



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

Vladislav H. Grozev¹ · Matthew J. Easterbrook¹

Received: 18 January 2021 / Accepted: 5 October 2022 / Published online: 14 October 2022
© The Author(s) 2022

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

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,

✉ Vladislav H. Grozev
vg68@sussex.ac.uk

Matthew J. Easterbrook
m.j.easterbrook@sussex.ac.uk

¹ University of Sussex, Sussex, UK

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", 2022). 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 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

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.

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 & 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; NUS, 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 (Robo-

tham, 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., 2000; 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 & Sadler, 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 ($M=42.45$ min, $SD=9.07$ min). 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; Elliot 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-in and writing it all out and then giving it in like 10 minutes before it was due. I did not

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

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 night-club), 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 hard-working 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

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

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 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 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

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

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.

Appendix A: 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?

Acknowledgements Not applicable.

Authors' contributions The first author assisted in designing the study and interview schedule, conducted all interviews, analysed and prepared all data and helped to write the manuscript. The second author assisted in designing the study and interview schedule, analysed 15% of the interviews, assisted in the analysis of data and helped to write the manuscript.

Funding Self-funded PhD project.

Data Availability Not applicable.

Code Availability Not applicable.

Declarations

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

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Amiot, C. E., de la Sablonniere, R., Smith, L. G., & Smith, J. R. (2015). Capturing changes in social identities over time and how they become part of the self-concept. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 9(4), 171–187. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12169>
- Aries, E., & Seider, M. (2005). The interactive relationship between class identity and the college experience: The case of lower income students. *Qualitative Sociology*, 28(4), 419–443. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-005-8366-1>
- Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2000). Identification in Organizations: An Examination of Four Fundamental Questions. *Journal of Management*, 34(3), 325–374. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308316059>
- Boliver, V. (2015). Are there distinctive clusters of higher and lower status universities in the UK? *Oxford Review of Education*, 41(5), 608–627. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2015.1082905>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage
- Bradley, G. (2006). Work participation and academic performance: A test of alternative propositions. *Journal of Education and Work*, 19(5), 481–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080600988756>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative research in psychology*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Broadbridge, A., & Swanson, V. (2006). Managing two roles: A theoretical study of students' employment whilst at university. *Community Work and Family*, 9(2), 159–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668800600586878>
- Buften, S. (2003). The lifeworld of the university student: Habitus and social class. *Journal of phenomenological psychology*, 34(2), 207–234. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916203322847146>

- Butler, A. B. (2007). Job characteristics and college performance and attitudes: A model of work-school conflict and facilitation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(2), 500. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.2.500>
- Callender, C. (2008). The impact of term-time employment on higher education students' academic attainment and achievement. *Journal of Education Policy*, 23(4), 359–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930801924490>
- Cameron, J. E. (1999). Social identity and the pursuit of possible selves: Implications for the psychological well-being of university students. *Group Dynamics: Theory Research and Practice*, 3(3), 179. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.3.3.179>
- Cheng, C. Y., Lee, F., Benet-Martínez, V., & Huynh, Q. L. (2014). 13 Variations in Multicultural Experience: Influence of Bicultural Identity Integration on Socio-Cognitive Processes and Outcomes. *The Oxford handbook of multicultural identity*, 276
- Cheng, D. X., & Alcántara, L. (2007). Assessing working students' college experiences: A grounded theory approach. *Assessment & evaluation in higher education*, 32(3), 301–311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602930600896639>
- Cinamon, R. G. (2016). Integrating work and study among young adults: Testing an empirical model. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 24(3), 527–542. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1069072715599404>
- Clemmensen, L. K. H., & Harder, D. E. (2015). Student employment and study effort for engineering students. In *43rd Annual Conference of the European Society for Engineering Education (SEFI 2015)* (p. 56598)
- Creed, P. A., French, J., & Hood, M. (2015). Working while studying at university: The relationship between work benefits and demands and engagement and well-being. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 86, 48–57. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2014.11.002>
- Curtis, S. (2007). Students' perceptions of the effects of term-time paid employment. *Education + Training*. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910710762940>
- Curtis, S., & Shani, N. (2002). The effect of taking paid employment during term-time on students' academic studies. *Journal of further and higher education*, 26(2), 129–138. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03098770220129406>
- de Vreeze, J., Matschke, C., & Cress, U. (2018). Neither fish nor fowl: A perceived mismatch in norms and values between oneself, other students, and people back home undermines adaptation to university. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 57(3), 684–702. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12253>
- Derous, E., & Ryan, A. M. (2008). When earning is beneficial for learning: The relation of employment and leisure activities to academic outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 73(1), 118–131. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2008.02.003>
- Elliot, R., Fischer, C. T., & Rennie, D. L. (1999). Evolving guidelines for publication of qualitative research studies in psychology and related fields. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38, 215–229. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466599162782>
- Endsleigh (2015). Student Survey. Available at: <https://www.endsleigh.co.uk/pressreleases/10-august-2015/Eurostat> (2016). Young people on the labour market (lfsow_16)
- Evans, C., Maxfield, T., & Gbadamosi, G. (2015). Using part-time working to support graduate employment: Needs and perceptions of employers. *Industry and Higher Education*, 29(4), 305–314. <https://doi.org/10.5367/ihe.2015.0260>
- Geel, R., & Backes-Gellner, U. (2012). Earning while learning: When and how student employment is beneficial. *Labour*, 26(3), 313–340. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9914.2012.00548.x>
- Haslam, S. A., & Ellemers, N. (2005). Social identity in industrial and organizational psychology: Concepts, controversies and contributions. *International review of industrial and organizational psychology*, 20(1), 39–118
- Herrmann, S. D., & Varnum, M. E. W. (2018). Integrated Social Class Identities Improve Academic Performance, Well-Being, and Workplace Satisfaction. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 49(4), 635–663. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022022118761107>
- Holmes, V. (2008). Working to live. *Education + Training*. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910810880542>
- Huie, F. C., Winsler, A., & Kitsantas, A. (2014). Employment and first-year college achievement: The role of self-regulation and motivation. *Journal of Education and Work*, 27(1), 110–135. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2012.718746>
- Humphrey, R. (2001). Working is a class issue. *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 19, 16
- Iyer, A., Jetten, J., Tsvirikos, D., Postmes, T., & Haslam, S. A. (2009). The more (and the more compatible) the merrier: Multiple group memberships and identity compatibility as predictors of adjustment after life transitions. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(4), 707–733. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466608X397628>
- Jessop, D. C., Herberts, C., & Solomon, L. (2005). The impact of financial circumstances on student health. *British journal of health psychology*, 10(3), 421–439 <https://doi.org/10.1348/135910705X25480>

- Jetten, J., Iyer, A., Tsivrikos, D., & Young, B. M. (2008). When is individual mobility costly? The role of economic and social identity factors. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38(5), 866–879. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.471>
- Koeske, R. D., & Koeske, G. F. (1989). Working and non-working students: Roles, support and well-being. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 25(3), 244–256. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.1989.10671281>
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Cruce, T., Shoup, R., & Gonyea, R. M. (2007). Connecting the dots: Multi-faceted analyses of the relationships between student engagement results from the NSSE, and the institutional practices and conditions that foster student success. *Final report prepared for the Lumina Foundation for Education Grant # 2518*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research
- Living costs for full-time students (2021). Retrieved 1 November 2021, from <https://www.ucas.com/finance/student-finance-england/tuition-fee-loans-full-time-students#whats-available>
- Lucas, R. (1997). Youth, gender and part-time work-students in the labour process. *Work Employment and Society*, 11(4), 595–614. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0950017097114001>
- Lucas, R., & Lammont, N. (1998). Combining work and study: an empirical study of full-time students in school, college and university. *Journal of education and work*, 11(1), 41–56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1363908980110103>
- Manthei, R. J., & Gilmore, A. (2005). The effect of paid employment on university students' lives. *Education + Training*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910510592248>
- McGregor, I. (2015). How does Term-time Paid Work Affect Higher Education Students' Studies, and What can be Done to Minimise any Negative Effects? *Journal of Perspectives in Applied Academic Practice*, 3(2), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14297/jpaap.v3i2.127>
- Metcalfe, H. (2003). Increasing inequality in higher education: the role of term-time working. *Oxford Review of Education*, 29(3), 315–329. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980307447>
- Moreau, M. P., & Leathwood, C. (2006). Balancing paid work and studies: working (-class) students in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(1), 23–42. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070500340135>
- National Student Money Survey (2021). Retrieved 1 November, 2021, from <https://www.savethestudent.org/money/surveys/student-money-survey-2021-results.html>
- National Union of Students (1999). Student Hardship Survey
- Nieuwenhuis, M., Manstead, A. S., & Easterbrook, M. J. (2019). Accounting for unequal access to higher education: The role of social identity factors. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 22(3), 371–389. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1368430219829824>
- Obst, P. L., & White, K. M. (2007). Choosing to belong: The influence of choice on social identification and psychological sense of community. *Journal of community psychology*, 35(1), 77–90. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20135>
- Outerbridge, H. J. (2016). *The Impact of Part-Time Work on the Student Experience* (Doctoral dissertation, Education: Faculty of Education). Retrieved 1 November, 2021, from <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/16466>
- Packer, M. J., & Addison, R. B. (Eds.). (1989). *Entering the circle: Hermeneutic investigation in psychology*. Suny Press
- Park, Y., & Sprung, J. M. (2013). Work–school conflict and health outcomes: Beneficial resources for working college students. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 18(4), 384. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033614>
- Quintini, G. (2015). Working and learning: A diversity of patterns. <https://doi.org/10.1787/1815199X>
- Reay, D., Crozier, G., & Clayton, J. (2010). 'Fitting in' or 'standing out': Working-class students in UK higher education. *British educational research journal*, 36(1), 107–124. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01411920902878925>
- Robotham, D. (2009). Combining study and employment: a step too far?. *Education + Training*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910910968337>
- Robotham, D. (2012). Student part-time employment: characteristics and consequences. *Education + Training*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400911211198904>
- Robotham, D. (2013). Students' perspectives on term-time employment: an exploratory qualitative study. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 37(3), 431–442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2012.666892>
- Rubin, M., & Wright, C. L. (2015). Age differences explain social class differences in students' friendship at university: Implications for transition and retention. *Higher Education*, 70(3), 427–439. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-014-9844-8>
- Safron, D. J., Schulenberg, J. E., & Bachman, J. G. (2001). Part-time work and hurried adolescence: The links among work intensity, social activities, health behaviors, and substance use. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 425–449. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090188>
- Grozev & Easterbrook (2018). *Differences between working and non-working students in approaches to learning and discipline identification*. Unpublished manuscript

- Savoca, M. (2016). Campus employment as a high-impact practice: relationship to academic success and persistence of first-generation college students (Doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University. Libraries). Retrieved 1 November, 2021, from <https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/campus-employment-as-high-impact-practice/docview/1805293024/se-2?accountid=14182>
- Silver, H., & Silver, P. (1997). *Students: Changing roles, changing lives* (p. 10). Buckingham: Open University Press
- Smith, N., & Taylor, P. (1999). ‘Not for lipstick and lager’: students and part time work. *Scottish Affairs*, 28(1), 147–163. <https://doi.org/10.3366/scot.1999.0042>
- Sorensen, L., & Winn, S. (1993). Student loans: a case study. *Higher Education Review*, 25, 48–65. Retrieved 1 November, 2021, from <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/student-loans-case-study/docview/1297985721/se-2?accountid=14182>
- Stiles, W. B. (1993). Quality control in qualitative research. *Clinical psychology review*, 13(6), 593–618. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-7358\(93\)90048-Q](https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-7358(93)90048-Q)
- Tajfel, H., Turner, J. C., Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *Organizational identity: A reader*, 56, 65
- Tam Oi, L. B., & Morrison, K. (2005). Undergraduate students in part-time employment in China. *Educational studies*, 31(2), 169–180. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055690500095555>
- Tannock, S., & Flocks, S. (2003). "I Know What It's Like to Struggle" The Working Lives of Young Students in an Urban Community College. *Labor Studies Journal*, 28(1), 1–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0160449X0302800102>
- Teixeira, L., Lowden, A., da Luz, A. A., Turte, S. L., Valente, D., Matsumura, R. J., & Fischer, F. M. (2012). Sleep patterns and sleepiness of working college students. *Work (Reading, Mass.)*, 41(Supplement 1), 5550–5552. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-2012-0879-5550>
- Tuononen, T., Parpala, A., Mattsson, M., & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2016). Work experience in relation to study pace and thesis grade: investigating the mediating role of student learning. *Higher education*, 72(1), 41–58. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-015-9937-z>
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell
- Veldman, J., Meeussen, L., & van Laar, C. (2019). A social identity perspective on the social-class achievement gap: Academic and social adjustment in the transition to university. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 22(3), 403–418. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1368430218813442>
- Watts, C., & Pickering, A. (2000). Pay as you learn: student employment and academic progress. *Education + Training*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910010372670>
- Winn, S., & Stevenson, R. (1997). Student loans: are the policy objectives being achieved? *Higher Education Quarterly*, 51(2), 144–163. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2273.00032>

Publisher's Note Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.