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## MANAGING TWO ROLES

A theoretical study of students' employment  
whilst at university

*The main reasons for students combining term-time employment with university life are seen as financial, although additional benefits and costs are associated with 'earning and learning'. Most studies focus on the negative impact of combining these roles, suggesting that students' term-time employment leads to poorer adjustment to university life in terms of academic performance, social inclusion and reduced psychological well-being. Methodological problems with previous research have made it difficult to draw firm and generalizable conclusions regarding the interrelationship between university life and term-time employment roles. The current study adopts a pluralistic approach to study the links between psychological well-being, satisfaction with academic performance and social integration and students' term-time and vacation employment. The first phase, reported here, consisted of qualitative research. Nine focus groups were conducted with undergraduate students at Stirling University, Scotland. These data were examined using a content analysis approach. Both positive and negative aspects of combining work and studying were discussed within the focus groups. This provides a balanced picture of combining the two roles. Results are discussed in relation to the models of complementarity, spillover and separation.*

**Keywords** students; term-time working; qualitative research; role combination

*Les étudiants qui exercent un emploi rémunéré pendant leurs études universitaires, le font pour des raisons financières même si d'autres bénéfiques et inconvénients résultent de ce cumul. La plupart des publications s'intéressent aux effets négatifs engendrés par la nécessité de travailler, suggérant que les étudiants qui gagnent leur vie pendant leurs études ont des difficultés plus grandes à s'adapter à la vie étudiante, obtiennent des résultats académiques moins bons et sont psychologiquement moins contents. Cependant la méthodologie utilisée au cours de ces recherches présente certains problèmes qui empêchent de tirer des conclusions claires et nettes sur les interactions qui existent entre la vie universitaire et l'exercice simultané d'un métier. Les travaux de recherche de ce communiqué adoptent une approche pluraliste pour étudier les liens entre le bien-être psychologique, le degré de satisfaction social et académique selon que l'étudiant travaille pendant l'année académique ou juste pendant les vacances. La première partie de ces recherches est décrite ici et consiste en une étude qualitative. Des discussions ont été menées avec neuf groupes d'étudiants de candidature à l'Université de Stirling en Ecosse. Le contenu de ces entretiens a ensuite été analysé en suivant une méthode d'approche de*

*l'analyse du contenu. Comme les aspects positifs et négatifs résultant du cumul études — emploi ont été examinés avec chacun des groupes de discussion, l'analyse de ces entretiens produit des résultats équilibrés. Ces résultats sont discutés en utilisant les modèles de complémentarité, de débordement et de séparation.*

**Mots-clés** étudiants; étude qualitative; emploi rémunéré pendant leun études universitaires

## Introduction

A substantial proportion of employed adults report conflict between their work and family roles (Pleck, Staines, & Lang, 1980). Previous research has adopted alternative approaches to the study of stress in the work-home interface. One approach identifies the relationship between roles in each domain as being 'cumulative' — either additive (Bhaget, Lindholm, McQuaid, & Segovis, 1985; Goode, 1974; Sekaran, 1983) or multiplicative (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1986). Theories of role additivity also link to the issue of 'spillover', where attitudes or behaviour employed in one domain are carried over into the other. The effects of the relationships between the roles in each domain can be positive or negative. If positive, multiple roles are seen to complement one another. Skills and competencies acquired in one domain are seen as transferring to the other resulting in enhanced well-being (Cooke & Rosseau, 1984; Thoits, 1983; Verbrugge, 1986). If negative, multiple roles are seen as conflicting, leading to reduced well-being and a perception of overload.

A second approach views the relationship between the two domains as being negatively associated or 'compensatory'. Either domain is seen as compensating for problems or deficiencies in the other. Examples of this approach treat home life as a 'refuge' from the demands of work (Bartolome & Evans, 1979), or alternatively perceive opportunities for self realization and skill use in occupational settings as an antidote to the 'drudgery' of domestic roles (Baruch, Biener, & Barnett, 1987; Brown, Bhrolchain, & Harris, 1975; Campbell, Campbell, & Kennard, 1994; Haw 1982). A further approach asserts that the roles may be independent, that is, both environments can be described as separate from each other (Glowinkowski & Cooper, 1985).

## Student participation in term-time employment

Since the 1990s there has been a dramatic rise in the number of student combining term-time employment with full-time academic studying. Studies vary, but the number of students combining both these roles is substantial. Recent estimates place this figure in the region of 41% although this figure is 54% for those in the lower socio-economic groupings (Woodward, 2003). Others (cf. Barke et al., 2000; Callender & Kemp, 2000; Paton-Saltzberg & Lindsay, 1993; Smith & Taylor, 1999; Winn & Stevenson, 1997) estimate that over half of students are engaged in term-time employment activities at some stage of the academic year. One in six (15.9% or 1.1

million) of all part-time and self-employed employees are students or still at school (Labour Force Survey, 2002). Term-time employment is becoming the norm for students in higher education in the UK, a pattern following the US. Among the reasons for the increased incidence of term-time employment is the changing funding arrangements for higher education students in the UK (including the introduction of tuition fees and freezing of maintenance grants) which has resulted in financial hardship (Humphrey et al., 1998) and debt (Deacon, 1994; Judd, 1997; McCarthy & Humphrey, 1995).

Although students can be found in every occupational grouping (Hakim, 1998), much previous research in this area has shown that students tend to work in the service industries. In particular they are found in retailing, catering, bars and hotels (Canny, 2002; Incomes Data Services, 1997). Woodward (2003) additionally cites office work and call centres as common places for students now to work. The growth in flexible labour in the service sectors makes this sector particularly attractive for students' employment. In Canny's (2002) study a retail grocery employees' representative argued that students were a cheap source of easily disposable flexible labour and that employers have capitalized on students' need for flexible work. The nature of many jobs in these sectors is characterized as being poorly paid, low skilled, insecure with high labour turnover rates and with low unionization, that is, jobs associated with the secondary labour market (Piore, 1975). As such, the conditions of employment may impact on students' perceptions of the impact of being in term-time employment whilst at university.

The number of hours worked also varies from study to study but it is clear that these hours worked have increased over the last decade. The government's proposed maximum is 10 to 12 hours per week (Higher Education and Employment Committee on Student Retention, 2001; Independent Committee of Enquiry into Student Finance, 1999). While some students are working these hours, many are working beyond this amount. Several studies found the average hours worked to be nearer 15 hours per week (e.g. Buie, 2001; Canny, 2002; McKechnie, Hobbs, & Lindsay, 1998; Silver & Silver, 1997; Smith & Taylor, 1999; Woodward, 2003). More importantly perhaps, in relation to successfully combining the demands of multiple roles, is that several studies revealed students' working hours vary over time, often from week to week (Lucas, 1997; Lucas & Ralston, 1997). This might be attributed to the nature of the work involved which requires employees to be flexible in their working arrangements. Clearly this might impose difficulties in successfully combining their employment and university lives. Furthermore, many students reported feeling pressurized into working additional hours if asked by their employers (Ford, Bosworth, & Wilson, 1995; Hodgson & Spours, 2001; Smith & Taylor, 1997) believing it would damage the frequency and quality of future work offers (Lucas, 1997). Again, this can affect the ability to juggle the multiple roles.

Some studies have explored the reasons for the growth in the incidence of combining term-time employment and full-time study. Many of these are rooted in financial reasons (Ford et al., 1995; Labour Research Department, 1996; Leonard, 1995; Lucas & Ralston, 1997; Smith & Taylor, 1997; Woodward, 2003). However, although financial necessity (poverty and need) was a reason proposed by some students for working, for others, this need was to earn extra cash (lifestyle pressures and youth consumption) rather than for the basic essentials (Hodgson & Spours, 2001;

Woodward, 2003). Department for Education estimates also suggest that the ratio of students' expenditure on essential items (such as accommodation, food, bills, course expenditure and essential travel) in comparison with other expenditure (such as entertainment and non-essential travel) has decreased between 1995/1996 and 1998/1999 (Office for National Statistics, 2002). This casts a different light on the idea that students are forced into having to combine term-time employment and studying, and suggests that many of them may choose to combine these two roles in order that they can sustain a certain lifestyle. For example, a study involving diaries kept by 60 students on a retailing course from the authors' institution found that students spend, on average, between £100 to £200 per month on clothes.

### **Effects on academic study**

Educational professionals have become increasingly anxious about the number of students employed part time and the number of hours they work (Hodgson & Spours, 2001). This has led to fears that combining the two roles has a conflicting and negative effect rather than a positive effect. As such, much of the research conducted in this area has concentrated on the negative outcomes of combining the two roles.

#### *Negative effects*

Many of the studies conducted to date have reported the negative effects of combining term-time (and sometimes vacation) employment and studying (Barke et al., 2000; Leonard, 1995; McCartan, 1988; Smith & Taylor, 1997; Sorenson & Winn, 1993). Some of the problems found by the research have been the difficulty and inability to manage workloads (Broadbridge, Swanson, & Taylor, 2000; Buie, 2001; Lucas & Lammont, 1998; Smith & Taylor, 1997). This can be exacerbated when flexible hours of employment are worked by students. Several studies found that students believed that their academic performance had declined owing to employment commitments (Booth 1993; Leonard, 1995; McKechnie et al., 1998; Paton-Saltzberg & Lindsay, 1993; Silver & Silver, 1997). Having less time for academic study (Silver & Silver, 1997; Sorensen & Winn, 1993; Winn & Stevenson, 1997), tiredness (Broadbridge et al., 2000; Buie, 2001; Smith & Taylor, 1997; Sorensen & Winn, 1993; Winn & Stevenson, 1997), missing lectures or time-tabled sessions (Barke et al., 2000; Ford et al., 1995; Leonard, 1995; Meyer, 2001; Smith & Taylor, 1997; Sorensen & Winn, 1993), and missing deadline dates (Ford et al., 1995) because of employment commitments were common factors perceived to adversely affect academic performance. Some (Broadbridge et al., 2000; Smith & Taylor, 1997) reported difficulties in fitting jobs around examinations or even changing academic electives to fit employment patterns (Silver & Silver, 1997).

There are growing concerns that students who are engaged in term-time employment sacrifice their full experience of 'student life' (Leonard, 1995). The tiredness associated with being employed spilled over into their non-employment lives (Broadbridge et al., 2000; Taylor & Smith, 1998). Those with term-time jobs also reported a large negative impact on extra-curricular activities (Broadbridge et al.,

2000; Paton-Saltzberg & Lindsay, 1993; Taylor & Smith, 1998), including sporting activities (Humphrey et al., 1998; Meyer, 2001) and voluntary activities (Meyer, 2001; Silver & Silver, 1997).

### *Positive effects*

Previous studies have found some positive effects of combining employment and studying although these were reported with much less frequency than the negative effects. If employment was vocationally related to their degrees, students may use their time to complete assignments or collect data for assignments and dissertations (Hodgson & Spours, 2001; Lucas, 1997). Furthermore, a minority of students believed that employment can be regarded as helping students with the acquisition of knowledge or skills which were academically relevant (Callender & Kemp, 2000; McKechnie et al., 1998). Other positive outcomes may be better time management and relieving of stress by enabling the purchase of books/materials (Sorenson & Winn, 1993). However, these were mentioned by just 2% of the sample. It can also facilitate the transition from full-time education to full-time employment (Hakim, 1998) and help to develop transferable skills (e.g., communication skills, team working). Enhanced self-esteem, confidence and social skills from paid employment may help students' adjust to university life, as well as providing them with the skills for use in later life.

Several studies have discussed the social aspects of students' involvement in term-time employment. Some (Lucas, 1997; Lucas & Lammont, 1998) describe it as a means of going out without having to spend money. Other students have identified the general social aspects of work as a source of satisfaction (Ford et al., 1995; Lucas, 1997; Lucas & Ralston, 1997).

### *Non-workers/no effects.*

Lucas and Ralston (1997) found that the reasons students were not in employment was because of fears it would interfere with their studies. They argue that these students trade off the prospect of obtaining a good degree in exchange for a burgeoning amount of debt. Others (Lucas & Lammont, 1998; McKechnie et al., 1998) found students less likely to be employed in their final year. These students are exhibiting behaviour that is keeping the two roles separate. Rather than run the risk of negative spillover, a choice is made to separate the two activities, possibly coping with this by undertaking vacation employment only.

A large minority (31%) of Sorensen and Winn's (1993) term-time employees (regular and ad-hoc) reported no effect (either positive or negative) of paid employment on their academic studies. This would suggest that these students are able to balance their multiple role demands and so the multiple roles may be seen to be complementary.

Hodgson and Spours (2001) classified students into various typologies: balancers and risk takers (both of whom combine studying and part-time employment, with risk takers spending more hours in part-time work), deliberate non-workers (who choose not to work part time), outsiders (those seeking part-time employment but are excluded from it) and connectors (those making active connections between their part-time employment and full-time course).

*Motivation to study.*

A study by Winn (2002) examined the diversity of students' circumstances, the complexity of their lives and academic studies and the effect on motivation. She found that some students with demanding family or employment commitments were able to integrate the demands of the course into their lives, while others had little time for academic work. Furthermore, her study revealed that some students who have few extraneous commitments also spent little time studying. This suggests that personality and motivational factors may also affect individual students' willingness to study. Participation in term-time employment activities may or may not affect the motivation to study.

The UK has seen a sharp rise in the number of students who now attempt to combine their full-time studies with term-time employment activities. Much of this rise in employment is attributable to financial requirements, although ironically the types of jobs typically undertaken by students are low paid, precarious ones. As a body, students represent a reserve army of cheap and flexible labour for many employment sectors. The growth of full-time study and term-time employment has led to concerns by educationalists that the combination of these roles is negative. Indeed, many studies have reported these negative effects, with positive or neutral ones being very much in the minority. There have been methodological problems with some previous studies (see Broadbridge & Swanson, 2005, for further expansion) and they largely ignore the effects of term-time employment on the social aspects of university life. The overall aim of the current research was to investigate further the effect of term-time and vacation employment on adjustment to university life.

The specific objectives of the research were to:

- Consider the positive and negative effects of combining paid employment whilst studying at university;
- Explore how term-time employment has affected academic studying, participation rates and performance;
- Explore how term-time employment has affected social life whilst at university;
- Understand how students attempt to manage their employment roles with university roles (both academic and social);
- Understand how employment affects general health and well-being.

## **Method**

To investigate the effects of term-time and vacation employment on adjustment to university life, a pluralistic methodology was undertaken. This consisted of a series of focus groups, the results of which helped to devise a questionnaire survey. This paper reports the findings from the focus groups. The aim of the focus group research was to investigate the participation of term-time and vacation employment, the impact this has had on university life, and how the combined roles are managed.

A total of nine focus groups were conducted with 84 undergraduate students at Stirling University. Most were in their third year of academic study, while a minority were in their final year of study. The University operates a four-year undergraduate

honours degree scheme. Some students can graduate after three years with a general degree, although the majority stay on to their fourth year. The focus groups were conducted in October 2002. Both authors were present in each of the discussions. As the research was exploratory in that we wanted to examine students' views on their combination of employment and academic studies, we were careful not to influence the discussions by imposing a priori categories from the literature. As such, the groups began by asking each participant to introduce themselves, to state whether they had been involved in term-time and/or vacation employment, the nature of this employment and hours worked per week if applicable. This acted as an icebreaker to the groups and gave the researchers an indication of the extent of term-time and vacation employment. The groups were then asked how they felt about working (particularly during term time) whilst studying at university. Both positive and negative aspects of combining work and studying were explored within the focus groups. This was followed by asking them how working affects their university life (both with regard to its impact on academic performance and social life). They were asked what they specifically do to fit employment and the rest of their life together. Finally, they were asked how working affected their general health and well-being. The data were analysed using a content analysis approach. Results are discussed in relation to previous research findings and to the models of complementarity, spillover and separation. We acknowledge that there might be criticism raised at the sampling method, that is, confined to one university. However, the research was exploratory in nature and was not intended to generalize to the wider population of UK students. Clearly, the location of the university and the type of existing employment in the surrounding area will have an affect on students' experiences and this would be accounted for and counterbalanced in any further studies conducted. Furthermore, the rationale for choosing students in their third and fourth year of study was because they had more opportunities to experience what we were discussing. We acknowledge that experiences might be very different for those in their first and second years of study.

## Findings

### *Background and participation rates of participants*

Thirty-five of the respondents were men and 49 were women. The majority of the students had been involved in some term-time employment over the course of their academic studies. Forty-one students (about half the sample) said that they were currently involved in term-time employment, while another 13 had been involved in term-time employment in the past. Some students reported having more than one paid job at any one time, although the norm was to have one paid job. A further seven were actively looking for term-time employment, while 22 (approximately a quarter) stated never having been employed during the term time although most had vacation employment experience. In support of previous studies, almost all of this employment has been in the service industry sector, mainly in retailing or hotel and bar work. The hours worked ranged between eight and 40 hours per week, the average being between 15 and 20 hours per week. Many also spoke about working flexible hours

each week. Weekend and evening work was not uncommon, as found in other studies (Canny, 2002; Hodgson & Spours, 2001).

### *Reasons for working*

The findings from the focus groups supported previous research into why students work. Most reasons included financial, either for poverty and need, and to save for higher education (specifically mentioned by four groups) or to adhere to lifestyle pressures such as socializing and the purchase of fashion items (specifically mentioned by seven groups):

*I work for rent, clothes and food.*  
(female group G)

*I just feel its not fair on my dad not working.*  
(female, 4th year, group F)

*I need the money for holidays and stuff like that.*  
(female, group H)

*Vacation work is for the necessities. Term-time work is for luxuries, for extras, going out drinking. You can go out and buy clothes. You can buy a bit more life rather than sitting in and thinking 'Oh I'll stay in, I can't afford it'.*  
(male, group H)

However, financial reasons were sometimes combined with other reasons for working:

*I need some form of being away from study . . . people really need jobs financially and socially.*  
(female, group B)

*My job was a social outlet as well as a financial bonus . . . it gives you a more rounded lifestyle.*  
(male, bar work, group A)

*I've always had some kind of job while I've been at university. It used to be mainly for the money but now I do it because I enjoy it and I need a break from studying all the time.*  
(female, group B)

Some students work for non-financial reasons such as self-development, meeting people, a supplement to university life and developing a curriculum vitae (CV):

*I wanted to get some experience. This gives me an advantage in my studies — you might get a job in the same place you have worked...*  
(male, group D)

*I look for work you can put on your CV afterwards...*

(female, group D)

Like the studies of Hodgson and Spours (2001), a few identified that the drudgery of their job was a powerful motivation to continue studying. For example:

*These jobs make you appreciate, you know, you get a degree so you don't end up in a job, you know, as a waitress which I don't still want to be doing bar work, you know, when I'm 40.*

(female, group E)

*It lets you see what kind of job you can expect without a degree.*

(male, group A)

### *Reasons for not working*

About a quarter of the students had chosen not to work during term time and we explored their reasons for choosing not to work. Some chose to work during the summer so that they did not have the potential problem of juggling multiple role demands during the term. In one sense they were choosing to separate their employment and university lives:

*I don't need to work — I organize something when I go back home — I make enough money over the summer to live on so I don't need to worry about it.*

(male group F)

Other students chose not to work because they wanted to experience university life to its full potential. Working was often associated with a sacrifice of social time:

*I just feel that if I can get through the year without working [during term-time] then why should I? I've plenty of time for that in later life — working every day.*

(male, only worked term-time during first semester in first year, group F)

*I didn't really look for work . . . I didn't need to. I didn't need the money because I had the money coming in from the summer . . . I've got a bit more time here to play hockey and stuff and go out more.*

(female, group B)

*I would rather go out and have a good time at night rather than working. I don't need the money — I would rather go into debt. I worked very hard during the summer for three months.*

(male, group G).

### *Negative effects of combining employment and university life*

Much of the prior literature in the area has concentrated on the negative effects of combining employment and studying. Our research revealed some similarities to this

prior research. There did appear to be a correlation between the amount of hours worked and how this made some students feel. Flexible hours were not as problematic as some previous research has suggested but participants in six groups felt obligated or tempted to work additional hours if they were asked to by their employers. The attraction of the additional money had to be counterbalanced with their need for time for studying:

*You think, well if I did that extra shift I would have an extra £20 in my pocket, and that's when it begins to spiral.*

(male, bar work, group A)

*I just felt that I had to because I thought I'd be letting them down. And if I didn't, they would say 'oh she hasn't given an extra hour so we will just not include her at Christmas or something like that'.*

(female, retail, group B)

*They [supermarket] would say 'we are offering you this and we will fit it into your university work'. It's like they are being really nice to me, so I should take it. I didn't think an essay due on Wednesday... I just thought of the money and the favour.*

(female, retail, group B)

*They would call me in at short notice — even if you had some [academic] work to do in the next days — you'd find it hard to say no to the money — you would go along and then come back and sit up 'til all hours to get your work done — then you're tired. But if you managed your time properly it could work.*

(female, group D)

*You get a lot of extra hours at Christmas time because it is very busy. I found it difficult having study time for my exams and having to go to work . . . It's kind of expected from everyone to do more hours . . . I know last Christmas I worked possibly a full day on Saturday and Sunday and Thursday night. It was a lot of overtime.*

(female, retail work, group A)

Some participants in seven of the nine groups mentioned the difficulty or inability to manage workloads, thus demonstrating the issues connected with role conflict and successfully juggling multiple role demands. For some (mentioned by four of the groups) this resulted in missing lectures or tutorials. Six of the groups mentioned having less time for academic study, although just one group mentioned their academic performance suffering as a consequence (three groups specifically said it had no affect). None specifically mentioned missing deadline dates as a result of their term-time employment responsibilities:

*I've got training squads and weekends away and to juggle that with work, especially this semester [entering final year], I'm not looking forward to it.*

(female, sports bursar, group A)

*I got home at 4am . . . I couldn't be bothered with studying . . . the manager was not interested when I had my exams. I had no time off for studying and was only off for the exam day.*

(male, hotel work, group H)

*I always remember in second year I had a lecture at 9am on a Wednesday morning and I couldn't even tell you what class it was for — I never went to it.*

(male, bar work Tuesday evening, group A)

*I usually rush assignments when I'm working . . . when I'm working more my marks are worse than what they are if I take less work and put more effort into my university work, I get better marks. So it does show.*

(female, group B)

*I started not going to classes anymore because work was more important to me and they needed me . . . so I stopped [working] and I got better at university.*

(female, group B)

*Last year I couldn't be bothered contributing to class discussions because I was fed up putting myself forward all the time at work. It affects your motivation.*

(male, group H)

For others, this resulted in a sacrifice of their social life:

*You sacrifice more than university work . . . I missed out on silly things with my friends . . . I miss out on hockey games . . . I think I am sacrificing quite a lot of my social life more than I am my studies.*

(female, group B)

*You don't have time to relax because you're on the go all the time — you get stressed.*

(male, group D)

### *Positive effects of combining employment and university life*

Although there were various negative associations mentioned in connection with combining term-time and vacation employment with university life, the responses from the groups showed that the topic is more complex than some previous studies suggest. In addition to the negative comments, we also found there to be contradictory comments from participants within and between the groups. Moreover, we also found there to be numerous positive comments about combining the two roles. Our findings suggest that the positive comments were mentioned with more regularity than in some of the previous research studies. The second part of the research involving a questionnaire survey sent to all full-time undergraduates at the institution will enable us to confirm or refute this once the quantitative results have been analysed.

So while for some students there was difficulty in fitting their jobs around exam time, others commented that their employers were most helpful in allowing them to

juggle their employment with exam times. Furthermore, as some students worked for the local student bars, so they found it easier to take time off for revision as the bars were generally quieter at this time. While flexibility in working hours has been found by previous research as a negative factor in combining employment with university life, seven of the groups actually mentioned the positive aspects of the flexibility of their employment:

*I'm working at Marks and Spencer. They change my contract whenever I ask. If I have a different timetable they do it to suit whatever I want to work. So its quite flexible in that case.*  
(female, group B)

Yet she also comments:

*Sometimes I do find it a bit of a struggle. Normally at the end of term — I would rather not go to work and just do some extra studying.*  
(female, group B)

*If my timetable changed then Tesco's would change my hours. And round exam times, as long as you worked your contracted hours, it didn't matter what days you did.*  
(female, group B)

*Mine [employer] is quite flexible as well — like if you've got an essay to do or something and they're going to be busy — and you give them advance warning, they'll get someone else to cover your shift.*  
(male, group D)

Three groups found their term-time employment to have no affect on their academic studies while participants in another three groups mentioned that they could undertake studying while at work.

*It doesn't really affect my studying.*  
(female, group C)

*Working doesn't make any difference to my grades.*  
(male, works 13.5 hours per week, group C)

*If I had to give up my job the only thing that I would gain would be sleep. . . . I wouldn't do any more studying.*  
(female, group B)

*If it's quiet I can sit and do my reading behind the desk and do my tutorial work or whatever so I'm not constantly on the go — I wouldn't do it if I couldn't do that.*  
(female, receptionist, 30 hours per week, group E)

*My flatmate does babysitting and she says it's the only time she ever gets any work done because the [student] flat is too busy.*  
(female, group E)

Four groups mentioned the escape from studying that their employment provided them with as a positive aspect of combining term-time employment with university life. This has been reflected by previous quotes.

Of the positive features of working participants from eight of the groups mentioned the social aspects of working and the general satisfaction they gained from working.

*I really enjoy my job with Debenhams. I like the position that I have and the responsibility of the job.*

(female, group A)

*I do love it. The social aspect of it as well. You meet so many people. It's given me experience of working with people, working with money, management experience. I've become more outgoing since I started there, which is going to help me.*

(female, bar work, group I)

Various groups mentioned the development of skills or themselves in association with their employment. Five groups mentioned the development of communication and people skills. Two groups specifically mentioned the enhancement of their self-esteem, confidence and social skills, while many other groups inferred this in their conversations. Participants in four of the groups talked about their improvement in time management skills and self-discipline, again demonstrating the complexity of this variable, which for some is a problem. This demonstrates that some students are better able than others to cope with effectively combining their multiple role demands.

*I don't think university teaches you the practical side of working and dealing with other people and managers and that.*

(female, group F)

*My job has definitely taught me how to deal with older people . . . the job has been brilliant experience. I've really learnt a lot.*

(female, receptionist, group E)

*I think it's [term-time employment] quite good because it helps you to manage your time and gets you a bit realistic and organized.*

(female, group C)

*If I didn't have a job there would be no way I would be able to make it into half the classes and stuff — laziness would set in.*

(female, group E)

A couple of the groups mentioned that their work was vocationally related and so it helped their courses by enabling them to collect data for their assignments and dissertations.

*If work relates to studies it won't really affect your grades, and it depends how much hours you work . . . and you get a better understanding of what you are doing.*

(female, group F)

*I am getting work experience as well . . . because I've had a year and a half experience within marketing so that is going to help me when I graduate.*

(female, marketing student, group B)

*You can bring experience into assignments. It's easier to remember things when you have experience of work to relate to university work. It's like a circle.*

(male, fast food restaurant, group H)

Two of the groups specifically mentioned using their employment to build their CVs, while three of the groups mentioned that their employment facilitates their transition into full-time employment and was being undertaken as a means of setting themselves apart from other graduates in the employment market.

*If you graduate at say 22 and go looking for a job [if not worked] you've no experience at all — even although its not your field you're going to go into it's just the experience of working with people — time management, getting on with people no matter what context you're going into — you're getting vital qualities there — working with people, meeting targets can only be useful in the long term . . . you can meet people through your work as well which can help in the future.*

(male, retail work, group E)

*One of my friends hasn't had a job and panics all the time that she's not going to get a job after graduation because she's not got any references.*

(female, group E)

*You look for a job that your future employers would approve of, something relevant — just to give you that wee bit extra because you know nowadays everyone is getting degrees — to give you that competitive edge.*

(female, group E)

*Most of the jobs I work in go forward to graduate schemes.*

(female, group I)

Three groups also mentioned the networking opportunities employment brings to them. These students mentioning the positive aspects of combining employment with university life were more likely to effectively combine their multiple roles.

*Working experience can be good because you can make connections for working [full-time employment] after your study.*

(male, group C)

*You can do quite a bit of networking even just pulling a pint... it broadens your horizons.*

(female, group G)

*Affects on social life*

While there were positive and negative statements about the combination of employment and university life, several of the students discussed the impact working had on their social life. Again this was not always negative, but had some positive elements too:

*Working in a shop, you can work around studying. Bar work is attractive because of the social side. Working helps you to meet people away from the university. It's nice to talk to people that are not totally university oriented.*

(female, group G)

However, some students do feel their social life is sacrificed:

*To be honest, I don't have a life at all outside work because I am absolutely exhausted.*

(female, group I)

On the other hand, others do not:

*My shift is Friday 4.30pm until 10pm so I can still go out. I have a real buzz from being at work and have £15 cash in my pocket. Everyone else has been sitting having dinner, chilling, but I've been working and ready to go out. Or I go out with staff from the pub — I always socialize after work.*

(female, group G)

Some students, however, had deliberately chosen to sacrifice their term-time employment to enable them to enjoy a better social life at university:

*Working doesn't deter from my studies . . . I found I was sacrificing my free time last year by working and so have decided to give it up.*

(male, group H)

*Management strategies for combining the two roles*

One student admitted to not managing the combination of the two roles well, which led to him having to take a leave of absence from university, as the desire for employment overtook his studies and had a negative affect on his course grades. When away from the situation he was able to reassess his priorities and has returned to university with some attempts to effectively combine the two roles:

*Working should be seen as an escape from your mundane sort of studying. It's when the attraction of that short term benefit from working in the bar outweighs the long term objectives — that is when the problems start.*

(male, group A)

This student might have been described as a 'risk taker' (Hodgson & Spours, 2001) owing to him being employed over 30 hours per week. He now is a 'balancer' and has

learnt how to combine the two roles as effectively as he can. Other students feel no negative effects from an inability to manage the two roles or found that their employment improved their time management and self-discipline skills:

*It never becomes too much — I don't feel I'm not coping.*

(male, 13.5 hours per week, group C)

*If you're working and if you've got something due in you've got to try and work round your hours. If you're not working at all then maybe you would be a bit lazier when it came to doing your academic work.*

(male, café, 20 hours per week, group F)

*Working actually pushes me to start things earlier — like I know I have to plan things better if I know I've got work at the weekend. As long as you can time manage a wee bit I think working can actually push you a bit further academically into your studies. You devote a specific time to it.*

(female, group F)

*Like when you get older and in full-time work you're going to have family and juggle commitments or whatever, so it kind of sets you up to getting used to that.*

(female, group F)

The amount of hours worked per week does seem to have a bearing on ability to cope with the two roles for many students. Beyond 25 hours a week proved particularly difficult for some:

*I miss Mondays most of the time. I just sleep through them.*

(female, hotel work 25–30 hours per week, group G)

*When working 25 hours a week my grades got really bad.*

(male, publishing company, group G)

Some students found it difficult trying to juggle multiple role demands:

*I tried and I couldn't do it. Everything just fell to bits. I wasn't at university and I wasn't at home. Everything at home just didn't work.*

(Female with children, group I)

Other students spoke about the difficulty in combining the two roles but were able to combine them effectively. However, this often was to the sacrifice of their social life:

*If I need the money I always seem to put work before university and then I end up doing everything . . . but I can always make it up if I stay in at night.*

(female, group B)

Others do not seem to think that working has any affect on their studies:

*My time management is rubbish anyway. I don't normally do academic work after 9pm anyway unless I've got an essay to do or something . . . so I might as well get a job.*

(female, bar work, group E)

*Outcomes and affects on general health and well-being.*

With regard to the outcomes of their employment, eight of the groups mentioned tiredness as the main outcome as demonstrated by some of the previous quotes. Participants from other groups mentioned being ratty, being more susceptible to colds and feeling run down, experiencing sleep problems, mood swings and missing meals. However, these were mentioned in just two of the groups:

*Working can affect your mood . . . I was really grouchy with people because I was trying to put up with the job to get it on my CV.*

(male, fast food outlet, group H)

*The main thing is your health as well. You can get stressed or really tired. You start to miss meals as well.*

(female, group I)

## Discussion

The findings from this research study show the complexity of the combination of term-time employment and studying simultaneously. We found various patterns of employment existed, varying from those who effectively combine term-time employment and studying and thus experiencing role additivity and a positive spillover of their multiple roles, to those who find difficulty in combining the two roles and experience negative spillover of the two roles. Approximately a quarter of the participants chose not to combine the roles, but rather work during vacations to save financially and socially for their university life, yet to also gain valuable employment experience. These students are arguably adopting an 'independent role' to their employment and university lives and separating both environments. There was little evidence of students adopting a compensatory role, although one did compensate her work role because she was not enjoying university life.

Reasons for working were also more complex than financial alone. Many students spoke of additional reasons for working either during the term-time, vacation or both. These included the social aspects of working as well as educational reasons in it is regarded as good experience for their current studies and future employment opportunities. Although the type of work undertaken is typically in the service sector, many students believed this was nonetheless good for developing self-awareness and time management skills as well as important transferable skills. All of these were perceived as good for building their CVs.

The students in our research fit the typologies suggested by Hodgson and Spours (2001) even though their research was with advanced level students. Many of the students in this research were active 'balancers' or 'risk takers'. More were possibly risk takers (and working more than the government recommendation) than in

Hodgson and Spours' studies owing to the difference in age and source of financial arrangements. A large minority were 'deliberate non-workers' during the term time. However, they did work during the vacations to supplement their finances and employment experiences. They have decided not to engage in term-time employment in order to concentrate on university life, whether this be for academic and/or social reasons. There was evidence from some students that in their final years of study where continual assessment of units counted towards the final degree classification their participation in term-time employment declined or stopped altogether. However, a small minority of students were 'outsiders', that is those actively looking for term-time employment but unable to find it. Finally, some students were 'connectors', who used their term-time and vacation employment opportunities to make active connections with their academic studies.

The type of employment undertaken by students is often in the service sector where the demand for flexible labour is crucial to the efficiency of the organization. The findings suggest that while some employers are capitalizing on students' need for flexible work (Canny, 2002), others are sympathetic to the demands of university life and ensure that flexibility works both ways and also in favour of the individual student and their academic demands. These students reported being better able to cope with their multiple role demands. Those students working for unsympathetic employers were less likely to effectively combine the two roles. This can result in a negative spillover effect from work to university life.

Our preliminary findings suggest that the negative impact of combining term-time and vacation employment with university life is not conclusive. While there was some support for the findings of previous research, we also found that this was counterbalanced by various positive aspects of combining the two roles. The aim of the quantitative research involving a 12-page questionnaire sent to the population of full-time undergraduate students at the University of Stirling is to investigate this relationship in more depth. Here we can understand more fully the pattern of term-time and vacation employment of these students and understand in more detail how employment affects their adjustment to university life. Their demographic and personality factors can be taken into consideration in understanding more fully the correlation between earning and learning. While we found some positive aspects of students who combine full-time study with term-time employment opportunities, we are not suggesting that this should encourage any further withdrawal of state financial support for higher education students.

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