in turn, we found mixed evidence for the negative relationship between anticipated academic struggles and university choice – whereas the results of Study 1 indicated that academic struggles were marginally positively associated with university choice, the results of Study 2 implied a negative relationship between these two constructs. While Study 2's result is more in line with our initial theorising that students would choose low-status universities if they expect to struggle academically with a job at university, the result from Study 1 could indicate that such anticipated struggles could prompt prospective students to select high-status universities in order to maximise the value of their chosen degree. Altogether, anticipating to struggle academically with a paid job at university could prompt students to choose different types of universities, yet this could also be dependent on whether they seek to maximise the value of their degree through achieving the best grades possible or via the prestige of the institution they apply to. As we were not able to discern between these two different types of motivation in our current research, we encourage future research to explore how anticipating to struggle academically with a paid job at university feeds into prospective students' university choices in more detail. This is also necessitated by the small-sized effects that we encountered in both studies, suggesting that

eliminating anticipated concerns would have only a small effect on which university students choose to apply to.

Notably, however, anticipated academic struggles were not associated with university choice when we excluded those participants who were not sure they would work for pay at university in studies 1 and 2. This suggests that the potential effect of anticipated academic struggles is more pronounced for those students who do not expect to work for pay at university. While this suggestion runs counter to our initial theorising, it is also plausible that students who did expect to work for pay at university were aware of the academic cost of doing so yet have still chosen to apply to high-status universities to maximise the value of the degree in the labour market. We implore future research to explore this suggestion in more detail in order to shed more light on the role of anticipated academic struggles for prospective students' university choices.

Across our first two studies we found that the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities was positively associated with university choice. We suggest that this is because being in a university environment where there are more students who work for pay can help employed students to belong and adapt at university. Having more employed students at a particular university could also signal to employed students that it is possible to combine employment and studying effectively, and, in turn, alleviate concerns around academic achievement or social fit at university. The current exploration, however, is the first, to our knowledge, to demonstrate how expectations of attending universities in which there are many employed students could impact one's choices of university. Thus, we implore future research to explore the underlying mechanisms behind the positive relationship between perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities and university choice. From a more macro perspective, these results also point to a larger need for universities to (a) be an attractive destination to employed students and (b) keep data

on employed students. In terms of the latter, at present, universities at large do not collect data on employed students' outcomes, which, in turn, means we cannot easily disclose the percentage of employed students at most institutions. We opine that collecting such statistics will be beneficial to universities in terms of driving forward their recruitment, inclusion and diversity strategies, and helping employed students with their adaptation to university. The financial implications of doing so will have to be discussed further as well, as our studies found only small-sized effects of expecting more students to be employed at high-status universities on university choice. Thus, we implore higher education institutions to collect data on employed students, provided that does not cost them beyond the benefit of recruiting students.

Nonetheless, the effect of perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities on university choice was not statistically significant in Study 2 when we excluded those participants who did not expect to work at university. Rather, we found that anticipated social struggles (i.e., not being able to make friends or not being able to attend social gatherings) were negatively associated with university choice. These two findings suggest that these two factors - percentage of employed students at high-status universities and anticipated social struggles – could tap into the same underlying expectations of not being able to fit in at university if students were to hold a paid job at university, and in turn, applying to low-status universities. Due to this, we suggest that future research should pay more attention to students' anticipated social struggles with a job at university as those could predict students' university choices over and above the percentage of employed students at those universities.

We also tested whether presenting the percentage of employed students at a high-status university would lead to an increase in participants' desire to apply to that university in Study 3, yet that turned not to be the case. This result thus suggests that knowing the actual

percentage of employed students at a particular high-status university may not lead to increases in students' desire to apply to that university. Nonetheless, this result is also subject to three specific considerations. Firstly, we measured participants' desire to apply to a specific, yet fictitious university. We opted to do so to control for any biases that participants might have for or against a particular real university, however, it is also likely that the participants compared the University of Efford to their real university choices when deciding whether they wanted to apply to Efford or not. Thus, although Efford is a fictitious university, participants' choice of whether to apply to it or not might have also depended on students comparing Efford favourably to their real choices of university. Secondly, despite our efforts to alert participants to the experimental manipulation, the majority of participants in the experimental conditions did not pass our manipulation check. Although we conducted the same analysis with the subset of participants who did pass the manipulation check to the same result, that analysis did not have sufficient statistical power to offer confidence in the null result. Finally, it is plausible that participants did not see the University of Efford as a high-status university. Such an interpretation is corroborated by the participants in the control condition, most of whom believed that 66% of Efford students combined employment and studies. Thus, if participants were under the impression that low-status universities have higher percentages of employed students (Hutchings & Archer, 2001), then they might have seen the University of Efford as a low-status university. Due to these considerations, we encourage further research to control for these possible interpretations of our result and retest the hypotheses in Study 3 in a more stringent manner.

Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

Whilst our results provide a meaningful contribution to the socio-psychological literature on university applications, they should also be interpreted with caution. For

example, the results of Study 1 revealed that anticipated social fit and permeability at different types of universities were not significantly associated with participants' university choice. We propose that these non-significant effects are due to the grander frame of reference we imposed in the first two studies (Bruner, 1957; Rosch, 1978; Spears & Manstead, 1989). In comparison with Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019), who asked sixth-form students about their anticipated fit at and permeability of *specific* universities, we asked our participants about their fit at and permeability of *types* at universities (high-status, low-status, Oxbridge). As such, we imposed these categories on our participants in a top-down manner, however, participants could have had various pre-existing perceptions of what each category of universities represents or may have associated these categories with a prototypical university member. Thus, our grander frame of reference could be the reason behind why social fit and permeability were not significantly associated with participants' university choice. In order to control for this consideration, further research should test our Study 1 variables (social fit, permeability) in specific universities, which are either considered prototypical of their categories (low and high-status) or are particularly meaningful to prospective students.

Further research should also consider the timing of students' applications. In our work, we did not measure whether participants have already submitted their university choices or are still in the deliberation process. To illustrate the importance of this distinction, one participant in our related work (*blinded*, 2022a) described how they were looking at whether different universities allow their students to be employed and if so, for how long per week. In light of our results, it is plausible that students who have already submitted their university choices have more information on part-time work guidelines and, subsequently, have a better idea of how many students are, in fact, employed at those universities. To address this, future research should investigate whether the effect of perceiving a higher

percentage of employed students at high-status universities on university choice is moderated by whether students have submitted their university choices or not.

Finally, we also did not follow up participants to see whether their university choice matches which university they chose to attend. This consideration can augment our results in two important ways. Firstly, students may have put high-status universities as their first choice but may not actually be able to attend those if their A-level grades do not allow them to. We cannot shed any light on this consideration in the present dataset as the participants had not yet received their A-level grades at the point of data collection. Similarly, students could have changed their choice of university between the point of data collection and the point at which they would have chosen where to attend university. It is likely that, as students have narrowed their choices of university, the social, academic, and financial factors related to part-time employment that we outlined in the current research may become more salient for students and have even larger influence over which institution students choose to attend. Because of these reasons, the first choice of university that students have selected in the present research may not be representative of their actual choices of which university they ultimately attend. Thus, our work can only shed light on the processes prior to and during university application, but not on students' ultimate decision of which university to attend.

Conclusion

In Studies 1 and 2, we found that the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities is positively associated with their first university choice, whereas anticipated academic struggles at university if students have a job were positively (Study 1) or negatively (Study 2) associated with students' university choice. In Study 3, we experimentally manipulated the percentage of employed students at a fictitious high-status university, however, that did not make students more likely to apply to that university. Overall, this work reveals the effect of academic and social factors related to anticipated part-

time at university on students' university choices and offers suggestions for further research.

Thus, it is our hope that this work will inspire further investigations into the experience of part-time employment for both further and higher education students.

Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusions

General Discussion and Conclusions

Summary of Key Empirical Findings

The present thesis sought to advance the interests of current and prospective employed students alike by focussing on how the experiences of employed students become self-defining, in turn changing how they perceive themselves, and finally, inform their actions. To do so, in Chapters 2-4, we employed the Social Identity Approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987) which allowed us to understand how the experiences of employed students inform their self-concept and their relationships with other important groups. As such, the novel value of this thesis is in using the Social Identity Approach and other, related theories to explain the mechanisms through which the unique experiences of employed students are linked to lasting changes in how employed students navigate their university and work lives, and in providing practical and cognitive strategies to deal with what was often a hard adaptation period for these students. The insights from Chapter 5 then build on these assertions by considering the ways in which prospective students view attending prestigious universities as incongruent with having to be employed part-time and discuss specific factors that prevent these students from applying to those institutions.

The first three empirical chapters of this thesis (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) described what types of incompatibilities employed students experience; how employed students' experiences create intergroup comparisons between employed students, their colleagues, and non-employed students; and how those experiences become central to their employed students' identity as well as the correlates and antecedents of this identity. The aims of these papers followed our theoretical thinking at the time as we learned more about how the experiences of employed students become identity-defining for them and sought to learn

more about whether the employed student identity could be associated with important academic and comparative outcomes.

In Chapter 2, we began our exploration of the employed students' experience by focusing on the nature of their experienced incompatibilities. For the majority of our students, combining employment with studies resulted in practical incompatibilities (similar to the notion of work-study conflict; Butler, 2007), which stemmed from lack of time and energy. In the academic realm, the practical incompatibility associated with the combination of employment and studying led some participants to submit academic work late, resulted in stress, and, in severe circumstances, led to the employed student withdrawing from their course. In the social realm, the experienced practical incompatibility led students to change the way that they spent their downtime or abandon their hobbies altogether. Furthermore, the combination of employment and studies also resulted in experiencing identity incompatibility - for some of our participants, commencing employment equalled a transition to adulthood, which was in stark contrast to being a student who values having fun and learning. This sense of identity incompatibility was magnified if others perceived the student as simply a worker, and we found that such discrepancy between one's perception of themselves and others' perceptions of them could result in feelings of loneliness and isolation. We also found that employed students used both practical and cognitive strategies to deal with experiencing incompatibility. Practical strategies included taking on less work at certain times of the year or all year round, leaving either employment or university for a certain period of time, or taking on work when one's friends were busy. Cognitive strategies included creating and consulting one's hierarchy of priorities, integrating or compartmentalising the identities of being a worker and a student at the workplace, and using paid work as an affirmation of one's own core values of hard work and productivity.

Although Chapter 2 dealt exclusively with self-referential processes of incompatibility, Chapter 3 revealed that, to our surprise, some of the aversive experiences that employed students go through also result in intergroup categorisations (Turner et al., 1987). To exemplify this, categorisations into being a student and full-time employees at the workplace emanated from full-time employees treating employed students with lack of empathy, looking down upon employed students, and treating them with hostility. In some workplaces, subtle categorisations into groups of students and full-time employees were created by management through treating the employees in these groups differently and to the benefit of the full-time employee group. The process of categorisation was even more pronounced in the university domain where the perceived division into the groupings of employed and non-employed students was caused by salient differences in values or experiences. Nonetheless, we found that actively identifying as an employed student helped employed students to positively differentiate themselves from non-employed students through leaning on positive experiences or characteristics of the employed student experience (such as having increased motivation or being aware of the value of money). We found that such active identification as an employed student can also lead to receiving support from other employed students, which goes some way towards offsetting the negative effects of intergroup categorisation. Other ways of dealing with these negative categorisations included non-employed students and colleagues having a positive attitude towards the employed student experience or binding colleagues under conditions of common fate at the workplace (Campbell, 1958).

At that stage, we were not aware of how certain aspects of the employed student experience become important or central to the employed student experience. Chapter 4 revealed that, contrary to our expectations, aspects of the employed student identity which fulfil the motive of distinctiveness were also rated as less important and central to the

employed student identity by employed students. We then found that aspects which were rated highly on suitability to employed students were rated as more important and central to the employed student identity. This suggests that it is aspects that are typical of employed students that help employed students achieve positive distinctiveness rather than aspects which serve to increase the perceived differences between employed and non-employed students. Chapter 4 also revealed that, when measured at the between-participants level, the employed student identity was positively associated with employed students' status in society, but not with their academic achievement. These findings suggest that the adoption of the employed student identity is linked to positive changes in how employed students perceive themselves, but not directly associated with increases in their ability. However, it is plausible that the adoption of the employed student identity could help employed students to enact positive changes in the way that they study – through positive changes in their self-efficacy or increased usage of deep approaches to learning - the likes of which could then enhance students' academic achievement.

Moving our focus to prospective students, in Chapter 5 we explored whether academic, economic and social factors related to expecting to work at university were associated with sixth-form students' first choice of university to apply to. Whilst Study 1 revealed that anticipated money struggles, anticipated academic struggles, and the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities were associated with university choice, the results of Study 2 revealed that only academic struggles and the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities were associated with university choice. The results also differed when we excluded those students who were not sure whether they will work for pay at university – in Study 2, we found that anticipated social struggles were negatively associated with students' first university choice. We then conducted Study 3, where we experimentally manipulated the perceived percentage of employed students at a

fictitious university, yet the results revealed no significant difference between the different conditions in willingness to apply to the fictitious university. Altogether, our program of studies shed initial light on the role of different factors surrounding anticipated employment at university on students' university choices. Although we found mixed evidence for the effects of those academic, social, and money factors surrounding anticipated employment at university, our exploration can guide future efforts in understanding the role of these factors when guiding recruitment efforts or helping students who anticipate to have to work make informed choices about the universities they apply to.

Implications for Current Employed Students

The results of Chapters 2, 3, and 4 have led us on an interesting theoretical exploration into the social identity processes occurring within employed students. We started this journey with an explicit assumption that the two distinct identities - that of a worker, and that of a student - could be incompatible yet we were not aware of the underlying mechanisms as to how these identities become incompatible in the employed student self-concept. Although we acquired evidence that employed students experience identity incompatibility, we were surprised that the conflict underlying the experienced incompatibility stemmed from a perception of employment as a transition into adulthood. Thus, the experienced identity incompatibility developed from refusing to let go of the values associated with the student identity or an inability to reconcile those values with the normative behaviours expected from adult employees. These feelings of identity incompatibility were also magnified if employed students' self-perceptions did not match with how other students perceived them, as it further signalled to employed students that these two stages of life (employment and studies) are not normally combined by students and doing so incurs social detriments to employed students.

These findings thus pinpoint an important stage in students' development, during which students begin to see themselves as more than just students. While the results of Chapter 2 corroborated the insights from previous literature which suggest that employed students experience practical incompatibilities (Butler, 2007; Cinamon, 2016), we want to emphasise that, on top of such practical concerns, employed students also deal with a normative mismatch that can cause them to feel lonely and isolated. This finding should ring alarm bells in both practitioners and researchers' heads - while strategies and resources do exist within institutions to help employed students practically (i.e., in the form of extensions for submitting written work, financial help, or changing mode of study), institutions might be ill-equipped to deal with the social implications of identity incompatibility for employed students. Researchers should also note that the combination of employment and studies can lead to a sense of normative mismatch within employed students and aim to discover further strategies that can help resolve or mitigate identity incompatibility.

As a start, the participants in Chapter 2 suggested two differing strategies to deal with identity incompatibility or its adverse effects - compartmentalisation of identities and values affirmation. Identity compartmentalisation (Amiot et al., 2015) refers to an active separation of identities, such that they become salient only in the context within which they are important to the individual - i.e., the employee identity is primarily important, and thus activated, in the workplace context, whereas the student identity is predominantly important and activated in the university context (Oakes et al., 1994). The employed students in Chapter 2 revealed that pursuing compartmentalisation of identities allowed them to minimise the spillover of stress they experienced from one domain to the other and can be achieved through minimising the connections between the different domains (such as working a job that is not related to discipline of study or working a menial job rather than a cognitively demanding one). This strategy thus seeks to minimise the identity incompatibility via

focusing only on the normative behaviours of the context that students find themselves in. Practically, such a strategy offers an important first step for employed students who are not yet ready to resolve the different normative demands of being employed and being a student within their self-concept.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the strategy of compartmentalisation does not resolve the experienced incompatibility but rather seeks to minimise it. Therefore, we posit that the negative consequences of incompatibility may still persist for students who engage only in compartmentalisation. We therefore advise practitioners and researchers to use and investigate the foundations of values affirmation - a strategy that employed students have used where they cognitively turn the negative experiences of combining employment and studying into an affirmation of their own core values of hard work and productivity. Within this strategy, employed students did not seek to minimise the experiences of practical or identity incompatibility - rather, they used those struggles as a display of their persistence through higher education at all costs. We posit that future research should aim to foster such positive displays of affirmation in employed students through experimental designs. Indeed, previous experimental studies of values affirmation have found that it can help students deal with adverse experiences caused by devalued social identities (Blondé et al., 2022; Hadden et al., 2020), and as such affording employed students more opportunities to engage in values affirmation can be a useful tool to develop persistence and resilience in higher education. At present, practitioners can also use values affirmation to remind employed students of their ultimate goals within higher education and realign the adverse consequences of combining employment and studying into displays of resilience and persistence.

Nonetheless, the results of Chapter 3 revealed that employed students do not simply deal with self-referential or practical issues, but that they also struggle with intergroup categorisations that emanate from their different status, experiences, and values at the

workplace and university. Such intergroup categorisations serve to broaden the cognitive gap between employed students, their colleagues, and non-employed students; worsen intergroup relations; and make employed students feel lonely and isolated. Theoretically, it is also possible that perceiving salient intergroup categorisations can lead employed students to perceive their worker and student identities as further incompatible, thus fuelling the normative mismatch that we alluded to above. This latter effect was also illuminated in Chapter 4, where employed students' levels of identity incompatibility were positively associated with their levels of intergroup differentiation. Because of these reasons, and the adverse effects that intergroup categorisations can have on employed students' social lives, we believe that higher education practitioners should aim to normalise the experience of combining employment and studies at the university level. Doing so can facilitate non-employed students and work colleagues in having a positive attitude towards employed students, which can then negate the adverse consequences of intergroup categorisations (even if they persist).

To our surprise, employed students in Chapter 3 used a particular strategy to protect themselves from negative comparisons with non-employed students. They actively chose to identify as employed students through basing that identity on important consequences of the employed student experience that fostered positive distinctiveness. To exemplify this, employed students discussed non-employed students' lack of motivation, or their own increased awareness of the value of money. In self-categorisation terms, these aspects of the employed student experience form what Turner and colleagues (1987) describe as the *meta-contrast ratio* - employed students are more similar to each other than they are to non-employed students, as the aspects that are important to them also distinguish employed students from non-employed students. It is important to note, however, that we did not find any evidence that this is a strategy that employed students employ at the workplace. This may

be due to the power differences between them and their colleagues at the workplace. For example, full-time workers can ‘pull rank’ over employed students due to their age or experience at the job, and at times, due to favourable treatment from management. We thus posit that identifying as an employed student can inoculate employed students from negative intergroup experiences with non-employed students, but not with full-time colleagues, and as such may be a viable strategy for practitioners who are looking to improve the social lives of employed students at university.

Identifying as an employed student can also aid employed students as it opens the path for them to receive support from other employed students. Although we did not explore this further, other research clearly outlines the social and academic benefits of creating small communities of employed students (Cooper, 2018; Kiernan et al., 2015; Ziskin et al., 2010). In line with these results, we urge practitioners to create and maintain smaller communities which can be of social, workplace, and academic benefit to employed students. We also urge other researchers to look further into the positive effects of employed student identification as doing so can improve the experiences of employed students in the long run. One exciting stream of further research is in the area of venting about the workplace to other employed students, which can help employed students to address their issues at the workplace in a supportive, yet challenging manner (Behfar et al., 2020; Lammont & Lucas, 1999). This has been previously discussed by Lammont & Lucas (1999) who stated that mistreatment from management can bring employed students and full-time colleagues closer through shared venting at management, thus uniting the workforce under a condition of common fate (Campbell, 1958). However, when this is not possible, perhaps due to existing intergroup categorisations at the workplace, venting to another employed student can help to reframe the situation and reduce the experienced stress (Behfar et al., 2020). Having a common outgroup – employed students’ management or their full-time colleagues – can also serve to bring

employed students closer under the condition of common fate and thus help to foster the employed student identity. Altogether, we encourage practitioners and researchers to foster, maintain, and learn more about the positive effects of employed student identification within such communities of employed students.

Using the insights from Chapter 3, in Chapter 4 we sought to shed additional light on two important considerations - how aspects of the employed student experience become important or central to the employed student identity, and what are the positive antecedents and correlates of this identity. Indeed, we did find that aspects of the employed student experience become more central and important to the employed student identity, but it was only those aspects which were ranked as more suitable to employed students, rather than aspects which symbolically differentiated employed from non-employed students. This finding was consistent with an assertion from Chapter 2, where some of the employed students ascribed non-employed students a higher status than their own group and opined that the non-employed student experience is more desirable. This leads us to believe that employed students dislike things that distinguish them from non-employed students (see also Dijkstra & Barelds, 2016), but rather use some aspects of their experience which are more suitable to them to inoculate themselves when negative intergroup comparisons become salient. In line with research on social identity creativity (van Bezouw et al., 2021), employed students use aspects of their experience to change the dimension upon which they are compared to non-employed students to a dimension based on an aspect which causes them to be positively distinct (e.g., *non-employed students* might have more fun, but *we* are more dedicated to our studies). In doing so, employed students lean on their conception of who they are as employed students only to protect themselves from negative comparisons with non-employed students, but would still believe the non-employed student experience to be of higher status than their own. If this is indeed the case – and we contend that it might vary

between institutions, courses of study, and individual employed students – then we challenge institutions and researchers to invest in finding ways to make the employment more desirable for students who experience an economic necessity to combine employment and studying at university. Our research suggests that that can be accomplished through fostering the adoption of the employed student identity, but other strategies such as displaying the benefits of employment in building skills for graduate employment (Evans et al., 2015) can also help employed students to feel better about their current adverse circumstances.

The results of Chapter 4 also revealed that the employed student identity is positively associated with their perceptions of their general status in society. This is an important finding, because if the adoption of the employed student identity does indeed lead to an heightened sense of one's position within the social hierarchy (Blake & Worsdale, 2009), then this may serve to counteract the negative intergroup comparisons that were outlined in Chapter 3 and to mitigate the feelings of identity incompatibility experienced by employed students in Chapter 2. We predict that increasing employed students' perception of their status in society can also make their experience of combining employment and studying more bearable, especially if students are experiencing high levels of practical incompatibility, as they would be reminded that their work is valuable to them and their learning goals.

Therefore, in addition to garnering support from other employed students and serving as a protective mechanism against negative intergroup comparisons, adoption of the employed student identity can lead to students seeing themselves as having higher status in society, which could then allow them to move through this phase of life in a more resilient manner.

Implications for Prospective Students

The results of Chapter 5 revealed the importance of considering academic and social factors related to anticipated part-time employment at university as potential barriers for employed students to apply to high-status universities. Indeed, Study 2 in Chapter 5 revealed

that both anticipated academic struggles and the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities were associated with students' university choices. This is the first empirical study, to our knowledge, to demonstrate the effects that students' considerations of the academic, monetary and social costs associated with anticipated employment at university have on students' university choices. Our findings also have both practical and theoretical implications for universities and researchers, respectively.

In terms of practical implications for universities, our findings should urge high-status universities to turn themselves into more attractive destinations for students in financial need. We contend that high-status universities can do so by re-emphasising the different sources of financial support that they offer students in need, and by making the employed student experience more normalised and attractive, which then signals to prospective students that *it is possible* to be employed and achieve highly at university. Importantly, universities should make all of this information available to students and their colleges *prior to* applying, as our and previous results (Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019) reveal that this is a crucial stage in persuading students to apply to particular universities.

Theoretically, our results reveal the importance of anticipated experience of students at high-status universities to predicting their choices of universities. In addition to students' personal characteristics (e.g., age, previous achievement, parental education) and the characteristics of the universities themselves (e.g., high or low status, geographic location, specific course of study), we urge future researchers to consider how students expect to acclimate to high-status universities in order to better predict students' university choices.

Finally, we also urge students, parents, and college counsellors to inform themselves about the percentage of employed students at students' chosen universities. Doing so can then help the student to know whether combining employment and studying is achievable at the selected university and can also help them to pre-empt the onset of the self-referent processes

we outlined in Chapters 2 through 4. We hope that finding the proportion of employed students at the university level can indirectly bring forth the issues of combining employment and studies that we outlined in this thesis and spark action towards improving the outcomes of both prospective and current employed students.

Synthesising the Current Employed Students and Prospective Employed Students

Literature

Although our work with current employed students was focussed on the social identity implications of combining employment and studies, we posit that it could also be of importance in future research that discusses prospective students' university choices. Indeed, if prospective students are employed during their time in further education, then it is possible that they have experienced some of the self-referential processes that university students in our studies illuminated. Thus, in order to avoid having to deal with experiences of identity incompatibility or negative intergroup categorisations at the university level, prospective students might not want to attend universities where the majority of students are not employed.

Nonetheless, we contend that some prospective students would not correctly estimate the academic or social consequences of combining employment and studying at the university level. Thus, while prospective students perceive that combining paid work and studying at university would be worse than it is in reality, we argue that it is prospective students' perceptions of those experiences that influence their university choices rather than the reality. In such cases, high-status universities could actually be rejected by prospective students simply due to existing misconceptions around the academic and social experiences of part-time employed students at high-status universities. If this is proven to be the case by future research, then this thesis can offer important information which enables prospective students to first select high-status universities to apply to, and then use the strategies we outlined in

this thesis to successfully navigate their experiences of combining employment and studying when attending a high-status university.

Practically, the results of this thesis can also be used by college counsellors to prepare prospective university students who would need to combine paid work and studying. We envisage that, by equipping prospective students with the outlined strategies to reduce identity incompatibility or deal with negative intergroup categorisations, we can help prospective students to flourish at university as much as possible. This will then signal to future prospective students that successfully combining studying and employment is *accomplishable* at the university level and thus enable them to select high-status universities in order to achieve their full learning and economic potential.

Future Directions

Although the implications of the work we conducted have offered us a plethora of exciting opportunities to continue our work in unexpected directions, we aim to conduct three studies that will address the questions which remained from our results. Firstly, as we aim to help employed students both in practice and through the development of further theory, we are seeking to curate the insights from Chapters 2 through 4 in physical booklet and electronic forms. We will then incorporate the physical and electronic booklets as part of a larger experiment that aims to reduce the experiences of practical and identity incompatibility through implementation of the strategies that we outline in this thesis. Theoretically, we will be aiming to gather additional data from employed students about their self-referential processes which will enable us to better understand whether the strategies that we gathered from employed students in this thesis help employed students at large. Practically, we hope that the continued design of such booklets will help employed students to better navigate the combination of employment and studying, and indirectly make the employed student experience more normalised.

Secondly, and in conjunction with the work described directly above, we also plan to investigate whether informal and formal communities of support for employed students are associated with increasing the adoption of the employed student identity, and the associated beneficial outcomes of this identity. As previous literature reports similar results with other specialised student groups (Cooper, 2018; Kiernan et al., 2015; Ziskin et al., 2010), we are interested in whether participating in such informal and formal groups is associated with increasing the adoption of the employed student identity. Although we illuminated some of the benefits of adopting the employed student identity in Chapters 3 and 4 (inoculating against negative intergroup categorisations, increasing status in society), we are yet to discover whether adopting this identity can also lead to important academic outcomes (e.g., academic self-efficacy, motivation, using deep approaches to learning) that then influence students' academic achievement. Conducting such a study will help provide evidence to universities about the benefits of creating formal spaces for shared support between employed students and illuminate the importance of the employed student identity for students' academic outcomes.

Finally, we are also looking to continue our exploration of whether the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities predicts prospective students' university choices. Although we did not find evidence that this factor predicted students' willingness to attend a fictitious university, we also noted some methodological limitations of our work which we will be looking to improve upon. Such limitations include improving the design and feel of the website of our fictitious university and making the manipulation more salient for prospective students. Additionally, we will be looking to investigate what is the underlying reason as to why the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities is associated with choosing to apply to high-status universities. At present, we believe that perceiving that there are more employed students at those institutions helps to

create a sense of anticipated belonging within prospective students (similar to Nieuwenhuis et al., 2019, see also Walton & Cohen, 2007), which in turn alleviates their concerns about combining studies with employment and the potential negative social consequences of doing so. From an academic standpoint, perceiving that there are more employed students at high-status universities could also signal to prospective students that it is *possible* to combine studying and employment successfully, such that commencing or continuing employment would not make achieving highly at university impossible. Nonetheless, further work is needed to ascertain whether anticipated belonging and perceived possibility to achieve highly academically act as mediators of the effect of the perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities on prospective students' university choice.

Altogether, these are the three main lines of research that we are aiming to continue exploring. Nonetheless, there are additional possibilities for further research, which I will describe next. The first of these possibilities stems from our initial explorations conducted prior to this thesis where we found that 1. being employed for more hours per week was positively associated with employed students' academic self-efficacy (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2017); and 2. experiencing identity incompatibility between the student and employee identities was associated with more use of maladaptive surface approaches to learning, which, in turn, was associated with lower academic achievement (Grozev & Easterbrook, 2018). Although we did not find initial support in Chapter 4 that the self-referential processes which we outlined in this chapter were associated with academic achievement, this could be because we did not take into account the mediating role of academic self-efficacy and approaches to learning (Capone, 2018; Richardson et al., 2012, Tuononen et al., 2015). Further research can also benefit from examining all of these processes in a longitudinal manner (c.f., Huie et al., 2014, and Marino & Capone, 2021), as the results of Chapter 2 demonstrate how employed students experience identity incompatibility at different times during their higher education

studies. Thus, it is possible that it is the changes in experience of identity incompatibility (or changes in employment status in general) that produce maladaptive learning outcomes, which then reflect in employed students' poor academic performance.

The second possibility for further research stems from exploring the effect of positive psychology principles in helping employed students to deal with identity incompatibility and negative intergroup categorisations. Indeed, the work of Nicklin et al. (2019) has demonstrated that mindfulness, self-compassion, resilience, and recovery experience are negatively related to stress as they reduce employed students' experiences of practical incompatibility. Thus, further research can benefit from combining this literature with our insights and explore whether the practice of positive psychology principles is associated with reducing identity incompatibility and the detrimental experiences stemming from intergroup categorisations in employed students. Such research will augment the strategies that we outlined in the current thesis and offer practical help for employed students who are dealing with practical and identity-based incompatibilities.

The final possibility for further research stems from exploring how employed students' experiences at university could serve them well in their post-university careers (Evans et al., 2015; Geel & Backes-Gellner, 2012). As the results of Chapter 4 revealed, adoption of the employed student identity was positively associated with increases in employed students' status in society. Although this and other findings could have positive implications for employed students' confidence, resilience, and improving on their skills, we cannot shed additional light on whether that is indeed the case. Thus, we urge future research to conduct longitudinal studies which aim to find out how the employed student experience benefits students after graduation. This is also important as it allows researchers to investigate whether it is the employment experience that produces increases in resilience and skills-building, or whether it is students who are already high on these characteristics that

commence employment in the first place. Such a programme of research will improve our understanding of whether the benefits of employment are reaped only by those students whose personal characteristics or circumstances allow them to combine employment and studying more seamlessly and illuminate the positive changes that employment causes to students' view of themselves.

Limitations of the Current Research

The research conducted in this thesis was also subject to some limitations in generalisability. Firstly, all of the studies in this thesis were conducted in the UK, where the relatively high cost of maintenance and tuition at the university level is mostly offset by students taking on government loans, which subsidise a substantial portion of their expenses. Thus, the students in our samples might have experienced less of a necessity to undertake part-time employment in comparison to students in other educational contexts where governmental or private subsidies are not as common (Miningou et al., 2014). Additionally, educational contexts in some other countries permit students to prolong their studies as much as they need (Carreira & Lopes, 2020; Katsikas, 2013; Tuononen et al., 2016) thereby allowing students to work for pay more than students in the UK, where the majority of students need to finish their undergraduate degree within three to four years. This variation in the extent to which employed students in other countries combine employment and studying could therefore lead to employed students experiencing the self-referential processes explored in this thesis in a different way or with a varying degree of intensity. Employed students in other countries may also perceive moving into adulthood differently than students in the UK do (Andrade et al., 2020; Piumatti et al., 2013), which could mean that they experience identity incompatibility due to other factors and not because they deem commencing employment as a move towards adulthood. All of these different factors suggest that our work may not generalise beyond the UK higher education context, therefore we urge other

researchers to understand the local educational context when considering the factors that could improve the employed student experience.

Secondly, another limitation of our results is the fact that we did not differentiate between employed students who were from different courses or years of study, nor between traditional (age 18-22) and mature students. Previous evidence suggests that undertaking paid employment makes it harder to study in International Relations courses (Wright, 2002) and in Engineering courses (Davis & McCuen, 1995; Richardson et al., 2013; Săvescu et al., 2017). One participant in our Chapter 2 also opined that having a paid job and studying Physics was a tall task as the Physics course entails the completion of lengthy weekly exercises, which the student rushed to complete on time. Similarly, our results may not extend as seamlessly to students with additional responsibilities, such as parents or those students who work full-time but study part-time. Indeed, previous work suggests that mothers who are employed students are especially dependent on support from the workplace, at home and online (Andrade & Fernandes, 2021; Andrade & Matias, 2017; Brauer & Faust, 2020; Cronshaw et al., 2022), which are factors that we did not cover extensively in the current thesis. Barfield (2002) also reveals that there are differences between mature employed students and those students of traditional age as the former group might not prefer to work with the younger group due to differences in experiences and opinions. As evident, intergroup categorisations might exist even between different groups of employed students, however, that was not something that we discussed at large in the current thesis. Due to these factors, we acknowledge that our findings may not generalise to all different types of students as combining work and studies might be even more detrimental to students in specific courses (Mega et al., 2008), whereas mature students might experience being employed differently than students of traditional age would (Rosenberg et al., 2011) and therefore experience different self-referential processes.

Similarly, this thesis was also prepared during the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020) and the associated move towards online learning in higher education (Aristovnik et al., 2020). Indeed, during this period many UK universities and further education institutions delivered the majority of their teaching content online in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Students were also learning from home during this period, and only those workers who were classified as ‘key workers’ were allowed to work at their workplace. As the majority of employed students are employed in the hospitality and retail sectors (Hunt et al., 2004; Robotham, 2009), this meant that the majority of those students would not have gone to work during this period as employees in those sectors did not classify as ‘key workers’ except in rare circumstances (NAHT, 2020). During this period, Ebarido & Wibowo (2021) stressed the importance for students of seeking support from other students and engaging in discussions around their studies as those opportunities would have been limited due to the lack of face-to-face teaching and not engaging in paid work. Importantly however, Barros et al. (2022) revealed that employed students in Portugal scored lower on indices of depression and stress than did non-employed students signalling the resilience that is associated with combining employment and studies. Nonetheless, as the majority of our data was collected prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the UK (Chapter 4 and Study 2 in Chapter 5 are the only exceptions), we did not include any measures which allowed us to factor in the impact that the COVID-19 situation had on employed students and their social identity processes, or on prospective students and their university choices.

Penultimately, we posit that our insights surrounding the emergence of social identity processes in employed students could have also been augmented by seeking the opinions of members of other important groups such as work colleagues, non-employed students, faculty or university officials, and company management (Phelan, 2001). As the present research sought to explore how the experience of employment lends itself to social identity processes

within employed students, we did not originally deem the opinions of members of other groups as important as the opinions of employed students themselves. However, the results of Chapter 3 indicated that a sizable amount of the negative social experiences associated with employment have an intergroup dimension. At present, however, we cannot shed additional light as to whether members of other groups share the opinions of employed students, and whether some of them (especially company management) caused the division into groups explicitly. In addition, including the opinions of company management, faculty members, and university officials could have provided additional avenues for research into how employed students can benefit from specific workplace or university policies and practices. For example, workplace research has previously revealed that employees can benefit from supervisor feedback to build their employee social identification (Young & Steelman, 2014), that aligning specific supervisor and employed students' ethics can lead to less tension at the workplace (Reid et al., 2017), and that displaying pro-company behaviours can lead to employed students receiving additional reward allocations via positive managerial perceptions (Yun et al., 2007). Previous research within universities has also revealed that employed students often wish that faculty members had additional availability which did not interfere with students' academic and employment commitments (Curtis, 2007; Robertson, 2020). Altogether, including the opinions of members of groups salient to employed students could have provided additional support for our results, but could have also led to discovering important avenues to improving the experiences of employed students at the workplace and at university.

Finally, in relation to prospective students, a limitation of our research is that we did not take into account the geographical location of students' preferred universities. For example, if a student wants to attend a university close to home - perhaps due to anticipated money struggles about having no job and because they want to stay close to family - then

their choices of universities might have been narrowed to the universities in that area rather than all 131 universities in the UK. Those students might be more familiar and therefore enamoured with particular universities that are either of high or low-status and also aware of the academic struggles involved with attending those universities or with the percentage of employed students there. Therefore, while some of the participants might have been answering our questions in more general terms, other students' thinking might have been clouded by the universities in their favourite geographical area. Although Nieuwenhuis et al. (2019) controlled for this possibility indirectly by measuring students' desire to apply to only local universities, we only controlled for this assumption in Study 3 of Chapter 5. Thus, we urge other researchers to consider this limitation of our results in order to predict students' university choices more comprehensively in the future.

Final Remarks

We started this thesis by trying to find out what types of incompatibilities are experienced by current employed students, and whether factors related to part-time employment at university prevent prospective students from applying to high-status universities. However, we quickly realised that the social detriments of combining employment and studying at the university level extend past the normative mismatch that we outlined in the introduction to this thesis. While employed students did experience a sense of identity incompatibility that was provoked by perceptions of entering adulthood, we also found that employed students suffer from salient intergroup categorisations which in turn made employed students feel lonely and isolated.

Nonetheless, we also found different strategies that can help employed students by reducing identity incompatibility or to inoculate themselves against negative intergroup comparisons. Chief among these was the adoption of the employed student identity, which was a surprising, yet vital identity process which helped to shield employed students against

negative intergroup categorisations and was associated with increases in social status. While our results offer an exciting start to research concerning the employed student identity and its correlates, we also acknowledge that further research is needed to cement the importance of the employed student identity in alleviating the social detriments of combining paid work and studying.

Finally, we also set out to find what employment-related factors acted as a barrier to prevent prospective students from applying to high-status universities in the UK. While we did find some evidence that one factor - anticipated academic struggles - served to deter students from choosing high-status universities, we found a potential mechanism (a high perceived percentage of employed students at high-status universities) that *enabled* prospective students to choose such universities. Although further work is underway to corroborate the insights from Chapter 5, our results have highlighted the importance of considering factors related to part-time employment at university when measuring students' university choices.

Altogether, we hope that the insights from this thesis have gone some way to illuminate the experiences of employed students and the novel social detriments (identity incompatibility, intergroup categorisations) which stem from these experiences. We also believe that this is just the start, as we have outlined ways to help employed students via direct practical work, policy development and implementation, and continued research in this area. It is our mission to continue fighting to improve the experiences of current and prospective employed students alike, and we hope that you, the Reader, have been inspired to join us on this journey.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Schedule for Chapters 2 and 3

Interview schedule

Demographic questions

- What is your age?
- What is your course of study?
- What is your year of study?
- Are you a full-time or a part-time student?
- Do you have any other responsibilities?
 - **Prompt:** Caring for someone? Dependants?
- Are you currently undertaking any voluntary work?
 - **Follow-up:** What is that like?

Thank you. I want to let you know that at this time we are interested in all of your experiences of combining work and study. With that in mind, I would like to take you back to your school days. Is that okay?

Conceptions of working

- Did you work when you were attending school?
 - **Follow-up:** During sixth form or college?
- Was it normal for students like you to work whilst at school?
- At that time, did you expect to work when you attended university?
 - **Follow-up:** Did your parents expect you to work when you attend university?

All right. Now, that you are at university I would like to ask you some questions about your current employment. Is that okay?

Current employment

- What is your place of employment?
 - **Follow-up:** Is it on-campus or off-campus?
- For how long have you been employed at your current place of employment?
- Do you have multiple jobs?
- What is the structure of your employment?
 - **Follow-up:** Specific shifts? Specific days? On rota?
- How economically necessary is it for you to be employed?
- Are you a first-generation scholar?
 - **Prompts:** Has anyone in your family ever attended university?
Would you say you grew up in a middle-class community? Were you on free school meals?
- In your experience, is it normal for university students to combine work and study?
 - **Prompts:** Why do most people work? Does that vary by people's background? Do you think it's normal at all universities, or does it vary depending on the university (e.g. post-92 old polys, Russell grp, Oxbridge, etc.). How people at work/uni react to hearing about your other activity?

A 'working' identity vs? a 'scholar' identity

- How do you combine working and studying?
 - **Prompts:** Why is it easy (hard)? What aspect makes combining the two easy (hard)?
- How do you personally relate working to studying?
 - **Prompts:** Does one take priority over the other? Would you prefer a job which is more related to your studies? Would you prefer to be closer/more distant to your work colleagues? Can you talk to your colleagues/study peers about what it is like at uni (work)?

A 'working' identity vs? a 'social student' identity

- How do you combine working and social activities/going out with friends?
 - **Prompts:** Why is it easy (hard)? What aspect makes combining the two easy (hard)?
- How do you relate working to social activities?
 - **Prompts:** Does one take priority over the other? Would you prefer a job which is more related to your studies? Would you prefer to be closer/more distant to your work colleagues? Can you talk to your colleagues/friends about what it is like at uni (work)?

A 'scholar' identity vs? a 'social student' identity

- How do you combine studying and social activities/going out with friends?
 - **Prompts:** Why is it easy (hard)? What aspect makes combining the two easy (hard)?
- How do you relate studying to social activities?
 - **Prompts:** Does one take priority over the other? Can you talk to your study peers/friends about what it is like at uni (work)? Would you

prefer to be more closer/distant to your study peers? Can you talk to your friends about what it is like at uni?

Appendix B: Questionnaire items in Chapter 4

Start of Block: Intro

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENT STUDY Thank you for your interest in our research study. We are interested in exploring your thoughts and opinions about yourself and your acquaintances in relation to working and university. The survey should take around 20 minutes to complete. All of your responses are held anonymously and no identifying information (such as names or emails) are collected with your responses to this survey. You can withdraw your participation in this study at any point. If you participate in this survey, you will get the chance to win one of our **4 prizes of £50**. To do so, please include your email at the end of this survey. Please read the instructions carefully and answer the questions in the order they appear. You will not be able to return to a previous page once you have clicked the continue button. Please read the following information first.

PLEASE NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Sussex's Sciences & Technology Cross-Schools Research Ethics Committee (crecscitec@sussex.ac.uk). This project is supervised by Dr. Matthew Easterbrook (m.j.easterbrook@sussex.ac.uk). The project reference number is ER/VG68/12. If you have any ethical concerns, please contact the ethics chair (crecscitec@sussex.ac.uk). The University of Sussex has insurance in place to cover its legal liabilities in respect of this study. You can again choose to withdraw your data at the end of the study if you wish to do so. **CONSENT** By pressing the button below, you are indicating that: - You are at least 18 years of age.

- You consent to the processing of your personal information for the purpose of this research.
- You understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential (subject to legal limitations) and handled in accordance with data protection legislation.

- You understand that your IP address will not be collected during this survey.
- You have read and understood the information above.

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)

End of Block: Intro

Start of Block: Demographics

Q51 What is your age?

▼ 18 (1) ... 100 (83)

Q52 What is your gender?

☐ Male (1)

☐ Female (2)

☐ Other (3)

Q49 What is the name of the course you are studying? (if you are studying a degree with a minor subject, please indicate your major subject)

▼ Accounting & Finance (1) ... Other (77)

Q51 In which UK university are you studying right now?

▼ University of Sussex (1) ... York St John University (147)

Q53 What is your current year of study?

- ☐ Foundation year (1)
 - ☐ First year, undergraduate (2)
 - ☐ Second year, undergraduate (3)
 - ☐ Third year, undergraduate (4)
 - ☐ Fourth year, undergraduate (5)
 - ☐ Postgraduate Taught (6)
 - ☐ Postgraduate Research (7)
 - ☐ Placement year/Year Abroad (8)
-

Page Break

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Current employment

Q58 Do you have a paid job in addition to your studies **right now**?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No, but I have worked before DURING university (2)
- ☐ No, but I have worked before university ONLY (4)
- ☐ No, I have never had a part-time job (6)

Display This Question:

If Do you have a paid job in addition to your studies right now? = Yes



Q62 **How many hours per week do you work on average?** (If you have multiple jobs, please sum up all of the hours that you work; if your hours vary from week to week please provide a rough estimate)

Page Break

End of Block: Current employment

Start of Block: IMQ free text for defining characteristics **WORKING STUDENTS ONLY**

Q1 Who are you as a working student?

In the numbered spaces below, please write 5 characteristics that define you as a working student. You can write these characteristics as they occur to you without worrying about the order, but together they should summarise the image of yourself as a working student. You might include characteristics that other people know about, as well as your private thoughts about yourself. Some of these characteristics you may see as relatively important, and others less so. Some may be things you are relatively happy about, and others less so.

☐ 1 (1) _____

☐ 2 (2) _____

☐ 3 (3) _____

☐ 4 (4) _____

☐ 5 (5) _____

Page Break

Q2 How much do you see these characteristics as central or marginal to your identity as a working student?

[illegible]

Q3 How important is each of these characteristics to your identity as a working student?

[illegible]

Page Break

Q4 How much do you feel that these characteristics distinguish working students from non-working students?

Being motivated (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having fun (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having money (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being hardworking (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 Are these characteristics more suited to working students or non-working students?

[illegible]

Having fun (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Having money (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being hardworking (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: IMQ free text for defining characteristics WORKING STUDENTS ONLY

Start of Block: Strength of Identification measures (Postmes et al., 2013) WORKING STUDENTS ONLY

Page Break

Q8 The next set of questions will ask you questions about yourself. Please answer the following questions as honestly and as accurately as possible.

Q9 I identify with working students

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Disagree (2)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (5)
- ☐ Agree (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree (7)

Q10 I identify with my fellow university students

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Disagree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (5)
 - ☐ Agree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (7)
-

Q11 I identify with workers from my work organization

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Disagree (2)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (5)
- ☐ Agree (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree (7)

Start of Block: Identity incompatibility (Iyer et al., 2009) WORKING STUDENTS ONLY

Page Break

Q12 The following questions will ask you about the different aspects of your self-structure.

Please answer them as honestly and as accurately as you can.

Q13 I am afraid being a worker is incompatible with my identity as a student

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Disagree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (5)
 - ☐ Agree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (7)
-

Q14 I cannot talk to my fellow students about what it is like at work

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Disagree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (5)
 - ☐ Agree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (7)
-

Q15 I cannot talk to my colleagues about what it is like at university

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Disagree (2)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (3)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (5)
- ☐ Agree (6)
- ☐ Strongly agree (7)

End of Block: Identity incompatibility (Iyer et al., 2009) WORKING STUDENTS ONLY

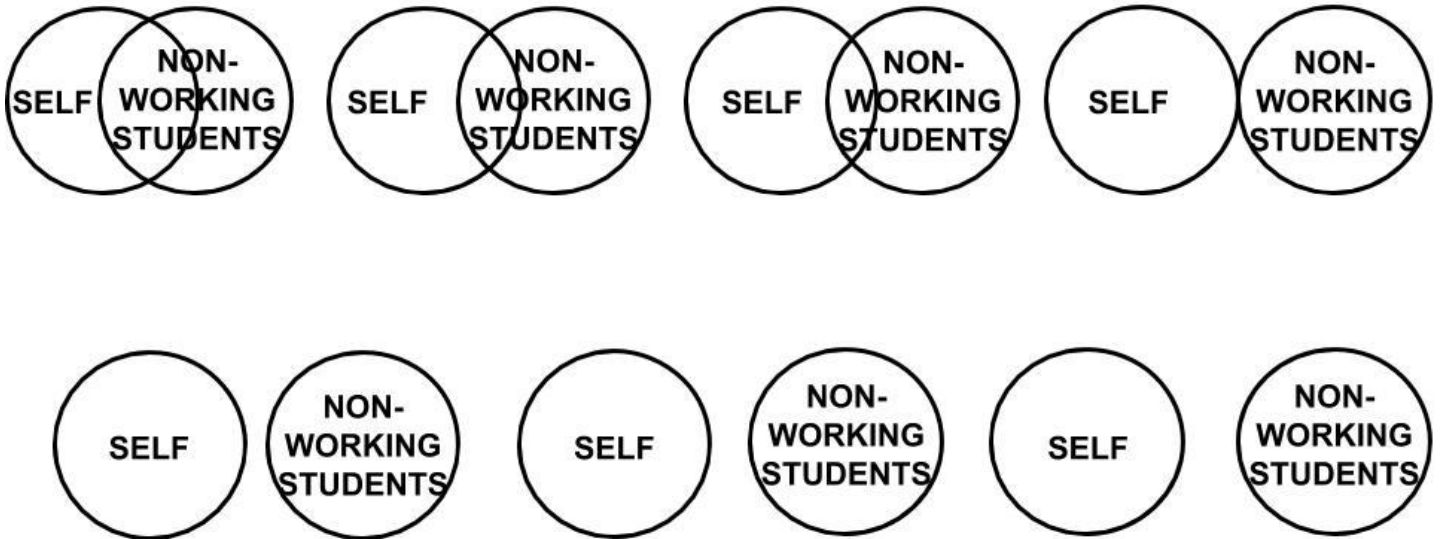
Start of Block: Intergroup differentiation WORKING STUDENTS ONLY

Page Break

Q43 Working students think differently about how they relate to non-working students. The following diagrams depict some of the possible ways in which you as a working student can relate to non-working students.

Please select **ONE** diagram below that best describes how you feel about your relationships with non-working students.

	Off (1)	On (2)
1 (11)		
2 (12)		
3 (13)		
4 (14)		
5 (15)		
6 (16)		
7 (17)		



End of Block: Intergroup differentiation WORKING STUDENTS ONLY

Start of Block: Superordinate identity BOTH STUDENT GROUPS

Page Break

Q50

Do non-working students or working students represent better what being a student is about?

- ☐ Non-working students represent what being a student is about much better than working students do (1)
- ☐ Non-working students represent what being a student is about better than working students do (2)
- ☐ Non-working students represent what being a student is about slightly better than working students do (3)
- ☐ Both groups represent equally well what being a student is about (4)
- ☐ Working students represent what being a student is about slightly better than non-working students do (5)
- ☐ Working students represent what being a student is about better than non-working students do (6)
- ☐ Working students represent what being a student is about much better than non-working students do (7)

End of Block: Superordinate identity BOTH STUDENT GROUPS

Start of Block: DV's

Page Break

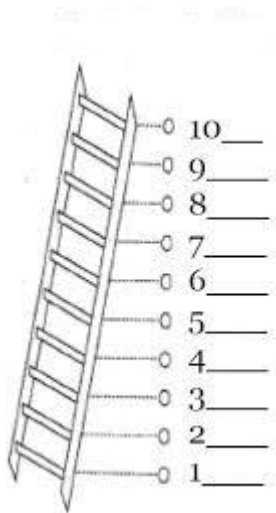
Q54 What was your average module result in the autumn term? (**Please provide an estimate if you are not sure**)

▼ 40 (1) ... 100 (61)

Q56 Think of this ladder as representing how much status people in our society have. For example, the lowest rung indicates that you have zero status in society, whereas the highest

rung indicates you have the utmost status in society. Now please pick which rung of the ladder represents best **your overall status in society**.

	Dislike (1)	Neutral (2)	Like (3)
Region #1 (1)			
Region #2 (2)			
Region #3 (3)			
Region #4 (4)			
Region #5 (5)			
Region #6 (6)			
Region #7 (7)			
Region #8 (8)			
Region #9 (9)			
Region #10 (10)			



End of Block: DV's

Start of Block: Debrief

Q61 Thank you for your participation in our survey!

We are interested in what are the defining characteristics of the working student identity. If you were a current working student, you answered questions about the defining characteristics of your identity and how your identity correlates with academic achievement and your status in society. If you were not a current working student you answered questions about how the characteristics differentiate you (or not) from working students and, also, academic achievement and status and society.

If you want to participate in our draw for one of our 4 **£50** prizes, please insert your email in [this survey](#). Your email will be only used for the purposes of the prize draw.

If you have any further questions please email Vladislav Grozev (vg68@sussex.ac.uk) or Matthew Easterbrook (M.J.Easterbrook@sussex.ac.uk) who is supervising this research.

Appendix C: Supplementary Online Material for Chapter 4

Overlap Between Freely Selected Aspects and Pre-Selected Ones

Firstly, some of the free form aspects that participants selected overlapped in meaning with our pre-selected ones. Out of the 1,010 freely selected aspects, 108 (10.7%) were rated as overlapping in meaning with the aspects we provided to participants to rate on the aspect-level variables. The two identity aspects that participants selected the most were *hardworking* ($n = 74$) and *motivated* ($n = 28$). *Proud* was selected only by four participants, and *having money* was selected by two participants. *Having fun* was not selected by any of the student participants which indicates that it is not an identity-defining aspect for employed students.

Frequency of Freely Selected Identity Aspects

Then, we analysed which identity aspects participants selected most frequently. Conceptually overlapping with the preselected aspect, *hardworking* ($n = 74$) was the most frequently selected identity aspect by the employed participants in our sample. Participants further described themselves as *busy* ($n = 71$), *organized* ($n = 66$), *stressed* ($n = 55$), and as *tired* ($n = 46$). Being *motivated* was selected by 28 participants as an identity-specific aspect. The other most frequently selected identity aspects were *determined* ($n = 25$), *responsible* ($n = 20$), *dedicated* ($n = 19$), *independent* ($n = 18$), *driven* ($n = 12$), and *ambitious* ($n = 10$). These most frequently selected aspects comprised 43.86% of all freely selected aspects ($n = 1,010$)

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for All Identity Categories on the Aspect-Level Variables in Chapter 4

	<i>n</i>	Centrality		Importance		Distinguish		Suitability	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Busy	76	8.56	2.27	7.01	2.61	7.14	3.01	8.72	2.09
Negative consequences	110	8.43	2.22	5.83	3.46	6.02	3.26	7.67	2.48
Positive consequences	30	8.10	2.14	8.33	2.62	6.43	2.71	7.77	2.24
Discipline	64	9.06	1.64	9.50	1.50	5.03	2.84	7.29	1.62
Hard-working ^a	71	9.18	2.19	9.82	1.58	5.10	2.98	7.43	2.00
Lack of money	13	7.54	2.70	5.50	3.00	7.00	2.66	7.42	2.61
Monetary consequences	27	8.96	2.67	9.38	2.45	6.81	2.84	7.96	2.19
Motivation ^b	85	9.06	1.97	9.69	1.24	5.50	2.93	7.13	2.02
Negative emotion	93	8.15	2.63	5.58	2.97	5.78	2.91	7.71	2.13
Organized	72	9.04	2.35	9.76	1.73	5.83	3.22	7.93	1.86
Personal characteristics	238	8.18	2.54	8.55	2.41	5.23	2.98	6.87	1.85
Positive emotion	33	7.15	2.56	8.88	2.19	5.65	2.40	6.36	1.93
Role identity	12	9.92	2.94	9.09	3.21	7.09	3.18	8.64	2.25
Skills	46	8.93	2.25	9.30	2.30	4.72	2.78	7.37	1.87
Hard-working ^a	197	9.11	2.26	9.56	1.79	5.47	2.69	7.12	1.60
Having fun	196	6.75	2.65	8.06	2.39	5.54	3.20	4.82	2.08
Having money	198	8.32	2.77	8.71	2.36	7.22	3.03	8.18	2.23
Motivated ^b	197	7.96	2.60	9.15	1.99	5.02	2.82	6.98	1.84
Pride in work	197	7.94	2.51	8.38	2.30	5.23	2.92	7.02	1.77

Note. The last five categories represent the five pre-selected aspects that we provided for all employed students to answer. Superscripts indicate a category that overlaps in meaning to one of the pre-selected categories.

Appendix D: Experimental manipulation for Study 3 in Chapter 5

Control condition

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