

**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' RATINGS OF SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION AND
EXPECTATIONS OF ACHIEVEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION.**

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requirements of the University of Greenwich
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Declaration

I certify that the work contained in this thesis, or any part of it, has not been accepted in substance for any previous degree awarded to me or any other person, and is not concurrently being submitted for any other degree other than that of Doctorate of Philosophy which has been studied at the University of Greenwich, London, UK.

I also declare that the work contained in this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise identified and acknowledged by references. I further declare that no aspects of the contents of this thesis are the outcome of any form of research misconduct.

I declare any personal, sensitive or confidential information/data has been removed or participants have been anonymised. I further declare that where any questionnaires, survey answers or other qualitative responses of participants are recorded/included in the appendices, all personal information has been removed or anonymised. Where University forms (such as those from the Research Ethics Committee) have been included in appendices, all handwritten/scanned signatures have been removed.

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Abstract

This thesis explored the experiences of undergraduate students in a post-1992 university in London in terms of how their identities might be associated with their expectations and perceptions of achievement in Higher Education. The social psychological theory of Social Identity was the main context through which these elements were examined. The participants who took part in the qualitative or quantitative studies were undergraduate students studying either professional or non-professional programmes. After separate analyses, the data were brought together through the mixed-method process of Joint Display analysis.

Students enrolled on either professional or non-professional programmes were found to differ with younger students more likely to enrol in non-professional programmes. Measures of social identification with university, university peers or peers external to university were similar for students on both programme types and also did not differ by ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the first in their family to attend university. However, older students did score significantly less in measures of identification with their external peers than their younger colleagues. Also, there were indirect effects of social identification on the grade the student expected at the end of their course, mediated through perceived belonging support.

When students' expectations of academic achievement and success were considered, those on professional programmes perceived lower grades as being a successful academic outcome. There was no effect of ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the First in their Family to study at university on expected academic outcomes or perceived successful outcome grades. Age did have an effect: with the youngest age group expecting more likely to expect to obtain a first-class degree.

Considering attributes assigned to the typical student and attributes students gave to themselves, professional students tended not to view themselves as being typical. There were associations

between the attributes students gave themselves, typical students and measures of social identification and expected achievement and perceived success.

Understanding these relationships should enable Higher Education Institutions to develop systems and processes to better support the diverse student body enrolled on both professional and non-professional degree programmes, some of which are outlined in the final chapter.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of chapter

The foci of this thesis are possible relationships between students' ratings of their social identities and their perceptions of achievement and success in Higher Education. In this thesis the self-reported experiences of undergraduate students at a post-1992 institution in London are explored. I examine how these undergraduate students rate and describe their student identity and views of achievement and success and how this may relate to student characteristics, their choice of programme, and experiences of support at university. The social psychological concept of Social Identity is the main context through which these elements are examined. Given current undergraduate degree Awarding Gaps (AdvanceHE, 2021) relating to a number of student characteristics (see section on context for details), the findings of the studies presented in this thesis have relevance to students in Higher Education and those working with them as well as academics interested in Social Identity and also widening participation in Higher Education.

In this introductory chapter the background of the thesis is discussed, giving an overview of the rise in participation rates in Higher Education over time in England and the changes in population and policies that drove those rises. Changes in how students finance their studies are presented alongside the political landscape in which the financial changes were instigated. Finally, in this background section, statistics showing differences in retention rates and achievement levels for students in Higher Education are presented so that differences between different demographic groups may be noted. Finally, the chapter concludes by presenting the organisation of the thesis with an outline for each chapter.

1.2 Background of the Thesis

Policy makers have been discussing non-traditional students for decades (e.g. *Dearing Report*, 1997; *Robbins Report*, 1963) and yet differences in participation rates (*Participation Rates in Higher Education*, 2018), retention rates (Non-Continuation Rates Summary: UK Performance Indicators 2015/16, 2017) and levels of achievement (What Are HE Students' Progression Rates and Qualifications?: Detailed Breakdowns, 2020) mean many of these students do not attain the outcomes they should. What explanations can be given for these differences in achievement from the perspective of the Widening Participation agenda?

Increasing both access to and success in Higher Education has been of interest in England for at least the last sixty years with debates continuing over who should get access and who should pay. These debates often centre around the argument of whether Higher Education is for the public or private good (Marginson, 2011). This section of the chapter starts by presenting an overview of the rise in participation rates in Higher Education over time in England and the changes in population and policies that drove those rises.

1.2.1 Changes in Higher Education Participation Rates

The 1944 Education Act was perhaps the first turning point in the shift towards widening participation in Higher Education. Government policy began a move from framing universities as elite institutions for a select few towards being a desirable aspiration for the masses (Education Act, 1944). However, over ten years later, Higher Education was still seen as the purlieu of the select few with overall participation rates standing at just 3.4% in 1955 (Committee on Higher Education, 1963). It should be remembered that the requirement for degrees in careers now seen as graduate professions, such as teaching and nursing, were uncommon at that time (Stevens, 2004).

Of the students born in 1940/41 studying at degree level in 1962 there was a significant difference in the numbers of men and women studying university with 5.6% of males and 2.5% of female 21 year olds attending (Committee on Higher Education, 1963) with these differences originating in the lack of female students staying onto sixth form education to sit entry qualifications. It was also clear that students' background as well as their own gender impacted on whether they studied at university; 15 percent of males whose fathers worked in non-manual professions, rising to 45 percent of those with fathers working in 'higher professional' groups, studying at university compared with only 3 percent whose fathers worked in manual professions (even if these were skilled). For 21 year old females at that time, 9 percent whose fathers were in non-manual professions were at university compared with only 1 percent whose fathers worked in manual professions (Committee on Higher Education, 1963). A university education was not in reach for the majority of young students. Students' ethnicities were not recorded at this time, though it was noted that overseas students did make up 7 percent of the undergraduate population of England and Wales at that time, mostly coming from Commonwealth countries (Committee on Higher Education, 1963).

There have been several boosts to the growth of the numbers of students participating in Higher Education since, including demographic patterns and political change. For instance, following the Second World War there was a temporary marked increase in the birth rate in the UK (and elsewhere) and these 'Baby Boomers' attending university in the 1960s, meant an increase in numbers. Also, the Conservative government of 1960 commissioned a report to review the pattern of full time Higher Education in the England. The scope of the report was to examine the nature of Higher Education provision and its long-term development to meet the country's needs. The resulting Robbins Report (1963) declared that there was a pool of talent being denied entry to Higher Education and that Higher Education places "should be available to all

who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so” (Committee on Higher Education, 1963, p. 8). The declining fortunes of the residing Conservative government, as well as social change and the statistics presented meant the findings of the report were quickly implemented on its release. However, whilst the report was vital in creating political consensus it was only endorsing what was already happening in that new universities were already being formed. It was the University Grants Committee which planned the creation of ‘New’ universities (such as Sussex) and the conversion of Advanced Technical Colleges to ‘Technical’ universities (such as Brunel) (Anderson, 2016). Free Higher Education also predated the Robbins Report being introduced in 1962 following the Anderson report. This meant full time domestic students had fees paid by the state and that they were able to claim a means tested maintenance grant.

The Robbins report identified four objectives for tertiary study: to teach skills; to produce cultivated men and women; to maintain research in balance with teaching and to promote common standards of citizenship. As such, Higher Education was seen as a long-term investment in human and intellectual capital and those who benefitted from it would be expected to fund the system through progressive taxation for its extension to future generations. As the report predicting an overall participation rate of up to 17% by the 1980’s, changes to the existing funding system, where up to 90% of university funding was dependent on the state, were not considered as the increase was not thought to have any particular economic impact. With the dependence of funding on successive UK governments, universities were vulnerable to economic crises and government cuts to expenditure. This vulnerability became more apparent with Margaret Thatcher’s rise to power in the 1980’s with the Conservative political orthodoxy of lower taxes and a market ideology.

The changes in the 1960's resulted in an increase to the number of universities across the decade going from 33 to 44 with an associated increase in the overall university participation rate from 5% in 1960 to a peak of 14% in 1972. Also, as a result of the Robbins report's findings, existing polytechnics were able to award degrees for the first time, creating new opportunities in Higher Education for many, particularly those from poorer backgrounds.

Whilst the Conservative government was blocked from introducing an element of contribution to fees, universities were encouraged to find alternative sources of funding and to run in more business-like ways. The government did separate university funding for teaching and research allowing for more selective funding for universities with strong research whilst the desire for more direct state intervention led to the end of the University Grants Committee and the formation of national funding councils. By the end of the 1980's the Conservative government had frozen grants and introduced the first student loans.

The second rapid expansion coincided with the end of the binary divide between polytechnics and universities which was achieved when the Further and Higher Education Act, 1992 was enacted. With that came the doubling of the number of universities in England.: there was then an obvious spike in the numbers attending university. Overall participation rates rose from 19.3% in 1990 to 33% in 2000 (Bolton, 2012). The flattening of the binary system of polytechnics and universities and with it the creation of post-1992 universities may be viewed in different terms politically. For example, it can be seen as either as opening up education to the masses in terms of John Major's 'classless society' where the abolition was motivated by a desire to reduce 'prestige inequalities' (Kettley, 2007) or as a continuation of the Conservative government's 'long war against Britain's liberal institutions' (Scott, 1992). Expansion in the number of degrees awarded took place under successive Conservative governments driven by neoliberal ideologies and as such ideas of market competition shaped

the Higher Education system (Greenbank, 2006). Its neoliberal agenda meant that Thatcher's government of the 1980s saw universities as complacent because they were over protected from market forces (Kealey, 2013). Steps towards countering this were made by introducing fees for international students for the first time in 1981 and by cutting research funds to the sector for instance.

1.2.2 *Widening Participation*

The conventional route to study in Higher Education in England and Wales has been through the completion of three 'A' Level courses where satisfactory grades would allow the student potential access to a place on a degree level university course (or a polytechnic prior to 1992). An alternative route was established in the 1970s through the introduction of Access to Higher Education diploma courses offered by colleges of Further Education which were designed to encourage non-traditional, mature students to become teachers. This may be seen as one of the first overt measures to widen participation in Higher Education. Access to Higher Education courses have long since expanded their reach beyond preparation for teacher training, but have remained part of the Widening Participation policies of successive British governments (Jane Burke, 2007). The historic background of Widening Participation as well the resulting government policies in the area are covered in this section before potential barriers to participation for some groups of students are discussed.

The Labour party were particularly interested in putting forward the widening participation agenda. Prior to their winning the 1997 election, starting with Prime Minister Tony Blair's "Education, education, education" speech at the Labour Party conference in 1996, the party had education policies as key points in their manifesto. Widening participation in Higher Education was not just about increasing numbers but was concerned with reaching parts of society that were seen as being isolated from opportunities. With concerns following rioting in

the 1980's and 1990's, it was also seen that attracting disaffected young men into Further Education was important to avoid social breakdown (Taylor et al., 2009). It was thought that encouraging an expansion in Further Education would then attract more people from disadvantaged backgrounds into Higher Education and so undo some of the economic and social problems of the previous decades. Helena Kennedy QC, now a Labour peer and then Chair of the Widening Participation Committee of the Further Education Funding Council, said that getting people to continue their education would "... tackle this waste of national potential and [...] create social justice" (Kennedy, 1997). It was also hoped that graduates would become more socially active, engaged citizens (Taylor et al., 2009).

However, there have been arguments against widening participation in the UK, mainly coming from members of the British Conservative party. They contended that quality was suffering in British Higher Education, that widening participation to Higher Education was at the expense of the more advantaged and that it was 'social engineering' (Curtis, 2004) being forced to measure intake and take a given proportion of students from state schools (this was not implemented). (Current education policy in the UK, devolved over the home nations, does continue to support policies of widening participation and some details of the evolution of this policy may be seen below.) Some also thought that the greater number of degrees awarded would mean that all degrees would be devalued (Warnock, 1996). Current statistics on graduates in the workplace (*Graduates in the UK Labour Market - Office for National Statistics*, 2018) suggest this is not the case. There has been a steady increase in the number of graduates in the UK over the past decade. In terms of the 'devaluing' of degrees, it was found that, graduates were more likely to be employed than non-graduates; non-graduates aged 21 to 30 had consistently higher unemployment rates than all other groups; and graduates were more likely to work in high-skilled posts than non-graduates.

In 2001 Blair's government committed increasing young people's participation in Higher Education to 50% by 2010. As a result, outreach programmes, such as AimHigher, were introduced to challenge and change the expectations of young people from poorer backgrounds. The target was reached in 2016 ('Participation rates in higher education', 2018) but by then Blair's government believed that the expansion of Higher Education had run far ahead of economic growth (G. Taylor et al., 2009) and that to maintain the quality of British universities more taxes must be spent on them or have other sorts of finance. This included student contributions to tuition fees.

From the 1960s up until 1998, and the implementation of the Teaching and Higher Education Act (1998), all education in England was essentially free to students; tuition fees and means tested maintenance grants were paid by the government via a student's Local Authority. However, in 1996 John Major's Conservative government commissioned Lord Dearing to draft a report on funding in Higher Education and the resulting paper, published after Tony Blair's Labour government came into power, recommended that students pay 25% of tuition fees and that government grants were maintained. The 1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act brought in means tested £1000 tuition fees for each year, abolished grants and introduced student loans. This increased to £3000 of 'top-up fees' for tuition with the Higher Education Act 2004 and further to £9250 a year for undergraduate courses from 2016. That year also saw the removal of means tested maintenance grants to be replaced with maintenance loans.

The provisions of the Higher Education Act (2004) included the provision of variable tuition fees for the first time. Whilst Scotland did not implement top-up fees, most English universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) sought to implement the new funding regime. At the time this policy was being debated there was considerable concern that the amount

of debt new graduates would be faced with could dissuade some potential students from entering higher education altogether. As a result of this concern, the Act established the post of Director of Fair Access to Higher Education and the supporting body OFFA (Office for Fair Access) and gave the Director the power to prevent a HEI charging fees above £1,200 if it could not satisfy the regulator that it would make adequate provision for widening access and encouraging participation. This change created a renewed interest in research into the issues surrounding widening participation in Higher Education.

According to the Dearing Report (1997) rates of participation in Higher Education are closely correlated with five general factors: national economic development; pluralistic democracy; comprehensive access to primary and secondary education; the structure of the education system; levels of social cohesion. The report also states that for an individual, correlations of participation in Higher Education are gender; socio-economic group; mother's education; attainment at 16 and at 18. Over twenty years since the publication of the report sees the same individual correlations in participation ('Higher education', 2018). Indeed going back to the Robbins report of 1963, the same correlations were reported over fifty years ago (Committee on Higher Education, 1963).

Various attempts have been made to explain under-participation in Higher Education, particularly amongst lower socio-economic groups. The Dearing Report (1997) included structural factors and cultural deficit explanations. In reference to structural factors, places in Higher Education are held to be allocated preferentially according to certain merit criteria and selected attributes. Explanations of this kind emphasise the close fit between power, wealth, class hierarchies and the differential consumption of social resources including Higher Education. As such, Higher Education is said to be exclusive by design, structurally excluding potential students from lower socio-economic groups.

A review of the literature on Widening Participation by the University of York, Higher Education Academy (2006) suggested three types of barriers to participation in Higher Education, the first being situational barriers such as cost and time available to study created by personal circumstances. Barriers to participation were also institutional in nature, such as admissions procedures, timing and lack of flexibility or dispositional factors in the form of an individual's motivation and attitude to learning.

Do these same barriers apply once students have started Higher Education in terms of barriers to successful completion of their programme of study? In these terms what psychological factors may be associated with barriers to successful university outcomes for undergraduate students, particularly those categorised as being non-traditional? The non-traditional student may be defined as being from backgrounds including: mature students, those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, first generation undergraduates, students from ethnic minorities and students with disabilities (Christie, 2007). Whereas the traditional student may be described as being young, studying full-time, living on or near campus and coming from families and communities where progression to Higher Education is the norm (Wong, 2018).

Individuals involved in interpreting policies had their own assumptions of who Higher Education should serve and what its purpose in society was (Doyle & Griffin, 2012). In reasoning for under-participation using cultural deficit explanations, Higher Education is held to represent a 'culturally alien terrain' for which entrants from manual class backgrounds lack the 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1986) with which to negotiate relationships and processes successfully. Cultural deficits may present as a disinclination to plan ahead, or as members of lower socio-economic groups having a lack of parental or peer support when compared to their peers. Alternatively, individuals from lower socio-economic groups may be said to be 'self-excluded' because they lack confidence, feel out of place, or lack self-esteem. Putting the

emphasis on what students' lack means the role and institutional culture of the Higher Education Institutions are not considered. The observation here being that academic culture is disciplinary, hierarchical, authoritative and entrenched in institutional and cultural bias (Wilkins & Burke, 2015). Consequently, students are expected to adjust their behaviour and learn to fit with culturally implicit norms of which they may not be aware of if they are a non-traditional student rather than any change be expected of the organisation.

Other factors that encourage or discourage participation in Higher Education have also been researched (e.g: Connor, 2001; Connor et al., 2001). For prospective students these include belief in the labour-market value of a degree; the financial cost of studying; the necessity of part-time working; concern about academic workloads and being able to gain entry qualifications in the first place.

The emergence of a deficit positioning of disadvantaged students with the assumption that those from lower socio-economic status groups need support to have aspirations for Higher Education endures within policy today.

Student participation rates have been controlled by government in the past. In 1993 the Higher Education Funding Council England wanted to maintain the participation rates of 1993/1994 and so avoid 'unaffordable' student numbers (economicsofhe, 2013). This was achieved by setting each university a maximum allowable student number to recruit which remained in place until 2002. From this date strict tolerance limits were introduced so that universities could control their intake to plus or minus five percent of the previous year's number. Expansion was difficult as institutions could only increase their numbers by bidding for places and they faced fines if they did over-recruit. The cap remained in place until 2012 when it was removed only for students achieving AAB grades in the English A Level system.

There were concerns over a potential drop in standards following the sudden announcement of the ending of the controls by the Coalition government in 2013 as well as concerns over how the new places were to be paid for (Hillman, 2014). By 2015 the student number controls were removed for all institutions leaving them open to attract as many full-time undergraduates as they wanted.

The Widening Participation agenda may be seen as a philosophical position taken by recent governments to restructure Higher Education based on notions of equality with the aim being to offer opportunities to groups within the population who are under-represented in Higher Education. As such it targets those from lower socio-economic groups, those with disabilities and people from specific ethnic minorities. However, despite this agenda being in place for many years with various interventions implemented at institutional and regional levels, degree participation and academic outcomes continue to be influenced by ethnicity, gender, disability, and study mode (full-time or part-time). Do the potential barriers to participation in Higher Education identified (University of York, Higher Education Academy, 2006) remain the same once students have started their undergraduate studies?

1.2.3 Rates of Retention in Higher Education

There has been much research about students studying at Higher Education institutions regarding their retention and success. Background statistics regarding programme retention and degree outcomes have been available for many years and continue to show differences for identified groups of students (HESA, 2018). Rates of student retention and success affect both institutions and students alike with universities accountable for the retention of students through its inclusion in the Teaching Excellence Framework (first introduced in England in

2017) and through loss of future revenue. From this financial perspective it is also bad for the student to incur costs without the benefit of obtaining a degree.

The last available Higher Education statistics show that overall 6.2% of young entrants to their first degree in England do not complete their degree (HESA, 2017). These figures vary across different demographic groups. For instance, the figures for non-completion are increased for male students (8.0%) (Hillman & Robinson, 2016), mature students (11.6%), those enrolling from low participation neighbourhoods (8.8%) and for part-time students (between 36.8% and 33.2%) (HESA, 2017).

Differences in rates of degree persistence were also noted according to ethnicity, with only students who classified themselves as Chinese having lower rates of non-continuation (4%) than those who classified as white (6.9%) (HESA, 2017). The non-continuation rates for any students classified as Asian or British Asian (7.2%), those classified as mixed or other ethnicity (9.4%) and for Black or Black British students (11.4%) are all above those of white students (HESA, 2017).

In UK higher education, non-traditional students include first-generation students, students from low income households, students from minority backgrounds, mature students (those starting higher education over 21 years of age) and those declaring a disability (Wong & Chiu, 2019). In addition to the gaps in retention in Higher Education for non-traditional students as identified above there also differences in degree outcomes.

1.2.4 Academic Outcomes and Non-traditional Students

Academic success at university is deemed to be about more than course persistence with a successful outcome for undergraduates classed as an upper second- or first-class degree. In addition to the differences in retention noted above, differences in degree outcomes have been

noted across different demographic groups. For instance, in 2016/17 a higher percentage of females obtained a first or upper second class degree (77%) when compared to males (72%) (HESA, 2018). There is also a substantial difference between those who achieved their first or upper second class degree qualification through part-time study (54%) and those who studied full-time (76%) (HESA, 2018).

The 'Futuretrack' Report, a longitudinal study of people who applied for a full-time place in a UK higher education institution to commence in 2006, found that degree outcomes varied for students from differing socio-economic backgrounds. For instance, 74% of students whose parents were from managerial and professional occupations achieved a first or upper second class degree qualification when compared to 67% of students whose parents were from routine and manual occupations (*Futuretrack - Warwick Institute for Employment Research, 2015*).

The report also found that there was an effect of being a student who commutes to university from the parental home as younger students (under 21 years) who lived with their parents were the least likely to achieve a first or upper second-class degree (70%). This compared with 75% for students who lived in their own homes and 78% who did not live at home whilst they studied. With the 'partying student' as a media trope this is perhaps surprising. However, it was also noted that those who were from a background where parents held routine and manual occupations (as a marker of low socio-economic status), those who did not have a parent with a degree, female students and those from minority ethnic groups were all more likely to remain in their parental home whilst studying. It may be a combination of these factors that potentially impact academic achievement rather than where the student is living.

Differences in degree outcome were also noted according to ethnicity, with students classifying themselves as White consistently achieve higher degree outcomes than students recording other ethnicities (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2014). For instance, data from

2015 shows that 76% of White students achieving a first or upper second-class degree compared with only 49% of Black students achieving the same degree outcomes. Compared with White students, a smaller proportion of Asian students (63%) and students with mixed or other ethnicities (69%) also obtained a first or upper second class degree (Mistry, 2016). The attainment gap for BAME students still exists even when entry qualifications are taken into account (Mcduff et al., 2018). Similarly, Mistry (2016) noted differences in degree outcome between students who specified a disability and those who did not with 69% of those who specified a disability achieving a first or upper second class degree compared with 73% with no specified disability.

The political agenda to increase participation in Higher Education led to an increase in students entering with different, non-traditional entry qualifications. By 2016 over one in four of students entering Higher Education in England had a BTEC qualification (Gicheva & Petrie, 2018). These students are more likely to fail their first year examinations (24 percent when compared with 6 percent of A Level students (Banerjee, 2018)). There are also a smaller proportion of students with BTECs with good degree outcomes when compared with those who had studied for A Levels, even when comparing the highest BTEC grades with three Cs at A Level (Radcliffe, 2018). Students are more likely to enter Higher Education with a vocational qualification if they come from an ethnic minority background if their parents worked in routine or manual work or if they come from an area where participation in Higher Education is low.

As can be seen in the statistics above, there are inequalities in terms of retention and achievement in Higher Education by gender, ethnicity, and disability among other characteristics, combining these factors with entry qualifications and changes in Higher Education funding makes the situation regarding potential barriers to success complex. The

metaphor of barriers to success in Higher Education is an attractive one in that it suggests an explanation for differences in patterns of retention and attainment between different groups. As such it contains its own solution – the removal of these barriers will decrease inequalities. Whilst situational barriers may be considered in this way, what of potential psychological barriers? Perhaps non-traditional students do not feel they belong in Higher Education at all as they do not identify as such. As a person's social identity defines the self in terms of group membership, the social identities held by students may impact their Higher Education studies. Research in this area as well as other literature that is pertinent is presented in the following chapter.

1.3 My Position within this Research

Every researcher starts a piece of work with existing ideas and biases that may influence what they observe and impact what they conclude. I am no different, with my life experiences drawing me to research in students' university experiences and academic outcomes.

I started university for the first time in 1987, taking the traditional route as an eighteen-year-old, straight from sixth form college, gaining a place at a 'high tariff' university to study a degree in chemical engineering. As a working-class woman, who was the first in my family to study at university, I never really felt I belonged at university studying with (mainly) men in my faculty who seemed to have very different life experiences to me. At that time university was 'free' with no tuition fees, and I even received a small grant each term, but the lack of money available from parental sources meant I commuted into university every day and worked in retail at the weekend to be able to afford my travel. Sharing a room at home with my two younger sisters meant studying at home was tough. I failed my first year but retook it and managed to achieve a lower-second class degree at the end of four years, of which I am still very proud.

Some years later I returned to university to study as a mature student. This time I was studying something I enjoyed: psychology (funding this myself through full-time employment as tuition fees were a lot lower than those today). Over five years I studied part-time in the evenings after work at a higher education institution exclusively for mature students. This time I felt I belonged. Every student was commuting, juggling working lives and sometimes families too, just like me. Despite becoming pregnant half-way through the course, I graduated again, this time with an upper-second class degree and a toddler on my knee for the graduation photographs.

My latest venture into higher education started in my late forties, using redundancy money and a postgraduate loan to fund a Masters programme in Child and Adolescent psychology. This time I was juggling growing children with additional needs and aging parents alongside my studies. I was definitely far older than those I was studying alongside as well as being older than many of the lecturers too. However, my only feelings of not belonging came when I realised lectures continued over the school half-terms and that I would not be able to attend those weeks. I was able to use my life experience (as a secondary school teacher) in my dissertation and was encouraged by academic staff who left me feeling that studying for a PhD was perhaps possible for 'someone like me'.

I have been a student at different points in my life, managing to complete undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. Looking at statistics in degree completion and outcomes (see 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 for details) I realised that the odds have been against me as a working class, first-generation student, a commuting student, a part-time student, a mature student and a student with caring responsibilities. I believe having lived experience of being a student at different times of my life is what drew me to research in this area and allows me to position myself as

an 'insider-outsider' (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), but I should remain aware of this position throughout the research.

1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

Research reported in this thesis explores how undergraduate students' different identities may be associated with their retention, progression and achievement in Higher Education and is presented in seven chapters.

In this thesis a social psychological approach to identity was taken and used to help understand how students' identities may be related with their success at university and as such Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature. This includes research from the perspective of Social Identity Theory, Self-Categorisation Theory, and other potentially relevant theories such as that the potential impact of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989).

The overall methodology used throughout the studies is discussed in Chapter 3. It includes the justification of the chosen paradigm and methodology, research design, selection of participants, data collection and measures. Specific methods for each study are presented later in the relevant results chapters.

A quantitative study is presented in Chapter 4, including the relevant procedure, data analysis and findings, the aims of which are to investigate whether membership of different groups and the concept of student held, impact identification as a student. Also, under investigation is what possible affect the strength of identification as a student in conjunction with identification to other factors may have in relation to views of student achievement and success.

In Chapter 5 a study is presented that uses a qualitative approach to capture the voices of undergraduate students. This explores the lived experience of students' university life and their

perceptions of the characteristics of themselves as students as well as how they see typical students. Study procedure, qualitative data analysis and findings are presented including whether the concepts of being a typical student vary across identified groups and how perceptions of success differ.

Where the same research questions are presented in Chapters 4 and 5, following separate analyses in the relevant empirical chapters, findings are integrated and presented in Chapter 6. Discussion of whether findings are convergent or divergent is included.

Finally, Chapter 7 provides a discussion of the studies and of their findings and recommendations for further research with implications of these findings, and conclusions being presented in Chapter 8.

1.5 Summary of Chapter

In this introductory chapter the background of the thesis was discussed, giving a brief history of Higher Education funding in England as well as to the Widening Participation agenda. Statistics presented showed differences between demographic groups in terms of both university retention rates and degree outcomes. The chapter concluded by presenting my position as researcher and the organisation of the thesis with an outline of its contents.

A review of relevant literature is presented in the next chapter, taking a Social Identity approach to understanding how students' identities may be related with their success at university. This includes research from the perspective of Social Identity Theory, Self-Categorisation Theory, and other potentially relevant theories such as that of intersectionality.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Chapter

As stated in the previous introductory chapter, in this thesis I explore how the social identities held by undergraduate students at a post-1992 English institution may be associated with their perceived views of academic success. Also investigated are how undergraduate identities may vary and how they may relate to students' perceptions of perceived typical students. The social psychological concept of Social Identity is the main context through which these elements are examined, though the potential importance of feelings of support and belonging are considered separately from this.

The sections below consider how the different theories presented may relate to these chosen research areas.

2.2 Introduction

The concept of identity has been used before in a number of different approaches, including education, sociology and social psychology. I felt I could consider this concept in relation to students in Higher Education as exploring identities may help us to understand and address challenges related to student learning, or feelings of community and belonging. I start by first considering different definitions of identity.

It may be thought of as an individual's sense of self as defined by a set of physical, psychological, and interpersonal characteristics that is not wholly shared with any other person. It may also be defined in terms of a person's range of affiliations (such as ethnicity) and their social roles (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2022.). In this thesis I have taken a Social Psychological perspective in respect of identity, in that identity is generally considered to be a

person's social identity. This is defined as being those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which they belong, as well as the emotional and evaluative consequences of this group membership (Hornsey, 2008).

Issues of identity have long been a topic of research in an educational context in terms of the sociology of education and pedagogy, but the social identity perspective (e.g. Tajfel, 1982a; Tajfel & Turner, 1978; Turner, 1985) has insights to offer this domain through a social psychological understanding of the self, groups and social systems. In this thesis a social identity approach to understanding how students' identities may be related to their success at university is taken. This includes theories from social psychology with particular emphasis being placed on Social Identity Theory (e.g. Tajfel, 1982) and its development through Self-Categorisation Theory (e.g. Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1992). Together, these theories outline the mechanisms through which social groups may affect individual psychology and here are applied to success in educational terms. Critique of this position is given with reference to Social Constructionism. Consideration is also given to some of the ways in which researchers in different domains have considered the reasons behind differences in student achievement. Here, research into Social Comparison (e.g. Gerber, Wheeler, & Suls, 2018), and Intersectionality (e.g. Erin & Carole, 2014) are reflected upon. After considering student success in this manner, a preliminary rationale for the current research is provided. The aim and purpose of the thesis is formulated in the context of viewing differences in achievement in the context of student identity. The thesis' significance and the resulting research questions follow on from the aim.

A sense of belonging or feeling accepted and included by others may be seen as a fundamental human need (Leary & Baumeister, 2017) and one's sense of self-worth is empirically linked with perceived and actual belonging (Cameron & Granger, 2020). I begin by considering how

support may be appraised in different ways (in terms of tangible support or belonging support for instance) and how perceived social support may affect students' university experience.

2.3 Social Support

Perceived social support is conceptualised as the perception of being cared for and loved, being esteemed and valued and being involved in social networks (Cobb, 1976). Integration into social networks provides a sense of embeddedness in a social system that enables individuals to receive feedback from others that leads to the feelings of stability, predictability and control over one's lives (Cohen & Syme, 1985).

The concept of social support employed by Cohen et al. (1985) was that social support could be seen as resources provided to an individual by others. They argued that one's personal relationships acted as stress buffers only when the type of support resources matched the coping requirements elicited by the stressors. For instance, offering a student a loan to help with a problem paying tuition fees may be a benefit to them, but the same resource would be ineffective as a response to a student who needed advice or guidance. Cohen et al. (1985) proposed a Stressor-Resource Matching model which posited perceived support as the source of stress buffering. According to this model, stress buffering occurs only when there is a match between the needs elicited by the stressful event and the functions of support that are present. Cohen et al. (1985) and Delistamati et al. (2006) identified four types of perceived support: Tangible support, referring to opportunities to get material support; Appraisal support, referring to opportunities to get someone to talk to about a problem or someone to provide advice; Self-esteem support, referring to self-recognition through social comparison; and Belonging support, referring to opportunities to build friendships or get a friend to do an activity together.

A substantial body of literature shows an association between perceived social support and adaptation to university life (e.g. Abdullah et al., 2014; Friedlander et al., 2007; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). Generally, these studies show that those students who perceive more social support adapt better to the challenges involved in starting university. Research in this field has shown inconsistent results regarding the influence of perceived social support on academic achievement. For instance, cross-sectional studies, longitudinal studies and meta-analysis (e.g. Credé & Niehorster, 2012) have shown that perceived parental support, but not peer support, predicts future academic achievement. Also, Jeon (2010) found results that suggested that social support perceived by Korean undergraduates had a significant influence on university academic achievement. However other research findings have indicated that social support does not improve academic achievement (e.g. Wintre & Yaffe, 2000) and so the relationship does not appear to be a straightforward one.

Other literature suggests that perceived social support may influence academic achievement indirectly through adjustment and motivation mechanisms (e.g. Mackinnon, 2012). A link between social support and academic achievement found in a study of Chinese university students where the results of path analysis suggested that self-esteem fully mediates the relationship between social support and academic achievement (Li et al., 2018).

The effectiveness of social support depends on the match between the provider and receiver of support. Individuals are more likely to provide or receive support when the provider or receiver perceive a shared sense of social identity (Cohen & Syme, 1985). Research has suggested that the extent to which one receives social support from a social group depends on the strength of one's social identification with the group. For example, Haslam et al. (2005) found a positive correlation between social identity and perceived social support where the more strongly one identified with a given group, the more social support one perceived to have received. Results

from path analysis indicated that social support was a significant mediator of the relationship between social identification and stress and social identification and life satisfaction. Another example of research suggesting that the extent to which one perceives social support from a social group depends on the strength of one's social identification with the group, comes from Guan and So (2016). They found results that indicated that individuals with a stronger social identity with a given social group perceived greater social support from the group which in turn predicted higher self-efficacy of engaging in a health-related behaviour advocated by the group and predicted greater behavioural intention.

A further exploration of Belonging support, that is opportunities to build friendships or get a friend to do an activity together, continues in the next section.

2.4 Belonging

Human beings are social creatures; the need to belong and be accepted is fundamental and drives much of human pursuit, activity and thinking with a seminal work by Maslow (1981) describing belongingness as the human need to be accepted, recognised, valued and appreciated by a group of other people. Psychologists Baumeister & Leary (1995) discussed the need to belong and their ideas were further developed by Somers (1999, p. 16) who defined belongingness as 'the need to be and perception of being involved with others at differing interpersonal levels. . .which contributes to one's sense of connectedness (being part of, feeling accepted, and fitting in), and esteem (being cared about, valued and respected by others), while providing reciprocal acceptance, caring and valuing to others'.

At the individual level 'belonging' recognises students' subjective feelings of relatedness or connectedness to the institution. This 'involves feeling connected (or feeling that one belongs in a social milieu)' (Vallerand, 1997, p. 300). It may relate 'the extent to which students feel

personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the [school] social environment' (Goodenow, 1993a, p. 80). Belonging may be characterised by regular contact and the perception that interpersonal relationships have stability, affective concern, and are ongoing (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Goodenow (1993, p. 25) described a sense of belonging in educational environments as the following:

Students' sense of being accepted, valued, included, and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class. More than simple perceived liking or warmth, it also involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual.

Whilst this research refers to students in secondary education, there is also research concerning students in Higher Education. Students who feel a sense of belonging to university feel an affinity with their institution, feel that they fit in and are part of the community, and feel accepted and recognised for their abilities (Hausmann et al., 2009; Pittman & Richmond, 2008).

A student's sense of belonging has been seen an indicator of a student's intention to persist at university (e.g. Tinto, 2017; Tinto, 1999). As the aim of this thesis was to explore factors that may affect student perceptions of success and academic achievement, it is considered to be potentially relevant to this thesis.

A sense of belonging may be measured in terms of how much a student identifies with the institution in which they are studying, showing strong identification being an indicator of a number of positive individual outcomes for students. Students from a low socio-economic status regularly report feeling that they 'do not belong' in the college context and so cannot

identify with the institution in which they are studying (Harackiewicz et al., 2014; Soria & Stebleton, 2013).

It may be argued that these challenges are more difficult for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and first-generation students as there is a large overlap in cohorts with students from lower socio-economic backgrounds far less likely to have family who are university educated. As universities “seem designed to meet the needs of those from higher SES backgrounds” (Jetten et al., 2017, p. 115), students of lower socio-economic background may feel unwelcome at high status educational institutions. This makes the transition to university particularly difficult as they are less able than those from higher socio-economic backgrounds to fit in and take on the new university student social identity (Iyer et al., 2009). Student identity is considered in this thesis as, according to the literature above, a sense of belonging at university may be associated with student identity.

In social psychology the concept of the self plays a role in explaining behaviours (Terry et al., 1999) and guiding learning (Trautwein et al., 2006). The model of self and identity that is adopted throughout this thesis is based upon the combined theories of social identity (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1978) and self-categorisation (e.g. Turner et al., 1987), collectively referred to as the social identity approach. The next section first looks at the historical development of social identity theory and then summarises some of the key tenets of the two theories.

2.5 Social Identity Theory

Following the atrocities of the Second World War, the question that preoccupied social psychology was how people could sanction violence towards others simply because of group membership. Post-war, many social psychologists assumed that those who hate must be hate filled with authoritarian personalities. Social identity theory was developed in opposition to

such individualism where social behaviours are explained as either the aggregation of individual states or inter-individual interactions (Hornsey, 2008).

Tajfel's personal experiences as a Polish Jew in France during, and immediately after, the Second World War inspired him to understand prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict. Tajfel initially tried to explain perceptual distortions that accompany categorisation from a cognitive perspective. Initial work on social perception (Tajfel, 1959, 1969; Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963) argued that categorisation automatically produces perceptual accentuation. It was argued that this fundamental cognitive bias could also be used to explain that when people categorise others, they see them as stereotypically similar to fellow group members and different from members of other groups. Tajfel and his colleagues went on to hypothesise that categorisation also produces behavioural discrimination.

To test this hypothesis, he devised the Minimal Group Paradigm, where participants were randomly allocated to minimally defined groups in order to investigate the minimal conditions required for discrimination to occur between groups. In an original experiment the schoolboy research participants were randomly told that they were either "overestimators" or "underestimators" of the number of dots in a display (Tajfel, 1969). In a subsequent experiment such categorisation was achieved by randomly, telling schoolboys that they were members of a "Klee" group or of a "Kandinsky" group after expressing their preferences, for a right or left hand painting, during a viewing of a succession of six pairs of un-labelled abstract paintings about which they were only told that one was painted by Paul Klee and the other Wassily Kandinsky (Tajfel, 1970). In each experiment participants then had the opportunity to give cash awards to different subjects based on group membership.

The results indicated that the participants persistently gave higher rewards to unknown ingroup members over unknown outgroup members, even when they had the possibility of maximizing

joint profits. Participants also tended to allocate rewards that maximized the difference between ingroup rewards over outgroup rewards rather than maximizing ingroup rewards, even when this led to the ingroup gaining smaller total rewards. It seemed that participants strategized that doing better than the outgroup was more important than doing as well as possible.

This initial work by Tajfel showed that categorisation automatically produces perceptual accentuation: a fundamental cognitive bias which could explain that when people categorise others, they see them as stereotypically similar to fellow group members and different from members of other groups. These experiments and those of Tajfel with other colleagues hypothesised that categorisation produces a preference for fellow unknown group members and elicited discrimination against other unknown participants outside their group. The preference for their own ingroup continued even when the participants believed the groups had been set for administrative convenience only and they had no reason to believe that the ingroup members shared any interests. Ingroup bias occurred in subsequent experiments even when the gain was symbolic (points) rather than material. A number of strategies were employed: *Parity fairness* where equal points were awarded to ingroup and outgroup recipients; *Maximum ingroup profit* where the highest absolute number of points were awarded to the ingroup, regardless of the points awarded to the outgroup; *Maximum joint profit* where the total number of points distributed to both the ingroup and the outgroup were maximized and finally, *maximum differentiation* where the difference in points awarded to the two recipients is maximized, with the difference favouring the ingroup but sacrificing absolute ingroup profit (Smith, 2010). Thus, the preferred strategy of intergroup differentiation is in competition with strategies based on more “rational” principles, such as being fair or obtaining maximum benefit for all.

The Minimal Group Paradigm has not been without criticism, one of which is due to demand characteristics associated with it. That is, when a participant receives the information that there are two groups, one to which she or he belongs and one to which she or he does not belong and is asked to allocate money to anonymous members of these groups, the participant may believe that intergroup differentiation is the only logical response to the situation or differentiation is the response that is expected by the experimenter. However, studies by social identity researchers have demonstrated that demand characteristics are not solely responsible for the minimal group effect. Critics such as Gerard & Hoyt (1974) and Yamagishi et al. (1999) note that participants are likely to be aware that the experimenters are dividing them into groups with the expectation that this will affect their behaviour. They argue that participants are likely to infer that they are expected to behave in a discriminatory way and that participants are merely doing what they believe is expected of them. An example of results supporting this come from an experiment (Hertel & Kerr, 2001) where participants primed with ‘loyalty’ were significantly more biased in a minimal group allocation study than those primed with ‘equality’.

Another criticism of the MGP rests on the criterion used to categorise individuals into the two groups. Early studies categorized participants into groups on the basis of preferences (e.g., for the painter Klee or Kandinsky) or on the basis of performance (e.g., *overestimators* or *underestimators*). Thus, it is possible that participants perceive similarity with other group members, and this similarity underpins intergroup discrimination, as opposed to mere categorisation into “us” and “them.” (J. R. Smith, 2010). Also, the two-group context may be particularly effective in eliciting an “us vs. them” contrast with ingroup bias occurring in minimal group experiments because participants access a dichotomous categorisation. The same bias was not found to occur in experiments using three groups (Hartstone & Augoustinos, 1995).

There have been concerns about ecological validity of findings from experiments using the minimal group paradigm. For instance, Aschenbrenner and Schaefer (1980) criticised the artificiality of the experimental situation which they stated does not permit generalisation to more realistic situations. The matrices used for coding the data were considered by Schiffmann and Wicklund (1992) who thought that Tajfel's data could be open to alternate explanations and also by Brewer (1979) who thought that the measures did not allow for the isolation of separate strategies. Bornstein et al. (1983) went further saying the measures were 'potentially misleading' (p. 347) whilst Schiffmann and Wicklund (1992) went even further to make Social Identity Theory out as a 'reductionist approach' (p. 29) to individual identity as the theory does not specify the psychological state of the individual prior to entry into the ingroup. In turn, the individual's social identity is then equated with physical presence in a group whereby membership is brought about by arbitrary assignment only rather than psychological forces. Hence, Social Identity Theory is "superfluous as an account of systematic social psychological phenomena" (Schiffmann & Wicklund, 1992, p. 29).

Despite some criticism, the minimal group paradigm has been adopted widely as an experimental norm for intergroup relations research (see Bourhis et al., 1994). Evidence from minimal group experiments led Social Identity theorists (e.g. Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1981) to distinguish between social identity and personal identity by integrating earlier ideas on social cognition and stereotyping (e.g. Tajfel & Wilkes, 1963) with previous social comparison theory by Festinger (1954). In doing this Social Identity Theory provides a social psychological analysis of the role of self-conception in group membership, group processes and intergroup relations (Hogg, 2011).

Social Identity Theory includes three core elements: social categorisation, social identification, and social comparison. Social categorisation refers to the tendency of people to perceive

themselves and others in terms of particular social categories. That is, they are members of relatively interchangeable group members instead of separate, unique individuals. For example, in terms of nationality 'we British' or any other status such as 'we mothers' or 'we students' or indeed 'we Nursing students'.

Social comparison is the process by which people determine the relative value or social standing of a particular group and its members. For instance, schoolteachers may be seen to having a higher social standing than retail workers. Compared with doctors, however, schoolteachers may be viewed as having a lower social standing.

The final key construct that is central to Social Identity Theory is that of social identity, defined by Tajfel (1972, p. 31) as "knowledge that [we] belong to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to [us] of this group membership.". This reflects the notion that people do not generally perceive social situations as detached observers. Instead, their own sense of who they are and how they relate to others is typically implicated in the way they view other individuals and groups around them. Someone's social identity is then seen as the outcome of those three processes where social identification may be defined as an individual's knowledge of belonging to certain social groups, together with some emotional and valuational significance of that group membership. People's social identity indicates who they are in terms of the groups to which they belong. Social identity was found to be associated with group and intergroup behaviour such as ethnocentrism, ingroup bias, group solidarity, intergroup discrimination, conformity, normative behaviour, stereotyping and prejudice (Hogg et al., 2017).

In contrast personal identity refers to self-knowledge associated with individual attributes and was found to be associated with positive and negative close interpersonal relationships and with idiosyncratic personal behaviour (Hogg et al., 2017).

The evidence from minimal group experiments led Tajfel and Turner (1979) to derive three theoretical principles for Social Identity Theory (p. 40): The first being that Individuals strive to achieve or maintain a positive social identity. Secondly that positive social identity is based on favourable comparisons that can be made between the ingroup and some relevant outgroups. Their final theoretical principle was that when social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct group and/or make their existing group more positively distinct.

From the first point it can be seen that Tajfel and Turner argued that the motivating principle underlying competitive intergroup behaviour was a desire for a positive and secure self-concept. Accepting that people are motivated to have a positive self-concept, it follows that people should be motivated to think of their groups as good groups when compared to other groups for instance in terms of characteristic attributes, attitudes, or behaviours. The theory assumes that individuals labelled as group members would categorise themselves and internalise the group label as social identity (Huddy, 2001) with this simple categorisation being sufficient to explain the creation of social identity. Once a relevant social identity is engaged, the 'search for positive distinctiveness' begins (Brown, 2020).

2.6 Self-Categorisation Theory

Whilst the focus of Social Identity Theory is between groups, Self-Categorisation Theory develops the cognitive processes for the dynamics within and between groups. Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell (1987) developed cognitive formulations to describe the cognitive factors that promote group membership. This Self-Categorisation Theory (e.g. Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1992) describes the circumstances under which a person perceive themselves to be part of a group and also if collections of individuals are perceived as a group. Group evaluations are relative and assessment of an individual's own group's worth

is made by comparing with that of other groups (e.g. Tajfel, 1982) with individuals preferring to have positive rather than a negative self-concept – there is a fundamental individual motivation for self-esteem. The process of self-categorisation produces an accentuation effect where salient social self-categories form the basis of the social world, where differences between social categories are accentuated along with the similarities within social categories (Turner et al., 1992). Self-categorisation theory focuses to a much greater extent on within group (i.e., intragroup) processes than social identity theory. That said, Self-categorisation Theory and Social Identity Theory are complimentary and do share considerable conceptual overlap, so much so that both theories are often collectively referred to as the Social Identity Approach. I have referred to the Social Identity Approach throughout this thesis.

2.6.1 Social Identity Salience

A person's social category is said to be salient when they are perceived, or they perceive themselves as a group member (e.g. mother or engineer) rather than as a unique individual (Bosak et al., 2018). According Tajfel and Turner (e.g. Tajfel, 1982b; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), category salience implies that a person's perception of another person and their behaviour towards that other person shift from the interpersonal level to the intergroup level. While the consequences of a salient group membership are well studied in social psychological research e.g. with respect to stereotyping, collective behaviour or intergroup conflict (see Turner et al., 1987 for an overview) the antecedents of category salience are relatively less often examined.

The underlying assumption of Self-Categorisation Theory (Haslam et al., 2012; Turner et al., 1987) is that category salience to be a function of “an interaction between the ‘relative accessibility’ of that categorisation for the perceiver and the ‘fit’ between stimulus input and category specifications” (Turner, 1985, p. 102; cf. Oakes, Turner, & Haslam, 1991). According

to self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987), self-categorisation is predicted by an interaction of three factors. These are 'comparative fit', 'normative fit', and 'perceiver readiness'.

The principle of comparative fit states that a collection of individuals tends to be categorised as a group to the degree that the perceived differences between them are less than the perceived differences between them and other people (outgroups) in the frame of reference. For predicting whether a group will categorise an individual as an ingroup or outgroup member, the meta-contrast principle may be defined as the ratio of the average similarity of the individual to outgroup members over the average similarity of the individual to ingroup members. As the differences perceived between individuals belonging to different (implicit) groups increase, compared to the differences perceived between individuals belonging to the same (implicit) groups, then the more salient will the social categorisation become in the perception of those individuals. That is members will tend to be perceived less as individually different persons and more as unitary social groups. The meta-contrast ratio is dependent on the context, or frame of reference, in which the categorisation process is occurring. That is, the ratio is a comparison based on whichever stimuli are cognitively present (Turner & Reynolds, 2012). Perceived meta-contrast is one aspect of fit (Oakes et al., 1991).

The principal of normative fit is that the content of the cognitive categories we use to understand stimuli reflect the features of category members and the dimensions on which those stimuli are categorized. It is the extent that the perceived behaviour or attributes of an individual or collection of individuals conforms to the perceiver's knowledge-based expectations (Oakes & Haslam, 1994). Oakes and colleagues (1991) demonstrated was that for any potential categorisation scheme the people must act in a way that that is normatively fitting. In their laboratory study they showed participants a film where three arts and three science students

(actually actors) were presented discussing university life. They presented 'pro-social life' or 'pro-hardworking' attitudes with the actors in different conditions taking attitudes in line or out of line with the expectations we would have with the content of a 'science students vs. arts students' scheme. They found that when participants were asked how similar one of the arts students were to the others, they were seen as most similar to the other arts students when they had presented 'pro-social life' views, in line with stereotypical expectations of an arts' student's behaviour. They reasoned that for any potential categorisation scheme people must act in a way that is normatively fitting. Or more broadly, potential categorisation schemes are influenced by our prior knowledge and experiences. Whilst 'accessibility' and 'fit' can both be seen to determine category salience they are not necessarily independent of one another, with the salience model (Blanz, 1999) suggesting one affects the other: the higher the chronic accessibility, the more likely it is perceived to fit to reality.

The final factor in self-categorisation, perceiver readiness, may be summarised as the readiness of a perceiver to adopt any particular categorisation scheme. Turner first described this as 'relative accessibility' which "reflects a person's past experiences, present expectations, and current motives, values, goals and needs" (Turner et al., 1994). This readiness is a function of the theories, expectations, and knowledge of the perceiver, as well as the goals, motivations, and purposes of the perceiver.

The salience of social categorisations is only one of the necessary antecedents of category-based perception and behaviour. People use accessible categories to make sense of their social context. They investigate how well the categorisation accounts for similarities and differences among people (structural or comparative fit) and how well the prototypical properties of the categorisation account for why people behave as they do (normative fit).

If the fit of the categorisation is poor, people cycle through other accessible categorisations until an optimal level of fit is obtained. This process is not entirely automatic. People are motivated to make categorisations that favour the in-group fit and may go to some lengths to do this. The categorisation that has optimal fit becomes psychologically salient in that context as the basis of self-categorisation, group identification, and prototype-based depersonalisation (Hogg & Reid, 2006).

2.7 Assumptions of the Social Identity Approach

The social identity approach assumes that people pursue meaning-making, in contrast to the ‘cognitive miser’ perspective of social cognition (Fiske et al., 1984). We seek to make sense of our environment and our place within it. An example of this is the role of social identity analyses of stereotyping (e.g. Oakes & Haslam, 2001) and social influence (e.g. McGarty et al., 1994). In terms of an educational context, this assumption means that given the right circumstances, students seek to make sense of new information and experiences they meet.

The second assumption is that the self-concept is both to be explained and an explanatory principle. Self-categorisation theory provides principles for how the self is cognitively constructed (e.g. Oakes, 1987) if it is assumed that the self takes the form of self-categorisations. How, when, and why others may share similarity is the focus of other aspects of the theory. Considering this in an educational context again, the self-concept subsequently guides attention, creates motivation, filters information and serves as a basis for interpreting information (e.g. Platow et al., 2007). The self-categorisation approach sees the self as being constructed through similarity and difference judgements, while these judgements are themselves influenced by individuals’ salient self-concepts (Mavor et al., 2017).

From this it can be assumed that the social identity approach assumes the self-concept to be dynamic and context dependent, not fixed (e.g. Turner & Onorato, 2014) which allows for flexibility in behaviours. This assumption means that we may also assume that in any given situation the self can be expressed at either a personal level, where we perceive ourselves as different from others, or a collective level, where the self is understood as being the same as others.

Together these assumptions allow us to talk meaningfully of learners in Higher Education not only as isolated individuals but as ‘students’ or ‘mature students’ or ‘nursing students’. As the aim of this thesis was to explore how undergraduate students’ different social identities may be associated with their perceptions of achievement, consideration of research into social identity in educational contexts is considered next.

2.8 Social Identity in Educational Contexts

Research conducted by Oakes et al. (1991) investigated social identity in an educational context. One of the experiments in this paper compared science and arts students and hypothesised that the perceived social category membership of others becomes salient as a description and explanation of their behaviour where their attitudes fit the social categorisation. Here fit is the degree to which the attributes of others are perceived to correlate with group membership in a ‘normatively consistent direction’.

Participants were shown video stimuli portraying stereotypical arts students’ attitudes (importance of social life and extracurricular activities) and science students’ attitudes (academic work the priority in order to get a good degree and go onto a high-status, well-paid job). Science students then judged arts students in the stimuli.

It was found that the arts/science categorisation became most salient where it correlated with similarities and differences between students' attitudes in a normatively consistent way. Also, the social categorisation of students into arts and science groups in these circumstances helped to explain their attitudes, an attribution which seemed internal but was not to individual personality.

The implication was that a shared, internalised norm (reflecting the target's social identification with arts' students) rather than an external group pressure was influencing action. The argument was that social category memberships are not only background social contextual influences upon the attribution process but are themselves a special kind of attribution, a cognitive representation of a distinct type of social dispositional property. A social category attribution refers not to an internal or psychological aspect of the person, but to shared social identity (Turner et al., 1987; Jones & Davis, 1965).

A key idea in the Social Identity approach is that social identity has an adaptive function producing social behaviour and attitudes (Turner, 1984). There is strong support from research for the proposition that social identity represents the basis for a whole range of collective behaviours, including collective action (Drury & Reicher, 2005) and social protest (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). There is also some evidence to show that social identity is related to individual level processes such as personal self-esteem (Haslam & Reicher, 2006), psychological well-being (Bizumic et al., 2009) and personal functioning and burnout (McCarthy et al., 1990).

This is consistent with other social identity research on the predictive value of strong social identities in relation to behaviours that are highly relevant to that specific social identity (Bliuc et al., 2007; Cameron, 2004; Haslam et al., 2000). The findings from Bliuc et al. (2011) may be further explained by noting that 'low identifiers' with the social category 'student' may have

other stronger and more central social identities which may not be consistent in terms of associated norms and values with academic achievement. Fundamental to the assumptions of this model is that social identity is imbued with normative content that informs students as to what behaviour is appropriate. As the concept of being a typical student may vary for different types of students, consideration of a potential relationship between social identification and students' norms are considered further in a section below.

Other research considering the impact of social identity for students in Higher Education has taken place in European universities. For instance, Zwettler et al. (2018) research with German university students found that identification with fellow students and their university program of study related negatively to emotional and cognitive symptoms of test anxiety. The positive relationship between achievement motivation and social identification with fellow students was empirically supported in this specific context and may also be explained in accordance with the social identity approach (Haslam, 2004). Due to adopted objectives and interests of the group, an individual strives to align his or her behaviour in that context (Dutton et al., 1994; Van Knippenberg and Van Schie, 2000). Bernabé et al.'s (2016) research with Spanish university students noted that the assumptions of Social Identity Theory would suggest that students with high identification with university and their university programme peers would develop positive behaviours in their approach to study and that this would predict engagement as it provides them with a positive value of identification with the group. Their research with university undergraduates did show identification with their programme of study had an indirect effect on students' engagement (mediated by personal-initiative).

Much of the research around social identity has been conducted experimentally including that by Walton and Cohen (2007) where a relationship between social identity and motivation

meant raised achievement motivation for participants who felt they belonged. This is in line with the Social Identity approach as it can be seen as group level self-esteem.

For instance, in Walton and Cohen's (2007) first experiment with Black and White undergraduates as participants, students were led to believe they would have few friends at college. White students were unaffected by this whilst Black students showed a drop in their sense of belonging and their perceived potential to succeed in the given academic subject (computer science). The second experiment tested an intervention designed to de-racialize the meaning of hardship in college and the doubt about belonging it can trigger. First year students learnt that these feelings were not unique to them or their racial group. Black students' beliefs in their potential to succeed were boosted by 20 percent and a 90% reduction in the racial achievement gap was noted for the sample.

However, the two studies used small numbers of participants (N= 69 and N= 37) and so their findings, whilst interesting, lack statistical power it is not clear if these effects could be generalised to a larger sample.

In addition, it has been found that a salient social identity can trigger psychological threat and that this can produce persistent performance decrements. Cohen & Garcia (2008) saw psychological processes as recursive and interacting with other factors in the social environment. In a school setting they saw a sense of threat (such as racial bias, for instance) potentially lowering a student's performance, heightening their sense of threat, which then further lowers performance in a repeating cycle until either their performance stabilises at a low level or an adaptation occurs. Cohen & Garcia (2008) produced a model of identity engagement that describes how a salient social identity can trigger psychological threat and belonging concerns. In an experimental application of model 7th grade American students wrote a positive affirmation or a neutral writing exercise at the start of each school day. They found

that African American students in the affirmation group received fewer D grades or less at the end of the year whilst no effect was seen on European American participants in the study. The intervention seemed to interrupt the recursive cycle noted in the model.

As it has been found that factors not directly related to intellect (as recorded in test scores or course grades) can play a part in motivation and achievement, examining how social psychological processes play out in real world rather than in experimental settings requires further investigation.

Conducting research with undergraduates studying different university programmes in a non-experimental way allows for investigation of how social identification at university may vary between students. It also enables investigation of whether a student's social identity is related to perceptions of success.

2.8.1 Social Identity and Ethnicity in Educational Contexts

When considering ethnicity and social identity together, a paper by Frings et al. (2020) investigated academic achievement for BAME students in Higher Education in a modern London university. They reported results indicating that BAME students had equal levels of student identity to non-BAME students but higher levels of ethnic identity. BAME students typically experienced higher levels of identity incompatibility where norms stemming from one identity conflict with another identity. BAME students had lower attainment than non-BAME students but that identity incompatibility appeared to moderate this effect but only for low and medium levels of incompatibility.

As stated in Chapter 1, there is a difference in academic achievement in Higher Education for those from different ethnicities with Black students less likely to attain a successful outcome than their White counterparts in England (*Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2016/17*,

2018). However, studies have found that, controlling for socio-economic background, Black students are not any more likely to have lower aspirations than White students (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Morgan & Mehta, 2004).

Therefore, considering moderating factors could be pertinent to a possible relationship between measures of social identity and expectations of achievement and perceptions of success.

2.8.2 Social Identity Salience in Educational Contexts

As written earlier, a person's social category is said to be salient when they are perceived, or they perceive themselves as a group member rather than as a unique individual (Bosak et al., 2018). In terms of the social identity salience of students, from the student's perspective, exhibiting behaviours such as spending time on campus, attending lectures, going to the library, and completing assignments, are most definitely the behaviours of a student. But what makes their social identity as a student the salient one?

There has been some research as to when a student does perceive themselves as a group member rather than as a unique individual so that the social category of student becomes salient. For instance, Lund Dean and Jolly (2012) modelled how some learning activities can trigger elements of students' identities, potentially forcing a cognitive dissonance confrontation. They said that students may concurrently self-identify in any number of ways: student, retail worker, caregiver, and volunteer for instance. In a classroom setting a given task may allow aspects of the 'student' identity to be enacted. They found that as students are presented with a learning activity, they assess whether participation would allow the current salient identity to remain positive and consistent with who they believe they are. When presented with a learning activity, students who engage with it may have decided that there is little perceived threat to the self or that the rewards of examining and changing their values and behaviours as a result of learning is worth the risk. In terms of disengagement, they found that

students may reject learning activities if they threaten an identity held and students go through a risk-reward assessment to decide whether to accept or reject changes to various identities. Accepting changes would modify the values, norms, and expectations relevant to identity. Those changed identity norms may then be consistent with behaviour conducive of improved performance.

There is some evidence as to whether a salient identity as ‘student’ has an effect on student university outcomes. A positive effect on outcomes will depend on whether student social identity norms are consistent with behaviour conducive of good performance (see section on Group Norms below). For instance, Voelkl (2012) found that identification with academics has been shown to be related to academic outcomes in secondary students. Considering students in Higher Education, Osborne (1997) found that among students starting their first year at university, identification with academics is related to later academic outcomes. Students are more likely to engage with the academic process if they adopt the identity of ‘student’ or ‘learner’ into their self-concept (Osborne and Jones, 2011). This process of identification influences students’ sense of belonging within the learning environment.

Reynolds, Lee, Turner, Bromhead, & Subasic (2017) posited that students’ school identification might affect their academic performance if the school climate is positive and supportive, which facilitates the student to identify with the school as a salient group. The authors suggest that in such instances the student is more likely to reflect and embed their school values and norms, with their behaviour focusing on learning and achievement. They tested this with 340 eleven to fourteen-year-old Australian students administering questionnaires and taking data from school administrative records. After controlling for age, gender, and length of time at the school, they found the three variables most significantly associated with achievement were parental education, socio-economic status, and school

identification. School identification fully mediated the relationship between school climate and academic achievement in numeracy and writing but not reading. Whilst this research highlights the importance of feeling psychologically connected to the school as a group for academic success for younger adolescents, it does not address whether identification with university would affect older students' academic performance in a similar manner.

Similarly, a larger study with 2257 Australian secondary school students investigated whether students' perceptions of school climate effected their writing and numeracy achievement (Maxwell et al., 2017). Results showed students' perceptions of school climate significantly explained writing and numeracy achievement. School identification was then investigated as a possible psychological mechanism to explain the relationship between school climate and achievement. It was found that the effect of school climate on achievement is mediated by students' psychological identification with the school.

It may be more difficult for the social identity of 'student' to be salient for those in less obviously visible minority groups such as those with a low socio-economic status, first generation students or commuter students. For example, commuter students often feel that the institutional environments they are studying in offer too little in the way of accommodation of their needs (Jacoby, 2015). Campus facilities, class timetables and campus extracurricular activities are designed to suit traditional age, full-time, often residential students which may not engender commuter students' feelings of belonging (Jacoby, 2015).

A salient social identity, such as being part of a visible ethnic minority on campus, may trigger psychological threat and belonging concerns in an individual. These can produce persistent academic performance decrements, which through feedback loops can increase over time (Cohen & Garcia, 2008). For Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students in particular, a sense of belonging is seen to also predict an intention to persist at university (Hausmann et al., 2007)

and 'belonging uncertainty' leads to a drop in a student's sense of belonging and their self-rated potential to succeed academically (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

2.8.2 Social Identity and Academic Performance

Considering social identity in the context of education, there has been research conducted finding that academic social identities predict academic performance such as the model developed by Bliuc et al. (2011). In their study students in a Romanian Higher Education institution were surveyed on their approaches to learning and their student social identity, their academic outcome was then recorded. Students' approaches to learning were rated as deep, where students aimed to achieve a better personal understanding of new ideas or information or rated as a surface approach where they were mainly concerned with completing only the most 'obvious' task requirements set. Previous research (e.g. Wilding & Andrews, 2006) had found links between students' approaches to learning and learning outcomes, with deeper approaches being associated with better learning outcomes.

Bliuc et al. (2011) built on this by applying social identity approach principles to students' university learning and then examining how these approaches are reflected in their learning outcomes. They found that university students' deep approaches to learning (for instance, going beyond the basics required to pass the course they were studying) were positively associated with students' social identification as university students and that they positively predicted academic achievement. Assessing the mediational role of the learning approach in the relationship between social identity and academic achievement, they found that student social identification affects the quality of learning outcomes through its effect on deep approaches to learning. Fundamental to the assumptions of this model is that for university students, a strong social identity with their discipline is linked to behaviours with normative content in a learning context that informs students as to what behaviour is appropriate which is reflected in the types

and quality of approaches to learning that the students adopt. This demonstrates how social identities may be experienced personally and that they then may act as strong motivators for personal achievement.

2.9 Identity and Transition

Life transitions often involve social identity change where the social and personal self may be deeply affected (Iyer et al., 2009) and there are challenges involved in the transition to higher education that may affect all students. These include leaving groups behind that have been central to their lives (Hopkins & Reicher, 1996) leading to a loss in identity (Jetten et al., 2002) and also the challenge of joining a new group and adopting a new identity (Jetten et al., 2017). The transition to Higher Education is seen as a tough challenge for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, with emphasis being placed on university education not being what ‘people like us do’ (Reay et al., 2009) and on its perceived incompatibility with social background for students (Jetten et al., 2008). The new identity of ‘student’ may be perceived as incompatible or be a threat to their existing identity. As a result, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds frequently have difficulty embracing their new identity as university students (Aries & Seider, 2005; Hinz, 2016; Moschetti & Hudley, 2015).

Improved academic and other outcomes such as an improved emotional well-being, have been shown to be associated with possessing a strong social identity as a university student have been reported, including improved psychological well-being (Cameron, 1999; Jetten et al., 2012). Group memberships form the basis of many self-aspects and can also be thought of as social identities (Mavor et al., 2014). However, it is not sufficient to simply belong to a particular group, individuals must regard their group membership as being important to how they describe themselves (Haslam et al., 2005a; Haslam & Reicher, 2006; McCoy & Major, 2003). An association between identifying with their high school students and positive

outcomes were found for younger students too with those identifying strongly with their school showing a higher level of self-esteem, positive affect and lower rates of anxiety and depression (Bizumic et al., 2008). Identifying strongly with other students has also been found to be associated with high levels of social support and improved wellbeing for those students (McNeill et al., 2017). This same study with Australian medical students also found that students' perceptions of group norms for medical student could influence their behaviours in areas such as partying or whether they sought help if they were struggling. As comparison against norms of behaviour seems to affect students' behaviour further consideration of what students' consider to be norms for other university students is pertinent.

2.10 Studies of uncertainty and identification

According to theories of Emerging Adulthood (Arnett, 2000), the transition through university into adulthood can be challenging and uncertain (e.g. Böke et al., 2019). As student identity is explored in this thesis and as 80% of U.K. domiciled university undergraduate students are under 25 years old, examining possible relationships between uncertainty and identity should be considered. There are also uncertainties associated with university study for mature students, for instance in terms of fitting into university culture (Mallman & Lee, 2016) and so again links between uncertainty and identity should be explored.

In 2000 Hogg proposed a motivational extension to Social Identity theory: the uncertainty reduction hypothesis. The original and most basic prediction from uncertainty reduction theory was that people identify more strongly with groups when they are feeling uncertain, that is uncertain about themselves, their behaviour, and what is expected of them. Its focus is on how individuals find a meaningful and acceptable self-concept through comparisons between the groups they belong to and the groups they do not. He saw the reduction of uncertainty as a

fundamental motivation as the “Reduction of uncertainty makes one feel positive about oneself and about others who help one reduce uncertainty.” (p. 248). He went on to state that:

People need to reduce uncertainty about who they are, what they should think, feel, and do and how they should interrelate with others. Self-Categorisation and depersonalisation in terms of a clear prototype that defines a relatively high entitativity group can stratify this motivation because it assimilates self to the prototype and provides a social field that is structured into discrete groups. (Hogg, 2000, p. 248).

Social categorisation reduces uncertainty by establishing group prototypes that describe how individuals (including the self) will and ought to behave and interact with one another. These prototypes represent a ‘subjective sense of consensus’ which validates both the definition of the self and the norms and values of the ingroup (Abrams and Hogg in Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010, p185). When facing self-conceptual uncertainty people are therefore motivated to self-categorise, preferably as a member of a group that is distinctive, highly entitative with clear boundaries and has a clear prototype.

In a study by Hogg, Sherman, Dierselhuis, Maitner, and Moffitt (2007), Australian undergraduate students took part in two studies that examined the effects of self-uncertainty and ingroup entitativity on group identification where entitativity is the perception of a group as a single entity. In a field experiment students rated the perceived entitativity of their own chosen political party, and self-uncertainty was primed (high vs. low). In another minimal group experiment where they were told whether their group was high or low in entitativity and again the participants were primed to feel either more or less certain about themselves. Support was found for the uncertainty reduction theory as in both cases participants identified more strongly when they were self-conceptually uncertain and the group was highly entitative.

Further support for the importance of uncertainty was found in a study by Grant and Hogg, (2012) that consisted of two experiments with U.S. undergraduates, where they found they identified most strongly with their group when they felt self-uncertain and that their group's identity was prominent in that it was either distinct from other identities they held or was one of their few identities held.

2.11 Social Identity Complexity

As the aim of this thesis was to explore how undergraduate students' different social identities might be associated with their perceived achievement at university, consideration of the effect of more than one social identity and possible interaction of these identities is relevant.

Distinctions among types of self and identity (e.g. Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Chen et al., 2006) have led to the exploration of the relationships among social identities within the self-concept. Roccas and Brewer (2002) introduced the term Social Identity Complexity to mean the degree of overlap perceived to exist between groups of which a person is simultaneously a member. The research suggested that individuals differ in the complexity of their subjective representations of their multiple ingroups. Those with a complex Social Identity have multiple discrete social identities that do not share many attributes, they are unique and separate. When a person acknowledges, and accepts, that memberships in multiple ingroups are not fully convergent or overlapping, the associated identity structure is both more inclusive and more complex. Whereas when the overlap of multiple ingroups is perceived to be high, the individual maintains a relatively simplified identity structure whereby memberships in different groups converge to form a single ingroup identification where ingroups are highly overlapping and convergent (Brewer & Pierce, 2005).

2.11.1 Social Identity Complexity in Higher Education

As this thesis aims to explore undergraduate students' different social identities, consideration of identity complexity and the possible interaction of these identities is relevant. The concept of Social Identity Complexity has been studied in the context of Higher Education in terms of students' identification with their university and how complex their identities are.

Grant and Hogg (2012) explored interactions between self-uncertainty and Social Identity Complexity on group identification in Higher Education. They manipulated Social Identity Complexity and self-uncertainty in North American university students and then measured the students' identification with the university. Participants primed with both self-uncertainty and fewer social identities more strongly identified with their university. They said that these findings showed that those with a simple social identity are impacted more by self-uncertainty than those with a more complex identity (Brewer & Pierce, 2005). Those with simple social identities may struggle as damage to one identity or group 'would ripple through the entire social self' because of the shared similarities of the ingroups. Individuals with low self-identity complexity see their ingroups as highly overlapping and convergent. Those with high self-identity complexity see their ingroups as distinct and cross-cutting membership groups.

Also in a Higher Education setting, a study by Brewer, Gonsalkorale, & van Dommelen (2013) found that Asian-Australian students perceived more overlap among their ingroups (lower Social Identity Complexity) than majority Anglo-Australian students. This was despite the fact that the objective overlap was greater for the Anglo-Australian group. The authors argued that in a pluralistic society where one cultural group is a dominant majority, it is relatively easy for majority members to take on multiple, differentiated group memberships and to move between them easily, often ignoring their ethnic identity. In comparison they found that people of ethnic

minorities are more likely to ‘carry’ their ethnic identity across social contexts so that their membership in other social groups is subjectively linked or associated with their ethnic identity.

2.12 Prototypical Students

People cognitively represent social categories as prototypes. These are ‘fuzzy sets’ of attitudes and behaviours that define one group and distinguish it from other groups (Hogg & Reid, 2006). A critical feature of prototypes is that they maximise similarities within and differences between group, thus defining groups as distinct entities. Prototypes form according to the principle of metacontrast which is the maximisation of the ratio of intergroup differences to intragroup differences (Hogg & Terry, 2000). By doing so they also enhance perceived entitativity, the property of a group that makes it appear to be a coherent and distinct entity that is homogeneous, well structured, has clear boundaries and whose members share a common fate (Hamilton & Sherman, 1996).

In order to consider the concept of whether views of a typical student vary between students studying different types of courses or from different backgrounds and whether this is related to student identity, exploring what could be meant by ‘typical’ is relevant and how students may compare their own characteristics to what they perceive as those of a typical student.

Prototypes tend to be shared; people in one group in the same context share their prototype of the ingroup and relevant outgroup(s). In this sense, group prototypes are group norms (Turner, 1991). The prototypical member of the ingroup, is the normative embodiment of the ingroup and contrasts with the outgroup.

2.12.1 Group Norms

Group norms are shared patterns of thought, feelings, and behaviour and in groups, what people do and say communicates information about norms and is itself configured by norms. Norms

are shared cognitive representations that, within a particular context, characterise the behaviour of members of relevant outgroups and describe and prescribe the behaviour of ingroup members including ourselves (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Group norms are cognitively represented as context dependent prototypes that capture the distinctive properties of groups.

Research into comparison with groups rather than against a specific individual has shown that people maintain prototypes of typical members of many categories including athletes, couch potatoes, actors and indeed students. Gibbons and Gerrard (2013) put that prototypes are ‘cognitive creations’ and that their construction often reflects a self-serving bias. People tend to form prototypes of desirable groups that are similar to the self, whereas those of undesirable groups or categories are created in such a way as to highlight the self/other distinction (Gibbons & Gerrard, 2013). Once constructed the prototypes serve as social comparison targets and this comparison can influence behaviour in a variety of ways.

Students in an educational setting may compare themselves with what they see as the prototypical student. In a study with American High School students, Hannover & Kessels (2004) had participants describe themselves and prototypical students who liked or disliked particular subjects using adjectives such as attractive or arrogant. Evidence was found for prototype-matching with students tending to prefer courses when their self-image overlapped the prototypical student who liked particular courses.

Even the physical characteristics of the prototypical student may be very different from the physical experience of the student in question. For example, Lewis and Neighbors (2006) asked students to describe the typical university student. Male students described the prototype as white, approximately 20 years old and studying full-time. However, half of female participants also described the typical student in the same manner, showing how far the prototype can differ from reality.

Aside from considering how prototypes may affect students' liking for particular subjects, similarity to a student prototype may affect perceptions of achievement. A study by Lane and Gibbons (2007) found that students high in neuroticism who saw themselves as dissimilar to the prototypical student were more likely than other students to leave school early, particularly when they viewed the prototype positively. In their additional study the perceived dissimilarity from student prototypes predicted worse academic achievement. In a similar vein, those student participants who perceived a 'typical' student as favourable but dissimilar to themselves had the lowest probability of graduating if they were not also 'committed to a personal identity' (Lane, 2017).

2.13 Social Identity Theory Criticism

Social Identity Theory attempts to explain how and why individuals' identity as members of a group and to quantify the impact of that identification on their behaviour. One criticism that is sometimes made of the self-categorisation analysis of group identities in particular is its cognitive and perceptual focus, and a consequent neglect of motivational and affective processes.

Critics have argued that Social Identity Theory has an individualistic bias (Peterson & Stewart, 2020), overlooks the importance of history and culture (Brewer & Yuki, 2007), simplifies the significance of self-esteem (Rubin & Hewstone, 1998) and makes claims about in-group bias that are not supported by the data (Huddy, 2002).

Dominant research paradigms have led researchers to focus on minimal group experiments or large-scale inter-group relations, largely ignoring the study of interactive group processes. It has been argued that Social Identity Theory wrongly replaces the traditional notion of the individual with an ill-defined concept of social identity. For instance, Postmes, Haslam, and Swaab (2005) make the case that in groups characterised by interpersonal relations,

individuality plays a central role in fostering group identity and purpose. They suggest that mechanistic interpretations of self-categorisation theory where social identity salience automatically leads to prototypical and uniform behaviour are over simplistic and that individuals have an active role in dynamically defining, redefining, and changing their identities.

Also psychological research on identity development (Erikson, 1968) assumes growth toward stability where children's identities are re-examined during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. After 'trying on' various possibilities, adolescents and young adults are predicted to 'stake a claim' to an identity that then remains stable. Research in this area focuses on testing whether identity changes over time as expected. An example being research on engagement in ethnic identities by (Ong et al., 2010). Considering identity in this way may be appropriate for younger students aged between 18 and 25 years as these traditional age students start university as adolescents, finding out who they are and where they fit in. Students who have achieved identity are confident in their choice of course and feel like they are in the right place (Tinto, 1999).

Proponents of some sociological perspectives have argued for stability of the self over time (e.g. Serpe, 1987; Stryker, 1980). For example, Serpe (1987) reported that university students did not vary in how they rated six university role identities over three time points in their first term at university.

Critics from political science have said that Social Identity Theory overlooks the contingencies of history and culture, preferring the abstractions of theoretical psychology and sociology (Huddy, 2001). She went on to argue that identity formation is not a result of group designation but rather depends on a combination of subjective factors (Huddy, 2001). Others have discussed the importance of culture, with work by M. Brewer and Yuki (2007) comparing

societies that are traditionally classified as collectivistic with more individualistic societies in the nature and structure of social identities. They argued that the nature of social identities is embedded in cultural values and practices, with the consequence that ingroup boundaries and ingroup–outgroup distinctions may be culture-specific.

When considering social identity and self-esteem, some social psychologists have argued that the posited correlation between high self-esteem and in-group bias simplifies a complex relationship. For instance, Crocker and Luhtanen (1990) and Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) observed that collective self-esteem as well as personal self-esteem plays a crucial role in moderating social identity. A review by Aberson et al. (2000) also suggested that the correlation tends to be less significant when high and low self-esteem individuals adopt indirect rather than direct bias strategies.

Another criticism of Social Identity Theory is that constructionist themes that recognise individual and collective activity around defining identities and bringing them to life are also relatively neglected.

2.14 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is a theory of knowledge that has its origins in sociology where knowledge is viewed as constructed as opposed to created (Andrews, 2012). Here it is being considered as a potential alternative theory to that of Social Identity Theory that may be considered when thinking about reasons behind differences in student achievement is that of Social Constructionism.

In 1966 Berger & Luckmann argued that human beings together create and then sustain all social phenomena through social practices. They saw three essential processes responsible for this: externalisation, objectification, and internalisation. They argued that the world can be

socially constructed by the social processes of people but at the same time experienced by them as if the nature of their world was pre-given and fixed. The way of thinking about the relationship between individual and society as a dialectical process allows us to think of the person being both agentic (always actively constructing the social world) and constrained by society (to the extent we must live our lives within the institutions and frameworks of meaning handed down to us from previous generations).

The emergence of Social Constructionism in psychology may be dated from a paper by Gergen (1985) who argues that all knowledge is historically and culturally specific and that we must therefore extend our enquiries beyond the individual into social, political and economic realms for a proper understanding of the evolution of present-day psychology and social life.

The Social Constructionist approach has the following general assumptions which Burr (2003) states as: a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge; historical and cultural specificity; knowledge is sustained by social processes; knowledge and social action go together. Using this approach, psychology can be seen as the study of the processes by which the mental and the behavioural emerge from the social. For instance, the social constructionist view of personality is that it is a concept that we use in order to try and make sense of the things that other people and we do. It can be seen as a way of explaining human behaviour and for trying to anticipate our part in social interactions with others. From this perspective, whatever personal qualities we display are a function of the particular cultural, historical, and relational circumstances in which we are located.

This framework can be used when considering identity as, according to Burr (2003, p. 108): “Our identity is constructed out of the discourses culturally available to us, and which we draw upon in our communications with other people.”. Our identity therefore originates not from inside the person but from the social realm, but from the social realm where people “swim in a

sea of language and other signs” (Burr, 2003, p. 109). To say that identities are socially constructed through discourse does not mean to say that those identities are accidental. However, the only thing our concept of self is contingent upon is social interaction. Both social constructionism and Self-Categorisation Theory view identity as being context dependent. However, for social constructionism it is agentic and strategic, whereas for Self-Categorisation it is passive.

2.15 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term first termed by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to describe how systems of oppression overlap to create distinct experiences for people with multiple identity categories. It proposes that different biological, social and cultural factors such as gender, race and class do not operate in isolation of one another. Intersectionality is now an analytical tool used to describe the complexity of systemic issues faced by marginalised groups that are simultaneously part of more than one minority. It may be a way for academics to understand the problems that can stem from the interconnectedness of social prejudices, disadvantages and privileges (Macias & Stephens, 2017). Considering this concept further, Geerts and van der Tuin (2013) defined intersectionality as ‘the idea that subjects are situated in frameworks of multiple, interacting forms of oppression and privilege through socially constructed categories such as gender and “race”/ethnicity’.

Cole (2009) states that there are implications considering intersectionality in psychological research and that three questions should be considered: Who is included within this category? What role does inequality play? Where are the similarities? She stated that intersectionality makes it clear that ‘gender, race, class and sexuality simultaneously affect the perceptions, experiences and opportunities of everyone living in a society stratified along these dimensions.’ (Cole, 2009, p. 179). To understand any one of these dimensions, all relevant identities must

be addressed in combination without focussing on a single dimension. Given the nature of this thesis, the questions that Cole raised should be considered at all stages. In their paper on identity research, Warner and Shields (2013, p. 809) stressed that “Successful engagement with intersectionality is not determined by who you study, but by how you study” and as such, intersectionality may need to be taken into account in the methodology (including sampling and the development of measures), analysis and in the interpretation of the findings.

2.16 Link between Social identity and Socialisation

In sociological terms, socialisation is the process of internalising the norms and ideologies of society. Primary socialisation occurs during infancy and childhood where family is the main agent and is where the basic norms of social interaction are learnt. Secondary socialisation occurs throughout the lifetime as people learn how to behave in relation to new areas of social life, such as university and work environments. In the context of higher education, socialisation for graduates may be defined as:

the process through which individuals gain the knowledge, skills and values necessary for a successful entry into a professional career requiring an advanced level of specialised knowledge and skills (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001).

University students’ social identities have been found to be context dependent, both in terms of which identity was the most salient and in the form the identity took. In a qualitative study Jungert (2013) interviewed 10 engineering students over a 4 year period. In the earlier years of their studies, they were most likely to identify as a student in relation to other students whilst graduates’ and third years’ most prominent identification was that of an engineer.

This raises a number of questions. For instance, can this shift in identification be mapped with the process of professional socialisation? There have been many studies investigating the socialisation of health care professionals where even first year undergraduate medical doctors

have been keen to view themselves in terms of doctor rather than student (e.g. Pitkala & Mantyranta, 2003). Whilst this has also been seen to be the case for student nurses (Mariet, 2016), it is not clear whether this identification changes dependent on whether they are on placement or studying at university. Also, do the identities of students from other disciplines also change over time or is this effect restricted to professional rather than non-professional programmes? What priming effect does their learning environment have on their salient social identity? Could the expectations of those learning environments change student outcomes?

2.17 Summary and Gaps in the Literature

In the previous chapter a brief history of Higher Education funding in England was given as well as an introduction to the Widening Participation agenda. Statistics presented showed differences between demographic groups in terms of both university retention rates and degree outcomes. Possible explanations for these differences in achievement from the perspective of the Widening Participation agenda are therefore examined in this thesis.

Considering different student groupings, whilst there has been research as to how students' academic social identity may predict academic performance (Bliuc et al., 2017), there is a lack of research into what factors may interact and affect these academic social identities. There is therefore a research gap as to whether the effect of gender and ethnicity together is greater than the impact of one factor on its own, for instance. There is also a research gap concerning comparing the academic identities of students on professional and non-professional degree programmes as previous studies have considered professional socialisation for health care professionals (e.g. Pitkala & Mantyranta, 2003; Mariet, 2016) with students on those professional course identifying more as a health care professional (a doctor or nurse in these cases) than they do as a student.

Also, how students view the typical student and students' relationships to that prototype (Lane & Gibbons, 2007) has been investigated but the effect of the interplay of different identities has on students' views of the typical student has not been studied. Indeed students views of the typical student (and the norms they hold) has been associated with both positive and negative outcomes (e.g. Burford, 2012; Cruwys et al., 2016). As many of the studies, such as that by McNeill et al. (2017), focus on medical students, understanding and comparing student norms as viewed by students taking other professional degrees as well as studying non-professional degree courses would broaden the field of knowledge.

As the social constructionist approach considers identity to be socially constructed through discourse a qualitative approach, talking with students about their experience and identity was seen to be appropriate.

Much research exists on why students fail rather than on studying successful students. As said by Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski (2011), "Studying what is right with students may illuminate new aspects of successful students experiences which can in turn be applied to supporting all students." (p. 300). This research for this thesis considered knowledge from several perspectives as they relate to identity and success but concentrates on the Social Identity Approach.

2.18 Aim and Purpose of the Thesis

Considering the areas of interest noted above, the aim of this thesis was to explore how undergraduate students' ratings of different social identities might be associated with their views of achievement in a post-1992 university.

Given this general aim, the purpose of this PhD research was to explore how student identity may differ for traditional and non-traditional students and between professional and non-

professional courses of study and also what factors affect the strength of student identification. An additional purpose of this thesis was to explore whether all students view success in the same way and how this may affect student expectations of their own outcomes and whether there is an association between students' social identity and their perceptions of success. Finally, the possible effect of norms of student behaviour were considered: How students view norms of student behaviour and how these may vary between traditional and non-traditional students and between professional and non-professional courses of study. Also, how perceived differences between their own attributes and those they perceive as being associated with a typical affect the identities they hold and their long-term aspirations.

2.19 Research Questions

To summarise the points raised above, in order to address the identified aim of the thesis, the following theoretical questions are addressed:

Do students studying on different Programmes of Study vary and if so, how?

Do measures of students' social identity with their university, peers and family differ and if so, how?

What are students' expectations of achievement and success and if these differ, how?

What are student's self-reported own and typical student attributes and if these do affect measures of social identity and expectations of achievement and success, how?

2.20 Summary of Chapter

In summary, in this chapter theories regarding the issues surrounding university success and identity from sociological, educational, and psychological stand points were discussed. The potential importance of feelings of support and belonging were considered though social

identity was the main context through which these elements were examined. In addition, alternative viewpoints considering social constructionism and socialisation were discussed.

After considering potentially relevant theories, a statement of the problem as seen from the perspective of the continuing problem of attainment or awarding gaps in Higher Education was given and the aim and purpose of the thesis was stated. It's potential significance due to possible gaps in the literature and the resulting research questions followed.

In next chapter the general methodology for the thesis is outlined, an overview of the research questions is covered and each of the studies is mapped. The general methodology is discussed, including general design, participants, procedure, materials, and measures used. Specific methods for each study in the thesis are provided in the Chapters 3 and 4.

Chapter 3. General Methodology

3.1 Overview of chapter

In this chapter the general methodology for the thesis is outlined, as such it should be remembered that specific methodologies are given in each study chapter. First in this chapter, leading on from the Literature Review, an overview of the research questions covered and each of the studies is mapped. Following on from this, the general methodology for the thesis is discussed and rationale for using Mixed Methods given. Mixed methods have been chosen here as they are especially useful in understanding possible contradictions between quantitative results and qualitative findings. Utilising mixed methods gives a voice to participants and ensures that study findings are grounded in participants' experiences.

In the rest of the chapter the general design, participants, and overview of procedures for each study is given with specific detail for each study provided in the empirical chapters.

3.2 Research Questions

Given the context of this research as laid out in the Introductory chapter, the main aim of this research was to explore how undergraduate students' ratings of their different identities might be associated with their views of achievement in a post-1992 university.

In order to address the identified aim of the thesis, the following theoretical questions were proposed at the end of the Literature Review chapter:

Do students studying on different Programmes of Study vary and if so, how?

Do measures of students' social identity with their university, peers and family differ and if so, how?

What are students' expectations of achievement and success and if these differ, how?

What are student's self-reported own and typical student attributes and if these do affect measures of social identity and expectations of achievement and success, how?

Two studies have been designed to collectively provide knowledge to address the main aim, and research objectives of the thesis detailed above. Figure 3.1 below outlines how each of the studies presented in this thesis have been designed to address the main aim and research questions. Figure 3.1 also shows how qualitative and quantitative methods have been selected for their suitability in answering the research questions in each study.

As mixed methods are used within this thesis, the appropriateness of using them is first addressed in the next section of this chapter before discussion of the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Again, it should be noted that specific methods, including individual study designs, participants, materials, and procedures are covered in the results chapters for each study.

Thesis Aim	To consider what may affect undergraduate students' reported perceptions of achievement and success in Higher Education.		
Thesis Research Question	To explore if and if so how undergraduate students' social identities (in relation to peers etc), perceptions of support and traits as a student might be associated with their perceptions of achievement and success in Higher Education.		
Methodology	Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed Method
Study	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6: Integrated Data
Study Research Questions	Do students studying on different Programme of Study vary and if so, how?		
	Demographic factors		Demographic factors
	Do measures of students' Social Identity with their university, peers and family differ and if so, how?		
	Demographic factors Differences between groups	Importance of student identity to participants	Demographic factors & differences Descriptions of student social identities
	What are students' perceptions of Achievement and Success and if these differ, how?		
	Demographic factors Differences between groups Affect of perceived social support/belonging	Academic success and other success Perceptions of support and belonging	Descriptions of achievement and success Demographic factors & differences Affect of perceived social support/belonging
Design	What are students' perceptions of their own traits and those of typical students and if these affect measures of Social Identity and perceptions of Achievement and Success, how?		
	Differences between groups for perceptions of typical students' traits and students' own traits. Affect of perceptions of typical students' traits and students own traits on social identity. Affect of perceptions of typical students' traits and students own traits on perceptions of achievement and success.	Typical students' traits. Students' own traits.	Descriptions of own and typical student traits. Differences between groups for perceptions of typical students' traits and students' own traits. Affect of perceptions of typical students' traits and students own traits on social identity. Affect of perceptions of typical students' traits and students own traits on perceptions of achievement and success.
	Correlational, Between & Within participants	Semi-structured Interviews	Convergent
Methods	Pearson's correlation; ANOVA; independent t-test; linear regression and Mediation Analysis using PROCESS macro.	Thematic Analysis of transcribed audio recording of between 40 and 60 minutes for each semi-structured interview.	Merging survey and interview data through Joint Data Analysis

Figure 3.1 Thesis map on how the studies of this thesis meet the research questions

3.3 Rationale for Methodology

3.3.1 Epistemology

My background as a researcher is psychological and so I initially tended towards a purely psychological approach. Historically, psychological research has relied heavily on experimental and quasi-experimental methods of collecting and analysing numeric data (Tashakkori et al., 2012). This leads to a number of philosophical assumptions including an ontological assumption where there is only one reality out there; all of it is knowable and measurable in some way. As such, a Positivist paradigm assumes that the social world may be studied in the same way as the natural world in terms of cause-and effect relationships, rather than by a value system where one thought, culture, language is considered superior over another. It is assumed that the scientific method allows accurate measurement of what can be observed. This measurement can then be used to create laws that describe constant recurring relationships between variables in the world. Positivists believe that ‘Scientific knowledge is utterly objective and that only scientific knowledge is valid, certain and accurate’ (Crotty, 1998, p. 29).

However, scientists have come to the realisation that all observation, including objective reality, is fallible which led to the post-positivist paradigm (e.g. Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2017). Post-positivistic psychology is a broader and more human endeavour, influenced by such philosophers of science as Thomas Kuhn (1922–1996) who argued that it is not simply individual theories but whole worldviews that must occasionally shift in response to evidence. It is not a rejection of the scientific method, but rather a reformation of positivism to meet these critiques. As such, it reintroduces the basic assumptions of positivism: ontological realism, the possibility and desirability of objective truth, and the use of experimental methodology.

Within post-positivism we find two movements: constructivists and critical realists. Blanche et al. (2006) explain that the quantitative constructivist paradigm (also found in the qualitative paradigm) observations about the world are based on perceptions and recognise that observations are constructed from fallible perceptions. The construction of reality will therefore be imperfect. As reality is a social construction, it is important for scientists to acknowledge biases, including biases ingrained in theory and so research should be open for scrutiny through peer review. The constructivist paradigm rejects absolute truths and views constructed reality as transactional, value-laden, and attempts to find multiple realities (Blanche et al., 2006).

The second movement, critical realists, holds that reality exists independently from what scientists think about it, and recognises that fallibility and error can occur during observations. As a result, theory is revisable and questions scientists' ability to discern reality with certainty. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2017, p. 118) refer to 'degrees of freedom' acted out by autonomous individuals guided by 'the voice of conscience' calling scientists back to reality. What differentiates critical realism from other perspectives is that critical realism is grounded in cultural and social sciences. Critical realists can have both qualitative and quantitative standpoints but the main focus is on constant debate, questioning findings, and providing evidence-based facts (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009).

As with positivist research, quantitative post-positivist research also concerns observations that are rooted in theory (O'Leary, 2009). However, scientists recognise that they are influenced by their own backgrounds and imperfect perceptions. Possible fallacies can be addressed with the use of data triangulation. Triangulation investigates multiple sources of data to confirm the truthfulness of results in an effort to provide the most accurate view of reality (Olsen, 2004).

Post-positivist research is broad rather than specialised and can use different methodologies with theory and practice not being separated (Ryan, 2006). The researcher's motivations for and commitment to research are also central to the enterprise. Having already laid out my position as a researcher (see section 1.3 in Chapter 1), it is important that I choose an epistemology where this may be incorporated and so post-positivism seems appropriate in this respect.

Having decided upon a post-positivist paradigm as being an appropriate one within which to explore barriers to success in Higher Education, the next section will discuss how the paradigm may be applied.

3.3.2 Applying Epistemology to Methodology

Despite acceptance that qualitative methods do have relevance to psychological research (Willig, 2019), quantitative methods still dominate (Lund, 2012). Purist researchers from both the quantitative and qualitative camps have very different worldviews. Quantitative purists, adopt a positivist philosophy (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) whilst qualitative purists, reject positivism and have a constructivist philosophy, maintaining that social science inquiry can only be subjective and that generalisations are neither desirable nor possible.

Both sets of purists view their methodologies as the ideal for research, and, implicitly if not explicitly, they advocate the incompatibility thesis (Howe, 1988), which posits that qualitative and quantitative research paradigms, including their associated methods, cannot and should not be mixed as they answer different questions. However, much research today is cross-disciplinary and so a pluralistic approach has gained more ground with a mixed methods approach providing a combination of both qualitative and quantitative data being seen as giving 'the most complete analysis of problems' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 21).

Post-positivism allows for mixed methods research that allows the insights provided by quantitative and qualitative research to be fitted together building a bridge between conflicting methodologies. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) define mixed methods as ‘research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry’ (p. 4). Hence mixed methods can refer to the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to provide answers to several research questions, each answered with a different methodological approach.

There are a number of potential advantages for adopting this approach and Lund (2012) gives an overview of four main benefits. These include that mixed methods research is more able to answer certain complex research questions than qualitative or quantitative research in isolation. Another benefit is that qualitative and quantitative results may relate to different objects or phenomena but may be complementary to each other in mixed methods research. Hence, the combination of the different perspectives provided by qualitative and quantitative methods may produce a more complete picture of the domain under study. Another advantage of mixed methods research is that it may provide more valid inferences. If the results from different strategies such as qualitative and quantitative ones converge, the validity of the corresponding inferences and conclusions will increase more than with convergence within each strategy. A final advantage in mixed methods research is that qualitative and quantitative results may be divergent or contradictory, which can lead to extra reflection, revised hypothesis, and further research. Thus, given that data have been collected and analysed correctly, such divergence can generate new theoretical insights (Lund, 2012).

In this thesis qualitative and quantitative results may relate to different phenomena but may be complementary to each other in mixed method research. Hence the combination of different

perspectives provided by qualitative and quantitative methods may produce a more comprehensive set of data that can be analysed and ultimately lead to a more complete picture of the domain under study. Mixed methods may provide more valid inferences and if the results from different strategies converge the validity of the conclusions increase. If on the other hand the results are divergent, this may lead to further research.

3.4 Design

Considering the advantages of utilising a mixed methodology, this thesis adopted a mixed method approach. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) there are four types of mixed methods research design: triangulation, embedded, explanatory and exploratory. Initially conceptualised as a triangulation design, convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) is one in which the quantitative and qualitative strands are implemented during the same phase of the research process. Data were analysed separately and the results mixed into an overall interpretation of the data. In embedded designs researchers collect and analyse both quantitative and qualitative data within a traditional quantitative or qualitative design, for example using open ended questions alongside scales in a survey. Both explanatory and exploratory are two-phase designs with qualitative and quantitative data collected sequentially in different phases of the research. In an explanatory design, collection and analysis of quantitative data are followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data in order to help explain the quantitative results. Whereas in an exploratory design qualitative data are first collected and analysed followed by the collection and analysis of quantitative data to test or generalise initial qualitative findings.

As the purpose of a convergent design is “to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic” (Morse, 1991, p. 122), this mixed method study most appropriately employs this type of design where both quantitative and qualitative data are collected concurrently in order

to obtain triangulated results. This approach allows for validation of findings, enhances richness, and allows for greater criticality of results.

The design of the quantitative study used between and within groups designs where groups compared students on either professional or non-professional degree courses. The design used between subjects' factors including gender, age, ethnicity, and other factors such as carer status.

Dependent variables are specified in the individual results chapters but include measures of the ratings of student identity held and views of student success and perceived social support received.

3.5 Participants

The context from which the participants are drawn are undergraduate students from a post-1992 university in London. According to figures passed to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) ('Key facts', 2017), the university has a total of approximately 20,000 students of which 57 percent are female and 42 percent male (less than one percent identified as any other gender). The majority of students are under 25 years of age (63 percent) with 26 percent of the students being between 25 and 39 and the final 11 percent being over 39 years old. The university is more ethnically diverse than the general figure for UK universities of students being White with 50 percent compared with 73 percent nationally ('Who's studying in HE?: Personal characteristics', 2017). The university reported that their remaining student population was made up of 17 percent Black students, 23 percent Asian students and 10 percent of students as Other or Mixed ethnicities. This data from HESA informed the choice of participants.

Participants are drawn from either professional or non-professional degree courses so that comparison is possible across the programmes as differences have previously been found

between cohorts in a number of areas. For instance, in terms of perceived academic stress experienced whilst studying (Shukla & Joshi, 2017), adaptability to change (Arora, 2015) and experiences of mental health distress during their programme of study (Leahy et al., 2010).

Participants drawn from this population are first, second- and third-year undergraduates from professional (e.g., nursing) and non-professional (e.g., psychology) academic programmes of study.

For the qualitative study there are 30 participants chosen from both professional and non-professional academic degree programmes. Specific details are given in Chapter 4.

The quantitative study has 300 participants drawn from the chosen programmes of study. These are split across first, second- and third-year undergraduate students. Specific details are given in Chapter 5.

3.6 Procedures

3.6.1 *Quantitative data collection*

Demographic information, information on part-time working, caring responsibilities, and information on their residential situation as well as time spent engaged on campus were gathered online. In addition, participants completed instruments online gathering data on their ratings of their student identity, expectations of university and how supported they feel at university.

See Chapter 4 for study 1 and for a more detailed methodology. Also see Appendix 1 for a survey schedule.

3.6.2 Qualitative data collection

Participants were contacted via their degree programme leaders, requesting participation in a semi-structured interview. Demographic information, information on part-time working, caring responsibilities, and information on their residential situation as well as time spent engaged on campus were gathered online in addition to participant's contact details.

3.6.2.1 Use of semi-structured interviews. As Arksey and Knight (1999) state, qualitative research interviews are a valuable research method for exploring “data on understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings [...] that people have in common” (p. 2). These qualitative interviews can take a number of forms such as structured interviews, where the interviewer sticks very closely to the interview schedule in order to have as little variation between the interviews as possible. In contrast the second type of interview is the open-ended or unstructured interview where there is freedom both on the part of the interviewer and interviewee whether to adhere to any schedule set. As well as interviews in one-to-one settings, qualitative data may also be gathered in focus group interviews where small groups are engaged in an informal discussion focussed on a particular topic. Focus groups can provide an open environment in which participants talk in-depth (Braun & Clarke, 2013) even when discussing ‘sensitive’ topics. Given this a pilot study was conducted utilising a focus group method.

For the pilot study, a focus group was formed of a group of post-graduate students with varied undergraduate experiences in terms of both demographics, programme, and location of study. Participants had completed their undergraduate studies in England, the United States of America and Canada studying a mix of psychology, sociology, and liberal arts undergraduate programmes. Participants knew each other before participation in the group interview, all belonging to the same post graduate programme, though at different stages of completion. As

such it could be said that there was already an element of trust through the group, though no one had talked to others in the group about their experiences as students before. Interviewees were given clear guidelines on the confidential nature of responses within a group interview setting before the session commenced.

Whilst the interview schedule and stimulus materials were successful in that they elicited rich responses, individuals in the group responded quite individually to the questions and tasks (see Appendix 2 for details on the schedule) rather than prompting group discussion as a whole. This seemed to be because experiences and expectations of university varied widely across the group with each participant responding to questions as an individual, rather than prompting a more group led, organic discussion. This was the case despite some participants studying as undergraduates at similar institutions, either post-1992 universities in England or colleges in North America. Following the lack of interaction between participants in the pilot focus group, I decided that I would be justified in choosing individual interviews as the choice of method of gathering qualitative data.

Semi-structured interviews are ones in which the questions are predetermined but open-ended where the interviewer is able to improvise follow-up questions and to explore meanings and areas of interest that emerge. The interviewer does not have to stick to an interview schedule as in a fixed interview and there is room to clarify or extend answers. Due to the degree of structure in this type of interview, the resulting text is a combination of researcher and participant and so the interviewer must be careful not to include leading questions and so unduly influence participants' responses (Given, 2008). Participants may answer questions in terms of what they see as important, choosing what and how much to say about a particular topic and it is up to the researcher to respond to the information provided by the participant in order to gain rich, relevant data.

As the researcher takes a direct role in both data collection and analysis, the issue of membership in the groups being studied is relevant. As said by Dwyer and Buckle (2009), the ‘intimacy’ of interviewing does not allow the researcher to remain “true outsiders to the experience under study” and yet the role of researcher means disqualification as “complete insiders”. This leads to the assumption that researchers “occupy the space between, with the costs and benefits this status affords” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 61).

It is important for qualitative researchers to situate themselves in their research (Ely et al., 1991) where interviewers are “invited to bring their personal role into the research relationship” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p. 62). In this way rapport and trust can be established by the interviewer answering participants’ questions, sharing knowledge and experience, and giving support when asked.

When considering my own ‘membership role’ (Adler & Adler, 1987) as researcher I placed myself as a peripheral member researcher who does not participate fully in the core activities of group members who in this case were undergraduate students. As an insider-outsider (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) I could gain the benefits of increased rapport by identifying myself as a postgraduate student before interviews begin and relating to interviewees where appropriate as a parent, mature student, first generation student and as a commuting student when an undergraduate. I did not see this as harming the validity of the stories produced during interview, rather that, by judiciously letting the participant know that I ‘have been there’ and can empathise, a ‘growing trust is the basis for richer interviews’ (Ely et al., 1991, p. 61).

It is also worth noting that interviews are not simply a conversation between equal partners, rather it is ‘a specific professional conversation with a clear power asymmetry between the researcher and subject’ (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 33). The researcher inevitably influences the production of knowledge by determining the topic, following the pre-determined question schedule, deciding upon, and asking any associated follow-up questions and ultimately

interpreting and reporting what the interviewee has said. This power differential may result in participants deciding to withhold information, protest against the questions asked or withdraw from the process. However, the influences the researcher exerts may be reduced when the participant feels empowered to honestly and openly share their experiences (Smith, 2015).

As stated by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), even when intentional indications of power are considered, the structure of an interview and how any conversation is researcher led, means that power is not eliminated from them and so should be reflected upon when considering the production of interview data.

Despite potential issues with power asymmetry in qualitative research interviews, semi-structured interviews have been chosen as the data collection method. Following the piloted focus group interview, it has been decided that semi-structured one-to-one interviews can provide an open environment in which participants talk in-depth. The interview agenda contains both open questions and photographs as research stimuli (see Appendix 2 for the interview agenda).

3.6.2.2 Use of Photoelicitation. The main purpose of using visual stimuli as part of interviewing was to record how subjects respond to images. Critical consideration reveals how they can aid in understanding how the viewer constructs meaning with each viewer bringing their own opinions, experiences and understandings to their interpretation (Torre & Murphy, 2015).

Photoelicitation as a method of interviewing is simply the use of photos within an interview setting (Bates et al., 2017). It has found to alter the tone of the interview, with the potential to prompt emotional connections to memories and provide more meaningful accounts (Kunimoto, 2004), encouraging richer, more detailed responses and deeper reflection than open questions alone (Bates et al., 2017; Torre & Murphy, 2015).

Photoelicitation interviews are generally ensconced in a post-positivist paradigm where photographs are seen as a method for uncovering how both the researcher and participant understand the world. Photoelicitation researchers analyse participant reaction to images to uncover the values and perceptions held by participants (Heisley & Levy, 1991) and in this way researchers create theory using inductive reasoning (Torre & Murphy, 2015).

It has been frequently used with children and young people to explore issues such as consumerism and identity (Croghan et al., 2008) and in educational contexts it has been used too, investigating feeling on school transition for instance (Torre & Murphy, 2015). Photoelicitation has already been used in studies investigating identity construction, for instance (Vila, 2013, p. 58):

“The description of a photograph that we give, what we consider its main theme, what we see or fail to see in it, are intimately linked to the plots of our narrative identities, since it is precisely these plots that guide the process of selective appropriation of reality that characterizes any social identity.”

In this study researcher driven photoelicitation interviews are used where a set of images are provided for interview and used as stimuli to promote discussion. As such the photographs themselves are not analysed and the associated narrative remains the data set with the interview itself remaining the method.

Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) allows the interpretation of several aspects of the research topic with photoelicitation interviews giving greater context to the interview when compared with verbal-only interviews as photographs are used in conjunction with the participants’ dialogue, yielding deeper and more elaborate accounts of participants lives (Bates

et al., 2017). It may also be argued that Thematic Analysis is compatible with later comparison with quantitative data because not bound to a strict or specific philosophy.

As the photographs provided as stimuli are in the public domain rather than artefacts provided by participants, no additional ethical considerations concerning participants are required. Images used as stimuli for the semi-structured interviews may be found in Appendix 3.

3.6.3 *Quantitative data analysis*

Initial analyses identify the identities held and note differences between these groups and also between the professional and non-professional degree undergraduates. Further analysis involved the development of a model for development of identity involving the context of Higher Education. Full details for analysis of quantitative data gathered may be found in Chapter 4.

3.6.4 *Qualitative data analysis*

Yin (2009) suggests that in studies whereby the research questions have been formulated based on the literature review, the theories that have been used when formulating the research questions could also be used in analysing the findings. This suggested a deductive-inductive approach to data analysis would be essential for theoretically driven studies. Based on these arguments qualitative data was analysed using deductive methods.

Following one-to-one interviews, recordings were transcribed and a deductive approach used: looking for similarities and differences between the content of the accounts according to the literature review topics discussed. In this way the data were first organised, a framework of themes identified and data coded and sorted into these themes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) Thematic Analysis is ‘a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p79). Thematic Analysis is theoretically flexible

(Clarke, 2018) and so may be used deductively and be used to interpret various aspects of the research topic in the context of previously identified theories. Thematic Analysis was therefore conducted in order to compare themes generated in the interviews (Stewart, 2006, p109). Full details of this process are found in Chapter 5.

3.6.5 Data integration

Following separate analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, data are merged in order to find whether the results from both analyses converge and how they converge if they do (as indicated by Figure 3.1 above). There are different merged data analysis strategies that allow for the comparison of results. These include a side-by-side comparison where findings are presented together in a discussion or summary table. A second strategy is the use of a joint display where, for instance, a theme display arrays the qualitative themes derived from the qualitative analysis with quantitative statistical results. An alternative joint display highlights convergent and divergent findings in a merged data analysis display (e.g. Lee & Greene, 2007). A third strategy option is transformation merged analysis where one type of data is transformed into another so that both can be easily compared and analysed. Transforming qualitative data into quantitative involves reducing coded themes into numeric information (see Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), for instance, counting the number of times a theme occurs or the number of people selecting certain themes.

By presenting analyses of quantitative and qualitative data separately prior to their integration, one potential threat to the validity when merging data are addressed. Equal weight is given to both data sets as merged data are presented in a joint display.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the University for all of the research in this thesis (University Research Ethics Committee Reference: 17.3.5.3, see Appendix 5 for letter of confirmation). It also follows the British Psychological Society Code of Human Research Ethics. As such, it shows respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals and communities, scientific integrity, and social responsibility whilst maximising benefit and minimising harm.

3.7.1 Ethical Considerations Around the Subject-Matter of the Research

In this research there were no ethical matters around the subject-matter that could be considered controversial, contentious, embarrassing, or upsetting. However, one does not know how participants may potentially respond to any questions posed. All participants were informed that they may withdraw at any point in the study and have their data removed from the data set within a given, notified time of taking part. Participants were also debriefed after taking part in either the qualitative or quantitative studies.

3.7.2 Ethical Considerations Around Participants

There were limited ethical matters around participants if students involved were undergraduates who were members of Psychology department seminar groups taught by the lead researcher. To address this issue, all information sheets for the studies contained assurances of confidentiality and stated that withdrawing from the study would not affect course grades in any way. No students that were taught by the lead researcher were invited to take part in the one-to-one interviews.

The University where this research took place uses SONA with undergraduate students studying psychology. This is a web-based experiment management system that provides a way for researchers to recruit and reward participants who take part in research studies. All psychology undergraduates are expected to take part in a number of research studies throughout their programme of study, for each study they participate SONA points are awarded as proof of participation. However, psychology students still participate anonymously and have free choice as to whether to participate in any particular study as there are a large number of studies available for students to choose from.

All participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point in the study and have their data removed from the data set within a given, notified time of taking part .

3.7.3 Ethical Considerations Around Confidentiality

Whilst some data from the first online questionnaire may be submitted anonymously, others decided to include their name and contact details in order to participate in the interviews for the second part of the study.

There may be confidentiality issues associated with this research as participants taking part in interviews are recorded and saved as audio files for later transcription. Prior consent is obtained with data anonymised in the transcribed files. Sound files are stored in password protected files and also backed up to encrypted memory sticks as appropriate. Transcribed text is stored in password protected files with backups stored on encrypted memory sticks. Data are published only in anonymised form, even when direct quotes are used from the qualitative section of the research, ensuring that the data never causes damage or distress to individuals.

Confidentiality of the data are ensured by anonymising the data once collected by separating the data from the identifying details of the participant and allowing participants to choose codes so that they may be allowed withdraw from the project within a given timescale.

3.8 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter the general methodology for the thesis was outlined. First in this chapter an overview of the research questions was covered and a thesis map on how the studies of this thesis meet the research questions was given (Fig. 3.1). Following on from this, the general methodology was discussed, including the research rationale which included reasoning for the thesis choice of a mixed method approach. The chapter went on to discuss the general design, participants, procedures, materials, and analyses used before considering any ethical considerations. Specific methods for each study in the thesis are provided in the results chapters. In the next chapter, the first of these results chapters provides detail of the first study which uses quantitative methods in order to answer the research questions.

Chapter 4. A Quantitative Study on Student Social Identity and Perceptions of Success

4.1 Overview of Chapter

Based on literature (see Chapter 2), the study reported in this quantitative chapter investigates whether different demographic factors (including ethnicity, age and whether they are the first in their family to study at university) and choosing to study different types of degree programme (either professional or non-professional) may impact social identification as a student.

An additional research question which is examined is whether those different demographic factors (again including ethnicity, age and whether they are the first in their family to study at university) affect student's expectations of academic success.

Also, regarding student's expectations of academic success, it is examined whether students' own perceptions of perceived social support mediate any relationship between social identification and expectations of success.

Also investigated is the potential relationship between those same demographic factors and the perceived attributes students assign themselves (such as whether they are hardworking for instance) and also the perceived attributes they assign to typical students.

4.2 Quantitative Study

The aim of this thesis was to explore how undergraduate students' different identities may be associated with their perceptions of achievement in Higher Education. The Research Questions that are explored in this study chapter are shown in Figure 4.1 with the detailed study questions being expanded in the section below.

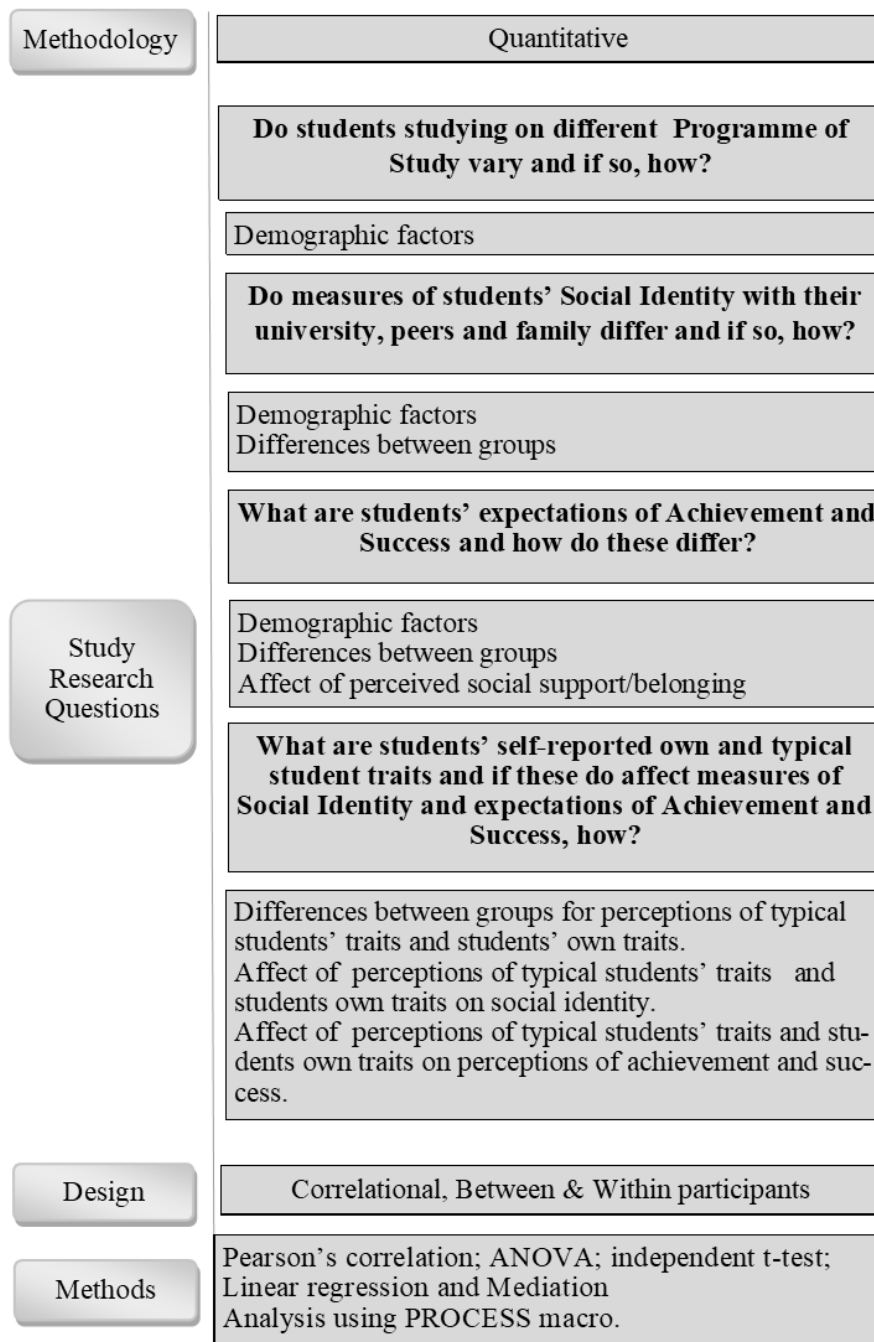


Figure 4.1 Thesis map recap on how chapter four meets the research questions

4.2.1 Study Questions

4.2.1.1 Choice of Programme. The study question is: Is a student's choice of programme of study is related to factors including: student's ethnicity; student's age; student's gender; whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not?

National statistics (*Who's Studying in HE?: Personal Characteristics*, 2018) indicate that different types of programmes differ in terms of students' gender and ethnicity of those enrolled in them. As such, alternative hypotheses are as follows:

H_{1A}: Students' choice of type of programme of study is related to their ethnicity.

H_{1B}: Students' choice of type of programme of study is related to their gender.

H_{1C}: Students' choice of type of programme of study is related to whether they are the first in their family to study at university.

H_{1D}: Students' choice of programme of study is related to their age.

The null hypothesis (H_{01A}, H_{01B}, H_{01C}, H_{01D}) for each being that there is no relationship between students' ethnicity, gender, whether students are the first in their family to study at university or age and whether they are enrolled in professional or non-professional programmes.

4.2.1.2 Social Identification. The first study question here is: Do students studying on professional programmes identify less strongly as university students than students studying non-professional programmes?

Past research has indicated that undergraduate nurses perceive themselves more in terms of a nursing identity rather than a student identity (e.g. Mariet, 2016). Considering nursing

students to represent students on professional programmes more generally, it is predicted that:

H_{2A}: Students' ratings of social identification with their university differs according to the type of programme of study on which they are enrolled.

H_{2B}: Students' ratings of social identification with university peers differs according to the type of programme of study on which they are enrolled.

H_{2C}: Students' ratings of social identification with their external peers differ according to the type of programme of study on which they are enrolled.

The null hypothesis (H_{02A}, H_{02B}, H_{02C}) being that there are no differences in students' ratings of social identification between those studying on professional and non-professional programmes.

The second study question related to social identity is: Do measures of students; social identification with their university, with university peers or external peers differ with demographic factors such as: student's ethnicity; student's age; student's gender; and whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not?

There have been indications that the social identity of students does differ according to different demographic factors. These factors include ethnicity (e.g. differences between Black and White students (Walton & Cohen, 2007)), age (e.g. mature students' identity (Taylor & House ,2010)) or whether the student was the first in their family to study at university (e.g. Veldman et al., 2019). Considering this cited research, the following alternative hypotheses are made:

H_{2D}: Students' ratings of social identification with their university differs according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

H_{2E}: Students' ratings of social identification with university peers differs according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

H_{2F}: Students' ratings of social identification with their external peers differs according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

The null hypotheses (H_{02D}, H_{02E}, H_{02F}) being that there are no differences in students' ratings of social identification according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

4.2.1.3 Expected Academic Achievement and Success. The study question is: Do students' predictions of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success differ between those studying on professional degree programmes and those studying on non-professional degree programmes.

There appear to be differences between the proportion of those studying psychology achieving a successful degree outcome when compared to those studying nursing programmes. For instance, in 2019 84 percent of psychology graduates in England obtained a first or upper class degree compared with 72 percent of nursing graduates (*What Are HE Students' Progression Rates and Qualifications?: Detailed Breakdowns*, n.d.). As research (e.g. Cuthbert & Hatch, 2008) has indicated an association between young people's

expectations/aspirations and their educational attainment, it may be acceptable to consider students expectations of success here. Given this, it is hypothesised that:

H_{3A}: Students' predictions of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success differ according to the type of programme of study on which they are enrolled.

The null hypothesis (H_{03A}) being that there are no differences in students' predictions of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success between those studying on professional and non-professional programmes.

The second study question here is: Do students' predictions of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success differ by demographic factors such as: student's ethnicity; student's age; student's gender; and whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not?

As reported in Chapter One, there are inequalities in academic achievement are recorded across a variety of student characteristics. Considering research putting forward associations between young people's expectations/aspirations and their educational attainment (e.g. Cuthbert & Hatch, 2008; Gorard et al., 2012; Homel et al., 2014), hypotheses associated with this research question are as follows:

H_{3B}: Students' expectations of their end of year grade is related to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

H_{3C}: Students' expectations of their end of programme grade is related to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

H_{3D}: Students' perceptions of a successful outcome grade is related to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

The null hypotheses (H_{03B} , H_{03C} and H_{03D}) being that there is no relationship between students' predictions of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success between those studying on professional and their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university

4.2.1.4 Expected Academic Achievement, Success and Perceived Support. The study question is: Do students' own perceptions of perceived social support mediate any relationship between social identification and expectations of achievement or success?

Some studies indicate that students' perceptions of social support predict future academic performance (e.g. Credé & Niehorster, 2012) whilst others indicate a more complex relationship (e.g. Li et al., 2018). Considering a possible relationship between social support, social identification and expectations of achievement and perceptions of success, it is hypothesised that:

H_{4A} : Students' own perceptions of perceived social support mediate any relationship between ratings of social identification with their university and expectations of achievement or perceptions of success.

H_{4B} : Students' own perceptions of perceived social support mediate any relationship between ratings of social identification with their university peers and expectations of achievement or perceptions of success.

H_{4C} : Students' own perceptions of perceived social support mediate any relationship between ratings of social identification with their external peers and expectations of achievement or perceptions of success.

The null hypotheses (H_{04A}, H_{04B} and H_{04C}) being that students' own perceptions of perceived social support do not mediate any relationship between measures of social identification and expectations of achievement or perceptions of success.

4.2.1.5 Typical Student Attributes. The study question is: Do the students' self-reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes?

Possible attributes of successful students studying different types of programme have been researched, such as Mariet (2016) with nursing students and Ko and Leu (2021) with computing students with some different attributes for successful students reported across studies. Further exploration of how students studying on different types of programme view the attributes of typical students leads to the following hypothesis:

H_{5A}: Students' self-reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes.

The null hypotheses (H_{05A}) being that students' self-reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes do not differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes.

4.2.1.5.1 Typical Student Attributes and Demographic Characteristics. A second study question here is: How might students' self-reported ratings of a typical student's attributes differ by demographic factors such as: student's ethnicity, student's age, student's gender, and whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not?

H_{5B}: Students' self-reported ratings of a typical students' attributes differ according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they are the first in their family to study at university.

The null hypothesis (H_{05B}) being that students' self-reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes do not differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes.

4.2.1.5.2 Typical Student Attributes and Social Identification. The study question is: How might students' self-reported perceptions of the attributes of a typical student be related to their social identification with their university or university peers?

H_{5Ci}: Students' ratings of social identification with their university are associated with their perceived attributes of a typical student.

H_{5Cii}: Students' ratings of social identification with their university peers are associated with their perceived attributes of a typical student.

The null hypotheses (H_{05Ci}, H_{05Cii}) being that students' ratings of social identification are not associated with their perceived attributes of a typical student.

4.2.1.5.3 Typical Student Attributes and Expectations of Achievement and Success. The study question is: How might students' self-reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success?

H_{5D}: Students' expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success are associated with their perceived attributes of a typical student.

The null hypotheses (H_{05D}) being that students' students' expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success are not associated with their perceived attributes of a typical student.

4.2.1.6 Self-Reported Student Attributes. The study question is: Do students' self-reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes?

H_{6A} : Students' self-reported perceptions of their own student attributes differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes.

The null hypotheses (H_{06A}) being that students' expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success are not associated with their perceived attributes of a typical student.

The second study question here was: How might students' self-reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student differ by demographic factors such as: student's ethnicity, student's age, student's gender, and whether student is the first in their family to study at university or are not?

H_{6B} : Students' self-reported ratings of perceptions of their own student attributes differ according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they are the first in their family to study at university.

The null hypothesis (H_{06B}) being that students' self-reported ratings of perceptions of their own student attributes do not differ according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they are the first in their family to study at university.

4.2.1.6.1 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Ratings of Social Identification. How might students' self-reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student be related to their ratings of social identification with their university or university peers?

H_{6c}: Students' ratings of social identification with their university or with university peers are associated with their self-reported ratings of their own student attributes.

The null hypothesis (H_{06c}) being that students' self-reported ratings of perceptions of their own student attributes do not differ according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they are the first in their family to study at university.

4.2.1.6.2 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Expectations of Achievement and Success. How might student's self-reported perceptions of their own attributes affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success?

H_{6D}: Students' expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success are associated with their self-reported ratings of their own student attributes.

The null hypothesis (H_{06D}) being that Students' expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success are not associated with their self-reported ratings of their own student attributes.

4.2.1.7 Difference between Ratings of Students' own Self-Reported Attributes and their Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students

4.2.1.7.1 Difference between Ratings of Students' own Self-Reported Attributes and their Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students and Programme Type. As some of the personal attributes of successful students studying different types of programme are different

such as those of nursing students in Mariet (2016) and computing students in Ko and Leu (2021). It is predicted that depending on the type of programme, students will perceive themselves as being different from what they think of as the typical student:

H_{7A}: The difference in ratings between students' own self-reported attributes and the ratings given to a typical student will differ depending on the programme type.

The null hypothesis (H_{06D}) being that students' expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success are not associated with their self-reported ratings of their own student attributes.

4.2.1.7.2 Difference between Self-Reported and Typical Attributes and Social Identification. Some research (Lane, 2017; Lane & Gibbons, 2007) indicates that students rating themselves as negatively against a prototypical student predicts negative educational impacts including academic achievement. The study questions here consider whether measures of social identification or expectations of academic achievement and success, differ depending on whether there a positive or negative difference in ratings between students' own self-reported attributes and the ratings given to a typical student. The study question is: How might the difference between student's own self-reported attributes as a student and their perceived attributes of a typical student affect their ratings of social identity as a student? It is predicted that:

H_{7B}: Students' ratings of social identity as a student differ depending on whether there a positive or negative difference in ratings between students' own self-reported attributes and the ratings given to a typical student.

The null hypothesis (H_{07B}) being that students' ratings of social identity as a student do not differ depending on whether there a positive or negative difference in ratings between students' own self-reported attributes and the ratings given to a typical student

4.2.1.7.3 Difference between Self-Reported and Typical Attributes and Expectations of Academic Achievement and Success. The research question is: How might the difference between student's own self-reported attributes as a student and their perceived attributes of a typical student affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success? It is predicted that:

H_{7C} : Students' expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success differ depending on whether there a positive or negative difference in ratings between students' own self-reported attributes and the ratings given to a typical student.

The null hypothesis (H_{07C}) being that students' ratings of social identity as a student do not differ depending on whether there a positive or negative difference in ratings between students' own self-reported attributes and the ratings given to a typical student.

4.3 Method

4.3.1 Design

The study adopted a mixed between and within groups design where groups were students studying different degree programmes. The design uses between subjects' factors including gender, age, ethnicity, and other factors including whether the student is the first in their family to study at university.

The independent variable Programme of Study has levels for Psychology, Nursing, Childhood and Youth Studies and Social Work. They were then grouped into whether they were professional (Nursing and Social Work) or non-professional degrees (Psychology and Childhood and Youth Studies).

The demographic variables included Ethnicity, Age Range and whether they were First in Family to study at university. Ethnicity has categories as given by the Office of National Statistics: Asian/Asian British, Black African/Caribbean/Black British, Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller, Mixed/multiple ethnic backgrounds, White/British/European/Other and Other. The variable Age Range classified participants as 21 years of age and under, those 22 to 24, those 25 to 39 and those over 40 to reflect whether they were classed as a mature student when they started their programme of study. (The short age ranges in the students' twenties in particular were chosen to match the age ranges reported by HESA (*Who's Studying in HE?*, 2022.)). The variable for First in Family (to study in Higher Education) was Boolean.

The dependent variables included mean rating scores on identification with university, identification with university peers, identification with external peers, identification with family, perceived academic effort; perceived academic competency; perceived academic importance; general self-worth. Students were asked for their expected grade for the end of the current academic year and end of course (Fail, Pass, Third, Lower Second, Upper Second or First), what grade they expected to achieve at the end of their course (Fail, Pass, Third, Lower Second, Upper Second or First), and what grade they perceived to be an academic success (Fail, Pass, Third, Lower Second, Upper Second or First). Two variables were measured for student perceived attributes: their own self-reported perceived attributes and what participants perceived as the attributes of a typical student. Each had the same set of attributes including Lazy to Hardworking, that had levels of Very Lazy, Somewhat Lazy, Neither Lazy nor

Hardworking, Somewhat Hardworking and Very Hardworking. In a similar way, other attributes rated were Unenthusiastic to Enthusiastic, and Anti-social to Social.

4.3.2 Participants

The sample consisted of 217 undergraduate students who were recruited from degree programmes for Adult Nursing, Psychology and Childhood and Youth Studies at a large university in London. The distribution of participants across the programmes was 148 from Psychology, 45 from Nursing, 22 from Childhood and Youth Studies or Education Studies and 2 from Social Work. These were grouped into either professional degrees (Nursing and Social Work) and non-professional degrees (Psychology and Childhood and Youth Studies).

Of those who signed up, 19 were male, 196 were female and 1 identified as ‘other’ in terms of gender. The respondents were grouped into those under 21 years of age and under, those 22 to 24, those 25 to 39 and those over 40 to reflect whether they were classed as a mature student when they started their programme of study (where starting university after the age of 21 designates being a mature student according to the Office for Students (*Mature Students*, 2020)). The greatest number of respondents were aged under 25 years (76.5 percent), whilst the remainder were 25 or older (23.5 percent) (See Table 4.1.).

Participants were asked to respond about their ethnicity given categorisations as set by the Office of National Statistics. Overall, most of the participants categorised themselves as White British (41 percent), with a further 17 percent as White Other, 16 percent as Black and 15 percent as Asian. The remaining 9 percent were either Mixed (6 percent) or Other (5 percent). This is a smaller Asian student percentage than the university as a whole (23 percent) but still presents a picture of a more ethnically diverse participant group than the average university

population as reported by HESA (2018). See sample Table 4.1 below for detail on how these items intersect.

Table 4.1 *Break down of how participants fit into variables used in the analysis (cells are not unique across different variables)*

Variable	Total	Ethnicity						Gender		Age				First in Family		
		n	1	2	3	4	5	6	M	F	7	8	9	10	Y	N
Programme of Study	Childhood and Youth or Education Studies	22	11	1	2	6	2	0	1	20	12	7	3	0	13	9
	Psychology	148	62	29	8	24	18	7	10	137	122	0	16	7	91	57
	Social Work	2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	1
	Nursing	45	15	7	1	3	15	3	8	37	10	5	23	3	31	14
Ethnicity	1. White British	88							7	81	62	10	15	1	59	29
	2. White Other	37							4	33	22	4	11	0	21	16
	3. Mixed	12							1	10	7	2	3	0	6	6
	4. Asian/Asian British	33							2	30	28	4	1	0	23	10
	5. Black African/Caribbean/Black British	35							5	30	18	2	9	6	18	17
	6. Other	11							0	11	7	0	3	1	8	3
Gender	Male	19									8	1	8	2	8	11
	Female	196									135	20	35	6	128	68
Age	7. 18 – 21	144													89	55
	8. 22 – 24	22													15	7
	9. 25 – 39	43													27	16
	10. 40+	8													5	3

4.3.3 Measures

The participants completed an online questionnaire which included background information and demographic information, information on part-time working, caring responsibilities, and information on their residential situation as well as time spent engaged on campus.

A number of measures were included. These included an adapted version of the About Me questionnaire that includes details about going to university. The 'About Me' is a self-report questionnaire, consisting of statements requiring Likert-type responses, for school children based on research by Maras (e.g.: Maras, Brosnan, Faulkner, Montgomery, & Vital, 2006; Maras, Thompson, Gridley, & Moon, 2016). The questionnaire used is an updated version that is relevant for undergraduate students, it's validity with this user group has been tested in research carried out by Moon (2019) and were retested here. The updated 'About Me' contains 33 items and is designed to measure social identity with family, peers and university, academic self-concept of effort, importance and competence and general self-worth. The constructs below are each made up of a number of items: Identification with university; Identification with family; Identification with Peers at university; Identification with peers outside of university; Academic Effort; Academic Competence; Academic Importance and General Self-Worth.

Perceived social support was measured using items adapted from the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) (Cohen & Hoberman, 1983) version for university students. The items are counterbalanced for desirability, that is half of the statements are positive about social relationships and the other half are negative.

An eighteen-item scale made up of 3 sub-scales, those being tangible support, belonging support and appraisal support was used. The tangible support sub-scale is intended to

measure perceived availability of material aid; the appraisal sub-scale, the perceived availability of someone to talk to about one's problems and the belonging sub-scale, the perceived availability of people for companionship.

Each item of the scale is a statement positively or negatively related to social support. There are two answer options: 'rather yes' or 'rather no'. The ISEL score is calculated by adding one point either for each 'rather yes' answer concerning statements positively related to social support, or for each 'rather no' answer concerning statements negatively related to social support. The highest score on this amended ISEL – college version for each sub-scale is 6, whereas the lowest is zero.

Scale reliability

The version of the About Me questionnaire previously adapted by Moon (2019) was employed to measure different, underlying constructs of social identity, academic perception, and self-worth. One construct, social identity, consisted of four sub-scales, each consisting of four questions. The scale for 'identification with university' had an adequate level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's α of .69 (Taber, 2018). The scales for 'identification with university peers' and 'identification with external peers' had adequate levels of internal consistency, as determined by Cronbach's α 's of .67 and .80 respectively. The scale for 'identification with family' had an adequate level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's α of .65. These calculated Cronbach values were either over .50 and between .75, indicating a moderately reliable scale or above .75, indicating a scale of high reliability (Hinton et al., 2014).

Another construct, academic perceptions, consisted of three sub-scales, each consisting of four questions. The scale for 'academic effort' had an adequate level of internal consistency, as

determined by a Cronbach's α of .70. The scale for 'academic competence' had a good level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's α of .80. The scale for 'academic importance' had a lower, but acceptable level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's α of .57. Again, these calculated Cronbach values were either over .50 and between .75, indicating a moderately reliable scale or above .75, indicating a scale of high reliability (Hinton et al., 2014).

The construct general self-worth consisted of four questions. The scale had an adequate level of internal consistency, as determined by a Cronbach's α of .72 indicating a moderately reliable scale (Hinton et al., 2014).

Tangible support was measured with six items. Sample items include "I know someone who could lend me £100 so I could go away for the weekend." and "I don't know anyone at university or at home who would help me study for an exam by spending several hours reading me questions." (reverse coded) with a Cronbach's α of .61.

Belonging support was measured with six items. Sample items include "I hang out in a friend's room or flat quite a lot" and "I don't often get invited to do things with other people" (reverse coded) where Cronbach's α of .77. As both values of Cronbach's Alpha computed for these measures were over 0.6. an acceptable level of reliability is indicated (Hinton et al., 2014).

Student attribute descriptors were derived using attributes previously described in literature. For instance successful nursing students were described as hardworking and conscientious (Baldacchino & Galea, 2012; March & McPherson, 1996; Wilkes et al., 2014). Successful nursing students were also seen as enthusiastic (Hambridge, 2012) and friendly (March & McPherson, 1996). These attributes were then assessed by participants choosing where on scales for the each given attribute they saw themselves.

As some studies have found that a perceived dissimilarity from prototypical student attributes are associated with poorer academic achievement (Lane, 2017; Lane & Gibbons, 2007), the question was then repeated with the participants asked to rate the same set of attributes but for a 'typical student'.

The attributes were listed as a five-point Likert-type scale. For instance, with the scale lazy to hardworking participants use the ratings: very lazy; somewhat lazy; slightly lazy/hardworking; somewhat hardworking or very hardworking. This assumes that words on the different ends of the scale have opposing meanings.

4.3.4 Procedure

Data were gathered online using a Qualtrics survey tool (Qualtrics, 2020). Only students on the specific courses that had received ethical clearance were approached. Recruitment was through various means including flyers distributed at lectures where I attended and explained the research and also through messages on the course online learning portals posted by course leaders on my behalf. 208 student participants were recruited and completed the online survey.

After the information sheet and consent form, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire where they were asked for demographic information (including age range and ethnicity), information on caring responsibilities, parental education, and information on their residential situation as well as time spent engaged on campus. Participants also completed questions on their perceptions of academic success, perceived student characteristics and measures of social identity (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the questionnaire).

4.4 Findings

4.4.1 *Relationship between Variables*

To examine relationships between demographic variables and those associated with identity, achievement, and support, zero order correlations were undertaken (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.2 Zero order (Pearson *r*) between key variables. *N* for each correlation reported in subscripted parenthesis

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1 Prof/Non-Prof Programme	-												
2 Gender	-.16* ₍₂₁₇₎	-											
3 Age range	.59** ₍₂₁₇₎	-.17* ₍₂₁₇₎	-										
4 Ethnicity	.18** ₍₂₁₇₎	.03 ₍₂₁₇₎	.12 ₍₂₁₇₎	-									
5 First in Family	-.06 ₍₂₁₇₎	-.06 ₍₂₁₇₎	-.01 ₍₂₁₇₎	.01 ₍₂₁₇₎	-								
6 Expected End of Year Grade	-.06 ₍₁₉₇₎	.01 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.09 ₍₁₉₇₎	.02 ₍₁₉₇₎	.02 ₍₁₉₇₎	-							
7 Expected End of Prog Grade	.13 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.02 ₍₁₉₇₎	.04 ₍₁₉₇₎	.02 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.04 ₍₁₉₇₎	.60** ₍₁₉₇₎	-						
8 Successful Grade	.10 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.05 ₍₁₉₇₎	.09 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.10 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.04 ₍₁₉₇₎	.36** ₍₁₉₇₎	.53** ₍₁₉₇₎	-					
9 Support_Tangible	-.16* ₍₂₀₄₎	.03 ₍₂₀₄₎	-.18** ₍₂₀₄₎	-.16* ₍₂₀₄₎	.04 ₍₂₀₄₎	-.17* ₍₁₉₇₎	-.12 ₍₁₉₇₎	.01 ₍₁₉₇₎	-				
10 Support_Belonging	-.18** ₍₂₀₄₎	-.03 ₍₂₀₄₎	-.15* ₍₂₀₄₎	-.08 ₍₂₀₄₎	.02 ₍₂₀₄₎	-.20** ₍₁₉₇₎	-.18* ₍₁₉₇₎	-.05 ₍₁₉₇₎	.41** ₍₂₀₄₎	-			
11 Student identification	-.07 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.00 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.05 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.11 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.06 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.07 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.06 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.06 ₍₁₉₇₎	.27** ₍₂₀₄₎	.27** ₍₂₀₄₎	-		
12 Identification with Uni Peers	-.12 ₍₂₀₆₎	.05 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.13 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.11 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.04 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.11 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.08 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.10 ₍₁₉₇₎	.20** ₍₂₀₄₎	.31** ₍₂₀₄₎	.44** ₍₂₀₆₎	-	
13 Identification with External Peers	-.27** ₍₂₀₆₎	.02 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.30** ₍₂₀₆₎	-.10 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.02 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.02 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.04 ₍₁₉₇₎	.02 ₍₁₉₇₎	.20** ₍₂₀₄₎	.29** ₍₂₀₄₎	.25** ₍₂₀₆₎	.10 ₍₂₀₆₎	-
14 Identification with Family	-.09 ₍₂₀₆₎	.08 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.10 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.05 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.06 ₍₂₀₆₎	-.01 ₍₁₉₇₎	.03 ₍₁₉₇₎	.01 ₍₁₉₇₎	.28** ₍₂₀₄₎	.18** ₍₂₀₄₎	.28** ₍₂₀₆₎	0.09 ₍₂₀₆₎	.33** ₍₂₀₆₎

For all correlations subscripts indicate * $p < 0.05$ level; ** $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

4.4.2 Type of Programme

The study question considered here was: Is a student's choice of the type of programme of study related to factors including students' ethnicity, students' age, students' gender, and whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not?

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if the choice of type of programme of study was different for groups with different ethnicities. Participants recorded themselves as one of eight groups (see Table 4.1 above). The likelihood of enrolling on a professional degree was found to differ, with Black students ($M = .43, SD = .50$) being the most likely to enrol on a professional degree and Asian students ($M = .09, SD = .29$) the least. Differences between ethnic groups was statistically significant, $F(7, 217) = 2.978, p = .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .091$. This contradicts the null hypothesis (H_{01A}), supporting H_{1A} : Students' choice of type of programme of study is related to their ethnicity.

There were no significant differences in terms of gender ($F(3, 217) = 1.878, p = .134$, partial $\eta^2 = .026$) or whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not ($F(1, 217) = .747, p = .388$, partial $\eta^2 = .003$). This means we cannot reject the null hypotheses H_{01B} and H_{01C} , there is no relationship between students' gender or whether students are the first in their family to study at university and whether they are enrolled in professional or non-professional programmes.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if the choice of type of programme of study was different for different age groups. Participants recorded themselves as being in one of four age groups (see Table 4.1 above). The likelihood of enrolling on a professional degree increased with age, with all older students aged over 40 ($M = .1.00, SD = .00$) enrolling on a professional degree and the youngest students aged 21 and under ($M = .07, SD = .26$) the least likely. Differences between the age groups was statistically significant, $F(3, 217) =$

38.963, $p < .000$, partial $\eta^2 = .354$. This contradicts the null hypothesis (H_{01D}), supporting the alternative hypothesis, H_{1D} : Students' choice of type of programme of study is related to their age.

4.4.3 Social Identification

4.4.3.1 Social Identification and Programme Choice.

The study question considered here was: Do students studying on professional programmes identify less strongly as university students than students studying non-professional programmes?

An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in measures of social identity between those on professional and non-professional courses. There were no outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of a boxplot. Identification scores for type of course were not all normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$) but it was decided to go ahead with the t-test. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students on non-professional courses scored more highly on measures of social identity with university ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.30$) than students studying professional courses ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.12$), though this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.11$, 95% CI [-0.10, 0.33], $t(204) = 1.042$, $p = .299$. The null hypothesis (H_{02A}) cannot therefore be rejected, meaning that there are no differences in students' ratings of social identification with university between those studying on professional and non-professional programmes.

Students on non-professional courses also scored more highly on measures of social identity with university peers ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.06$) than students studying professional courses ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.14$), though this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.22$, 95% CI

[-0.40, 0.49], $t(204) = 1.673$, $p = .096$. This was also the case for measures of identification with their families where students on non-professional courses ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.06$) scored more highly on measures than students studying professional courses ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.14$), though again this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.18$, 95% CI [-0.08, 0.44], $t(204) = 1.355$, $p = .177$. The null hypothesis (H_{02B}) cannot therefore be rejected, meaning that there are no differences in students' ratings of social identification with their university peers between those studying on professional and non-professional programmes.

Students studying non-professional courses did score more highly on measures of social identity with external peers ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.06$) than students studying professional courses ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.14$), and this was a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.55$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.83], $t(204) = 3.976$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis (H_{02C}) can therefore be rejected, meaning that there are significant differences in students' ratings of social identification with their external peers between those studying on professional and non-professional programmes.

4.4.3.2 Results for individual programmes.

As some differences in measures of social identification were found between students studying professional and non-professional programmes, ANOVAs were also completed on data sets for each programme of study (though Social Work was excluded as the data set was too small).

The results obtained when analysing data from students studying Nursing courses were the same as when all students were analysed in that there was no significant difference found on the measure of social identification with university ($F(5, 38) = .750$, $p = .593$, partial $\eta^2 = .114$), social identification with university peers ($F(5, 38) = 1.684$, $p = .170$, partial $\eta^2 = .225$) and

social identification with family ($F(5, 38) = .929, p = .477, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .138$). There was again a statistically significant difference in measures of social identification with external peers ($F(5, 38) = 1.195, p = .044, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .312$), with Black Nursing students identifying the least with their peers outside university ($M = 2.96, SD = .52$) and White British Nursing students identifying the most ($M = 3.63, SD = .73$).

When Nursing students were given the statement ‘I identify more as a nurse than a student’, 43.8 percent either agreed or strongly agreed. There was no significant difference based on students’ ethnicity, students’ age, or gender. However, students who were the first in their family to study at university were more likely to report that they did not know whether they identified more as a nurse than a student.

The results obtained when analysing data from students studying Psychology courses were mainly the same as when all students were analysed in that there was no significant difference found on the measure of social identification with university ($F(6, 145) = .661, p = .066, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .083$), social identification with university peers ($F(6, 145) = 1.306, p = .259, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .055$) and social identification with family ($F(6, 145) = 1.930, p = .080, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .079$). However, there was no statistically significant difference in measures of social identification with external peers ($F(6, 145) = 1.991, p = .071, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .081$).

There were variations for those studying Childhood and Youth Studies or Education studies. Again, there was no significant difference found on the measure of social identification with university ($F(6, 21) = .546, p = .659, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .105$), social identification with external peers ($F(6, 21) = 1.454, p = .270, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .237$) and social identification with family ($F(6, 21) = .563, p = .649, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .108$). However, there was a statistically significant difference in measures of social identification with university peers ($F(6, 21) = 4.033, p = .029, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .464$) with Black Childhood and Youth Studies students identifying the least with their peers

inside university ($M = 2.63$, $SD = .18$) and White British Nursing students identifying the most ($M = 3.41$, $SD = .53$).

4.4.3.3. Social Identification and Demographic Factors.

The second question considered in relation to social identification was: Do measures of students' social identification with their university, with university peers or external peers differ with demographic factors such as: students' ethnicity, students' age, students' gender, and whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not?

An ANOVA was conducted on a measure of social identification with university with ethnicity as the independent variable and age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates. There were no significant covariates nor was there a main effect of ethnicity on the measure of students' identification with university ($F(6, 205) = 1.764$, $p = .108$, partial $\eta^2 = .051$), nor with their university peers ($F(6, 205) = .467$, $p = .832$, partial $\eta^2 = .014$). The null hypotheses H_{02D} and H_{02E} should therefore be accepted, meaning that there are no significant differences in students' ratings of social identification with their university according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university. Also, there are no significant differences in students' ratings of social identification with their university peers according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

When considering measures of identification with peers external to university, neither gender nor whether they were first in family were significant co-variates though students' age was significant ($F(6, 205) = 7.656$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .102$), with younger students identifying with external peers more than their older colleagues did. The main effect of ethnicity was not significant ($F(6, 205) = 1.109$, $p = .359$, partial $\eta^2 = .033$) with students recording Other as their ethnicity having higher scores of identification with peers external to university than

White British, White European or Asian students. Students recording the lowest scores were those recording Black or Mixed ethnicities. The only aspect of the alternative hypothesis (H_{2F}) that could be supported was that students' ratings of social identification with their external peers differs according to their age, other characteristics were not found to be significant.

4.4.4 Expected Academic Achievement and Perceptions of Success

4.4.4.1 Expected Academic Achievement and Programmes Type. Do students' predictions of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success differ between those studying on professional degree programmes and those studying on non-professional degree programmes?

An independent-samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in expectations for end of year grades, end of programme grades and what was perceived to be a successful outcome between students studying professional and non-professional degree programmes. Here the lower the score, the higher the expected grade.

Considering students' expectations for their end of year grades, there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students studying professional programmes expected higher grades at the end of the current year ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.58$) than students studying non-professional courses ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.60$), though this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.26$, 95% CI [0.33, 0.85], $t(195) = .885$, $p = .778$.

Students tended to expect better grades at the end of their programmes than they did the end of the year. There was not homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$) this time so a Welch's t-test was conducted and it was found that students studying non-professional programmes expected higher grades at the end of the programme

($M = 1.38, SD = .91$) than students studying professional courses ($M = 1.71, SD = 1.43$), though this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = -0.34$, 95% CI [-0.85, 0.17], $t(40.12) = -1.344, p = .187$.

Considering students' ideas of a successful degree outcome, there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students studying non-professional programmes saw higher grades as being a successful outcome ($M = 1.74, SD = 1.10$) than students studying professional courses ($M = 2.06, SD = 1.43$), though this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = -0.32$, 95% CI [-0.74, 0.11], $t(195) = -1.462, p = .145$.

As there were no statistically significant differences between those studying professional and non-professional programmes for both the expected end of year grades, expected end of programme grades and perceived successful outcomes, the alternative hypothesis H_{3A} cannot be supported. Therefore, students' predictions of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success do not differ according to the type of programme of study on which they are enrolled.

4.4.4.2 Expected Academic Achievement and Demographic Factors. Do students' predictions of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success differ between demographic factors such as students' ethnicity, students' age, students' gender, and whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not? ANOVAs were conducted on students' expected End of Year grade, expected End of Programme grade and their perceived successful outcome grade with ethnicity as the independent variable and age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates. There were no significant covariates nor was there a main effect of ethnicity for expected End of Year grade ($F(6, 196) = .536, p = .780$, partial $\eta^2 =$

.017), nor for expected End of Programme grade ($F(6, 196) = .407, p = .874, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .013$) or perceived successful outcome grade ($F(6, 196) = .774, p = .591, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .024$). Therefore, the alternative hypotheses H_{3B} , H_{3C} and H_{3D} cannot be supported: students' expectations of their end of year grade, end of programme grade and perceptions of a successful outcome grade are not related to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university.

4.4.4.3 Expected Academic Achievement, Success, Social Identity and Perceived Support. Do students own perceptions of perceived social support mediate any relationship between social identification and expectations of success?

To investigate whether perceived social support mediates the relationship between social identification and measures of success simple mediation analyses were performed using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2018). The outcome variable was either the expected grade at the end of programme or the perceived successful outcome grade. Mediation analyses were first used to investigate the hypothesis that self-reported social support (belonging support) mediates the effect of social identification with university (H_{4Ai}), identification with university peers (H_{4Bi}), or external peers (H_{4Ci}) on the perceived successful outcome.

Results indicated that social identification with university was a significant predictor of Belonging Support but that Belonging Support was not a significant predictor of the perceived Successful outcome grade (see table 4.3). No significant mediation had occurred and so H_{4Ai} was not supported.

Table 4.3 *Model Coefficients for Belonging Support Mediating Effect of Identification with University on perceived Successful Outcome*

Antecedent	Consequent					
	M(Belonging Support)			Y(Success)		
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p

Antecedent		M(Belonging Support)				Y(Success)		
		Coeff.	SE	p		Coeff.	SE	p
X(Identification with Uni)	<i>a</i>	.673	.180	<.001	<i>c'</i>	-.096	.138	.485
M(Belonging Support)		-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.028	.053	.598
constant	<i>i_M</i>	.184	.751	.806	<i>i_Y</i>	2.276	.554	<.001
				R ² = .067				
				F(1,195) = 13.963, <i>p</i> < .001	F(2, 194) = .514, <i>p</i> = .599			

Results (see table 4.4) indicated that social identification with university peers was a significant predictor of Belonging Support but that Belonging Support was not a significant predictor of the perceived Successful outcome grade. No significant mediation had occurred and so H_{4Bi} was not supported.

Table 4.4 *Model Coefficients for Belonging Support Mediating Effect of Identification with University Peers on perceived Successful Outcome*

Antecedent		Consequent						
		M(Belonging Support)			Y(Success)			
		Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	
X(Identification with Uni Peers)	<i>a</i>	.660	.146	<.001	<i>c'</i>	-.138	.115	.230
M(Belonging Support)		-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.018	.053	.742
constant	<i>i_M</i>	1.024	.442	.022	<i>i_Y</i>	2.254	.335	<.001
				R ² = .095				
				F(1,195) = 20.428, <i>p</i> < .001	F(2, 194) = .995, <i>p</i> = .372			

Results (see table 4.5) indicated that social identification with external peers was a significant predictor of Belonging Support but that Belonging Support was not a significant predictor of the perceived Successful outcome grade. No significant mediation had occurred and so H_{4Ci} was not supported.

Table 4.5 *Model Coefficients for Belonging Support Mediating Effect of Identification with External Peers on perceived Successful Outcome*

Antecedent		Consequent						
		M(Belonging Support)			Y(Success)			
		Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	
X(Identification with Ex Peers)	<i>a</i>	.552	.140	<.001	<i>c'</i>	.049	.108	.653

M(Belonging Support)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.044	.053	.408	
constant	<i>i_M</i>	.909	.532	.089	<i>i_Y</i>	1.747	.397	<.001
R ² = .074				R ² = .004				
F(1,195) = 15.526 , <i>p</i> < .001				F(2, 194) = .371 , <i>p</i> = .691				

Further mediation analyses were then conducted to investigate the hypotheses that self-reported social support (belonging support) mediates the effect of social identification with university (H_{4Aii}), identification with university peers (H_{4Bii}), or external peers (H_{4Cii}) on the expected outcome grade.

Results (see table 4.6 and figure 4.2) indicated that social identification with university was a significant predictor of belonging support and that belonging support was a significant predictor of the expected outcome grade. The indirect effect of social identification with university on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived belonging support was found to be statistically significant, $ab = -.073$, 95% CI(-.17, -.01) so H_{4Aii} was supported.

Table 4.6 Model Coefficients for Belonging Support Mediating Effect of Identification with University on Expected Outcome Grade

Antecedent		Consequent						
		M(Belonging Support)			Y(Grade)			
		Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	SE	<i>p</i>	
X(Identification with University)	<i>a</i>	.673	.180	.002	<i>c'</i>	-.030	.119	.800
M(Belonging Support)		-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.109	.046	.018
constant	<i>i_M</i>	.184	.751	.806	<i>i_Y</i>	1.883	.479	<.001
R ² = .067				R ² = .032				
F(1,195) = 13.963 , <i>p</i> < .001				F(2, 194) = 3.237 , <i>p</i> = .041				

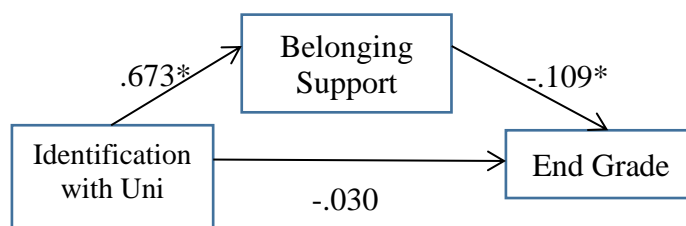


Figure 4.2 Statistical diagram showing the simple mediation model the effect of social identification with university on the expected grade

Results (see table 4.7 and figure 4.3) indicated that social identification with university peers was a significant predictor of belonging support and that belonging support was a significant predictor of the expected outcome grade. The indirect effect of social identification with university peers on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived belonging support was found to be statistically significant, effect = $-.070$, 95% CI($-.16, -.01$) so H_{4Bii} was supported.

Table 4.7 Model Coefficients for Belonging Support Mediating Effect of Identification with University Peers on Expected Outcome Grade

Antecedent		Consequent							
		M(Belonging Support)			Y(Grade)				
		Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p		
X(Identification with Uni Peers)	<i>a</i>	.660	.141	<.001	<i>c'</i>	-.037	.099	.708	
	M(Belonging Support)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.106	.046	.023	
	constant	<i>i_M</i>	1.024	.442	.022	<i>i_Y</i>	1.861	.290	<.001
		R ² = .095			R ² = .033				
		F(1,195) = 20.429 , p < .001			F(2, 194) = 3.276 , p = .040				

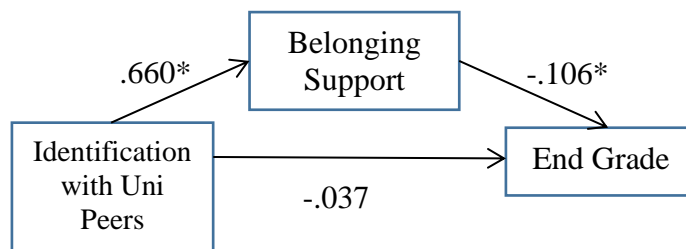


Figure 4.3 Statistical diagram showing the simple mediation model the effect of social identification with university peers on the expected grade

Results (see table 4.8 and figure 4.4) indicated that social identification with external peers was a significant predictor of belonging support and that belonging support was a significant predictor of the expected outcome grade. The indirect effect of social identification with external peers on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived belonging

support was found to be statistically significant, effect = -.063, 95% CI(-.14, -.01) and so H_{4cii} was supported.

Table 4.8 Model Coefficients for Belonging Support Mediating Effect of Identification with External Peers on Expected Outcome Grade

Antecedent	Consequent								
	M(Belonging Support)			Y(Grade)					
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p			
X(Identification with Ex Peers)	<i>a</i>	.552	.140	<.001	<i>c'</i>	.012	.093	.900	
M(Belonging Support)		-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.113	.046	.014	
constant	<i>i_M</i>	.909	.532	.089	<i>i_Y</i>	1.728	.344	<.001	
			R ² = .074				R ² = .032		
			F(1,195) = 15.526, p < .001				F(2, 194) = 3.212, p = .042		

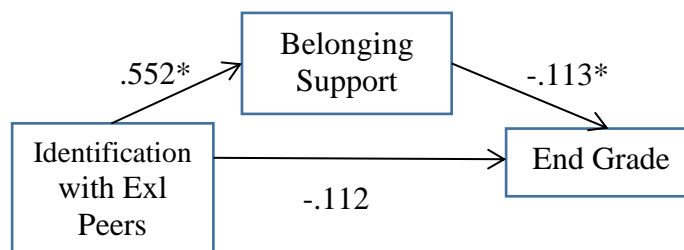


Figure 4.4 Statistical diagram showing the simple mediation model the effect of social identification with external peers on the expected grade

Similarly, to further investigate whether another form of perceived social support, tangible support, mediates the relationship between social identification and measures of success, simple mediation analyses were performed using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Hayes, 2018). The outcome variable for analysis the was the grade students considered to be a successful outcome or the expected outcome grade. The predictor variables for the analysis were the sub-scale measures of social identification and the mediator variable was the perceived tangible support.

Mediation analysis was again used to investigate the hypothesis that self-reported social support (tangible support) mediates the effect of social identification with university (H_{4Ai}), university peers (H_{BAi}) or external peers (H_{4Ci}) on the perceived successful outcome grade.

Results (see table 4.9) indicated that social identification with university was a significant predictor of tangible support but that tangible support was not a significant predictor of the perceived successful outcome grade (see table 4.9). No significant mediation had occurred and so H_{4Ai} was not supported.

Table 4.9 *Model Coefficients for Tangible Support Mediating Effect of Identification with University on perceived Successful Outcome*

Antecedent		Consequent							
		M(Tangible Support)			Y(Success)				
		Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p		
X(Identification with University)	<i>a</i>	.709	.169	<.001	<i>c'</i>	-.131	.139	.345	
	M(Tangible Support)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	.023	.056	.682	
	constant	<i>i_M</i>	1.443	.704	.042	<i>i_Y</i>	2.238	.560	<.001
				R ² = .083					
				F(1,195) = 17.640 , p < .001	R ² = .005				
					F(2, 194) = .458 , p = .633				

Results (see table 4.10) indicated that social identification with university peers was a significant predictor of tangible support but that tangible support was not a significant predictor of the perceived successful outcome grade. No significant mediation had occurred and so H_{4Bi} was not supported.

Table 4.10 *Model Coefficients for Tangible Support Mediating Effect of Identification with University Peers on perceived Successful Outcome*

Antecedent		Consequent							
		M(Tangible Support)			Y(Success)				
		Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p		
X(Identification with Uni Peers)	<i>a</i>	.428	.142	.003	<i>c'</i>	.024	.055	.658	
	M(Tangible Support)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.160	.112	.153	
	constant	<i>i_M</i>	3.110	.429	<.001	<i>i_Y</i>	2.160	.372	<.001

R² = .045
 F(1,195) = 9.120 , p < .003

R² =.011
 F(2, 194) = 1.039 , p =.356

Results (see table 4.11) indicated that social identification with external peers was a significant predictor of tangible support but that tangible support was not a significant predictor of the perceived successful outcome grade. No significant mediation had occurred and so and so H_{4Ci} was not supported.

Table 4.11 *Model Coefficients for Tangible Support Mediating Effect of Identification with External Peers on perceived Successful Outcome*

Antecedent		Consequent							
		M(Tangible Support)			Y(Success)				
		Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p		
X(Identification with Ex Peers)	<i>a</i>	.381	.135	.005	<i>c'</i>	.022	.106	.834	
	M(Tangible Support)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	.005	.055	.922	
	constant	<i>i_M</i>	2.950	.512	<.001	<i>i_Y</i>	1.691	.427	<.001
R ² = .039				R ² =.000					
F(1,195) = 7.991 , p = .005				F(2, 194) = .032 , p =.968					

Further mediation analyses of social identification with university and with university peers on their expected outcome grade through tangible support were conducted. Results (see table 4.12) indicated that social identification with university was a significant predictor of tangible support but that tangible support was not a significant predictor of the expected outcome grade. No significant mediation had occurred and so and so H_{4Aii} was not supported.

Table 4.12 *Model Coefficients for Tangible Support Mediating Effect of Identification with University on Expected Outcome Grade*

Antecedent		Consequent							
		M(Tangible Support)			Y(Grade)				
		Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p		
X(Identification with University)	<i>a</i>	.709	.169	<.001	<i>c'</i>	-.051	.121	.675	
	M(Tangible Support)	-	-	-	<i>b</i>	-.074	.049	.134	
	constant	<i>i_M</i>	1.443	.704	.041	<i>i_Y</i>	1.969	.489	<.001
R ² = .083				R ² =.016					
F(1,195) = 17.640 , p < .001				F(2, 194) = 1.532 , p =.219					

Results (see table 4.13) indicated that social identification with university peers was a significant predictor of tangible support but that tangible support was not a significant predictor of the expected outcome grade. No significant mediation had occurred and so and so H_{4Bii} was not supported.

Table 4.13 *Model Coefficients for Tangible Support Mediating Effect of Identification with University Peers on Expected Outcome Grade*

Antecedent	Consequent						
	M(Tangible Support)			Y(Grade)			
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	
X(Identification with Uni Peers) <i>a</i>	.428	.142	.003	<i>c'</i> -.077	.098	.433	
M(Tangible Support)	-	-	-	<i>b</i> -.072	.048	.136	
constant <i>i_M</i>	3.110	.429	<.001	<i>i_Y</i> 1.976	.325	<.001	
	$R^2 = .045$			$R^2 = .018$			
	$F(1,195) = 9.120, p = .003$			$F(2, 194) = 1.756, p = .175$			

Results (see table 4.14 and figure 4.5) indicated that social identification with external peers was a significant predictor of tangible support but that tangible support was not a significant predictor of the expected outcome grade. The indirect effect of identification with external peers on expected outcome grade through tangible support was significant, $ab = -.030$, $CI[-.08, -.001]$, supporting H_{4Cii} .

Table 4.14 *Model Coefficients for Tangible Support Mediating Effect of Identification with External Peers on Expected Outcome Grade*

Antecedent	Consequent						
	M(Tangible Support)			Y(Grade)			
	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p	
X(Identification with Ex Peers) <i>a</i>	.381	.135	.005	<i>c'</i> -.021	.092	.819	
M(Tangible Support)	-	-	-	<i>b</i> -.078	.048	.107	
constant <i>i_M</i>	2.949	.512	<.001	<i>i_Y</i> 1.855	.372	<.001	
	$R^2 = .040$			$R^2 = .015$			
	$F(1,195) = 7.991, p = .005$			$F(2, 194) = 1.469, p = .233$			

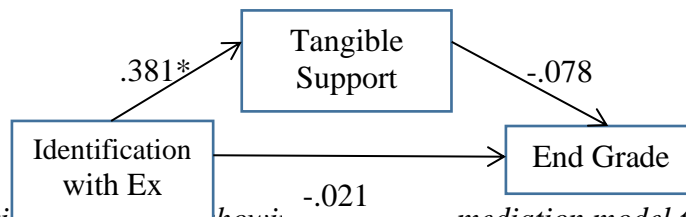


Figure 4.5 Statistical diagram showing the simple mediation model the effect of social identification with family on the expected grade

In summary, there were statistically significant indirect effects of both social identification with university, social identification with university peers and social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course, through perceived belonging support. There was also an indirect effect of social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived tangible support.

4.4.5 Ratings of Typical Student Attributes

4.4.5.1 Ratings of Typical Student Attributes and Programme Type. Do the students' reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes?

To check for differences between the groups, t-tests were conducted. Considering students' ratings of how hardworking they scored typical students, there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students studying non-professional programmes rated typical students as being more hardworking ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.01$) than students studying professional programmes ($M = 3.49, SD = 1.19$), though this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.10, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.27, 0.48], t(200) = .532, p = .595$.

Considering students' ratings of how enthusiastic they scored typical students, there was not homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p = .001$) and so a Welch t-test was conducted. Students studying non-professional programmes rated typical

students as being more enthusiastic ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .89$) than students studying professional programmes ($M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.18$), though this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.05$, 95% CI [-0.36, 0.47], $t(45.675) = .250$, $p = .803$.

Finally considering students' ratings of how social they scored typical students, there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students studying non-professional programmes rated typical students as being more social ($M = 4.12$, $SD = .95$) than students studying professional courses ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.18$), and this was a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.41$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.77], $t(200) = 2.276$, $p = .024$.

As the results do not show significant differences between students studying professional and non-professional programmes in terms of how hardworking, enthusiastic, or social they rate typical students, the alternative hypothesis H_{5A} cannot be supported. Students' self-reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes do not differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes.

4.4.5.1 Ratings of Typical Student Attributes and Demographic Factors. How might students' reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes differ by demographic factors such as: students' ethnicity, students' age, students' gender, and whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not?

ANOVAs were conducted on measures of how hardworking, enthusiastic, and social students perceived typical students as being with ethnicity as the independent variable and age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates.

When considering a measure of how hardworking typical students were seen to be, neither gender nor age nor whether they were first in family were significant co-variates. The main

effect of ethnicity was significant ($F(6, 201) = 2.316, p = .035, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .068$) with students recording Black as their ethnicity having higher scores than all other ethnicities ($M = 4.07, SD = 1.04$), with Mixed ($M = 3.20, SD = .92$) and White Other ($M = 3.00, SD = .92$) students recording typical students as being the least hardworking.

When considering a measure of how enthusiastic typical students were rated, neither gender nor age nor whether they were first in family were significant co-variates. Whilst students recording Black as their ethnicity had higher scores than all other ethnicities ($M = 4.14, SD = .99$), the difference between how enthusiastic they rated typical students compared with of other ethnicities was not significant ($F(6, 201) = .331, p = .245, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .040$).

When considering a measure of how social typical students were seen to be, neither gender nor age nor whether they were first in family were significant co-variates. The main effect of ethnicity was significant ($F(6, 201) = 3.061, p = .007, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .088$) with students recording White British ($M = 4.29, SD = .78$) as their ethnicity having higher scores than all other ethnicities, with Asian students recording typical students as being the least social ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.10$).

When considering hypothesis H_{5B} (Students' self-reported ratings of a typical students' attributes differ according to their ethnicity, age, gender or whether they are the first in their family to study at university), students' ethnicity was found to be the only characteristic that was related to how hardworking or social typical students were rated.

4.4.5.2 Ratings of Typical Student Attributes and Social Identification

To examine relationships between key variables, zero order correlations were undertaken (see Table 4.15).

Table 4.15 Zero order (Pearson r) between variables associated with student attributes. N for each correlation reported in subscripted parenthesis

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Identification with University	-						
2 Identification with University Peers	.44** ₍₂₀₆₎	-					
3 Typical student attribute: Hardworking	.19** ₍₂₀₂₎	.20** ₍₂₀₂₎	-				
4 Typical student attribute: Enthusiastic	.23** ₍₂₀₂₎	.26** ₍₂₀₂₎	.60** ₍₂₀₂₎	-			
5 Typical student attribute: Social	.25** ₍₂₀₂₎	.15** ₍₂₀₂₎	.17* ₍₂₀₂₎	.37** ₍₂₀₂₎	-		
6 Own student attribute: Hardworking	.21** ₍₂₀₂₎	.12 ₍₂₀₂₎	.29** ₍₂₀₂₎	.18* ₍₂₀₂₎	.12 ₍₂₀₂₎	-	
7 Own student attribute: Enthusiastic	.25** ₍₂₀₂₎	.25** ₍₂₀₂₎	.34** ₍₂₀₂₎	.38** ₍₂₀₂₎	.27** ₍₂₀₂₎	.67** ₍₂₀₂₎	-
8 Own student attribute: Social	.22** ₍₂₀₂₎	.29** ₍₂₀₂₎	.23** ₍₂₀₂₎	.29** ₍₂₀₂₎	.23** ₍₂₀₂₎	.29** ₍₂₀₂₎	.49** ₍₂₀₂₎

For all correlations subscripts indicate * $p < 0.05$ level; ** $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

The first research question here was: How might students' self-reported perceptions of the attributes of a typical student be related to their social identification with their university or university peers? A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students' rating of how hardworking typical students are on social identification with university. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university against hardworking ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals.

The prediction equation was: social identification with university = $4.043 + 0.133 \cdot \text{score}$. How hardworking students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, $F(5, 196) = 2.693, p = .022$, accounting for 6.4% of the variation in Identification with University with adjusted $R^2 = 4.0\%$, a small effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant but small effect: the more hardworking typical students were rated the higher the rating of social identification with university, supporting hypothesis H_{5Ci}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students' rating of how hardworking typical students are on social identification with university peers. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university peers against hardworking ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university peers = $2.683 + 0.178 \cdot \text{score}$. How hardworking students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university peers, $F(5, 196) = 4.369, p = .001$, accounting for 10.0% of the variation in Identification with University peers with adjusted $R^2 = 7.7\%$, a small to medium

size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant effect: the more hardworking typical students were rated the higher the rating of social identification with university peers, supporting hypothesis H_{5Cii}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students' rating of how enthusiastic typical students are on social identification with university. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university against enthusiasm ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university = 3.853 + 0.163*score. How enthusiastic students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, $F(5, 196) = 3.226, p = .008$, accounting for 7.6% of the variation in Identification with University with adjusted $R^2 = 5.2\%$, a small size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant but small effect: the more enthusiastic typical students were rated the higher the rating of social identification with university, supporting hypothesis H_{5Ci}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students' rating of how enthusiastic typical students are on social identification with university peers. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university peers against enthusiasm ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university peers = 2.440 + 0.215*score. How enthusiastic students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university peers, $F(5, 196) = 4.968, p < .001$, accounting for 11.2% of the variation in Identification with University peers with adjusted $R^2 = 9.0\%$, a medium size effect

according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant effect: the more enthusiastic typical students were rated the higher the rating of social identification with university peers, supporting hypothesis H_{5Cii}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students' rating of how social typical students are on social identification with university. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university against social ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university = 3.763 + 0.145*score. How social students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, $F(5, 196) = 2.767, p = .019$, accounting for 6.6% of the variation in Identification with University with adjusted $R^2 = 4.2\%$, a small size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a small but significant effect: the more social typical students were rated the higher the rating of social identification with university, supporting hypothesis H_{5Ci}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students' rating of how social typical students are on social identification with university peers. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university peers against hardworking ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university peers = 2.911 + 0.070*score. How social students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university peers, $F(5, 196) = 2.123, p = .064$, accounting for 5.1% of the variation in Identification with University peers with adjusted $R^2 = 2.7\%$, a small size effect according to

Cohen (1988). This is a significant effect: the more social typical students were rated the higher the rating of social identification with university peers, supporting hypothesis H_{5Cii}.

4.4.5.3 Ratings of Typical Student Attributes and Expectations of Achievement and Success

4.4.5.3.1 Relationship between Variables. To examine relationships between key variables, zero order correlations were undertaken (see Table 4.16).

Table 4.16 Zero order (Pearson r) between variables associated with student attributes. N for each correlation reported in subscripted parenthesis

Variable			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1	Expected End of Year Grade	-							
2	2	Expected End of Programme Grade	.60** ₍₁₉₇₎	-						
3	3	Successful Outcome	.36** ₍₁₉₇₎	-.53** ₍₁₉₇₎	-					
4	4	Typical student attribute: Hardworking	-.11 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.17* ₍₁₉₇₎	-.18* ₍₁₉₇₎	-				
5	5	Typical student attribute: Enthusiastic	-.15* ₍₁₉₇₎	-.12 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.13 ₍₁₉₇₎	.60** ₍₂₀₂₎	-			
6	6	Typical student attribute: Social	-.04 ₍₁₉₇₎	-.17* ₍₁₉₇₎	-.07 ₍₁₉₇₎	.17* ₍₂₀₂₎	.37** ₍₂₀₂₎	-		
7	7	Own student attribute: Hardworking	-.20** ₍₁₉₇₎	-.19** ₍₁₉₇₎	-.09 ₍₁₉₇₎	.29** ₍₂₀₂₎	.18* ₍₂₀₂₎	.12 ₍₂₀₂₎	-	
8	8	Own student attribute: Enthusiastic	-.32** ₍₁₉₇₎	-.29** ₍₁₉₇₎	-.16* ₍₁₉₇₎	.34** ₍₂₀₂₎	.38** ₍₂₀₂₎	.27** ₍₂₀₂₎	.27** ₍₂₀₂₎	-
9	9	Own student attribute: Social	-.21** ₍₁₉₇₎	-.15* ₍₁₉₇₎	-.03 ₍₂₀₄₎	.23** ₍₂₀₂₎	.29** ₍₂₀₂₎	.23** ₍₂₀₂₎	.23** ₍₂₀₂₎	.29** ₍₂₀₂₎

For all correlations subscripts indicate * $p < 0.05$ level; ** $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

The research question here was: How might students' reported perceptions of a typical student's attributes affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success?

ANOVAs were conducted on students' expected End of Year grade (H_{5ci}), expected End of Programme grade (H_{5cii}) and their perceived successful outcome grade (H_{5ciii}) with how hardworking they rated the typical student as the independent variable and ethnicity, age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates. There were no significant covariates nor was there a main effect of the rating of the typical student on the End of Year grade. However, the rating of how hardworking the participants saw the typical student did significantly affect the End of Programme grade ($F(4, 196) = 3.389$, $p = .011$, partial $\eta^2 = .067$), with those rating typical students as 'Very lazy' ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 3.46$), expecting lower end of programme grades than those rating typical students as 'Very hardworking' ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.67$). The rating of how hardworking the participants saw the typical student also effected the perceived successful outcome grade ($F(4, 196) = 3.188$, $p = .015$, partial $\eta^2 = .064$), with those rating typical students as 'Very lazy' ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 3.79$), seeing lower grades as a successful outcome than those rating typical students as 'Very hardworking' ($M = 1.58$, $SD = .83$).

ANOVAs were conducted on students' expected End of Year grade (H_{5ci}), expected End of Programme grade (H_{5cii}) and their perceived successful outcome grade (H_{5ciii}) with how enthusiastic they rated the typical student as the independent variable and ethnicity, age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates. There were no significant covariates nor was there a main effect of the rating of the typical student on the expected End of Year grade, End of Programme grade or the perceived successful outcome grade, though for each, the higher that a typical student was rated in

enthusiasm, the higher the expected grades for themselves and the higher a successful outcome grade was seen to be.

ANOVAs were conducted on students' expected End of Year grade (H_{5ci}), expected End of Programme grade (H_{5cii}) and their perceived successful outcome grade (H_{5ciii}) with how social they rated the typical student as the independent variable and ethnicity, age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates. There were no significant covariates nor was there a main effect of the rating of the typical student on the expected End of Year grade, End of Programme grade or the perceived successful outcome grade, though for each, the more social than a typical student was rated, the higher the expected grades for themselves and the higher a successful outcome grade was seen to be.

4.4.6 Ratings of Self-Reported Student Attributes

4.4.6.1 Ratings of Self-Reported Student Attributes and Programme Type.

The research question here was: do students' reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student differ for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes.

To check for differences between the groups, t-tests were conducted. Considering students' ratings of how hardworking they scored themselves, there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students studying professional programmes rated themselves as being significantly more hardworking ($M = 4.16, SD = 1.07$) than students studying non-professional programmes ($M = 3.56, SD = 1.14$), this being a statistically significant difference, $M = -0.61, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.01, -0.20], t(200) = -2.939, p = .004$. As there were differences in how hardworking students rated themselves between different programme types, H_{6A} was supported.

Considering students' ratings of how enthusiastic they scored themselves, there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students studying professional programmes rated themselves as being more enthusiastic ($M = 4.11$, $SD = .97$) than students studying non-professional programmes ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.01$), and this was also a statistically significant difference, $M = -.40$, 95% CI [-0.76, 0.04], $t(200) = -2.185$, $p = .030$. As there were differences in how enthusiastic students rated themselves between different programme types, H_{6A} was supported.

Finally considering students' ratings of how social they scored themselves, there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students studying professional programmes rated themselves as being more social ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.19$) than students studying non-professional programmes ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.16$), though this was not a statistically significant difference, $M = -0.05$, 95% CI [-0.46, 0.37], $t(200) = -.399$, $p = .831$. As there were not significant differences in how social students rated themselves between different programme types, H_{6A} was not supported.

4.4.6.2 Ratings of Self-Reported Student Attributes and Demographic Factors.

The research question was: how might students' reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student differ by demographic factors such as students' ethnicity, students' age, students' gender, and whether students are the first in their family to study at university or are not? ANOVAs were conducted on measures of how hardworking, enthusiastic, and social students perceived themselves with ethnicity as the independent variable and age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates.

When considering a measure of how hardworking they rated themselves, age was a significant co-variant ($F(1, 201) = 4.202$, $p = .042$, partial $\eta^2 = .022$) but neither gender nor whether they were first in family were. Though Asian students scored themselves as the least

hardworking ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.08$) and White British students the most ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.13$), there was no significant main effect of ethnicity ($F(6, 201) = .432$, $p = .857$, partial $\eta^2 = .013$).

Asian students scored themselves as the least enthusiastic ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .99$) and White Other students the most ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .88$), there was no significant main effect of ethnicity on how enthusiastic students scored themselves ($F(6, 201) = .585$, $p = .742$, partial $\eta^2 = .018$) and no significant covariates.

Whilst Asian students scored themselves as the least social ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.13$) and White Other students the most ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .75$), there was no significant main effect of ethnicity on how social students scored themselves ($F(6, 201) = 1.348$, $p = .238$, partial $\eta^2 = .041$) and no significant covariates.

The only significant differences in how students rated themselves, in terms of how hardworking, enthusiastic, or social they were, was that age affected how hardworking students rated themselves, H_{6B} was not generally supported.

4.4.6.3 Ratings of Self-Reported Student Attributes and Social Identification

The research question investigated was: how might students' self-reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student be related to their social identification with their university or university peers?

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students own rating of how hardworking they are on social identification with university. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university against hardworking ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation

was: social identification with university = $4.071 + 0.121 \cdot \text{score}$. How hardworking students scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university, $F(5, 196) = 2.745, p = .020$, accounting for 6.5% of the variation in Identification with University with adjusted $R^2 = 4.2\%$, a small size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant but small effect: the more hardworking students rated themselves the higher the rating of social identification with university, supporting hypothesis H_{6Ci}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students own rating of how hardworking they are on social identification with university peers. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university peers against hardworking ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university peers = $2.955 + 0.900 \cdot \text{score}$. How hardworking students scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university peers, $F(5, 196) = 2.577, p = .028$, accounting for 6.2% of the variation in Identification with University peers with adjusted $R^2 = 3.8\%$, a small size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant but small effect: the more hardworking students rated themselves the higher the rating of social identification with university peers, supporting hypothesis H_{6Cii}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students own rating of how enthusiastic they are on social identification with university. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university against enthusiasm ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university = $3.903 + 0.166 \cdot \text{score}$. How enthusiastic students

scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university, $F(5, 196) = 3.741, p = .003$, accounting for 8.7% of the variation in Identification with University with adjusted $R^2 = 6.4\%$, a small size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant but small effect: the more enthusiastic students rated themselves the higher the rating of social identification with university, supporting hypothesis H_{6Ci}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students own rating of how enthusiastic they are on social identification with university peers. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university peers against enthusiasm ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university peers = $2.531 + 0.211 * \text{score}$. How enthusiastic students scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university peers, $F(5, 196) = 5.350, p < .001$, accounting for 12.0% of the variation in Identification with University peers with adjusted $R^2 = 9.8\%$, a medium size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant effect: the more enthusiastic students rated themselves the higher the rating of social identification with university peers, supporting hypothesis H_{6Cii}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students own rating of how social they are on social identification with university. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university against social ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university = $4.153 + 0.117 * \text{score}$. How social students scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university, $F(5, 196) = 2.620, p = .025$, accounting for 6.3% of the variation in Identification with University with adjusted $R^2 =$

3.9%, a small size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant but small effect: the more social students rated themselves the higher the rating of social identification with university, supporting hypothesis H_{6Ci}.

A linear regression was run to understand the effect of students own rating of how social they are on social identification with university peers. To assess linearity a scatterplot of social identification with university peers against hardworking ratings with superimposed regression line was plotted. Visual inspection of these two plots indicated a linear relationship between the variables. There was homoscedasticity and normality of the residuals. The prediction equation was: social identification with university peers = 2.760 + 0.182*score. How social students scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university peers, $F(5, 196) = 5.230, p < .001$, accounting for 11.8% of the variation in Identification with University peers with adjusted $R^2 = 9.5\%$, a small size effect according to Cohen (1988). This is a significant effect: the more social students rated themselves the higher the rating of social identification with university peers, supporting hypothesis H_{6Cii}.

4.4.6.4 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Expectations of Achievement and Success

How might student's self-reported perceptions of their own attributes affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success?

ANOVAs were conducted on students' expected End of Year grade, expected End of Programme grade and their perceived successful outcome grade with how hardworking they rated themselves as the independent variable and ethnicity, age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates. There were no significant covariates on any measures but was there a main effect of the rating of themselves student on the expected End of Year grade ($F(4, 196) = 3.765, p = .006$, partial $\eta^2 = .074$) with those rating themselves as 'Very lazy' ($M = 2.53, SD = 1.53$), expecting lower End of Year grades than

those rating themselves as ‘Very hardworking’ ($M = 2.02$, $SD = 1.28$). The rating of how hardworking the participants saw themselves did not significantly affect the expected End of Programme grade ($F(4, 196) = 2.174$, $p = .074$, partial $\eta^2 = .044$) or the perceived successful outcome grade ($F(4, 196) = 1.939$, $p = .106$, partial $\eta^2 = .040$).

ANOVAs were conducted on students’ expected End of Year grade, expected End of Programme grade and their perceived successful outcome grade with how enthusiastic they rated themselves as the independent variable and ethnicity, age, gender and whether students were the first in their family to study at university as covariates. There were no significant covariates on any of the measures but there was a main effect of the rating of themselves on the End of Year grade ($F(4, 196) = 5.800$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .110$), with those rating themselves as ‘Very unenthusiastic’ ($M = 5.50$, $SD = 2.12$), expecting lower end of year grades than those rating themselves as ‘Very enthusiastic’ ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 1.31$). Also, the rating of how enthusiastic participants saw themselves did affect the End of Programme grade ($F(4, 196) = 7.652$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .140$), with those rating typical students as ‘Very unenthusiastic’ ($M = 4.50$, $SD = 3.54$), expecting lower end of year grades than those rating themselves as ‘Very enthusiastic’ ($M = 1.18$, $SD = .39$). The rating of how enthusiastic the participants saw themselves also effected the perceived successful outcome grade ($F(4, 196) = 2.907$, $p = .023$, partial $\eta^2 = .058$), with those rating themselves as ‘Very unenthusiastic’ ($M = 1.50$, $SD = .71$), seeing lower grades as a successful outcome than those rating typical students as ‘Very enthusiastic’ ($M = 1.49$, $SD = .78$), though both are higher than those rating themselves as ‘Slightly un/enthusiastic’ ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.60$) in this case.

ANOVAs were conducted on students’ expected End of Year grade, expected End of Programme grade and their perceived successful outcome grade with how social they rated themselves as the independent variable and ethnicity, age, gender and whether students were

the first in their family to study at university as covariates. There were no significant covariates on any of the measures but there was a main effect of the rating of themselves on the End of Year grade ($F(4, 196) = 3.972, p = .004, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .078$), with those rating typical students as ‘Very antisocial’ ($M = 3.25, SD = 2.38$), expecting lower end of year grades than those rating themselves as ‘Very social’ ($M = 1.91, SD = 1.14$). Also, the rating of how enthusiastic participants saw themselves did affect the End of Programme grade ($F(4, 196) = 7.652, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .140$), with those rating typical students as ‘Very unenthusiastic’ ($M = 4.50, SD = 3.54$), expecting lower end of year grades than those rating themselves as ‘Very enthusiastic’ ($M = 1.18, SD = .39$). The rating of how social the participants saw themselves did not significantly affect the perceived successful outcome grade ($F(4, 196) = .376, p = .826, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .008$).

4.4.7 Difference between Ratings of Students’ own Self-Reported Attributes and their Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students

Ratings of how hardworking, enthusiastic, and social students rated themselves and how they rated typical students was collected and the difference between them was calculated. A negative score showed they rated themselves higher than the score they gave to a typical student and a positive score showed they rated themselves lower than the score they gave to the typical student for each attribute.

4.4.7.1 Difference between Ratings of Students’ own Self-Reported Attributes and their Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students and Programme Type.

Independent-samples t-tests were run to determine if differences between students’ own ratings and those they gave typical students varied between those on professional and non-professional

courses. There were no outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of boxplots. Difference scores for type of course were not all normally distributed, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk's tests ($p > .05$) but it was decided to go ahead with the t-test in each case. There was homogeneity of variances for each, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variances ($p > .05$). Students on non-professional courses scored themselves as more hardworking than the score they gave to typical students ($M = -.68, SD = 1.06$), whilst students studying professional courses rated themselves as being less hardworking ($M = .03, SD = 1.33$), this was a statistically significant difference between the programme types, $MD = 0.71, 95\% CI [.25, 1.17], t(200) = 3.017, p = .003$. Students on non-professional programmes also scored themselves as more enthusiastic than the score they gave to typical students ($M = -.43, SD = 1.12$), whilst students studying professional courses rated themselves as being less enthusiastic than typical students ($M = .02, SD = 1.08$), this was a statistically significant difference between the programme types, $MD = 0.45, 95\% CI [.06, .84], t(200) = 2.28, p = .024$.

However, whilst students on non-professional and professional programmes scored themselves as less social than the score they gave to typical students, and the difference between those studying the two programme types was not significant. As there are differences between those studying professional and non-professional programmes in how students rated themselves and how they rated typical students in terms ratings of hardworking-ness and enthusiasm the null hypothesis (H_{07A}) can still be rejected.

4.4.7.2 Difference between Ratings of Students' own Self-Reported and their Ratings of Typical Attributes and Measures of Social Identification

How might the difference between student's own perceived attributes as a student and their perceived attributes of typical students affect their social identity as a student?

The difference between students' scores of their own attributes and their scores of the attributes

of typical students were calculated and grouped into either negative difference (own higher than typical), positive difference (typical higher than own) or no difference.

Social Identification with University. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if identification with university was different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how hardworking they perceived themselves and the typical student. Participants were classified into three groups: negative difference ($n = 68$), no difference ($n = 80$), and positive difference between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students ($n = 53$). Considering differences between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group had the highest scores for university identification ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .62$) when compared with the positive difference group ($M = 4.11$, $SD = .60$) and the negative difference group ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .55$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 202) = .593$, $p = .553$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if identification with university was different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how enthusiastic they perceived themselves and the typical student. Participants were classified into three groups: negative difference ($n = 63$), no difference ($n = 87$), and positive difference between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students ($n = 51$). Considering differences between how enthusiastic students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group again had the highest scores for social identification with university ($M = 4.19$, $SD = .58$) when compared with the negative difference group ($M = 4.12$, $SD = .56$) and the positive difference group ($M = 4.10$, $SD = .65$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 202) = .996$, $p = .371$, partial $\eta^2 = .010$).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if identification with university was different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how social they perceived

themselves and the typical student. Participants were classified into three groups: negative difference ($n = 31$), no difference ($n = 66$), and positive difference between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students ($n = 105$), showing the majority of students rated a typical student as more social than themselves. Differences between how social students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group again had the highest scores for social identification with university ($M = 4.28$, $SD = .59$) when compared with the positive difference group ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .65$) and the negative difference group ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .56$). These differences were significantly different ($F(2, 202) = 3.295$, $p = .039$, partial $\eta^2 = .033$).

4.4.7.1 Social Identification with University Peers. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if identification with university peers was different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how hardworking they perceived themselves and the typical student. Participants were classified into three groups: negative difference ($n = 68$), no difference ($n = 80$), and positive difference between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students ($n = 53$). Considering differences between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group had the highest scores for identification with university peers ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .75$) when compared with the positive difference group ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .70$) and the negative difference group ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .83$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 202) = .593$, $p = .553$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$), though age range was a significant co-variant ($F(1, 202) = 4.730$, $p = .031$, partial $\eta^2 = .024$).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if identification with university peers was different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how enthusiastic they perceived themselves and the typical student. Participants were classified into three groups:

negative difference ($n = 63$), no difference ($n = 87$), and positive difference between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students ($n = 52$). Considering differences between how enthusiastic students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group again had the highest scores for social identification with university peers ($M = 3.03$, $SD = .74$) when compared with the negative difference group ($M = 2.90$, $SD = .78$) and the positive difference group ($M = 2.85$, $SD = .79$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 202) = 1.386$, $p = .252$, partial $\eta^2 = .014$), though age range was again a significant co-variant ($F(1, 202) = 5.154$, $p = .024$, partial $\eta^2 = .026$).

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if identification with university peers was different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how hardworking they perceived themselves and the typical student. Participants were classified into three groups: negative difference ($n = 31$), no difference ($n = 66$), and positive difference between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students ($n = 105$), showing the majority of students rated a typical student as more social than themselves. Differences between how social students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group again had the highest scores for social identification with university peers ($M = 3.00$, $SD = .78$) when compared with the positive difference group ($M = 2.93$, $SD = .74$) and the negative difference group ($M = 2.87$, $SD = .82$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 202) = .158$, $p = .854$, partial $\eta^2 = .002$), though age range was again a significant co-variant ($F(1, 202) = 4.778$, $p = .030$, partial $\eta^2 = .024$).

4.4.8 Difference between Ratings of Students' own Self-Reported and their Ratings of Typical Attributes and their Expectations of Academic Achievement and Success

How might the difference between student's self-reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student and their perceptions of attributes of a typical student affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success?

The difference between students' scores of their own attributes and their scores of the attributes of typical students were calculated and grouped into either negative difference (own higher than typical), positive difference (typical higher than own) or no difference. One-way ANOVA analyses were conducted to determine if expected End of Year grades, expected End of Programme grades were different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how hardworking they perceived themselves and the typical student.

Considering expected End of Year grades, differences between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group expected the highest grades ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.50$) when compared with the negative difference group ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 1.64$) and the positive difference group ($M = 2.79$, $SD = 1.63$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = 1.873$, $p = .157$, partial $\eta^2 = .019$).

Considering expected End of Programme grades, differences between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group expected the highest grades ($M = 1.28$, $SD = .58$) when compared with the negative difference group ($M = 1.53$, $SD = 1.17$) and the positive difference group ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 1.28$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = 1.472$, $p = .232$, partial $\eta^2 = .015$).

Considering perceived successful outcome grades, differences between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group saw the highest

grades as being a successful outcome ($M = 1.71, SD = .91$) when compared with the positive difference group ($M = 1.79, SD = 1.23$) and the negative difference group ($M = 1.90, SD = 1.36$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = .539, p = .584, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .006$).

One-way ANOVA analyses were conducted to determine if expected End of Year grades, expected End of Programme grades were different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how enthusiastic they perceived themselves and the typical student.

Considering expected End of Year grades, differences between how enthusiastic students perceived themselves and typical students, the negative difference group expected the highest grades ($M = 2.34, SD = 1.48$) when compared with the neutral difference group ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.60$) and the positive difference group ($M = 2.88, SD = 1.69$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = 1.708, p = .184, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .018$).

Considering expected End of Programme grades, differences between how enthusiastic students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group expected the highest grades ($M = 1.32, SD = .93$) when compared with the negative difference group ($M = 1.42, SD = .92$) and the positive difference group ($M = 1.65, SD = 1.25$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = 1.688, p = .191, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .017$).

Considering perceived successful outcome grades, differences between how enthusiastic students perceived themselves and typical students, the negative difference group saw the highest grades as being a successful outcome ($M = 1.66, SD = .67$) when compared with the positive difference group ($M = 1.73, SD = 1.32$) and the neutral difference group ($M = 1.94, SD = 1.32$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = 1.525, p = .220, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .016$).

One-way ANOVA analyses were conducted to determine if expected End of Year grades, expected End of Programme grades were different for groups with different differences between perceptions of how social they perceived themselves and the typical student.

Considering expected End of Year grades, differences between how social students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group expected the highest grades ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.44$) when compared with the positive difference group ($M = 2.61$, $SD = 1.63$) and the negative difference group ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.79$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = 1.262$, $p = .286$, partial $\eta^2 = .013$).

Considering expected End of Programme grades, differences between how social students perceived themselves and typical students, the positive difference group expected the highest grades ($M = 1.37$, $SD = .82$) when compared with the neutral difference group ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 1.01$) and the positive difference group ($M = 1.73$, $SD = 1.55$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = 1.402$, $p = .249$, partial $\eta^2 = .015$).

Considering perceived successful outcome grades, differences between how social students perceived themselves and typical students, the positive difference group saw the highest grades as being a successful outcome ($M = 1.69$, $SD = .85$) when compared with the neutral difference group ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 1.24$) and the negative difference group ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.80$). These differences were not significantly different ($F(2, 197) = 1.314$, $p = .271$, partial $\eta^2 = .014$).

4.5 Discussion from Findings of Quantitative Data

This section of the chapter relates the above findings to the research questions while contextualising them within existing research.

4.5.1 Choice of Programme

From national data (*Who's Studying in HE?: Personal Characteristics*, 2019) it was predicted that this data set would show demographic differences between those enrolled on professional programmes (such as nursing) and non-professional programmes (such as psychology).

The likelihood of enrolling on a professional degree was found to differ significantly by ethnicity, with Black students being the most likely to enrol on a professional degree and Asian students the least, supporting H_{1A}: Students' choice of type of programme of study is related to their ethnicity. Findings here showed that 23 percent of participants enrolled in nursing were from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds as well as 24 percent of those studying psychology, both these figures show the cohort to be more diverse than the national figures where students from Black or Minority Ethnic backgrounds make up 20 percent of students (*The UK Nursing Labour Market Review 2018*, 2019) and 19 percent of psychology students (*Who's Studying in HE?: Personal Characteristics*, 2019).

Participants in this study mainly came from psychology and nursing degree programmes, both of which tend to have a gender biased intake. Only approximately 10 percent of nursing graduates are male (*The UK Nursing Labour Market Review 2018*, 2019) and approximately 20 percent of psychology students are male (*Who's Studying in HE?: Personal Characteristics*, 2020), though participants in this study were predominantly female across the programme types and so despite the national differences noted, students' choice of type of programme of study was not found to be related to their gender.

There is no granular data for parental education, with statistics overall showing nationally 43 percent of undergraduates had a parent with a Higher Education qualification (*Who's Studying in HE?: Personal Characteristics*, 2019). There were no significant differences in whether the

students had a parent with a university education between those studied professional or non-professional programmes in those surveyed. Though over 60 percent of participants on either professional or non-professional programmes were the first in their families to study at university, significantly above the national average figure.

National figures show 56 percent of undergraduates studying nursing as being under 25 years old (*Equality Analysis*, 2018) whereas 79% of psychology students were (*HESA*, 2018), meaning a significant difference in the age of the cohorts. This was found with the participants in this study with those under 21 years old more likely to be enrolled on non-professional programmes

4.5.2 Social Identification.

4.5.2.1 Social Identification and Programme Choice. Results from this study indicate students studying non-professional programmes tended to have higher scores compared with those studying on professional programmes for identification with university, but this was not significantly different. Similar scores for students studying professional or non-professional programmes were found for identification with university peers. Significant differences between the groups of students were not found. However, students studying non-professional courses did score significantly more highly on measures of social identity with external peers than students studying professional courses.

When nursing students were asked if they identified more as a nurse than a student, over 43 percent of participants either strongly agreed or agreed, with 25 percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. As past research has indicated that undergraduate nurses perceive themselves more in terms of a nursing identity rather than a student identity (e.g. Mariet, 2016). Allowing nursing students to represent students on professional programmes more generally the results

here indicate those students identify less with their peers who are not studying professional courses.

4.5.2.2 Social Identification and Demographic Factors. There were no significant effects of ethnicity, age, gender or whether they were the first of their family to study at university on measures of students' identification with university, nor with their university peers. It was expected that older students would affect measures of identification (Taylor & House, 2010) as would whether the student was the first in their family to study at university (Veldman et al., 2019), but that was not indicated by results here.

When considering measures of identification with peers external to university, neither gender nor whether they were first in family were significant co-variables though students' age was significant. Ethnicity was also not significant, with the lowest scores from those recording Black or Mixed ethnicities with White British, White European or Asian students scoring more highly. A more significant difference was expected if results from previous studies were corroborated (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

4.5.2.3 Results for individual programmes. As some differences in measures of social identification were found between students studying professional and non-professional programmes, further analysis for each programme of study was completed.

The results obtained when analysing data from students studying Nursing courses were the same as when all students were analysed in that there was no significant difference found on the measure of social identification with university or social identification with university peers. There was a statistically significant difference in measures of social identification with external peers with Black Nursing students identifying the least with their peers outside university and White British Nursing students identifying the most.

The results obtained when analysing data from students studying Psychology courses were mainly the same as when all students were analysed in that there was no significant difference found on the measure of social identification with university, university peers or external peers.

Of those studying Childhood and Youth Studies or Education studies, there was no significant difference found on the measures of social identification with university or social identification with external peers. However, there was a statistically significant difference in measures of social identification with university peers with Black students identifying the least with their peers inside university and White British Nursing students identifying the most.

4.5.3 Expected Academic Achievement and Success.

4.5.3.1 Expected Academic Achievement and Success and Programme Type. National statistics indicate differences between the percentage of those studying psychology achieving a successful degree outcome when compared to those studying nursing programmes. For instance, in 2019, 84 percent of psychology graduates in England obtained a first or upper second class degree compared with 72 percent of nursing graduates (What Are HE Students' Progression Rates and Qualifications?: Detailed Breakdowns, 2020). Some research (e.g. Cuthbert & Hatch, 2008) has indicated an association between young people's expectations/aspirations and their educational attainment, it was considered acceptable to consider students expectations of success here. Despite national differences in attainment between graduates on different types of programme, no statistically significant differences were found between those studying professional and non-professional programmes in terms of their academic aspirations, that is their expected end of year grades, expected end of programme grades and perceived successful outcomes.

4.5.3.2 Expected Academic Achievement and Success and Demographic Factors. As reported in Chapter One, there are inequalities in academic achievement recorded across a variety of student characteristics, including by ethnicity, gender, and age. Considering these awarding gaps and research putting forward associations between young people's expectations/aspirations and their educational attainment such as the review by Gorard et al. (2012) which confirmed an association between young people's academic aspirations/expectations and their attainment, it was expected that aspirations would differ according to demographic factors. However, there was no significant effect of ethnicity, age, gender or whether students were the first in their family to study at university for expected End of Year grade nor for expected End of Programme grade or perceived successful outcome grade. For students surveyed as part of this study, expectations did not differ.

4.5.3.3 Expected Academic Achievement, Success, Social Identity and Perceived Support. A possible relationship between social support, social identification and expectations of achievement and perceptions of success was considered here given that some studies indicate a more complex relationship than that students' perceptions of social support predict future academic performance (e.g. Li et al., 2018). Whether student perceptions of either belonging support or tangible support mediated expectations of achievement or perceptions of success was investigated. There were statistically significant indirect effects of both social identification with university, social identification with university peers and social identification with external peers on the grade expected at the end of their course, through perceived belonging support. There was also an indirect effect of social identification with external peers on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived tangible support. This indicates that students' who perceive tangible support available to them from

peers outside their course and who score more highly on measure of social identification with those peers, expect to achieve higher grades.

4.5.4 Students' Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students

4.5.4.1 Students' Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students and Programme Type.

The personal attributes of successful students studying different types of programme have been researched (Mariet, 2016; Ko & Leu, 2021) with some different attributes for successful students reported across studies. Exploration of how students studying on different types of programme view the attributes of typical students indicated that students on professional programmes rated typical students as being less hardworking, more enthusiastic, and more social than non-professional students did. This indicates differences in how typical students are perceived by students studying those programmes. Whether students studying those programmes perceive themselves as being different from what they see as typical students was also investigated (see Section 4.5.6.1 below).

4.5.4.2 Students' Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students and Demographic Factors. Analyses of students' self-reported ratings of a typical students' attributes did not differ according to their age, gender or whether they are the first in their family to study at university. Students' ethnicity was found to be the only characteristic that was related to how hardworking or social typical students were rated. Black students rated typical students as being more hardworking than participants of other ethnicities did and White British students rated typical students as being more social than other ethnicities did.

4.5.4.3 Students' Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students and Social Identification. Analyses indicated several associations between participants' ratings of attributes of typical students. The more hardworking participants rated typical students, the higher their rating of

social identification with university and with university peers. Also, the more enthusiastic typical students were rated, the higher the rating of social identification with university and with university peers. The more social typical students were rated the higher the rating of social identification with university peers.

4.5.4.4 Students' Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students and Expectations of Achievement and Success. The ratings of how hardworking participants saw the typical student were associated with the expected End of Programme grade, with those rating typical students as being 'Very lazy' expecting lower end of programme grades than those rating typical students as 'Very hardworking'. The rating of how hardworking the participants saw the typical student was also associated with the perceived successful outcome grade, with those rating typical students as 'Very lazy' seeing lower grades as being a successful outcome than those rating typical students as 'Very hardworking'.

How enthusiastic or social participants rated typical students did not significantly affect the expected End of Year grade, End of Programme grade or the perceived successful outcome grade, though for each, the more social than a typical student was rated, the higher the expected grades for themselves and the higher a successful outcome grade was seen to be.

4.5.5 Ratings of Self-Reported Student Attributes.

4.5.5.1 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Programme Type. Students studying professional programmes rated themselves as being significantly more hardworking and enthusiastic than students studying non-professional programmes, though there were not significant differences in how social students rated themselves between different programme types.

4.5.5.2 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Demographic Factors. Ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the first in their family to attend university did not significantly affect how hardworking, enthusiastic, or social participants rated themselves. Analysis did indicate a significant difference in how hardworking students rated themselves, with older students rating themselves as more hardworking than younger students.

4.5.5.3 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Ratings of Social Identification. For each attribute the more positively the student rated themselves the higher the measure of social identification. The more hardworking, enthusiastic, or social students rated themselves the higher the rating of social identification with university and university peers. The effects in each case were small to medium.

4.5.5.4 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Expectations of Achievement and Success. Analyses indicated that students who rated themselves as hardworking expected higher grades at the end of year and their programme and they regarded higher grades as a successful outcome, though this was only significant in terms of end of year grades. Considering how enthusiastic students rated themselves, those who rated themselves as the most enthusiastic expected higher grades for both the end of year and programme and regarded higher grades as being successful outcomes. This was statistically significant in all cases. Students who rated themselves as most social expected higher grades at the end of year and programme as well as regarding higher grades as a successful outcome. This was statistically significant for the end of year and programme grades only.

4.5.6 Differences between Self-Reported Student Attributes and Typical Student Attributes

Ratings of how hardworking, enthusiastic, and social students rated themselves and how they rated typical students was collected and the difference between them was calculated. A

negative score showed they rated themselves higher than the score they gave to a typical student and a positive score showed they rated themselves lower than the score they gave to the typical student for each attribute.

4.5.6.1 Difference between Ratings of Students' own Self-Reported Attributes and their Ratings of the Attributes of Typical Students and Programme Type. Analyses were run to determine if differences between students' own attribute ratings and those given to typical students varied between those on professional and non-professional programmes. Students on non-professional programmes scored themselves as more hardworking than the score they gave to typical students whilst students studying professional programmes rated themselves as being less hardworking than typical students.

This was a statistically significant difference between the programme types. Students on non-professional programmes also scored themselves as more enthusiastic than typical students, whilst students studying professional courses rated themselves as being less enthusiastic than typical students, this was a statistically significant difference between the programme types.

4.5.6.2 Difference between Self-Reported and Typical Attributes and Social Identification. Considering social identification with university, the only significant finding was that differences in how social students rated themselves affected social identification with university. Those who gave themselves the same rating of sociability as they gave a typical student had the highest scores for social identification with university when compared with the positive and the negative difference groups. Considering social identification with university peers, there were no significant main effects.

4.5.6.3 Difference between Self-Reported and Typical Attributes and Expectations of Academic Achievement and Success. Research (Lane, 2017; Lane & Gibbons, 2007) indicates

that students rating themselves as negatively against a prototypical student predicts negative educational impacts including academic achievement.

Considering both students' self-reported expected End of Programme grades and the outcome grades students thought of as being successful, there were no significant findings associated with differences in how hardworking, enthusiastic, or social students rated themselves and typical students.

4.6 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter some results from the first quantitative study were presented. Initial analysis showed there were demographic differences between those enrolled to study on professional programmes and those studying non-professional programmes older students and those from Black ethnic backgrounds being more likely to study on professional courses such as Nursing. This is in line with current national statistics from the Office for Students, (2019).

4.6.1 *Social Identification*

In terms of measures of identification, significant differences between the groups of students studying different types of programme were not found. This does not support findings from previous research such (e.g. Mariet, 2016) which indicates that nurses are more likely to identify as a nurse rather than as a student.

As past research has predicted that having a salient social identity, such as being part of any minority on campus, may trigger psychological threat and concerns over belonging at university in an individual (Cohen and Garcia, 2008), social identification with university, with university peers and external peers were measured. When considering whether measures of students' social identification with their university and with university or external peers differ with demographic factors there were no significant effect of ethnicity, age, gender and whether

students were the first in their family to study on measures of students' identification with university, nor with their university peers. However, there was a significant main effect of ethnicity on identification with external peers (friends outside university) with students recording Other and Black ethnicities having the highest scores, Age was a significant covariate here too with older students identifying more with their peers outside of university.

4.6.2 *Expectations of Academic Achievement and Perceptions of Success*

Students' expectations for their end of year and end of programme results as well as their perceptions of what degree outcome they view as a successful one was analysed.

There were no statistically significant differences between students studying on different types of programme in terms of their expectations for their grades. Whilst students studying professional programmes saw lower grades as being a successful degree outcome than students studying non-professional degree programmes though again this was not a statistically significant difference. Recent statistics show that the percentage of students awarded a first or upper second class degree varies according to the subject taken (with a lower percentage of nursing students obtaining a first or upper second class degree when compared to the percentage of psychology graduates (*HESA, 2019*)). These results indicate this difference may not be attributed to differences in expectations of students on different types of courses.

Statistics show that demographic factors, particularly ethnicity, affect awarded grades at university with the awarding gap particularly affecting Black students. However, this study indicated that there was no main effect of ethnicity when considering whether students' expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success differ with different demographic factors. Whilst the awarding gap remains, it seems that students from ethnic minorities do not have lower expectations for themselves.

Factors such as parental influences have been shown to have an impact on educational aspirations, as well as educational attainments (Cohen, 1987), indicating that first generation students may have lower academic aspirations than their continuing generation counterparts. However, findings here related to first generation students do not support this with no significant differences in expectations for grades or what was thought of as a successful academic outcome for those who were first in family and those who were not.

4.6.3 Perceptions of Support

Any relationship between perceived social support and academic achievement does not appear to be a straightforward one with some studies showing social support as predicting future academic performance (Credé & Niehorster, 2012) and others showing that social support does not improve academic achievement (Wintre & Yaffe, 2000). Analyses were performed to investigate whether perceived social support mediates the relationship between social identification and measures of success. There were statistically significant indirect effects of both social identification with university, social identification with university peers and social identification with external peers on the grade expected at the end of their course, through perceived belonging support. There was also an indirect effect of social identification with family on the grade expected at the end of their course through both perceived belonging support and perceived tangible support.

4.6.4 Perceived Student Attributes

Student characteristics were totalled for both their own and typical student characteristics, the higher the score the more positive the characteristic. Professional students rated typical students as less hardworking, more enthusiastic than non-professional students did (though not significantly so). Non-professional students perceived typical students as more social than professional students did. The difference reflects past research that has indicated that

undergraduate nurses perceive themselves in terms of a nursing identity rather than a student identity (e.g. Mariet, 2016), and so perceptions of typical students' attributes may differ for students studying on professional and non-professional programmes.

Similarly, it was found that students' perceptions of their own attributes as a student differ significantly for students studying professional degree programmes when compared to students studying non-professional degree programmes. They considered themselves more hardworking and more enthusiastic than non-professional students did.

When considering how students' perceptions of attributes of a typical student differ by demographic factors, analysis indicated that there was main effect of ethnicity, with students recording Black as their ethnicity having higher scores than all other ethnicities, with White British and White Other students recording typical students as being the least hardworking.

When considering a measure of how social typical students were seen to be, there was again a main effect of ethnicity was significant with students recording White British as their ethnicity having higher scores than all other ethnicities, with Asian students recording typical students as being the least social. There were no differences for how enthusiastic or independent typical students were seen to be.

Similarly, students were asked to think about themselves in terms of the same attributes and then score themselves. There was a main effect of ethnicity with students recording White British as their ethnicity having higher scores than all other ethnicities, with Asian students recording themselves as being the least hardworking.

When considering a measure of how independent they rated themselves, age was a significant co-variant but no others. There were no differences for how enthusiastic or social students scored themselves.

In previous research students who saw themselves as dissimilar to what they saw as prototypical student were more likely than other students to leave education early (Lane & Gibbons, 2007) (Lane, 2017). Given I am presuming a relationship between university retention and social identification with that university, here it was predicted that differing from the attributes of a typical student affects students' social identification.

Considering differences between how hardworking students perceived themselves and typical students, the neutral difference group had the highest scores for university identification and identification with university peers. No differences were statistically significant. The same was found in terms of the difference between scores of how enthusiastic students perceived themselves and the scores given to typical students.

Considering the difference between how social students perceived themselves and typical students, the negative difference group (who scored typical students to be less social than themselves) scored significantly lower identification with university scores than the neutral or positive difference groups. Whilst the neutral group scored most highly on identification with university peers there were no significant differences between the groups.

In the following chapter a study is presented that uses a qualitative approach to capture the voices of undergraduate students then in chapter 6, results from this quantitative chapter and those from the following qualitative chapter are presented in an integrated way.

Chapter 5. A Qualitative Study Exploring Student Social Identity and Perceptions of Success through the use of Semi-Structured Interviews using Photo-Elicitation

5.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter presents an analysis of the qualitative data from this research. The structure of this chapter follows the research questions associated with this study (Figure 5.1). The chapter starts with how some of the previously presented research on social identity, achievement and support in Higher Education relates to the Research Questions in this study. This is followed by a methods section that builds on the rationale for the use of thematic analysis and the deductive-inductive approach coding outlined in the general methodology chapter.

In the following sections of the chapter, findings gathered from data collected using semi-structured interviews of 28 undergraduate students from a large London university is presented. The interviews aimed to explore their lived experience of university life, their feelings of support, their perceptions of the attributes of themselves as students and how they saw typical students as well as their views of success.

The chapter then concludes with an appraisal of the interview findings and how they provide an insight into the research questions.

5.3 Qualitative Study Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to: (1) address a gap in existing literature on the student experience and how they perceive themselves and other students from the students' own voice, and (2) broaden what is known about how students perceive their university experience and what they view as a successful outcome.

There have been indications that the social identity of students does differ according to different demographic factors including ethnicity (e.g. Walton & Cohen, 2007), age (e.g. Taylor & House, 2010) or whether the student was the first in their family to study at university (e.g. Veldman et al., 2019). Also, past research has indicated that undergraduate nurses perceive themselves more in terms of a nursing identity rather than a student identity (e.g. Mariet, 2016). To explore ideas of social identity and belonging in Higher Education, a Research Question on this area was included in the current study (see Figure 5.1 below): is student social identity important to participants?

There are differences in academic achievement in Higher Education according to ethnicity and age (*Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2016/17*, 2018), but that after controlling for socio-economic background, Black students are not any more likely to have lower aspirations than White students (Ainsworth-Darnell & Downey, 1998; Morgan & Mehta, 2004). Due to these differences, students' views on successful outcomes are explored in the current study (see Figure 5.1 below) with the Research Question being: what are students' perceptions of success?

Any potential relationship between perceived support at university and achievement may be a complex one (e.g. Abdullah et al., 2014; Friedlander et al., 2007; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000; c.f. Credé & Niehorster, 2012 and Wintre & Yaffe, 2000) and so additional exploration in the area of perceived support led to the inclusion of 'perceived support' as shown in Figure 5.1 below. The Research Question being: what are students' perceptions of belonging and social support?

Positive academic consequences of social identification processes are built on the assumption of a positive academic normative content within that identity (Lane, 2017; Lane & Gibbons, 2007). However, students who identified with groups where more problematic behaviours were

normative had high intentions towards those negative behaviours (e.g. Burford, 2012; Cruwys et al., 2016; McNeill, Smyth, & Mavor, 2017). In this way, behaviours which do not help students academically may become normalised. A Research Question on norms of behaviour for the typical student and those norms relate to how they see themselves were included in this study (see Figure 5.1) in order to explore this. A Research Question being: how do students view their own student attributes and those of typical students?

There are similarities between research questions in the quantitative and qualitative chapters. Findings from these similar shared questions are integrated and discussed in Chapter 6.

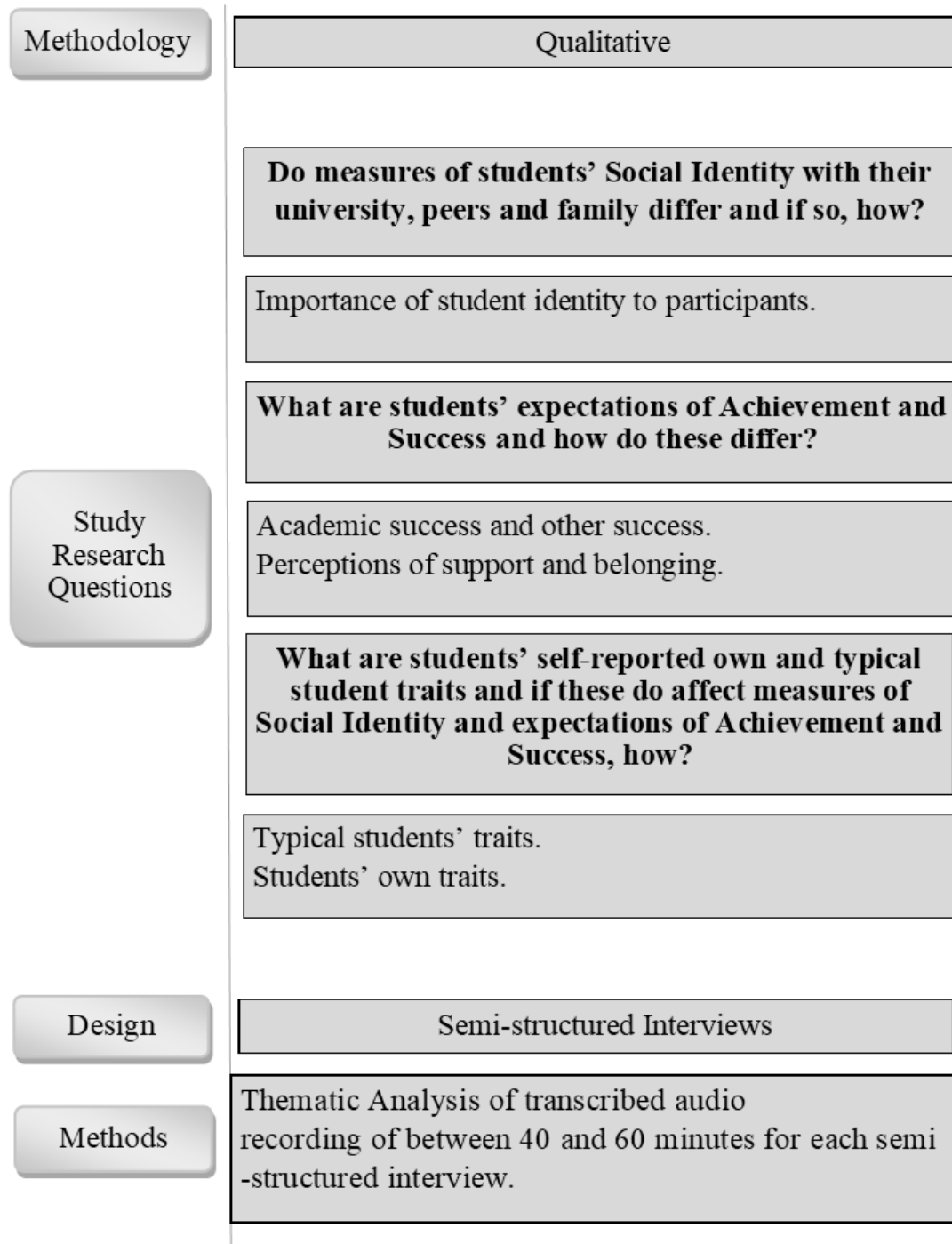


Figure 5.1 Thesis map recap on how the Chapter five meets the research questions

5.4 Method

5.4.1 Sample

The sample was drawn from the undergraduate student body of a large, London university. As such students were eligible for this study if they were at least 18 years old and currently attending the university full or part time and were studying undergraduate degrees in Psychology, Child and Youth Studies, Education Studies, Social Work or Adult Nursing programmes. Only students on the specific courses that had received ethical clearance were approached. Recruitment was through various means including flyers distributed at lectures where I attended and explained the research and also through messages on the course online learning portals posted by course leaders on my behalf. Twenty-eight student participants were recruited and interviewed.

Participants were undergraduate students aged between 18 and 55 years with a mean age of 25.7 years. Students ranged between first- and third-year undergraduates in either the BA Childhood and Youth Studies, BSc Psychology, BA Social Work or from one of the BSc Nursing programmes. Of these 28 participants, 11 were International Students, having travelled from abroad specifically to study, coming either from Europe (Portugal, Greece, Lithuania, Bulgaria) or further afield (India, Israel, Nigeria, Dubai, Brazil). The majority of participants described themselves as White British (12), with another eight students being White European or White Other. Four students described themselves as Asian or British Asian and four participants described themselves as Black British or Black African. Some who had moved from abroad had settled in the country some years before and other International Students had moved here just weeks before starting at university. Twenty-one of the students said they were the first in their immediate families to enter Higher Education with the remaining seven

students having either or both parents previously graduating from university. Eight participants said they lived in Halls of Residence (either run by the university or in private Halls), whilst seven lived at home with their parents and five lived in shared housing. Eight students lived either on their own or with their partner, their children or both. Six participants had caring responsibilities of some kind in addition to their studies, mainly for their own children, but one participant had caring responsibilities for a disabled parent.

Table 5.1 *Break down of sample (cells are not unique across different variables)*

Variable	Total	Ethnicity					Gender		Age				First in Family		
		n	1	2	3	4	5	M	F	6	7	8	9	Y	N
Programme of Study	Childhood and Youth Studies	5	4	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	3	0	1	4	1
	Psychology	19	7	4	3	4	1	3	16	1	4	1	0	14	5
	Social Work	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	
	Nursing	2	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1
Ethnicity	1. White British	12						1	11	9	2	0	1	9	3
	2. White European	4						0	4	2	1	1	0	2	2
	3. White Other	4						0	4	3	1	0	0	3	1
	4. Asian/Asian British	4						1	3	3	1	0	0	3	1
	5. Black African/Caribbean/Black British	4						1	3	1	0	1	2	3	1
Gender	Male	3								1	1	1	0	2	1
	Female	25								1	6	1	3	19	6
Age	6. 18 – 21	15												11	4
	7. 22 – 24	8												6	1
	8. 25 – 39	2												1	1
	9. 40+	3												3	0

5.4.2 Ethics and Safeguards

Institutional ethical approval was obtained prior to approaching potential participants (University Research Ethics Committee Reference: 17.3.5.3, see Appendix 5 for letter of confirmation.) and the commencement of data collection. Prospective participants either booked an interview slot on the SONA system if they were psychology students (see chapter 3, section 3.7.2 for more information on this), left a contact email as part of the quantitative study or they emailed me directly stating they were interested in participation. If contacted via email, times, and dates for a one-hour interview slot were agreed this way. The email thanked participants and provided the location for the interview, one of the psychology laboratory rooms for individual use. Once the interview time was set and students arrived for the hour-long interview, they were welcomed and I briefly explained the study and gave participants the information sheet to read (see Appendix 6). I also talked with them about their rights as a research participant and asked them to read and sign the “Consent to Participate in a Research Study” form (see Appendix 7). The consent form outlined the study’s potential risks and benefits, the participant’s rights, and steps to protect their confidentiality .

Efforts were made to guard participant confidentiality. These efforts included conducting interviews in a private room and using a coding system that excluded identifiers (e.g., names, contact information) on all study documents (i.e., interview materials and transcriptions). The consent forms with student names on them were kept in a separate locked cabinet in separate from transcriptions which were kept in a secure electronic file. Finally, recording devices were locked with the coded interview material and once transcribed, were kept as computer files that were password protected and encrypted.

There was limited risk in participating in the current study due to the nature of the questions asked. It was possible students experienced uncomfortable feelings while reflecting on their

experience of student life during the interview. Prior to the study, participants were made aware that their participation was completely voluntary and that they could stop at any time or decline to answer specific questions. Details on how to contact and use the resources of the university Wellbeing Hub were given to all participants as part of the participants' debrief.

5.4.3 Data Collection

Flyers distributed at lectures asked interested participants to send me an email to set up an interview. Psychology students could also book an interview via the SONA system (a website designed for managing research participation where course credit is given for participation) thus earning participation points required for them to pass the first and second year of the course. This was considered as part of the University Ethics application and it should be noted that Psychology students have a large number of studies available to choose from at any time and so did not have to participate in this study. Students on other courses received no inducement to take part and did so purely as they were interested in the research.

Data were collected using semi-structured interviews including tasks using photographs to elicit responses from participants (see General Methodology Chapter for a rationale as to why these techniques were used). As described in that chapter, the purpose of using semi-structured interviews was to build a thorough perspective on aspects of student identity and perceived student characteristics that emerge from student experience. It is important to permit participants to “describe in their own words the internal and interpersonal processes by which they defined their identities” (Jones & Abes, 2013, p. 64).

The interview questions were developed, following a literature review (see Appendix 2 for interview schedule and prompts) to ask students questions on their identity, their own

experience, and attributes as students and what they saw as attributes of typical students. They were also asked about their expectations of university and their perceptions of success.

After being asked to describe themselves, participants were asked about their university experiences using photo elicitation as a means to enrich their discussion of their own attributes as students by choosing images to represent themselves as students and then discussing them. The images provided were associated with the initial themes deducted (see section 5.4.4.1) and were designed to represent a broad range of student experiences (see section 5.4.4.2). The process was then repeated with participants choosing images they felt their families would choose to describe typical students, and then images they felt represented typical students. Again, the images were a means to promote discussion.

During the interview questions were also asked to determine the participant's age, programme, and mode of study, whether they were the first in their family to study in Higher Education, what responsibilities they had outside of university, where they lived and whether they were an international student. These questions were asked during the interview to gather standard information about students and their experience but did not necessitate interpretation from the interview format.

Each interview took between 40 minutes to one hour to complete, with between five and ten minutes allowed for an introduction to the study before the interview and again for a debrief afterwards. When participants arrived, I first attempted to make a connection with them by introducing myself and making my status as a PhD researcher and student clear before beginning. Next, I gave participants time to read an Information Sheet (see Appendix 6) then gave an overview of the interview timeframe, including information that I may be more directive with questions at times to make sure we completed all of the questions within the given time. I also explained confidentiality and asked if they had any questions before asking

the participant to sign the consent form (see Appendix 7). As soon as the introduction was complete, I informed the participant that I would be turning on the recording device and the interview began. After I completed the interview questions and tasks with participants, I debriefed them before thanking them and ending the interview. After the interview was over, I promptly took the confidentiality forms and locked them away. I downloaded the sound file from the recording device and ensured it was stored on a secure file system.

An Olympus digital recorder was used to capture student responses. In order to begin the process of analysing themes, I took down notes during the interview of participant answers to demographic questions so that memos could be created prior to file transcription as an aide memoir. Once the recordings were downloaded, they were transcribed onto text documents in a locked computer within my secure office. All recordings were transcribed by the researcher and transcription took place in a university office. The audio recordings were kept during the write up of the research and erased on its completion.

5.4.4 Data Analysis

Yin (2009) suggests that in studies whereby the research questions have been formulated based on the literature review, the theories that have been used when formulating the research questions could also be used in analysing the findings. This suggests a deductive-inductive approach to data analysis would be essential for theoretically driven studies.

Based on these arguments qualitative data were initially analysed using deductive methods. Therefore, following one-to-one interviews, the recordings are transcribed and a deductive approach used: looking for similarities and differences between the content of the accounts according to the literature review topics discussed. In this way the data were first organised, a framework of themes identified and data coded and sorted into these themes. According to

Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is ‘a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p79). Thematic analysis is theoretically flexible (Clarke, 2018) and so may be used deductively and be used to interpret various aspects of the research topic in the context of previously identified theories. Thematic analysis was therefore conducted in order to compare themes generated in the interviews.

5.4.4.1 Initial Deducted Themes. The initial research questions identified were realist ones in that this study was interested in students’ own experiences of university life and their points of view in both how they perceive themselves and other students and in what they view as being a successful outcome. The initial deductive themes were informed by the literature review and how they linked to the study research questions. The theme ‘Engagement’ was decided upon due to research linking academic and social engagement at university with identification with students’ programme of study (Bernabé, Lisbona, Palací, & Martín-Aragón, 2016) and also engagement as a predictor of academic success (Thomas, 2012). The theme ‘Belonging’ was chosen due to research linking social identity, ideas of belonging and academic motivation for university students (Walton & Cohen, 2007). Belonging also predicts intention to persist for university students (Hausmann et al., 2007; Tinto, 2017) and may differ according to socio-economic status (Harackiewicz et al., 2014). The theme ‘Support’ was chosen because of associations between perceived social support and adaptation to university (e.g. Abdullah et al., 2014; Wintre & Yaffe, 2000) as well as associations between students’ perceived support and academic achievement (Credé & Niehorster, 2012). The final initial theme was ‘Student Norms’. Research in the literature review linked student social identity, approaches to learning and student norms (Bliuc et al., 2011b) whilst other research (Lane,

2017; Lane & Gibbons, 2007) indicated that students rating themselves as negatively against a prototypical student predicted negative educational impacts including academic achievement.

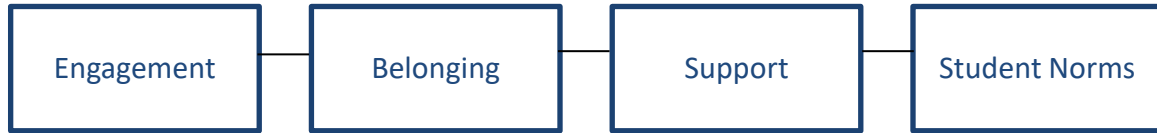


Figure 5.2 *Visual representation of initial deductive themes*

5.4.4.2 Choice of images used in interviews. The initial choice of images to be used in the interviews was informed by the deduced themes above. Images were chosen from online sources (listed in Appendix 3), the rationale for choosing individual images and the themes they were associated with is shown in Table 5.2. with some images potentially being associated with more than one theme.

Table 5.2 *How chosen Images are associated with each deduced Theme*

Theme	Image	Rationale
Engagement		Represented students engaged by attending seminars and lectures



Represented students engaged by paying attention during lectures or seminars



Represented engaging by working with others.



Represented engaging in independent study.



Represented engagement in programme specific activities for Nursing students



Represented a lack of engagement in seminars or lectures.

Belonging



Represented belonging to a social group outside of seminars or lectures.



Represented belonging to either a social or study group.



Represented belonging to a study group.



Represented belonging to a diverse programme group.



Represented a lack of belonging either socially or academically.



Support



Represented perceived social support from peers.



Represented perceived study support from peers.



Represented feeling unsupported academically.



Represented feeling unsupported academically or socially.



Represented feeling unsupported financially – the need for paid employment .



Represented providing support for others.

Student Norms



Represented independent study or the importance of study as a norm.

Represented being social with university peers as a norm.

Represented excessive alcohol consumption as a norm.

Represented either laziness or tiredness due to hardworking as a norm.



Represented the need for paid employment as a norm.

Care was taken to choose images showing different types of students in terms of age and ethnicity and programme type. The same images were used during the initial pilot study with participants choosing and talking about images that differed from their own demographic to represent themselves. Examples of image choice during the pilot study included a White student who chose the image of a Black student in a retail setting when talking about the impact of paid work and another student participant who was a mother of an older teenager picking the image of a student studying with a baby in their arms to represent themselves when talking of ‘juggling’ the commitments of family life and studying. This indicated that students were not only choosing images of others who superficially looked like themselves but that participants assigned their own meanings to the images presented.

5.4.4.3 Process of Analysis. The approach to Thematic Analysis that was developed by Braun and Clarke (2019) involves a six-phase process for analysis and this was the approach that was taken here. Whilst the phases were sequential, with each building on the previous one, analysis is typically a recursive process and so it was here, with movement back and forth between different phases. Therefore, upon completion of the interviews, the process started with initial familiarisation with the data, where I first transcribed the in-person interviews into electronic format to combine participant responses with the other interview data. I transcribed each interview myself and then re-read each in order to become more familiar with the contents. Using NVivo software (a qualitative data analysis computer software package), having reviewed literature, initial deductive themes (Figure 5.2) were set up (see above) and labels were then attached to transcripts as they fitted into these. The whole dataset was coded in this

way with codes and extracts collated. Additional inductive themes were also added when important features of the data were identified that may have been relevant to answering the research questions.

Each additional candidate theme was then checked against the dataset and reviewed in order to check that they told “a convincing story of the data” (‘Thematic analysis - The University of Auckland’, 2019) where themes were defined as “patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central concept or idea”. Themes were then named and defined where each theme was analysed in order to give its scope and focus that determines the ‘story’ of each. Figure 5.3 shows the set of themes derived following this deductive-inductive process.

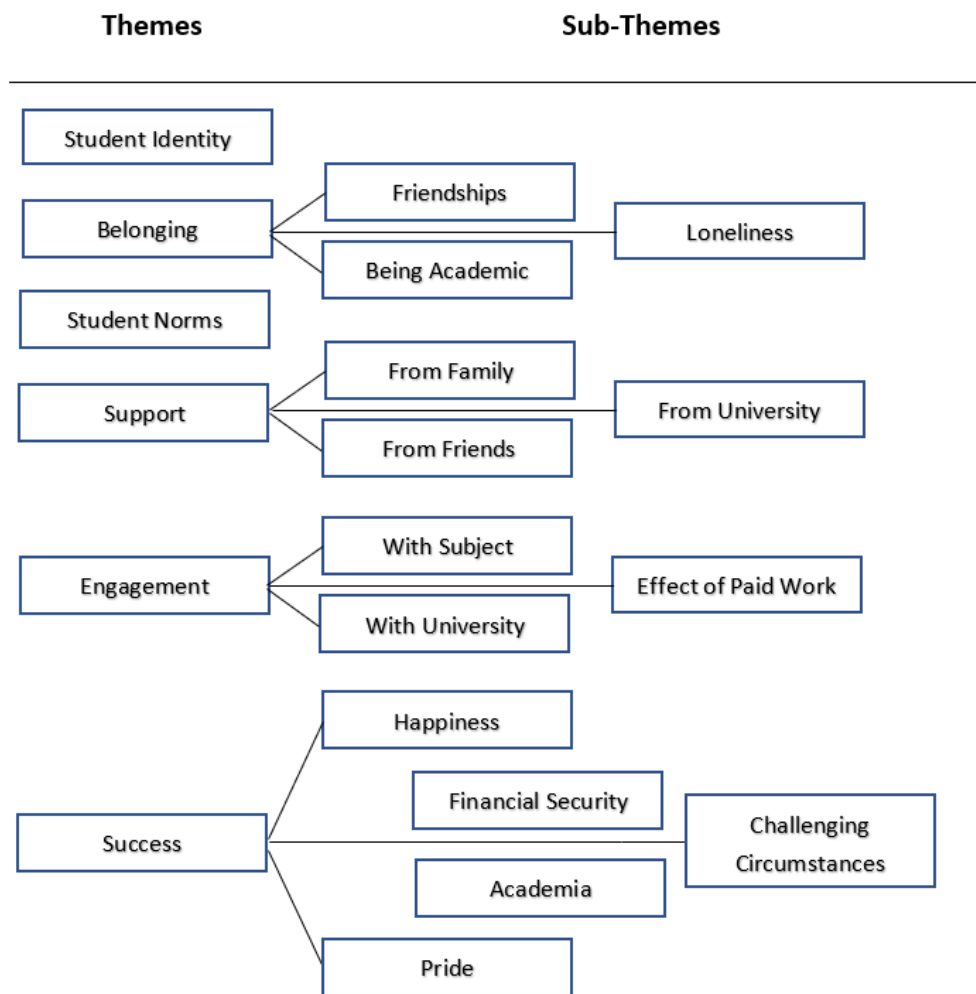


Figure 5.3 Visual representation of deductive-inductive themes

5.5 Findings

5.5.1 Is the student social identity important to participants?

In order to answer the Research Question of whether the identity of ‘student’ is an important one (see Figure 5.1) during the first part of the interview participants were asked to describe themselves in three words. These words were generally adjectives such as ‘honest’, ‘caring’ or ‘friendly’. Only those who were mothers included terms other than adjectives, with every participant who was a mother including the term ‘mother’ or ‘mum’ (see Figure 5.4). Students did not respond ‘student’ when asked this question to the student participants in these interviews. It may be noted that when the same question was put to students during a third-year psychology lecture, a quarter of the respondents included the descriptor ‘student’ (see Figure 5.5).

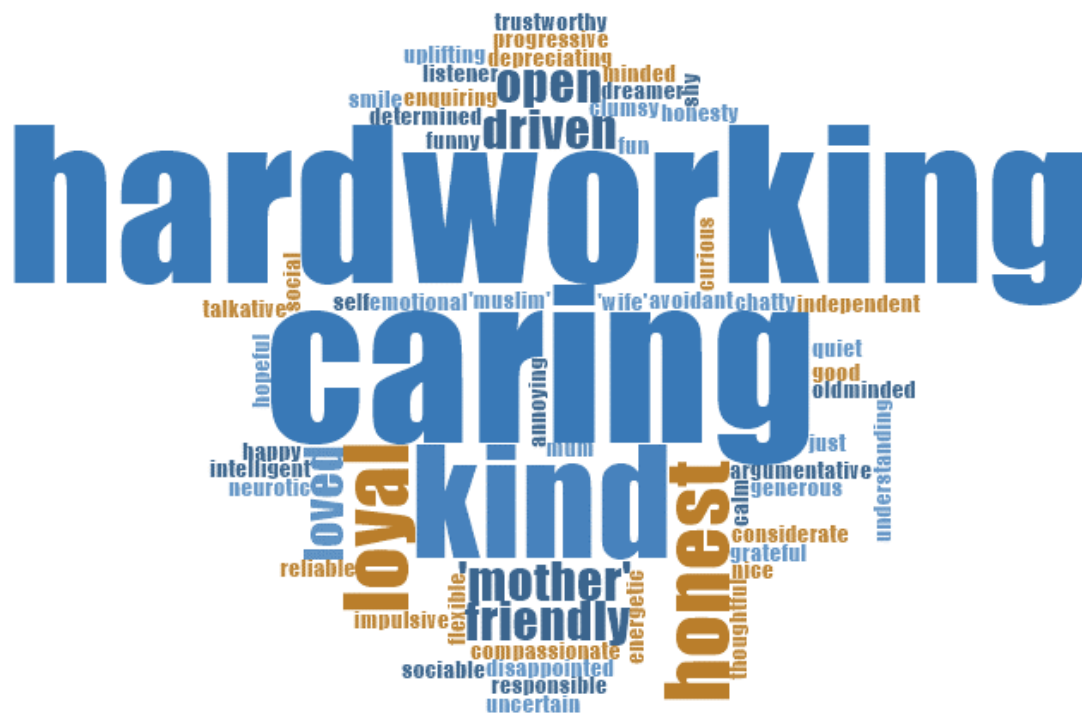


Figure 5.4. Student self- descriptors from interview sessions



Figure 5.5 *Student self- descriptors from students in a psychology lecture*

From the differences between responses made during interview (still on university premises but in an interview room rather than classroom or lecture theatre) and during a lecture there is an indication that the context of where the question is asked may have an influence on the nature of participants' responses. This finding corresponding with a central idea of Self Categorisation Theory.

During interviews some participants' given responses that may be thought of as relating potentially to a student identity are 'hardworking' and 'intelligent'. The descriptor 'hardworking' tended to be used by students who were not in their first year of study whilst 'intelligent' was only used by those who were the first in their family to attend university.

Some students found this task difficult and took several minutes to decide upon three words that they felt described themselves.

P12: *“It’s really hard, isn’t it? And it’s hard to think of positive words.”*. (A mature, White British, Childhood and Youth Studies student with caring responsibilities).

Whilst all students did use positive self-descriptors, some less positive descriptors were used by two students who commuted from their parental homes (“argumentative” and “shy”) and also by a mature student with caring responsibilities (“uncertain”). These responses correspond with findings from Taylor and House (2010) whose findings indicated that mature students and those from BAME backgrounds were less positive in their self-descriptions.

Later in the interview sessions, when participants were shown a set of images (see Appendix 3) they were told that they were seeing images of students and were asked to pick out those that they felt best represented themselves. This act may have been interpreted as triggering students’ social identity as students as they were asked them to think about themselves in that context with the images acting as cues.

5.5.2 What are students’ perceptions of success?

In order to answer the Research Question of how the view of student success may vary across demographic groups and between students taking professional and non-professional degree courses (see Figure 5.1), participants were asked what success meant to them (see interview schedule in Appendix 3). Student success may be seen as a complex construct (Zepke, Leach, & Butler, 2011) with hard outcomes measured by universities and outside agencies (such as the OfS) including retention and academic achievement and soft outcomes such as student engagement. A number of institutional factors may affect students’ academic success (Kuh et

al., 2006) with non-institutional factors such as family background effecting aspirations and family support for study having an impact on student success (Zepke et al., 2011).

Analysis of the findings revealed several subthemes surrounding students' perceptions of success: Happiness; Challenging Personal Circumstances; Pride; Financial security and Academia.

5.5.2.1 Happiness. When first asked to consider success, many students did not initially respond in terms of academic success but instead responded in terms of emotional affect, particularly in terms of feeling happy. This was the strongest sub-theme found with participants discussing the importance of feeling happy in order to feel successful in their lives. This seemed to be the case for students with different living circumstances, including those who commuted from the parental home:

P13: *“When I feel happy or content with what I have. That would be it yes.”*. (A Black African first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

P2: *“Being at peace with myself.”*. (An Asian European first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

Happiness was also seen as a criterion for success in those who lived in halls of residence:

P18: *“First of all obviously being happy.”*. (A White British first year psychology student living in halls).

The importance of feeling happy in order to feel successful has been seen in previous research such as that with pre-university student participants in the study by Wiseman et al. (2017) where emphasis was also placed on happiness as a criteria for success.

5.5.2.2 Challenging Personal Circumstances. Considering their personal circumstances seemed important for some students, either considering success as something

different from what they experienced in their home environment or thinking that the challenges they had already overcome meant they were already successful.

The possible influence of students' responsibilities outside of university on perceptions of success was highlighted by one student who was also a young carer. They responded in terms of comparing themselves with their disabled mother.

P6: *"I think to be successful you have to do something that makes you happy. Because I see my mum and she – she's obviously at home and she's not able to do things and she's not happy – and I'm not saying that that's not successful but I want to be able to get to a place where I am happy... But I think you have to be happy in life to get the most out of it. I see my mum upset a lot and I just – it sounds really selfish – but I don't want to go down the same path and be upset because obviously I see how miserable she is some days and I don't want to feel that myself."* (A White British first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

Personal challenges, in the case below with mental health issues, led to one student participant feeling a success right now because of having a sense of conquering personal hurdles:

P14: *"So I think for me like – like this morning – because I get on a busy train and usually, I get so panicked I stand up by the doors like way before my stop just so I'm able to get off of the train – but this morning I thought 'no I'm going to sit here on the seat and wait'. And even if it gets busy, I'm just going to get up and push through them all... And that was a challenge for me. And I did it. And I felt really proud of myself. And then like my mum said she was really proud. I told her 'I done it!'. Like I've been a real commuter. So, it's like baby steps."* (A White British first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

This sub-theme seemed to occur only in students who commuted into university from their parental home. This may be due to additional caring responsibilities meaning the student had to combine the caring responsibilities of either a young carer or parent and the necessity of continuing to provide care. Alternatively, issues related to mental health experienced prior to

university may mean students are less likely to leave the parental home and instead choose to attend a university within commuting distance in order to continue to receive support. As chronic stress affects students' academic performance (Schraml et al., 2012) that performance may also be affected by problems with mental health that contribute to stress (Bachrach & Read, 2012).

5.5.2.3 Pride. Feelings of pride appeared to be important to students when describing feelings of success. Some students termed success in terms of feeling proud of themselves or feeling that they had made others proud of them. For some, such as P2, it was put simply.

P2: *"Making my parents happy."* (A British Asian first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

Making loved ones proud as a marker of success was also the case for students who did not commute from their parental home.

P18: *"Like I know that people around me are proud of me and yeah that's one thing – making people that are important to me proud."* (A White British first year psychology student living in halls).

For students who were parents, perceptions of success appeared to coalesce around modelling what they want for their children and feelings of pride in their academic achievements.

P8: *"Being able to do what I want to do for my kid and show them the sort of life I want them to see, to be fair. So, kind of – at the moment I'm like really – I'm starting to feel proud of myself now because – hold on [chokes up and stops talking]... I feel I can say I'm proud of myself."* (An Israeli third year Childhood and Youth Studies student with caring responsibilities).

5.5.2.4 Financial Security. Financial security was an important sub-theme found within participants' discussions. This was important both in terms of acquiring material goods

(‘a nice house’) and financial security (‘being able to pay the bills’) as being part of how they would know they were successful. Modelling success around financial security was prevalent for students who were the first in their family to study at university.

P18: *“I want to be financially stable as well. Like I don’t want to be worrying about money when I’m older. Like I want to be in a good paid job... Yeah so, I think I factor in like – because people say it’s not all about money but in reality, to me it actually is a little bit... I don’t want to be like really rich – I just want to be able to pay my bills and not stress”.* (A White British first year psychology student living in halls).

Expressing success in terms of financial security was also present for those whose parents had attended university, whether those students were living in halls of residence or commuting from their family home.

P22: *“Like I know I’ll be happy when I do have a good job and earn good money – income. Because that’s like – I need – like I would want to be able to afford the lifestyle that my parents gave me.”.* (A White International student from Dubai first year psychology student living in halls).

P11: *“I guess for me I’m thinking about a nice house.”.* (A White British first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

By expressing success in terms of financial security these students were similar to those students (from London mainly) in a study by Wiseman et al. (2017) study who viewed being successful in terms of achieving a high income, though these students all studied in London, their backgrounds were from a variety of areas in a similar way to the student population discussed here.

5.5.2.5 Academic Success. For most participants the question of how they saw success needed to be rephrased in terms of how they viewed success in terms of academia in order for them to discuss it in these terms. However, once prompted, participants were able to view

success in this way and discussed in in terms of grades they wanted to achieve as an undergraduate, progression and further postgraduate study.

Participants' showed a tendency to respond in terms of end of programme grades they saw as being successful, in particular gaining a first-class degree. This appeared to be the case for students living in halls.

P15: "*Yes getting to a first would be all right for me.*". (A Greek first year psychology student living in halls).

Seeing a successful academic outcome only in terms of gaining a first-class degree also seemed to apply to students commuting from their parental homes or older students living independently.

P14: "*I think that everybody knows that the pinnacle is getting a first. We all want a first.*". (A White British first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

P9: "*I've got it in my head that I am not happy unless I get a first.*". (A White British third year Childhood and Youth Studies student who commutes from the parental home).

P12: "*So long as I come out with a good first-class degree, I'll feel that I have been successful in my studies.*". (A White British mature, third year Childhood and Youth Studies student living independently).

In the same way that official sources (such as the OfS) see both a first class and upper second-class degree outcomes as being successful, some participants did see upper second-class degrees as successful outcomes for themselves. Several students who were the first in their families to study in Higher Education did see an upper second-class degree as a successful outcome. For instance, P2 (a British Asian first year psychology student who commutes from

the parental home), P4 (a White British second year psychology student living independently in their own home) and P8 (an Israeli third year Childhood and Youth Studies student with caring responsibilities). Also, two students who were not first in family viewed a successful academic outcome in the same way.

P11: *“Oh - oh yeah. Everyone wants a first. I'd be happy with a two one.”*. (A 19-year-old, White British first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

P17: *“Yeah so that's what I'm aiming to do. No less than a two one and no re-submissions or anything.”*. (A 37-year-old Black African third year Nursing student living in a house share).

No students living in halls of residence expressed obtaining an upper second degree as a successful academic outcome. However, some other interviewees saw a successful outcome as simply being able to pass the current year or the course of study and did not mention the grade at all. Only one of these students (P11) was not the first in their family to study in Higher Education.

P16: *“Just now I want to be able to finish the first year. And the second. And then the third. I'll be happy with myself.”*. (A Bulgarian mature first year psychology student living in a house share).

P8: *“Before I was just – pass to get through it. Now I'm trying to – can I get an extra mark?”*. (An Israeli third year Childhood and Youth Studies student with caring responsibilities).

P15: *“To have good grades at the end of my university but especially for now because my grades are not good. I want to pass the first year.”*. (A White British first year psychology student living in halls).

P11: *“Get through three years.”*. (A White British first year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

Many students voiced that study beyond the undergraduate level would make them feel successful, whether they were first in family or not such as P16 or P21. Masters Level aspirations were also stated by those students who lived in halls and those who commuted to university from their parental home such as P22 or P13. Two psychology students who were both first in family (P4 and P20) were considering even further study by considering continuing for a PhD.

Only one student saw further studies as a way to extend their life as a student and delay adult responsibilities.

P21: *“I want to study for as long as I can because – I mean – I’ve got my whole life to work.”*. (A Portuguese first year psychology student living in Halls).

Finally, one student saw academic success as being able to complete the journey, comparing themselves to those who do not finish their courses and seeing finishing university as an accomplishment in itself.

P19: *“Well from the jobs perspective you need to have of course a high grade – but if it wasn’t for that – I wouldn’t give myself a grade – I will say ‘you accomplished this journey’ because – you know the moment you take this journey you want to finish this journey. So, you need to be happy with that. Because some people they don’t finish university – like they go away. So at least you are happy that you finished the journey.”*. (A second year from the Dominican Republic studying psychology and living in a house share).

5.5.3 What are students’ perceptions of social support?

Whilst specific questions were not asked about support at university, a general theme of support was generated through the interviews coming through discussion on how students saw

themselves and their expectations and experiences of university. Support was noted in a number of ways, both in terms of giving support to peers and family and also seeking out and receiving support from family, university and external peers and the university.

5.5.3.1 Receiving or seeking support. Students talked of receiving or seeking support in the form of emotional and academic help but also practical and social support. This support was received from family (even if remote for international students) or from university friends. Support from the university in terms of the actions of specific tutors, the method of teaching and use of the Extenuating Circumstances system were also mentioned. If support was not received from family, such as not wanting them to study, not valuing their choices or supporting them emotionally, it was commented on.

5.5.3.2 The Importance of Receiving Emotional Support. Some students spoke of their parents being supportive of choice to go to university, even if as first-generation students they felt their parents did not understand what study at university entailed.

P14: *“I think sometimes they don't understand like how much work it is. I know like the first year is not as important but I think they sort of - everybody sort of has ideas of students, don't they? You know going out all the time.... And because they've never been [...] But I think they always wanted me to go to university because I think in their eyes, they just see it as the next step. I think a lot of - you know they - people think you do A Levels and then you do your degree. So that's why - I think they're very proud and I think they're happy I've done it.”*. (A White British first generation, female psychology student).

Another example of a first-generation student, P18, spoke of her parents being initially less keen of her choice to study at university, because they did not understand the qualifications their daughter's career of choice would need:

P18: *“They kind of wanted me to do an apprenticeship. Because that's the way they're inclined [...] But like I tried to tell them that what I want to do I can't do that through an apprenticeship and I want to go to uni because like I don't want to go straight into a 9 to 5 job now. I couldn't think of anything worse. And I think they're really happy now that I've got in.”*. (A White British first generation, female psychology student).

One 19-year-old female student first generation student from Birmingham, living in halls of residence, said she had to ‘fight’ to be allowed to move away to university, but felt supported by her parents once the decision was made:

P24: *“Like my parents are - my parents said no to me moving here and that was tough. Not my dad - my dad was cool but then my mum - she was against and then she was like 'no you can't go'. So, I was like 'oh no' but then we got around her now - my mum - and I was relieved.”*. (A British Asian first generation, female psychology student).

As well as being supportive of choosing to study, some students spoke of their parents being supportive of their choice of course, whatever that may be.

P21 said of her parents: *“Yes. They are super supportive. And I'm very into theatre as well so they were super supportive of me even if I'd wanted to go through like the theatre path.”*. (An 18-year-old Portuguese student studying psychology).

However, another student said that her family did not understand that she was studying psychology and actually thought she was studying to become a nurse.

P19: *“I think they don't because they- they have never been to school so they don't know what it's really like going to school. And they even think I'm doing something else not psychology.”*. (A 23-year-old originally from the Dominican Republic).

She went on to say that she would explain this later (after graduation) by telling them she was studying Mental Health Nursing and that they would believe her.

International students, who had moved to the UK specifically to study, often found support by

speaking to family in their home country by telephone or video call, sometimes speaking every day, such as P7, a 19-year-old female student from India. A barrier to this support could be the sheer distance from their families such as for P22.

P22: *“I just didn't - I couldn't prepare myself for like missing my family. Because that was like really difficult. Because I'd never really - the longest I'd been from them was two weeks. Erm and just them being so far - like it really is far - like if something happened - like if I needed them, they wouldn't be able to get here in like a few hours like - it would be like a day or two. And erm like the time difference - like when you want to call them at night - like they're asleep.”*. (A 19-year-old female student whose family lived in Dubai).

Some older interviewees, talked warmly of the emotional support they received from their partners rather than their parents, telling them they are doing well, for example:

P20: *“Yeah he understands - he's so helpful. He's - I couldn't ask for more. [...] He helps me with the house when I'm studying too hard. And he tries to convince me when I'm taking - the psychologist that sees me said that I have perfectionist beliefs - that I need to be perfect if not I'm a failure - and he tries to convince me all the time like 'you have a good grade - you don't need to worry about that - you are just in the first year - you study all the time'. And I'm like 'I don't study all the time'. And he's like 'you do study all the time - you're doing well'.”*. (A 28-year-old Brazilian psychology student who lives in a house-share with her husband)

A couple of interviewees talked about their partners being worried that they were going to change once they were a university student. For instance, P27, a 48-year-old mother of five talked of the concerns her husband had before starting her degree.

P27: *“Once I told him that if I was going to change, I would have changed when you married me. And changed from my own people and copied your people but I didn't do that. I have my own identity - I become who I am until God knows when. I don't change.”*. (A Black British first-generation student of Social Work).

She went on to talk of the emotional support she received from her family and how her husband had acknowledged that she had ‘stayed the same’ despite his initial fears.

Some students did perceive a lack of support from their parents, not necessarily due to a lack of care of their part. Two different students gave the opinion that their parents, both sets of whom had not experienced a university education, were happy whatever their child was doing. This was the case for two of the few males that were interviewed.

P3: *“I’m the first in my immediate family to go. And it’s more of a case of me telling them than them asking. Because I think - it’s a little bit of a case of out of sight out of mind. Obviously, everyone’s so busy with their lives and they just think ‘oh he’s off in London’ - whatever. My mum was very happy with me being a waiter and so that’s the kind of family I have. Like, work, pay your bills, make sure you pay your bills - so when I came to university - for me - everything’s amazing! I’m so grateful to have this experience.”*. (An Asian first-generation psychology student).

P4: *“So yeah I think my mum was happy so long as I was doing what I wanted to do and what I needed to do.”*. (A White British first generation psychology student).

However, even older mature students interviewed felt the need of emotional support from their own parents, mainly in respect of their choice to go and study at all. For instance:

P12: *“I think the person who has the most difficulty accepting it is my mother. And she’s - well she’d never complement anybody - well she would my boys but she’d pay me a compliment anyway - but I know she would never say it to me but it’s just like ‘it’s ridiculous’. ‘Why are you doing that at your age? What are you going to do with that then? All that money.’”*. (A White British, married Childhood and Youth Studies student of 55).

She went on to refer to the fact that her mother had left school at 15 and that whilst her mother saw attendance at university as right for her grandsons that ‘she doesn’t see that that’s right for me’ and how that was ‘hurtful’.

Another older mature student, with her own daughter at university said:

P26: *“I think my parents - they're - you know - they're from a different time - you know so my mum - you know - she's like 'Why?' - you know? And my dad is just like - he thinks I'm mad really. And so, there's really no regard or - erm - yeah there's no regard really of things that I might have on my plate.”*. (A Black American Social Work student of 50).

The importance of having supportive friends on your course, particularly in nursing, even if you have support elsewhere was raised. For instance, a 30-year-old who had already completed a degree prior to studying a nursing degree said:

P25: *“When you're feeling really low or when you're feeling really lost or overwhelmed you just need to talk to someone on your course because - however much I love my boyfriend to pieces - he doesn't really necessarily understand possibly what I've seen or - however much I can explain it - or quite how to process it.”*. (A White British first generation nursing student).

Particularly for those without a long-term partner, including most of the younger students interviewed, there was talk of the importance of seeking and receiving emotional support from their peers at university. That support can be something as simple as having someone to talk to as stated by one student who felt that her ‘poor English’ was a barrier to making friends on her course initially:

P16: *“But yeah the first term it was - I was telling my friends and my parents 'I want to find the friends who speak' - because it was - I go - I don't know - it was little - but you feel like alone. It's no - but the second term - I don't know how - we can start to speak to some colleagues. Now I stay with her every Monday and Friday. She explain me. She - we study together...and now it's nice.”*. (A 36-year-old Bulgarian psychology student).

One participant, P23 a 19-year-old interviewed in her third term of study spoke of not feeling

supported by the new friends she had made despite studying and living together and the feeling 'let down' when the friends they had originally made had fallen away:

P23: *“And I tend to have small groups of friends. Erm and at the moment making friends - we're not super close yet - so there is that awkward stage where you are just all kind of sit next to each other and don't quite know what to say [...] So I've made friends and then they've all dropped out. So, I'm having to start again.”*. (A White British first generation psychology student).

Not all interviewees felt the need of support from peers at university, either because they felt they received support from the immediate family they lived with or because they felt they had all the support they needed from existing friendships outside of their university experience. For instance:

P28: *“And I think some of it is about being older as well because I remember before I went, I was saying to my friends like I've got no interest in friendships. I've got loads of friends in London so - you know I was raised here as well - so I've got loads of friends here so I don't need more.”*. (A 25-year-old White British Childhood and Youth Studies student).

5.5.3.3 The Importance of Receiving Financial Support. Some students perceived that they had received practical support from their parents in the form of buying them what they thought they needed to start at university. This varied in scale, from one student who talked about setting off for university for the first time with little in the way of assistance:

P4: *“Yeah my mum was just like 'Well Good Luck'. She dropped me off with some toilet paper and bread and then she was like 'Well I'll see you when I see you.'! [laugh]”*. (A 20-year-old first generation male psychology student).

Whilst another student, talked warmly of shopping with her mother after finding out she would be going away to university 'at the last minute':

P2: *“So in those last 3 days my mum and I went out and bought all the stuff that I'd need to go to uni.”*. (A 21-year-old Asian British first-generation psychology student).

Some students saw themselves studying at university as being a financial burden on their parents and for one this was a reason when considering whether to continue studying:

P21: *“Three years being in England and not near my parents. Then I feel like my parents would be like 'OK we're tired of giving you money - go work!'.”* (An 18-year-old student from Portugal).

The importance of financial support as well as emotional support from partners was specifically stated by some mature students. For example:

P12: *“I've always felt that I had the ability to do a degree and should have done it when I was much younger - kicking myself that I didn't do it when I was much younger - but when I turned 50 decided - I am going to do it! And a very supportive second husband who's financially and emotionally, critically everything - supports me really well [....] And that's probably why I haven't done it in the past. Because I really haven't felt - I should have done it when my boys were little but then I did feel I - I either wasn't ready myself or I felt that my husband wouldn't have supported me through it. And with young children you've got to have that support in order to do that as well haven't you?”*. (A 55-year-old White British student studying Childhood and Youth Studies).

Those students without access to practical support talked of worrying about having to support themselves whilst being a student even whilst deciding to embark on a programme of study.

An example of this is a student whose own daughter was also studying at university:

P26: *“It mainly revolved around finances. And being responsible for people. And even thinking 'how am I going to make my own mortgage?' and bills and 'how am I going to juggle everything?'. And I just got to a point where I was like you know what - I haven't been hungry yet so I'm just going to - have a leap of faith.”*. (A fifty-year-old Black American Social Work Student).

The affect additional calls on student time required by needing to work to earn money to support themselves is discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

5.5.3.4 Support from university. Whilst I did not ask students how they were supported by the university, some did talk about this in both a positive and negative manner. Support provided by universities may take a number of forms, from systems of Extenuating Circumstances where students may apply to defer submission of coursework to academic and pastoral support from personal tutors and pastoral support from central university student services.

One student, who was not the first in her family to study at university, talked of requesting and receiving support from their personal tutor before even starting their course proper:

P21: "I didn't know if I was coming to uni because none of my registration details had come through! So, I had no idea where I was supposed to be on the first day. And I emailed Oliver and he come back and he went - just turn up here at this time. I was like - yup that's helpful." (A White European 18-year-old psychology student).

The fact that she had familial experience of university systems means she was aware that there was someone she could contact.

Other students had applied to the university's Extenuating circumstances system as personal circumstances meant they were unable to submit coursework on time. For instance, P22, a 19-year-old psychology student who was not the first in her family to study at university, applied for extensions for coursework submissions after the death of a grandparent: "Yeah and I had so many deadlines and I had seven deadlines.", saying that the university "were really good with that".

Another student talked of using the ease of using same system when they became ill, but how

it was not always so easy to apply for the support they needed:

P23: *“And also I got ill so that pushed all of my exams - not exams, assessments to one side and I had to get ECs - so that's a thing that probably doesn't happen to most people. [...] And I could have got ECs for something else - a problem with my mother - but I didn't have to want to get the paperwork for that because it's a bit awkward to like ask to get the paperwork.[...] - so yes I didn't want to have to be like 'hey I know you're not well but can you find all this paperwork for me?'. So, I just didn't do that and tried to do my assessments. So, I found it really difficult when you can't easily prove something without making it a bit awkward. But then when it is straightforward like hospital stuff for yourself - then it's really easy to sort out.”*. (A 19-year-old White British and first-generation psychology student).

One interviewee was negative about the support received from the university, as their expectations were not being met:

P19: *“I was like a bit surprised of this - it's like the help. When you ask help. You don't receive that help you want. But of course, it's normal, I think. They can't give you feedback but they can give you advice. It depends on the teacher.”*. (A 23-year-old student from the Dominican Republic).

Some interviewees had previous experience studying at other universities which they then compared with their current university experience in either a positive or negative way. For instance, P20, a 28-year-old female who had previously studied at university in Brazil, said that she had previously spent more time in lectures, where information was more directly given, now more independent study was expected of students:

P20: *“OK - self-study Tuesday, Wednesday and you guys do it on your own' - isn't it? Basically, it's that. And I was like 'how are we to cope with all of this alone?' - you know? And then they have the support and stuff but sometimes you do expect more from the lecture.”*

Another interviewee, P28, who had ‘dropped out’ of another university course in England,

compared the learning experience more favourably:

P28: *“The teaching itself I'd say is more hands on. At [other university] there was a lot more self-study whereas here - yeah, a lot more hands on. [Other university] would never call you up for having bad attendance but here they do and you get emails if it reaches a certain point. So, I'd say it's - the standards are different - the expectations are different. And what I was expecting was another [other university] and it hasn't been.”*. (A 25-year-old female Childhood and Youth Studies student).

5.5.4 Other Calls on Student Time

The capacity students have to work on their degrees varies and students spoke of having to practically care for family, by giving their time and also perhaps supporting themselves or their family financially. Students also talked about giving time to help university peers academically and emotionally.

Giving support to fellow students either academically or emotionally was seen as important to some participants. For instance, P17, a mature, male nursing student from Zimbabwe spoke warmly of how other students asked for advice on academic matters. Another student, P18, was positive about providing emotional support for her newly made university friends:

P18: *“And like with obviously my new friends and stuff as well - like they always seem to confide in me. Which - I just think I value that quite a lot.”*. (A White British 19-year-old female psychology student).

However, providing support was sometimes a necessity rather than a choice with students having to support their own families emotionally or financially. For instance, again considering student P17, was working as well as studying in order to be able to support family in his own country of Zimbabwe, with this affecting his ability to study effectively:

P17: *“So as far as like last year I think I was slightly overworking because I had to make sure that I had to cover my bills in the UK as well as supporting family. And make sure I pass as well. So, it was a bit on the tricky side.”*. (A 37-year-old Zimbabwean nursing student).

Other students, with caring responsibilities talked of the responsibility they felt towards their elderly or disabled parents, such P6, a 19-year-old psychology student who lived at home with her disabled mother or P26 a mature social work student who felt a “massive responsibility” towards her parents.

Other students spoke of not being able to give the time they wanted to their children and trying to organise their studying to maximise the time spent with their children such P27 a 48-year-old Social Work student with five children at home:

P27: *“ ... my 7-year-old would come in any time with 'mummy you're still working!' - she will keep on reminding me. Like before I came yesterday, I had to tell her that 'oh I'm so sorry I've been so busy but I promise you when we finish this, we can plan something'. [...] When I go home, I don't touch anything - even if I have submission to do tomorrow - the next day - I don't touch. Because I promised myself when I started - I'm not touching books when my kids come from school - so I give them that time until 8, 9 when everyone is asleep. I go to sleep and then I wake up around 2, 1? Then I continue until 3 maybe, sleep and then wake up at 6.”*. (A 48-year-old Black British Social Work student).

Another student, P10, who was pregnant in her first year of study spoke around image 11 (attach) and having to try to study for resits when her daughter was just two months old and how things have improved over time:

P10: *“I remember having her on the changing mat and having all these papers everywhere and then just - that I remember. And like breast feeding and writing and*

like so - not so much now. ”. (A 24-year-old White British Childhood and Youth Studies student).

Now P10 is careful to try and separate university study and her parenting responsibilities:

P10: *“I feel like I have quite a lot of help and support. She is in nursery and I can put her in for the extra afternoon if I need to. It's really rare that I've got the laptop out and I've got her. I really try to just make sure that when I'm with her I'm with her and when I'm working - because I can't do the both - I end up doing both of them half-heartedly otherwise if I've got them both at the same time.”*

Other parents try to do the same, such as P8 who also has a very young child as well as working four days a week and attending university one day a week:

P8: *“She goes nursery - actually she goes nursery when I'm working - I work every day other than today. So, like either work, home - by the time I'm home it's just home stuff and then - yeah.”*. (A 26-year-old Israeli Childhood and Youth Studies student).

There were indications that interviewees thought that seeing their parents study had a positive effect on their children. This ranged from students with young children such as P8, felling like her toddler wanted to be like her: *“She likes to draw next to me - she likes to feel like she's doing the same and she likes to draw”*.

Another older, first-generation student (P27) talked of the effect that seeing her parent studying had had on one of her children:

P27: *“It's about having them see that different routes at different times are available... My daughter - she's doing her GCSEs now but she's got that perspective - they took them to different universities when they were in year 9 and her mind is telling her that she wants to be a gynaecologist. She wants to go to Cambridge. Yes. So, whenever you speak of anything she says 'no, no, no that's where I'm going'. So, it's like she's made up her mind.”*

5.5.5 How do participants view themselves as students?

In order to answer the Research Question of how students view their own student characteristics (see Figure 5.1), participants were asked to pick out a number of images that they felt best represented themselves as students and used the chosen images acted as prompts for them to talk about their experiences in higher education.

Analysis of the findings revealed several main themes surrounding their experiences of being a student in Higher Education: ‘Belonging’, ‘Engagement’, ‘Student norms’ and ‘Satisfaction’ (see Figure 5.3). There were a number of sub-themes present within each and these are now discussed in turn below.

5.5.5.1 Belonging. A common theme among participants involved feelings of belonging at university, in respect of the sub-themes of ‘loneliness’, ‘friendships’ and ‘being academic’.

5.5.5.1.1 Loneliness. Feeling lonely and being alone was an important sub-theme found within participants’ discussions on their experiences of being a student with negative feelings associated with loneliness and positive experiences of choosing to study alone.



Figure 5.5. Image of student studying alone in the library (see Appendix 3 for source)

One participant picked Figure 5.5 as representing them as a student and viewed studying alone as being negative:

P15: “... *alone without any kind of support of friends*”. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

Another participant expressed loneliness as a feeling of being unsupported when referring to a previous experience of university which they left after spending a year living away from home in halls of residence:

P2: “*I was really stressed about it and I had no one – like it’s weird going from a family of four to just living by yourself – not living by yourself but – you are in your own room and you are the only person that cares about your problems.*”. (A mature, first year psychology student now commuting from the parental home).



Figure 5.6. *Image of student sitting alone (see Appendix 3 for source)*

Some students continued to feel lonely after their first year of study. On choosing Figure 5.6 to represent them as a student one student said the following:

P19: “*She’s like you are – confused – and you feel lonely – so I think I am in that situation. That represents me.*”. (A second-year psychology student living in a house share).

However, most of the participants who chose Figure 5.5 as representing them as a student said this photograph represented 'studying alone' rather than loneliness and saw being alone positively, a choice made because they enjoy working that way or as an aid to productivity.

This positive slant on being alone applied to those who commuted to university:

P13: "*I like to study alone*". (A first-year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

The positive side of being alone was also found in those who did not commute:

P7: "*And this is me [Figure 5.5] like doing my research in the library. Because when I'm able to focus on something I want to be alone and give my full attention to it.*". (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

One participant discussed studying alone as being symbolic of the changes they had been able to make since starting university.

P14: "*I've been more independent - because I'm not a very independent person at all. But having come here - you know because I commute - it's made me a lot more independent. I can sit and get on with my work - like I'm not scared to go and sit in the library and just get my laptop out and get stuff done.*". (A first-year psychology student who commutes from the parental home).

No student who commuted to university described themselves as lonely though there was a tendency to discuss difficulties in making friends when commuting into university as is noted below.

5.5.5.1.2 *Friendships*. Peer networks and friendships appeared to be an important sub-theme found within participants' discussions. The logistics of building friendships for students who commuted into university appeared to be a source of difficulty for some students.

P6: *“It’s hard to meet up on the days where we don’t have uni because we’re all having to travel to each other or – so I’ve gone to the cinema with one friend maybe once or twice but nothing other than that.”*. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).

One student who said that their faith was very important to them also said that mixing with people outside their family was sometimes problematic for them and that they felt most comfortable at home with their immediate family.

P13: *“So it’s kind of pointless to go out and have a meal with them when they’re talking about – like I’m not into that stuff – you know what girls are like – they talk about boys and things. And I’m like uncomfortable.”*. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).

Making friends was also an important sub-theme for those students who were not commuting into study. Many did reflect that halls of residence were friendly places to be even as a mature student.

P17: *“I think even on my first day when I moved in everyone was quite friendly...I didn’t really feel out of place.”*. (A third year mature, nursing student reflecting on their first year in halls of residence).

Other participants discussed how friendships were made because of being together in halls of residence and sharing the same experiences of living away from home.

P22: *“The two girls I like – they’re both from halls and it’s like the three of us that go out with everyone else ... yeah you get so close with them because of uni ... everyone’s in the same situation.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

However, many students also living in halls of residence did not find making friends as easy as they expected it be, especially at first.

P7: *“I thought that – you know – people would mix easily but like the first two months I was like – well I felt really, really lonely... I thought I’d just start making friends and we would be hanging out.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

There was also discussion on how other students were different from how they saw themselves which made making friends more difficult for them.

P23: *“I haven’t met many students like me. I think most students my age are kind of partying students. And there’s a lot of mature students here which I didn’t realise. And a lot of them are mothers and stuff so we don’t have that much in common... so it’s quite hard to find somebody who is like me.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

The quality of friendships for younger undergraduates has been found to have a positive relationship to their adjustment to university (Buote et al., 2007), with friends providing a sense of belonging (Tokuno, 1986).

An active social life appeared to be an important aspect of the student experience with an expectation that most students are *‘partying students’* as stated by the participant above. Figures 5.7 and 5.8 below were the images many students associated with a social life and friendships at university.



Figure 5.7. *Image of student group socialising (see Appendix 3 for source)*



Figure 5.8. *Alternative Image of student group socialising (see Appendix 3 for source)*

Numerous students who lived in halls of residence discussed their social lives with friends they had made in university as a positive aspect of their student experience.

P7: “[Figure 5.7] This is basically going out at night with my friends at [the students’ union bar] or anywhere central. Like maybe three times a month? Sometimes even less because I don’t get the time.”. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

For international students in halls of residence, socialising was often seen as a way of keeping in touch with friends from home, rather than utilising new friendships made at university.

P21: “I have a lot of friends who are also here which are from back home. So yeah, we like going out for dinner and parties and stuff. But I chose [Figure 5.7] over [Figure 5.8] because we never – well I personally never really let myself get to this stage.”. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

This was also the case for students commuting from their parental homes who often saw their student experiences socialising as quite separate from those taking place at home.

P14: “I’ve got friends at home and friends I’ve made at uni. That’s one of the things I was scared about coming – like as I said I’m quiet... So, it’s like I’ve sort of got two separate – not lives – but I’ve got home and I’ve got uni so it’s like nice.”. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).

It has been found that students who commute are more willing to engage in the academic rather than social sphere (Thomas & Jones, 2017) and that there is minimal engagement in social activities with their university peers for students in London . However, some students who commute may frame their experience more positively, as P14 above did, valuing the separation between home life and university (Liz Thomas Associates, 2019).

5.5.5.1.3 *Being 'Academic'*. The idea of being an academic person appeared to be an important sub-theme found within participants' discussions around feelings of belonging at university. This was discussed in terms of knowing that university was the correct choice for them.

P23: *"I always sort of knew that university was the path for me because – they kept bringing up apprenticeships but – and I looked at them but there was nothing there that really interested me – because I'm quite an academic person and I prefer academics."*. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

Being the 'academic one' was also discussed in terms of being a label assigned to students by the families of commuting students if they were the first in their families to study in Higher Education.

P8: *"I don't know why because I was - I moved a lot of schools - I've done a lot - they always felt like - I'm the clever one."*. (A third year, mature Childhood and Youth Studies student commuting from their own flat).

P2: *"My parents always used to make me sit down with my sister and try to get her to do her work because I was the academic one"*. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).



Figure 5.9 Image of student alone with her laptop (see Appendix 3 for source)

Other students felt that they did not belong at university because they did not feel like an ‘academic’ person, one participant felt that Figure 5.9 represented them and the stress they felt stress as a student because of this.

P21: *“I’ve never been very academic. I don’t - I don’t - like I like going to lectures and stuff and obviously like I love learning - but actually like sitting down and studying is really hard for me. It’s really, really hard just focusing and stuff. So, deadlines are really stressful.”*. (First year psychology student living in halls of residence).

There were both students living locally and those commuting who chose Figure 5.9 to represent themselves feeling stressed and confused by the academic work they were asked to complete.

P18: *“Well to be fair I don’t leave things to the last minute - I just get confused [laugh] yeah it’s just hard.”*. (First year psychology student living in halls of residence).

P9: *“This is me nearly every day! [laugh] The majority of the time - kind of like how [her friend] said about how when she doesn’t understand something she gets like she shuts down - I’m a very emotional person. As soon as I don’t get something I cry.”*. (Third year Childhood and Youth Studies student who commutes from the parental home).

A student’s sense of belonging at university has been found to be positively associated with their motivation and academic self-efficacy (Freeman et al., 2007) and has also been discussed

in terms of university retention (Hausmann et al., 2007; Hoffman et al., 2002). The discussions above indicate factors inside the classroom (feeling ‘academic’) and outside the classroom (friendships and social life) foster a sense of belonging in students.

5.5.5.2 Engagement. In this theme particularly salient issues were whether the students enjoyed the subject they were studying, joining in with university life more generally and the effects of term time employment. Each of these sub-themes is discussed below.

5.5.5.2.1 Enjoying the subject. A common sub-theme discussed by participants was enjoying the subject they had chosen to study and the affect this had on them.

P14: *“Like I enjoy - I think I was worried that I wouldn't like it. But it is different because I love it. Like I want to come in. Like I'm excited.”*. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).

One participant discussed how enjoyment of the subject helped them continue at university when personal problems (including a relationship break up) occurred soon after starting their course.

P18: *“Yeah I think - when I wanted to drop out like literally at the start of the year - that was just me being like 'argh - everything's going wrong in my life' - but I'm so glad I stuck through because I actually enjoy it. Enjoy the subject.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

Other students discussed how enjoyment of the subject meant they were able concentrate more on the material and engage in the lectures, choosing Figure 5.10 as an image to represent this.



Figure 5.10 *Image of students in a lecture (see Appendix 3 for source)*

P13: *“Yeah engaging with everything. Paying attention. I want to be interested in what specifically they are talking about. Like today's lecture - I was super interested. I didn't realise like it was time to go.”*. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).

Some students discussed how they found it hard to concentrate on courses they did not find enjoyable.

P10: *“There have been quite a few courses that I've really not - not quite a few but - some that I've not enjoyed and I've really found it hard to concentrate.”*. (A third year, mature Childhood and Youth Studies student commuting from their own home).

On choosing an image of a lone student in a library (see Figure 5.5), some participants felt it represented how being a student in Higher Education meant they were able to go deeper into their chosen subject. This was the case for both students who commuted into university and those living in halls of residence.

P5: *“And then this one [Figure 5.5] I also like my own time where I sit alone and I go deep into my subject on my own.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in a house share)

P7: *“And this is me [Figure 5.5] like doing my research in the library. Because when I'm able to focus on something I want to be alone and give my full attention to it.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in Halls of residence).

The idea of having to focus as a student continued into how they use the library to study as a way to manage distractions from study, particularly if they were living in university halls of residence as the participants in the two examples below were.

P18: *“And I used to do my work in my room quite a lot and just be on my bed but like I’ve noticed now [laugh] because my friends will get really distracted but I’ll still end up doing lots of work if I go to the library.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in Halls of residence).

P22: *“Because I don’t do work in my room like. My bed is like too attractive [laugh] when I’m doing my work so I like go to the library like any time I have a deadline or like in January I had exams because like December and November I had loads of deadlines.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in Halls of residence).

Enjoyment in the subject they studied as well as pride were both positive predictors of academic grades (Villavicencio & Bernardo, 2013) and so there is a relationship between enjoyment and success.

5.5.5.2.2 *Wider University Life*. Another common sub-theme discussed by participants was whether they joined in the wider life of the university. This was only a point of discussion for students who commuted into university and was a matter of logistics for some students.

P6: *“I go to my lectures and then I go home... It’s hard to meet up on the days where we don’t have uni because we’re all having to travel to each other.”*. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).

Other commuting students discussed university life as being separate to their lives at home.

P14: *“For me I still have my life at home and I just do this like three days a week.”*. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).

Even when responsibilities are taken on by students who commute, responsibilities at home are more important to them and often attendance would slip as a result such as with P8 a student with parental responsibilities below.

P8: *“I was a student rep for three years - so I did know people. But the years before now I wouldn't attend - my attendance wasn't great. I would just attend for lectures and then I'd quickly go.”*. (A third-year student commuting from their own flat).

Student societies did not seem to have an impact on the student experiences of the participants interviewed, particularly for students who commuted into university.

P13: *“I knew there were societies and stuff. I just thought I would never join one.”*. (A first-year psychology student commuting from the parental home).

Even for students living in halls of residence, paid employment and university work appeared to be more important than belonging to university societies.

P23: *“I joined a few [societies] but I found it hard to make time for them because I've got my job and then I've got all the uni work for assignments and stuff. And the societies are generally held in the evenings of the week when I'm busy.”*. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

5.5.5.2.3 Effects of Paid Employment. Several participants referred to how working in paid employment was important to their university experience. Many choose to combine term time employment with their studies out of necessity as maintenance loans (or no loans at all for international students) may not cover their costs. The effect of paid employment has wider implications than affecting time management.



Figure 5.11 Image of Student in a lecture theatre (*see Appendix 3 for source*)

For instance, this participant was clear as to how paid work affected their ability to engage in academic endeavours to their full ability.

P7: “But yeah that’s me there and this is me when I’m extremely tired [points to Figure 5.11] from work and I have lecture in the morning early the next day - I usually come back at around twelve at night after work so I’m like really, really tired and this is me the next morning.”. (A first-year psychology student living in halls of residence).

In addition to affecting concentration levels, paid work also appeared to affect students’ ability to participate in extra academic or social activities outside of the classroom.

P19: “I remember activities in like our class - oh I didn’t do any of that because I work in the afternoons so - I’m a nanny for an Italian family ... I was prioritising trying to get some money otherwise how could I live? ... Oh yeah this year is special because it’s like closer and the hours is less this year so I’m happy.”. (A second-year psychology student living in a house share).

For some students, paid work had to take priority over university studies due to having to support not just themselves but family either in this country or sending money abroad to support family there.

P17: “So as far as like last year I think I was slightly overworking because I had to make sure that I had to cover my bills in the UK as well as supporting family. And make

sure I pass as well. So, it was a bit on the tricky side.” (A mature nursing student living in a house share).

Previous research has found employment-based demands affects academic engagement (Creed et al., 2015) and that engagement is a significant predictor of academic success (Thomas, 2012). Employment status has been found to have an impact on retention in Higher Education with those working more than 20 hours a week alongside full-time study more likely to drop out (Hovdhaugen, 2015).

5.5.6 Student Norms

In order to answer the Research Question of how students view the characteristics of the typical student (see Figure 5.1), participants were asked to pick out a number of images that they felt best represented typical students and used the chosen images acted as prompts for discussion.

Some students did class themselves as being a ‘typical student’, such as P24, a first generation, 21-year-old Asian psychology student, living in halls of residence who said that the images shown in Figure 5.12 represented her “*A 100%.*”

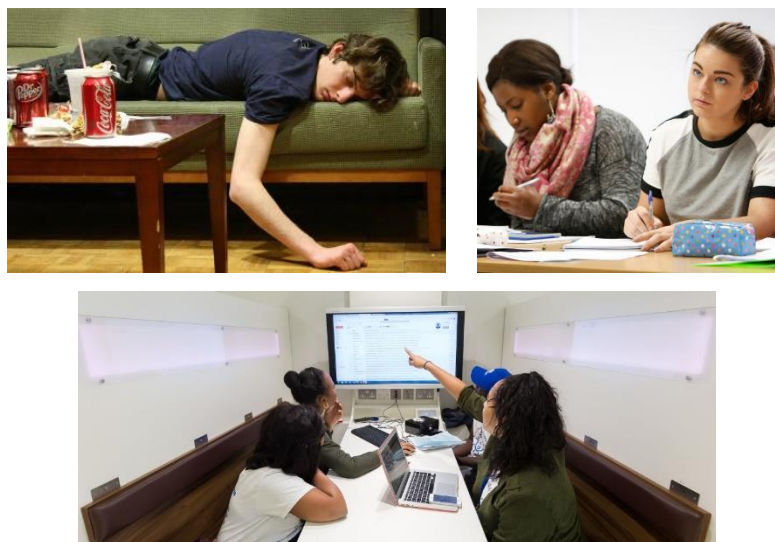


Figure 5.12 *Images chosen to represent both a typical student and herself by participant P24 (see Appendix for sources).*

She went on to say that this set also represented typical students, using the images to describe themselves and also typical students as “*lazy*” but also concentrating in lectures and being involved in group work outside of lectures. However, she did say that there were lots of “*party type people*” living in halls but that “*I’m not a party type person so I don’t involve myself with that.*” And so, she did not see “*partying*” students as being typical.



Figure 5.13 Images of student social groups; (a) (b)
(See Appendix 3 for sources)

Whilst some interviewees expected students to behave in ways portrayed in Figure 5.13 (above), they felt that their course or university did not keep to this norm. For instance:

P1: “*Yeah I think I got the most part of it out of my system. But also - its seems as though students at [this] University aren’t very [Figure 5.13 b] as it is. [...] I did think there’d be a bit of this [Figure 5.13 a]. But I definitely think that’s a university specific thing or maybe it’s just my year group. My course. [...] I think people - maybe how university students are portrayed - possibly this [Figure 5.13 a]. So, you’re not a full-on state like [Figure 5.13 b] but – [...] - society does seem to portray students as having an easy life.*”. (An 18-year-old White British psychology student).

Indeed, putting an increased emphasis on their studies, where this was the norm, was seen as most important to some interviewees, seeing those who party as being quite different to themselves and their friends with Figure 5.14 often discussed.



Figure 5.14 Image of student studying in the library (*See Appendix 3 for source*).

P13: *“So I prefer to like go to the library and study rather than go hang out with people whatever. It's just what I like to do. But I do like see kids going partying and stuff like that.”*. (An 18-year-old Black African psychology student).

P22: *“And I know like my closest friends that I speak to all go to the library a lot - like one of my friends he came to [this university] with me so we're both at this uni and we're like always at the library together.”*. (A 19-year-old psychology student from Dubai).

One young first year student chose Figure 5.14 to represent themselves and also ‘traditional students’, seeing mature students and ‘partying’ students as being different from themselves, with ‘partying’ students being more typical.



Figure 5.15 *Images chosen to represent herself by participant P23 (see Appendix for sources)*.

P23: *“I don't think they represent every student - I think this is more representative of like a traditional student maybe. But erm I think there are different categories of students like mature students and erm people who kind of come for a kind of party culture that would be more like [Figure 5.13 b]. But - so I think this isn't representative of everyone but I think it could represent quite a few. [...] I've always known I wouldn't be a party student so I knew that bit would be different. [...] I haven't actually met many students like me. I think that most of the students my age are the kind of partying students.”*. (A 19-year-old White British psychology student).

5.5.6.1 Being a student at a London university. Some students compared their experience of being a student with that of other students they knew who were studying elsewhere. Particularly saying that first year students were likely to party in other universities.

P9: *“Like my boyfriend goes to Canterbury Uni so he's moved away and his first year at uni was very much this [Figure 5.13 b]. As the two years have gone on now it's settled down a lot more and he's now more into what we do. But because I think I stayed at home personally I didn't necessarily have the uni experience that is like portrayed in like [Figure 5.13 b and a].”*. (A 20-year-old White British Childhood and Youth Studies student).

One interviewee talked of visiting friends who were in more campus-based universities and that this seemed to be a more typical student experience.

P21: *“Like and lifestyle in universities that are like further away from the city are so different to the ones that are actually in the city so that was all fun to experience [when I visited].”*. (An 18-year-old Portuguese psychology student).

As well as the practical side of living on campus and the availability of social life, the effect of the cost of living in London was commented upon as well as the impact of a more international student body.

P4: *“Yeah I think it’s such an international student base its maybe people are coming and not being familiar with where they are and also - yeah - just difference in what there is to do. A lot of the universities that are like in the middle of nowhere - that’s what their main culture is – it’s going out to clubs and doing that. Whereas we’re having to work more to be able to afford to live here.”*. (A 20-year-old White British male psychology student).

5.5.6.2 Commuter Students. One student who commuted from their parental home and had caring responsibilities for her disabled parent talked of how other students seemed to be the type shown in Figure 5.13.

P6: *“I think the majority of students - I’m not labelling everybody - but I think a lot of people are the party type. Because when some people think of university, they think of student life and going out and things like that - but I think it’s a split really - some people are here for education some people are here for education and experience.”* (A 19-year-old White British psychology student)

Her experience was different however and whilst she “expected me to be a bit more outgoing - more social - a bit more of an extrovert” it did not happen for her and she linked this to her status as a commuter student.

P6: *“Because - I don’t know - I find it hard to connect with some people.[...] I think what it is mainly it’s because where I’m a commuter - I’ve made friends with other commuters. So, we’re not all here so once the lectures are done, we all split off and go home.”*

Other commuter students also discussed how others also expected typical students to be those who live at university and are able to take part in an active social life at university and that this was more difficult for them.

P14: *“I think obviously where I didn't stay up here as well it's different because I think again with students a lot of people think of them as staying at university and having like the party thing.”*. (A 20-year-old White British psychology student).

P14: *“And yeah I thought it would be more social. I think obviously living away stops me a little bit because when there is a night out it's obviously it's having to get here and get home.”*. (A 20-year-old White British psychology student).

5.5.6.3 Mature students. Some mature students interviewed compared themselves against other students on their own course, seeing younger students as being more of a typical student and this included enjoying an active social life. For instance:

P26: *“Even some of my colleagues - I think their experience is completely different because they just don't have the level of responsibility that I might have or older people might have. I don't think I'm a typical student. I think I'm just trying to get through it.”*. (A fifty-year-old Black American Social Work student).

Some mature students were studying at university at the same time as their adult children and talk about their children's university experience (around Figure 5.13 (a) and (b) again) as being a more typical experience than their own.

P12: *“No. I think I can understand it - I can remember being of an age where I'd do those things - I didn't go to university obviously myself but yeah - and my boys do it and I don't feel totally removed from it. I can understand it and I've been there for my boys - but no it doesn't - it's not something - I'm asleep by nine o'clock! [laugh]”*. (A 55-year-old White British Childhood and Youth Studies student).



Figure 5.16 *Image of young people talking socially (See Appendix 3 for source).*

Another student picked out alternative images for their own child who was studying at the same time as they were, thinking of them as being a more typical student than themselves.

P27: *“I see this as my daughter [Figure 5.16]... She's a social child yeah. She might just go for coffee with her friends.”*. (A 48-year-old Black British Social Work student).

A couple of mature students saw returning to study as a ‘risk’ for them, as they have responsibilities other than themselves and so success in their studies is more important to them than younger students. An example of considering responsibilities is given by this student who was supporting his wife and young child in his home country whilst studying.

P17: *“I think it's different if you're a bit older. That's my thought. Because I will not - it's not all of them - but I think with most of the older ones they feel more for their responsibility. Their families. And they can't risk doing this again.”*. (A 37-year-old Zimbabwean nursing student).

Even without additional family to support, other mature students did prioritise studying over socialising.

P3: *“I think when you're a student right off college - you're 18 and I guess it's only fair that you want - you're not living at home anymore so you want to experience all these different things and you might be a little bit overwhelmed and try to balance things out and I think you'll always end up being very - 'OK. I'm 18. I want to go out. Everyone's going out. I don't want to miss out.' FOMO and all of that. So, if I was their age - yes,*

I would go out all the time. So, I guess good for them. However, for me I don't think - because maybe I'm a bit older or just because I have goals of 'I don't want to have a 40%' - my goals are a bit like - and it doesn't matter if it counts or not - I don't want that 40%.”. (A 28-year-old, Asian psychology student).

5.5.6.4 Studying for a second time. Some students had either completed another degree before (such as 30-year-old P25 who had previously completed a chemistry degree or P26 a 50-year-old who had previously studied accounting) or others who for a number of reasons left a previous degree course before completion (such as 21-year-old P2 who completed a year of a biomedical science degree or P28 a 25-year-old who studied a year of an anthropology degree). There were several examples of these students seeing a typical student as being what they were like first time around.

P20: *“I was younger as well when I was in the first uni - I skipped lots of lectures for parties.[...] But this as well [Figure 5.13 a] - I just used to hang out in the streets of my university so much. It's a different thing isn't it when we studied before.”. (A 28-year-old Brazilian psychology student).*

However, they now feel ‘grown up’ and no longer like a typical student when they first studied, they now have responsibilities:

P20: *“We are adults already at 28. And I live alone. I have a husband. I have duties. I have a dog to take care of [laugh]. I have family. I help my family when I can. It's like living alone, abroad from family in another country kind of makes you grow up. If you didn't yet - you will for sure.”. (A 28-year-old Brazilian psychology student).*

P25: [pointing to images in Figure 5.13] *“I mean that was my first year first time round - to be sure - in Edinburgh that was exactly my like uni time. Yeah.”. (A 30-year-old White British nursing student).*

P28: *“No. I'd say [Figure 5.13 b] would describe the old me. That was me. Other students at [this university] - I think that image still applies to those that come straight*

through. Yeah. Especially in first year. I think that is the entire of first year. [laugh] I think with time it gets a bit more like the images I chose here [Figure 5.17].”. (A 25-year-old White British Childhood and Youth Studies student).



Figure 5.17 Images chosen by P28 to represent herself (See Appendix 3 for sources).

Some students saw their first-time round studying, usually leaving home at age 18 as being the experience of the traditional student and this was what typical students experienced.

P28: *“Well actually - so I left my parental home for [other university] and went to halls and did it very traditionally. But this time I've moved in with my dad who doesn't live far from here. And he's very relaxed so I could if I wanted to keep doing this [Figure 5.13 b] but it's more I just don't want to.”*. (A 25-year-old White British Childhood and Youth Studies student).

5.6 Discussion from Findings of Qualitative Data

In order to answer the Research Question of whether the identity of ‘student’ is a salient one, students were first asked to describe themselves in three words. Within the context of the interview room, students’ used adjectives to describe themselves and did not refer to being a student at all. The context of where questions were asked was important here with participants’

including 'student' only when the question was asked as part of a lecture, but not during interviews with students.

Considering some descriptors given during interviews as being more associated with being a student, the descriptor 'hardworking' tended to be given by students who were not in their first year of study, possibly indicating changes in perceptions of the student experience as students gain more experience of university life. The descriptor 'intelligent' was used only by those who were the first in their family to attend university, perhaps indicating that those students saw themselves in a different way to those who were not the first generation to study at university.

The only students who used less positive self-descriptors were non-traditional students of different kinds. This is in line with findings by Taylor and House (2010) concerning mature students and those from BAME backgrounds who were less positive in their self-descriptions. Potential differences between those who are first in family to study in higher education and others and also non-traditional students in terms of self-description warrants further investigation in the next quantitative chapter.

In order to answer the Research Question of how the view of student success varies across demographic groups, students were asked what success meant to them. Participants initially placed an emphasis on feeling of happiness as indicators of success, in much the same way pre-university students did in the study by Wiseman et al. (2017). Others showed a greater concern for the importance of a high income, in much the same way that students in another London based university had done in their study, but not by students living in other cities.

When students were prompted in terms of academic success, most students responded in terms of achieving either a first or upper second-class degree in terms of their final outcome with many considering these as a requirement for further study rather than an end unto itself.

However only one student who was not first in family indicated that ‘getting through’ the three year course was an indicator of success compared with a number of first in family students who did. This may suggest that there are non-institutional influences on students’ perceptions of success in a similar way to those discussed in Zepke et al. (2011) study of students in nine New Zealand higher education institutions. Results from a further quantitative examination of how potential non-institutional factors may affect students’ perceptions of success, including potential effects of interactions between the factors, are presented in the next chapter, and are presented alongside qualitative examples in Chapter 6.

The remainder of this study chapter explored the Research Question of how students view their own student characteristics. This was achieved through the use of photo-elicitation as a means of gaining a more student-centric conceptualisation of student identity. Here my initial view was that students who have not taken the traditional route into higher education, are first in family, have caring responsibilities outside of university or commute from the family home, will not identify as a student in the same way as more traditional students.

For many young adults the first and most dramatic social identity change comes when starting university as it involves breaking with old groups and becoming members of new ones. Jetten et al. (2017) say this may be harder for lower Socio-Economic Status students as starting university represents a clear break from the past and indeed may be perceived as being incompatible with one’s social background (Jetten et al., 2008). Also Christie, Tett, Cree, Hounsell and McCune (2008) found transition to university as being seen as particularly emotional for non-traditional students.

In the current study, of those who said they found aspects of university stressful or confusing (having said that Figure 4.9 was an image that represented them), most were students who were the first in their family to study for an undergraduate degree. As parental education is one of

the aspects considered when measuring Socio-Economic Status (e.g. Schulz, 2005) the findings in this study may be interpreted as supporting previous work. Results from a further quantitative examination of how potential non-institutional factors may affect students' perceptions of themselves as students, including potential effects of interactions between the factors, are presented in the next chapter, and are presented alongside qualitative examples in Chapter 6.

5.7 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter findings were presented following the analysis of student interviews where photo-elicitation was used alongside a schedule in order to obtain richer data. Student identities did not seem to be triggered in participants until the image task was introduced, meaning that student self-descriptions in interviews were generally adjectives, with the exception of students who are mothers, who all chose that as a description. Descriptors were generally positive with only those who could be classified as non-traditional using less positive terms.

When asked about what success looked like to them, whilst students most often saw success in terms of personal happiness, when specifically asked about academic success, it was most often seen as achieving a first-class degree at the end of their programme of study. Here those students who were first in family were most likely to interpret academic success for themselves as managing to complete the course.

When considering images that represented them and their experience as students in higher education, of those who said they found aspects of university stressful or confusing, most were students who were the first in their family to study for an undergraduate degree.

In the next chapter, findings from research questions shared by the quantitative and qualitative studies are integrated and presented together with their convergence and divergence noted and commented upon.

Chapter 6. Integrated Data Chapter

6.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together information gathered in the qualitative and quantitative chapters. Findings were integrated in such a way as to highlight convergent and divergent patterns identified in the qualitative and quantitative data. Following the separate analyses of qualitative and quantitative data (see Chapters 4 and 5), data were merged to explore whether the results from both analyses converge and how they converge if they do.

This chapter was organised so that first a reminder of the research questions covered in the current study is given, the chapter continues with the method including examples of the Joint Display analysis process used in order to integrate the data. I then went on to discuss findings associated with the Research Questions, the first regarding students' choice of programme based on quantitative and qualitative findings. I followed this by reviewing and discussing how measures of students' social identification with university and peers may vary before repeating the process for the findings on the Research Question associated with students' expectations of achievement and success. The discussion includes the possible association of students' social identification with university and university peers and students' perceptions of support. Possible differences between groups studying different courses, students of different ages and students of different ethnicities were explored.

Finally, there is a review of the integrated findings and discussion of students' self-reported attributes and those they reported of typical students including how hardworking, enthusiastic, and social they rated themselves and other students. Again, possible differences between groups studying different courses, students of different ages and students of different ethnicities were explored as well as looking at possible differences for those who gave themselves different ratings to those they gave to typical students.

6.2 Integrated Analysis

Integration is a defining feature of mixed method research in that it is the mixing of qualitative and quantitative approaches such that they mutually inform each other (Fetters et al., 2013). The integration of qualitative and quantitative data can enhance the value of mixed method research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and so was applied here. Integration may occur at the interpretation and reporting level through narrative, data transformation, and joint display where the fit of integration describes the extent the qualitative and quantitative findings cohere. When integrating through joint displays researchers integrate the data by bringing the data together through visual means to draw out new insights beyond the information gained from the separate qualitative and quantitative results. Details of how this was achieved in this thesis may be found in section 6.4 below.

The research questions for this chapter were developed by considering where questions from the qualitative and quantitative studies overlapped. Figure 6.1 shows the main research questions in bold with an indication of the data used to answer the question underneath each chapter heading. The final column indicates the data from the previous chapters that are required to answer the research question in this integrated chapter. The first research question that is explored in this chapter is: **do students' choice of Programme of Study vary and if so, how?** Secondly, **do measures of students' social identification with their university, peers and family differ and if so, how?** Thirdly, **what are students' perceptions of achievement and success and if these differ, how?** And finally, **what are students' perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how?**

The methodology chapter (Chapter 3) outlines the rationale for the procedures chosen in this study including the choice of joint display as a method of analysis whilst the next section gives details of the method applied in this integrated chapter.

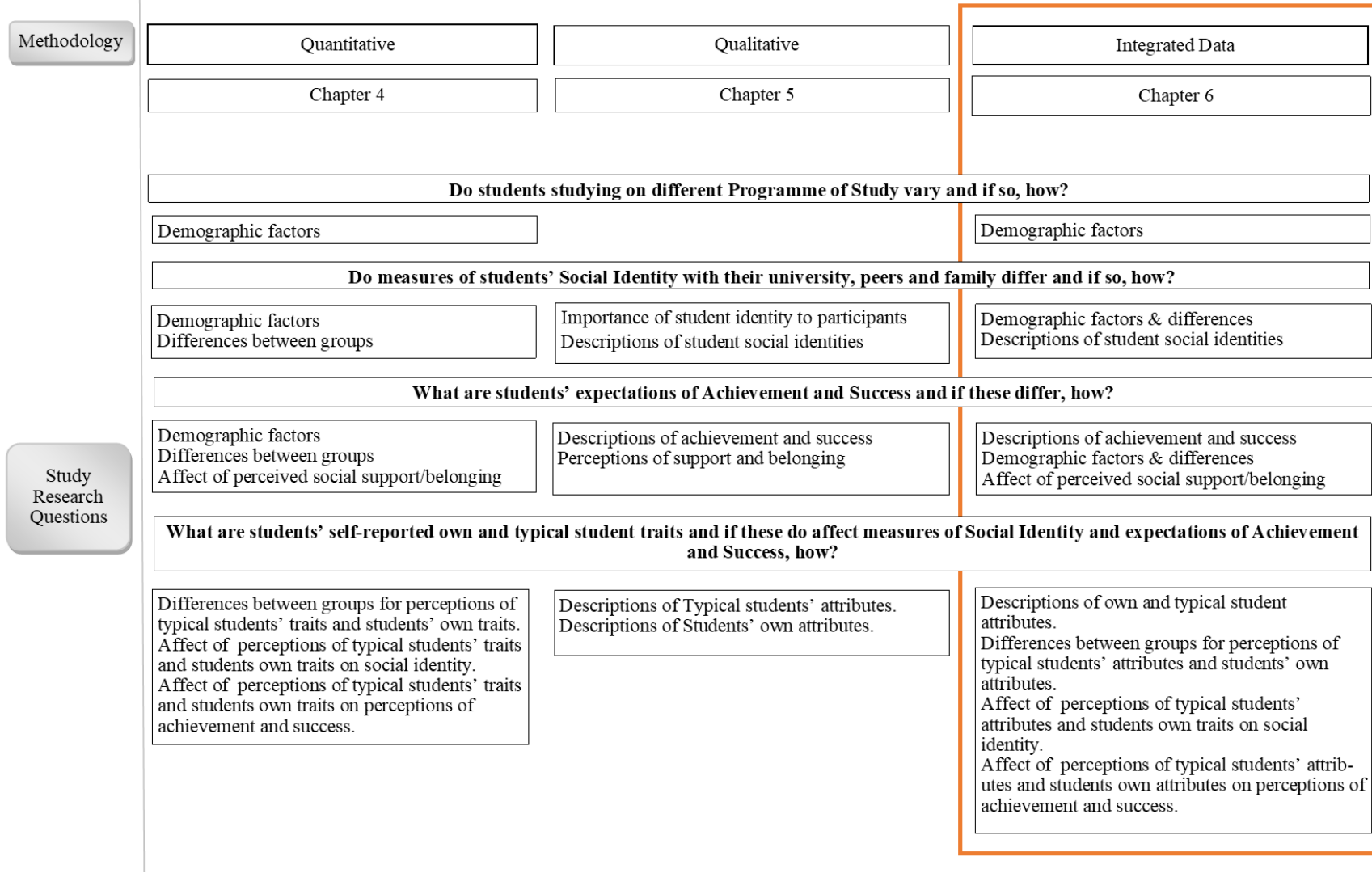


Figure 6.1. Thesis map recap on how the Chapter six meets the research questions

6.3 Method of Analysis

The study used a convergent mixed methods design with the rationale for this given in Chapter 3.

There are different merged data analysis strategies that allow for the comparison of results. Here a side-by-side comparison is used where findings are presented together in a summary table. An example table may be found below (see Figure 6.2). Equal weight was given to both data sets as merged data are presented in a joint display. By presenting analyses of quantitative and qualitative data separately prior to their integration, one potential threat to the validity when merging data are addressed.

The following data analysis steps were followed in this convergent design: First the quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently. Then the quantitative data and the qualitative data were independently analysed using analytic approaches best suited to the quantitative and qualitative research questions. Following this the dimensions by which to compare the results from the two databases was specified. What information would be compared across the dimensions was then specified. Subsequently the refined quantitative and qualitative analyses to produce the needed comparison information was completed. Once these additional analyses were completed, the comparisons were then represented in a suitable manner. Finally, there was interpretation as to how the combined results answered the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods questions.

In the following section, I discuss the use of joint display as an analytic process and present an example of how it is used with an example Research Questions (the remaining analyses completed as part of this thesis may be found in Appendix 4).

6.4 Joint Display Analysis

Joint display analysis involves explicitly merging the results from the two data sets through a side-by-side comparison to assess for “fit” of the two types of data. The “fit” of data integration refers to coherence of the quantitative and qualitative findings and is likely to have one of three outcomes: confirmation, expansion, or discordance between the datasets (Fetters et al., 2013). Confirmation occurs if the findings from both types of data reinforce the results from the other; expansion occurs if the findings from the two datasets diverge and expand insights of the results (by addressing different or complementary aspects of the phenomenon); and discordance occurs if the quantitative and qualitative findings are inconsistent, contradictory or disagree with each other (Fetters et al., 2013).

Integrating through joint display analysis provides advantages because it forces the researcher to think simultaneously about both types of data for related constructs and gives both data sets equal importance. Doing so can lead to new insights beyond the information gained from the data gathered separately based on the quantitative and qualitative results (Fetters et al., 2013; Guetterman et al., 2015). Building a joint display, demands some commonality in the domains or concepts being examined across the two data types (Fetters & Guetterman, 2021).

The analytic intent was to systematically examine the extent that qualitative data supported the quantitative findings. The joint displays developed in Guetterman et al. (2015) and Haynes-Brown and Fetters (2021) are both similar examples used to illustrate the use of joint display in an explanatory sequential study, with authors using interview data to support the quantitative data. Side-by-side displays were also used in a mixed methods photo elicitation study by Peroff

et al. (2020) where quantitative rankings of images were integrated with a qualitative induction of the meanings ascribed to them.

The analytic process followed was as per Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1 *Critical Considerations in Joint Display Analysis (from Haynes-Brown and Fetters, 2021)*

Compare and contrast the quantitative and qualitative data based on the findings of both data sets

Decide on the most suitable numerical and text findings to integrate

Consider the best approach for presenting the quantitative data

Consider the best approach for presenting the qualitative data

Examine the display for reader friendliness

Look for patterns and trends across displays created

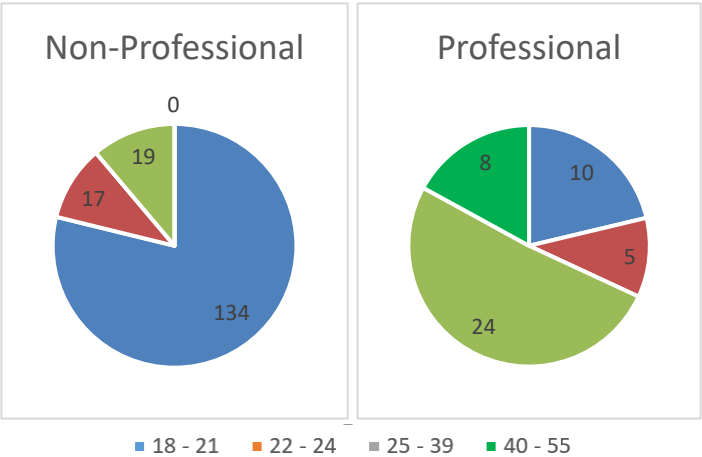
Identify concepts, themes, patterns, and anomalies in the results based on both data sets

Incorporate theory for structuring the analysis and for exploring emerging findings

Look for insights across the two types of data and draw meta-inferences

In this study the use of side-by-side joint data displays ensures systematic coverage of each of the research questions with colour used to ensure clarity wherever possible when integrating the data. The completed joint displays also informed the final overarching interpretations.

Figure 6.2 Joint Display for the Research Question: Do students' choice of programme vary and if so, how?

Quant	Qual	Interpretation															
<p>Older students more likely to be enrolled on Professional degree courses.</p> <p>Course Type and Age Range</p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Course Type and Age Range Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Course Type</th> <th>18 - 21</th> <th>22 - 24</th> <th>25 - 39</th> <th>40 - 55</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Non-Professional</td> <td>134</td> <td>17</td> <td>19</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Professional</td> <td>24</td> <td>5</td> <td>8</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Course Type	18 - 21	22 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 55	Non-Professional	134	17	19	0	Professional	24	5	8	10	<p>Convergence: Older students studying professional degree courses regarded university as a 'risk', such as P25, a 30-year-old, White British student or P26, an African American 50-year-old student who had both previously studied at university:</p> <p><i>P25: "It feels a risk coming back to do it."</i></p> <p><i>P26: "Massive. Massive risk... It mainly revolved around finances. And being responsible for people. And even thinking 'how am I going to make my own mortgage?' "</i></p> <p>Another example comes from a 37-year-old Black African student, talking about himself</p>	<p>Choosing to study Professional degree programmes may be seen as a way of mitigating risk for students with additional responsibilities as there is a known career path when they qualify.</p> <p>Also, for nursing students, those aged over 40 make up over 63 percent of the UK nursing workforce, making them visible to any potential older students wanted to enrol. This would enhance feelings of belonging as nurse, even if they feel 'too old' to be student.</p>
Course Type	18 - 21	22 - 24	25 - 39	40 - 55													
Non-Professional	134	17	19	0													
Professional	24	5	8	10													

Quant	Qual	Interpretation
	<p>and other mature students:</p> <p><i>P17: "And they can't risk doing this again because maybe with age and family commitments you know... It is a risk yeah."</i></p>	
<p>There was a larger proportion of students on the professional courses who were Black British/Caribbean or Black African. There was a larger proportion of White British students studying non-professional courses.</p> <div> <p>The figure consists of two pie charts side-by-side. The left chart is titled 'Professional' and the right chart is titled 'Non-Professional'. Below the charts is a legend with seven categories: W British (blue), W European (orange), W Other (grey), Mixed (yellow), Asian (light blue), Black (green), and Other (dark blue). In the Professional chart, the Black slice is notably larger than in the Non-Professional chart. Conversely, the W British slice is larger in the Non-Professional chart than in the Professional chart.</p> </div>	<p>The vast majority of students interviewed were White British/European/Other and studying non-professional courses.</p> <p>All of the Black students interviewed were studying professional programmes. Two of these students said they had chosen their programme as a result of direct prior contact with professionals. For instance, P17, a Black African nursing student said:</p> <p><i>P17: "They was like 'Oh you're caring – you work well with people – why don't you give it a try?'"</i></p>	<p>11.9 percent of the nursing workforce in the UK are Black Caribbean or African. Having a visible minority in a specific role may mean others of similarly visible ethnicities feel comfortable applying for the programmes leading to those roles, particularly if they have been encouraged to do so by people they know.</p>

6.5 Findings

6.5.1 Do students' choice of programme vary and if so, how?

The quantitative study examined whether the demographic makeup of students studying different types of programme (professional programmes such as nursing degrees or non-professional programmes such as psychology degrees) varied.

There was statistically significant difference between the types of courses chosen with older students more likely to choose to study professional programmes (see Figure 6.3).

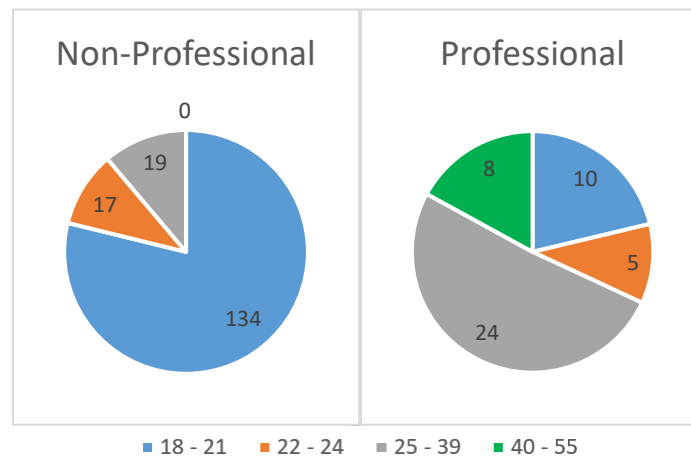


Figure 6.3 Proportions of students in each age range for professional and non-professional degree programmes

Interviews with older students studying professional degree courses regarded university as a ‘risk’, such as P25, a 30-year-old, White British student or P26, an African American 50-year-old student who had both previously studied at university:

P25: *“It feels a risk coming back to do it.”*

P26: *“Massive. Massive risk... It mainly revolved around finances. And being responsible for people. And even thinking 'how am I going to make my own mortgage?’”*

Another example comes from a student talking about himself and other mature students:

P17: “*And they can't risk doing this again because maybe with age and family commitments you know... It is a risk yeah.*”. (A 37-year-old Black African student).

Choosing to study professional degree programmes may be seen as a way of mitigating risk for students who have already spent time in the workplace and have additional responsibilities as there is a known career path when they qualify.

In the quantitative study there was a statistically significant difference between the types of programmes chosen for different ethnicities (see Figure 6.4) with a larger proportion of students enrolled on the professional programmes who were Black British/Caribbean or Black African. There was a larger proportion of White British students studying non-professional courses.

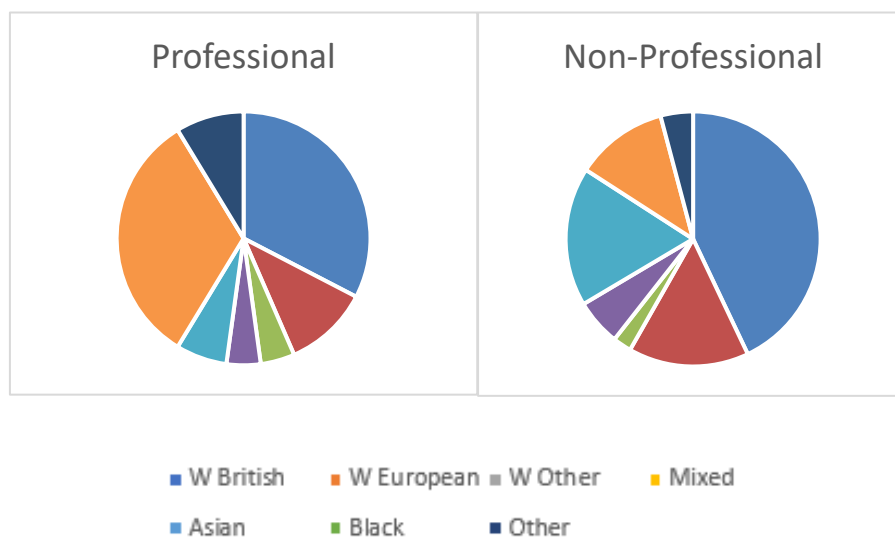


Figure 6.4 Proportions of students from each ethnicity for professional and non-professional degree programmes

The majority of students interviewed were White (British/European/Other) and studying non-professional courses so investigating this found difference was difficult. All of the Black

(British/Caribbean/African) students interviewed here were studying professional programmes and two of these students said they had chosen their programme as a result of direct prior contact with professionals in their chosen field. For instance, P17 said:

P17: “*They was like ‘Oh you’re caring – you work well with people – why don’t you give it a try?’*”. (A Black African nursing student).

Considering professional programmes, 12.3 percent of social workers in England are Black British, Caribbean or African (*Social Workers for Children and Families*, 2021) and 11.9 percent of the nursing workforce in the UK are Black British, Caribbean or African (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2020). By comparison, the 2011 census shows that 3.4 percent of the working age population identified as Black (*Social Workers for Children and Families*, 2021). Having a visible minority in a specific role may mean others of similarly visible ethnicities feel comfortable (expecting a sense of belonging) when applying for the programmes leading to those roles, particularly if they have been encouraged to do so by people, they know who already work in the profession.

6.5.2 Do measures of students’ social identification with their university and their peers differ and if so, how?

6.5.2.1 Type of Programme. The quantitative study examined whether measures of social identification with university, university peers, external peers and family differed between students studying different types of programme (professional programmes such as nursing degrees or non-professional programmes such as psychology degrees). The study found that students enrolled on professional and non-professional programmes are similar in terms of measures of identification with university and university peers and with family. There

are also high scores for identification with external peers, only the difference between professional and non-professional programmes are statistically significant.

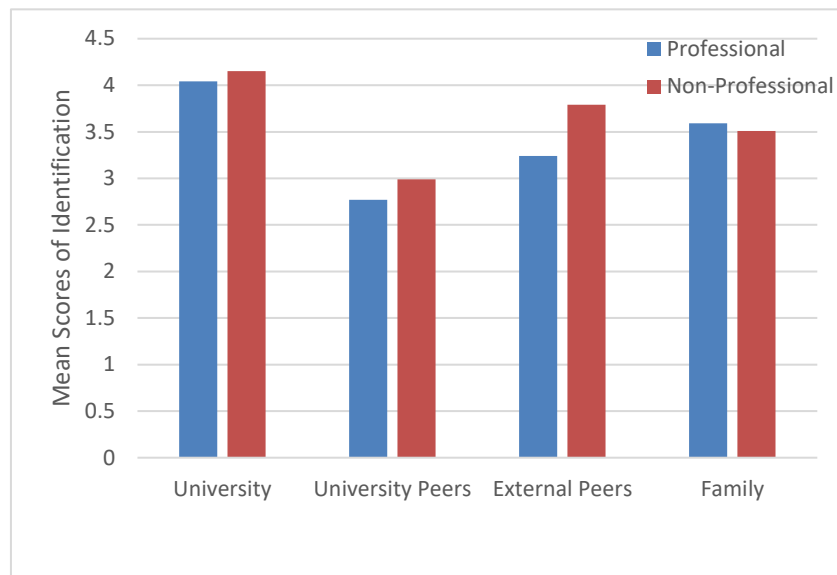


Figure 6.5 Graph showing mean identification scores for each subscale.

The high scores overall (all the mean scores were over 2.5) did indicate that participants identified with their university, university peers, external peers, and family. However, in the qualitative study no participants described themselves as a student when asked to describe themselves at the start of the interviews, despite being on a university campus when asked the question. However, the importance of peers who understand what they are going through in placement was important to some students on professional programmes, such as this student:

P25: "When you're feeling really low or when you're feeling really lost or overwhelmed you just need to talk to someone on your course because - however much I love my boyfriend to pieces - he doesn't really necessarily understand possibly what I've seen or - however much I can explain it - or quite how to process it." (A 30-year-old nursing student).

This may indicate the importance of the student having someone who understands what they are going through whilst studying, particularly whilst on placement for students studying

professional courses, be that a colleague on the same course, a friend outside university life or their own family.

6.5.2.2 Demographic Variables. The quantitative study also examined whether measures of social identification with university, university peers, external peers and family differed between students according to demographic differences such as ethnicity, age and whether they were the first in their family to study at university. There were no statistically significant differences in scores of identification with university or university peers in terms of ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the first in their family to attend university. There were no particular trends noted in the qualitative study either.

6.5.2.3 Age Range. However, older students did score significantly less in measures of identification with their external peers than their younger colleagues, though each of these mean scores was still relatively high, being over 2.5.

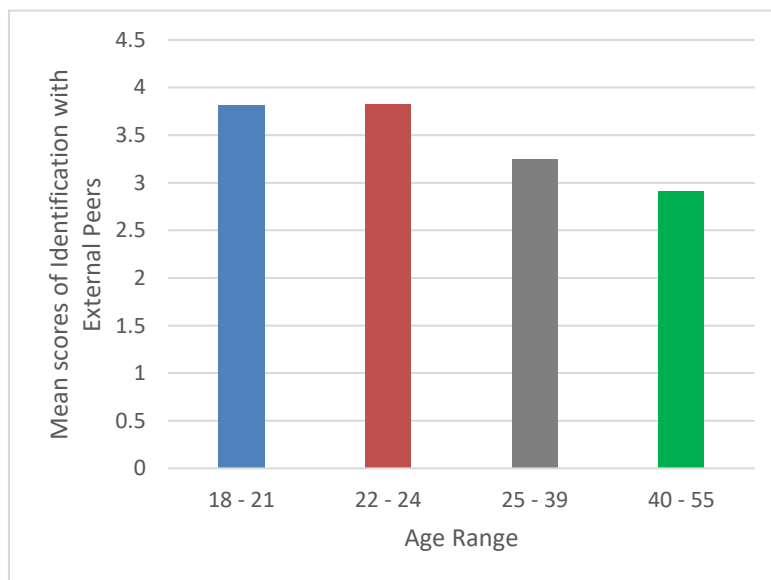


Figure 6.6 Mean Score of Identification with External Peers by Age Range

The qualitative findings tend to diverge from this however with students in different age groups talking of external peers in different ways. For instance, one student stated how they have grown apart from sixth form friends they used to have:

P18: *“OK I just feel like - it sounds like kind of sad but like since moving to uni some of my old girl mates - like my group split in half.”*. (A 19-year-old psychology student).

Whilst another student felt a strong bond with their existing friends outside of university, so much so that they felt they did not need to make new friends whilst studying:

P28: *“I’ve got no interest in [university] friendships. I’ve got loads of friends in London so [...] so I’ve got loads of friends here so I don’t need more.”*. (A 25-year-old psychology student).

The importance of identifying with university peers for students on placement was also noted above. However, students often have to wait until they are back at university to feel the benefit of this, often sometime after whatever incident has happened that they wish to discuss.

6.5.3 What are students’ perceptions of achievement and success and if these differ, how?

6.5.3.1 Types of Programme. The quantitative study examined whether students’ expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success differed between students studying different types of programme (professional programmes such as nursing degrees or non-professional programmes such as psychology degrees). The study found that there were similar expectations for those on both professional and non-professional programmes in terms of their expected End of Year and End of Programme grades.

Those on professional programmes perceived lower grades as being successful academic outcomes, with a larger proportion of students studying professional programmes putting a Lower-Second class degree or lower as a successful outcome (see Figure 6.7).

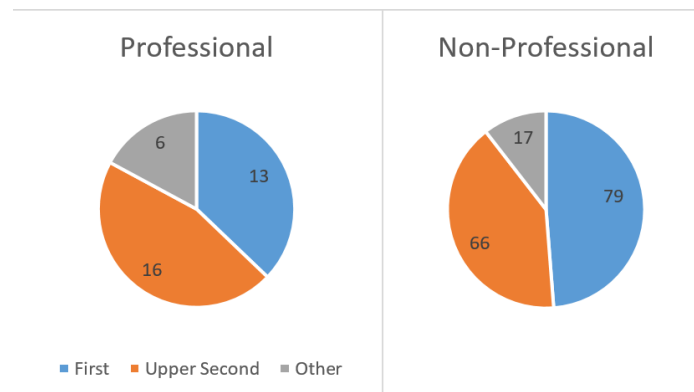


Figure 6.7 *Successful Outcome for those studying Professional or Non-professional programmes*

Qualitative findings converged with the quantitative finding here with several non-professional students who talked of wanting a first-class degree, such as this mature student:

P12: *“So long as I come out with a good first-class degree, I’ll feel that I have been successful in my studies.”*. (A 55-year-old Childhood and Youth Studies student).

Another example comes from this student:

P22: *“If I got below a 2:1 I think I’d be really upset.”*. (A 19-year-old psychology student).

There were some limited examples of students on professional courses accepting an outcome that would not be classed as successful being below an upper second-class degree, such as this student with caring responsibilities:

P26: *“I think I’m just trying to get through it.”*. (A 50-year-old social work student).

6.5.3.2 Demographic Variables. The quantitative study examined whether students’ expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success differed between students according to demographic differences such as ethnicity, age and whether they were

the first in their family to study at university. No statistically significant effect of ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the First in their Family to study at university on expected End of Programme grades.

6.5.3.3 Age Range. There was also no statistically significant effect of age, though when considering this, the largest proportion to expect a first-class degree were from the youngest age group (see Fig. 6.8).

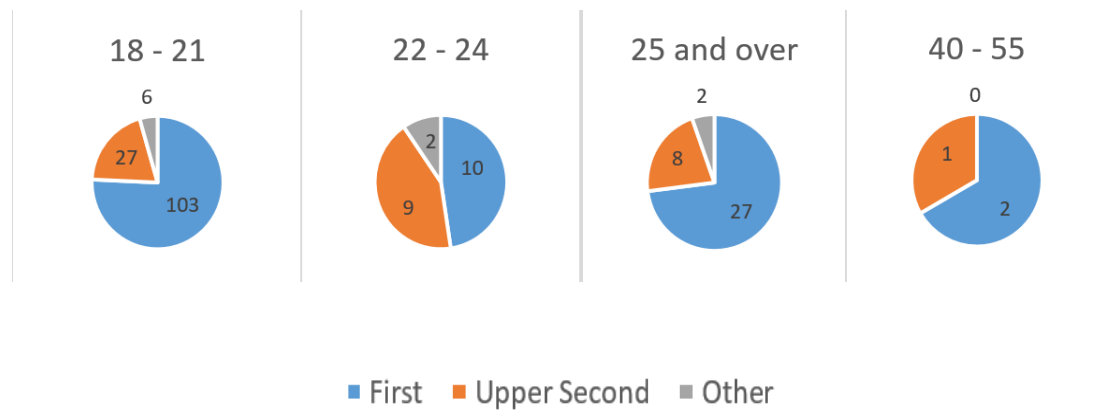
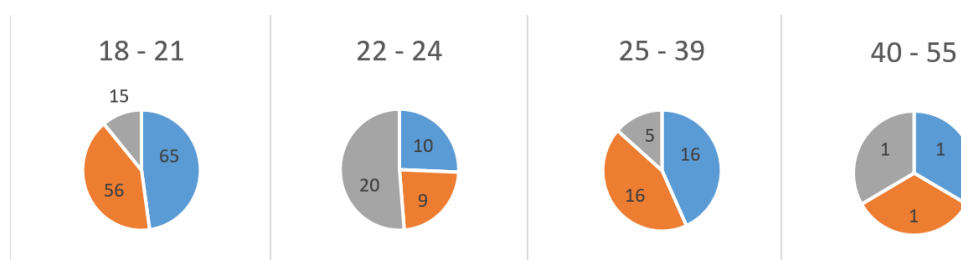


Figure 6.8 Expected End of Programme Grades for each Age Range

When considering what they thought as successful academic outcome again there was no statistically significant effect of ethnicity, age, gender, or whether they were the First in their Family to study at university on expected End of Programme grades, though the largest proportion to expect a first-class degree were again from the youngest age group (see Figure 6.9).



■ First ■ Upper Second ■ Other

Figure 6.9 *Perceived Successful Outcome Grades for each Age Range*

There was divergence from the qualitative findings here with mature student having different expectations of what they saw as a successful outcome for themselves. For instance, one student said:

P26: *“I don't think I'm a typical student. I think I'm just trying to get through it.”*. (A 50-year-old Social Work student).

Whilst another mature student said:

P20: *“I do want to continue my studies. Like I don't just want a degree - I want to eventually get a PhD as well.”*. (A 28-year-old psychology student).

Mature students are reported as a homogeneous group, with 25-year-olds being reported in the same manner as 35-, 45- or 55-year-olds, when in fact they can vary in a number of ways. Age may be combined with the existing responsibilities they have as well as how supported they feel all impacting on their expectations of achievement and success.

6.5.3.4 Students' Ratings of their Expected Academic Achievement and Perceptions of Success and Perceived Support. The quantitative study examined possible indirect relationships between measures of social identification, perceived belonging support and students' expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success. Findings in the quantitative study did show statistically significant indirect effects of both social identification with university, social identification with university peers and social

identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course, through perceived belonging support.

Findings from the qualitative studies showed divergence from this in terms of the importance of feelings of belonging and its relationship with views of successful outcomes. For example, one student who talked of feeling like they did not belong:

P7: *“The first two months I was like – well I felt really, really lonely... I thought I’d just start making friends and we would be hanging out.”*. (A 19-year-old psychology student).

Went on to give a high grade as what they thought of as a successful outcome:

P7: *“I’m totally happy [with a 2:1], but I need to score better”*

Another example came from another student who again felt they did not belong:

P23: *“I haven’t met many students like me. I think most students my age are kind of partying students ... we don’t have that much in common... so it’s quite hard to find somebody who is like me.”*. (19-year-old psychology student).

The student went on to also give a high grade as a successful academic outcome:

P23: *“Success will be me getting a really good grade – like a first”*.

A student’s sense of belonging at university has been found to be positively associated with their motivation and academic self-efficacy (Freeman et al., 2007). Some interviews indicate factors inside the classroom (feeling ‘academic’) and outside the classroom (friendships and social life) foster a sense of belonging in students but even those students who felt they did not belong, still had high expectations.

The quantitative study also examined possible indirect relationships between measures of social identification, perceived belonging support and students’ expectations of their own

academic achievement and views of success. There was also an indirect effect of social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived tangible support.

The findings from the qualitative study were this time convergent in terms of tangible support having an impact on the expected outcome grade. For example, one mature student commented on the support received from their husband:

P12: “[He’s] a very supportive second husband who’s financially and emotionally, critically everything - supports me really well.”. (A 55-year-old Childhood and Youth Studies student).

The same student went on to say that they expected “*a good first-class degree*”.

A perceived lack of support from parents may have an effect, even for mature students. Though there is not enough evidence here to make this claim, there are some examples, for instance, one mature student said:

P26 “*I think my parents - they’re - you know - they’re from a different time - you know so my mum - she’s like ‘Why?’ - you know? And my dad is just like - he thinks I’m mad really.*”. (A 50-year-old Social Work student).

This student wanted only “*to get through it.*” and saw passing their degree as a successful outcome for themselves.

6.5.4 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Typical Students and how do they Differ?

The full research question is: what are students’ perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how? For ease of understanding first to be considered are the reported

attributes of typical students and how these attributes may differ according to the programme type the respondent is studying, or by demographic variables such as their age or ethnicity.

iu6.5.4.1 Types of Programme. The quantitative study examined whether the self-reported attributes of typical students studying different types of programme (professional programmes such as nursing degrees or non-professional programmes such as psychology degrees) varied.

Students enrolled on non-professional programmes rated typical students as more hardworking and enthusiastic than students on professional programmes did, though there was not a statistically significant difference. Students on non-professional programmes rated typical students as more social than students on professional programmes did, and there was a statistically significant difference (see Figure 6.10).

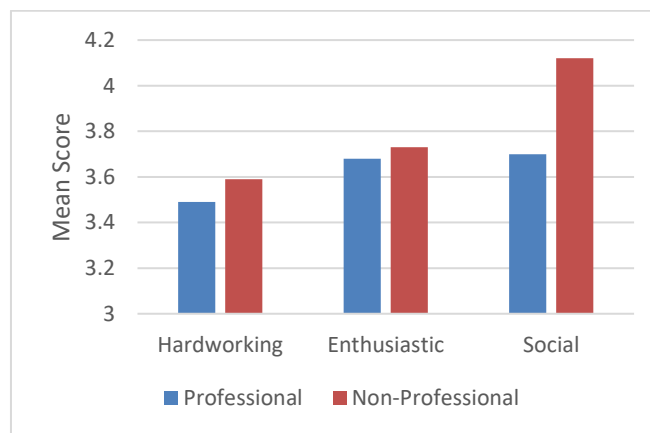


Figure 6.10 *Self-Reported Attributes of a Typical Student*

Differences between students studying professional and non-professional courses were noted in the qualitative study too. Professional Students talked of students on professional courses as being different from typical students on other courses in terms of being able to have a social life and having to work hard, for instance one nursing student compared her current colleagues to previous experience on a non-professional course:

P25: “I mean that was me first time round [image 6.1] I don’t think that the young ones in my cohort tend to go crazy too much – there’s too much time needed to study and on placement to really let your hair down enough I think.”. (A 30-year-old nursing student).

Image 6.1 *Stimulus image* (see Appendix 3)



Image 6.2 *Stimulus image* (see Appendix 3)



There was a trend for students from non-professional courses to choose similar images, depicting typical students as those in social situations or perhaps recovering from taking part in those social situations. Two psychology students (aged 19 and 21-years-old) said:

P23: “I think there are different categories of students – like mature students and people who kind of come for a kind of party culture that would be more like this [image 6.1].”

P24: “I feel a lot of people are like this [image 6.2]!”

Considering both data sets, those studying professional programmes do not seem to regard themselves as typical students due to combining study time as well as time on placement. Those studying non-professional programmes rated typical students as both more hardworking and enthusiastic as well as being more social.

6.5.4.2 Demographic Variables. The quantitative study also examined how self-reported attributes of typical students differed between students according to demographic differences such as ethnicity, age and whether they were the first in their family to study at university.

6.5.4.3 Ethnicity. Ethnicity was found to be statistically significant with Black students rating typical students as the most hardworking and White Other students rating typical students as the least hardworking (see Figure 6.11).

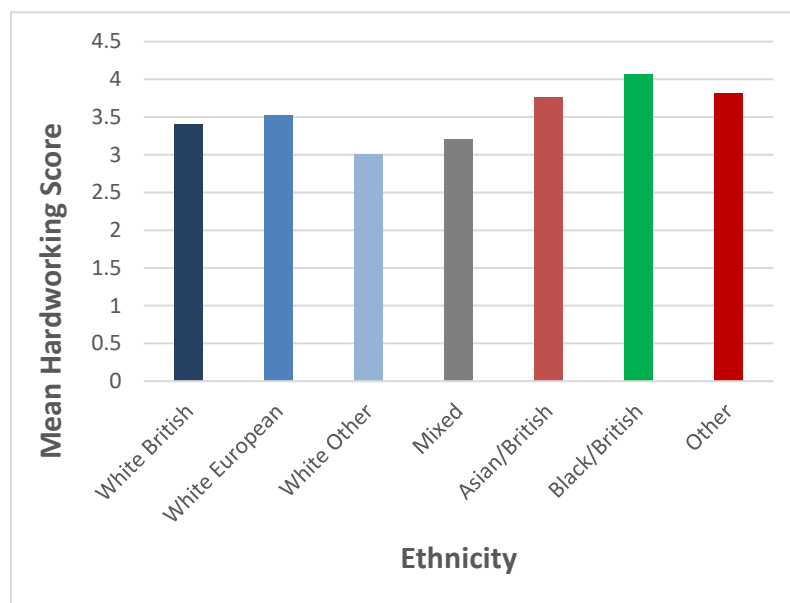


Figure 6.11 *Mean Hardworking Scores for Typical Students by Ethnicity*

There was divergence between the qualitative and quantitative findings as interviews with students of different ethnicities did not see typical students as being hardworking. For instance, a White British and White European said:

P1: *“Society does seem to portray students as having an easy life.”*. (A White British student).

P21: *“I’m very disciplined I would say. I love like health, nutrition and being active and stuff and I feel like a lot of students don’t.”*. (A White European student).

Another example came from a Black African student who talked of typical students as being different to themselves:

P17: *“Typical is different [from image 6.3]. I think this more me than the majority.”*.

Image 6.3 *Stimulus image* (see Appendix 3)



However, some students of different ethnicities did see other students as being hardworking, this time referencing Image 6.2 in a different way, as one Black African student said:

P13: *“All of that as well [image 6.2]. Being overworked and tired.”*

Though the same image was used by others as an indication of how ‘lazy’ students tended to be, as stated by one Asian student:

P24: *“Yeah. There are too many - there are a lot of different people. There’s a lot of different people. But I guess - this one [image above] I feel like a lot of people are as well [laugh]”*.

When students rated how social they thought typical students were, ethnicity was statistically significant with White British students rating typical students as the most social (see Figure 6.12).

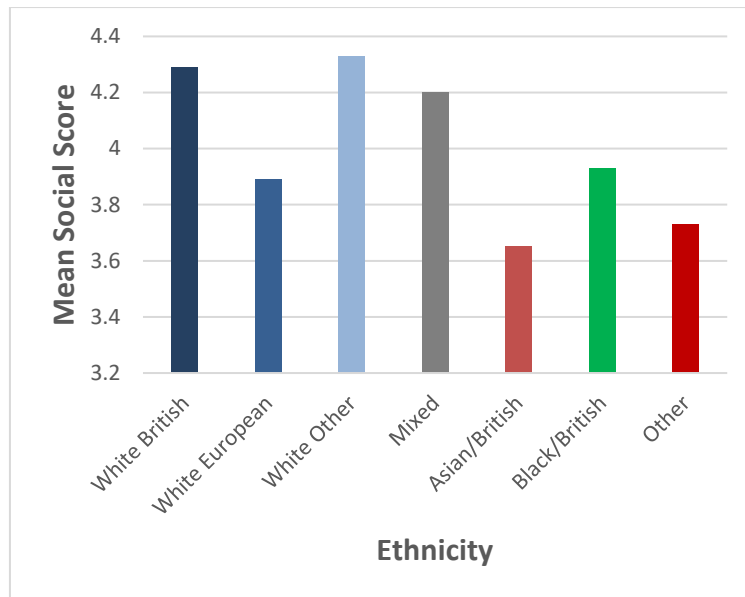


Figure 6.12 *Mean Social Attribute Scores for Typical Students by Ethnicity*

Asian students rated typical students as being the least social.

Again, there was divergence from the quantitative findings in the qualitative findings. Students of different ethnicities chose images showing students socialising to represent the typical student experience. For instance, two students of different ethnicities both chose image 6.1 to represent the typical student experience:

P18: *“Yeah I’m not ashamed to say that like it’s just how it is really.”*. (A White British student).

P13: *“That would probably be it.”*. (A Black African student).

Other students, such as White European participant P15, chose the image 6.4 (below) as being representative of the typical student experience, one that they would like to have themselves or Asian student P24 who said, *“It’s a crazy crowd around.”*

Image 6.4 *Stimulus image* (see Appendix 3)



Some students who were not first years saw the images above as representing only first year students such as this student.

P28: “*I think [image 6.1] is the entire of first year.*”. (A White British student).

6.5.5 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Typical Students and how might they be associated with Measures of Social Identification?

The full research question is: what are students’ perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how? Here a part of this question is considered. The quantitative study examined the possible relationship between self-reported attributes of typical students and students’ ratings of their identification with university and with university peers. For each attribute, it was considered whether qualitative data supported the quantitative findings.

6.5.5.1 Hardworking Attribute. How hardworking students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers, though this was a small size effect in both cases. There was some confirmatory evidence in the qualitative data where students spoke of other students studying hard in the library as being a typical experience. This was particularly the case for younger students who also had an active social

life at university. For example, a 19-year-old psychology student who described being someone who ‘partied’ alongside other students, also described their hard work in the library:

“And I know like my closest friends that I speak to all go to the library a lot - like one of my friends he came to [this university] with me so we're both at this uni and we're like always at the library together. And then my friends in Canada they're always in the library. So yeah, I think like quite a lot - a lot of students use the library.”

6.5.5.2 Enthusiasm Attribute. How enthusiastic students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, this was a small size effect and also significantly predicted social identification with university, this was a medium sized effect. Older students tended to see other older students as also being enthusiastic, but this did not extend to all students. Often their sense of belonging was restricted to other older students. An example of this came from a mature student who when describing typical students, spoke of enthusiasm for the subject in terms of older students like himself:

P20: *“I see them [the students] in a very energetic chat and it's kind of a lot what of happens here with me. Like I have this group of people - they are all mature students and I like that we talk - like we have the same interests, isn't it?”*. (A 28-year-old psychology student).

6.5.5.3 Social Attribute. How social students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, with a small sized effect. How social students scored typical students did not significantly predict social identification with university. Some students talked of other students in a social sense, out ‘partying’ or ‘laughing with friends’ and then talked of their own student experience in the same terms but some saw London university

life as having less ‘partying’ and so less social than their friends’ experiences elsewhere. For example, one student said:

P4: *“I think - not at this university. I have a lot of friends at different universities and it seems that the further north you go it seems the more like that it is. Not to say that they don't work hard but they definitely play hard as well [laugh]”*. (A 20-year-old psychology student).

Studying in London was also seen as being more expensive than studying elsewhere which greater necessitated the need for paid work.

P4: *“A lot of the universities that are like in the middle of nowhere - that's what their main culture is - it's going out to clubs and doing that. Whereas we're having to work more to be able to afford to live here”*

6.5.6 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Typical Students and how might they be associated with Students' Expected Achievement and Perceptions of Success?

The full research question is: what are students' perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how? Here a part of this question is considered. The quantitative study examined the possible relationship between self-reported attributes of typical students and students' expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success. For the hardworking attribute (the only attribute for which there was both qualitative and quantitative data), it was considered whether qualitative data supported the quantitative findings.

Students who rated typical students as hardworking expected higher End of Year and Programme grades and saw higher grades as being a successful outcome (see Figures 6.13, 6.14 and 6.15).

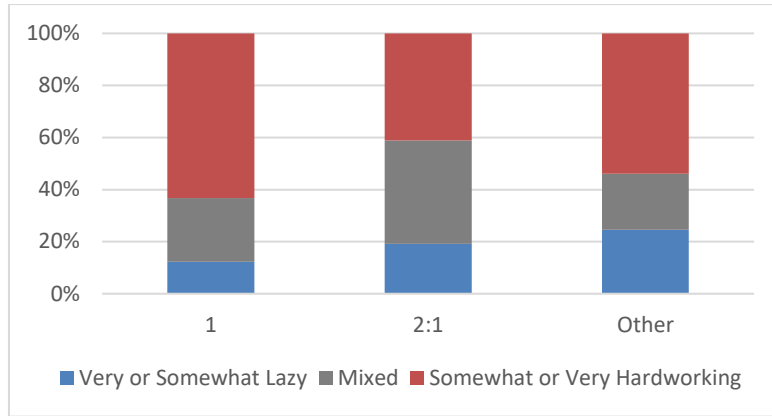


Figure 6.13 *Expected End of Year Grade by Hardworking attribute*

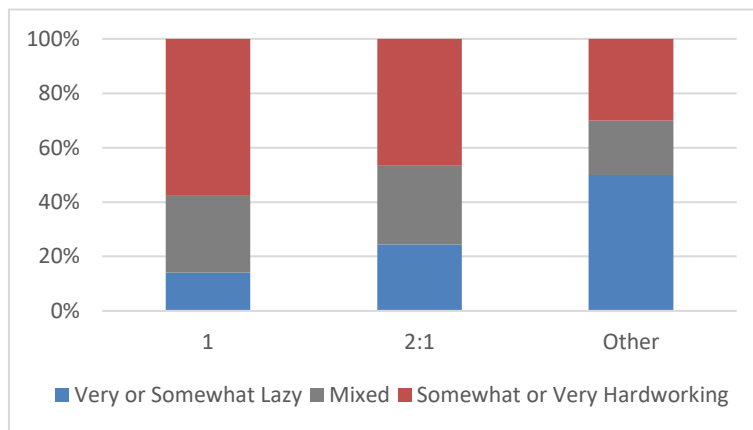


Figure 6.14 *Expected End of Programme Grade by Hardworking attribute*

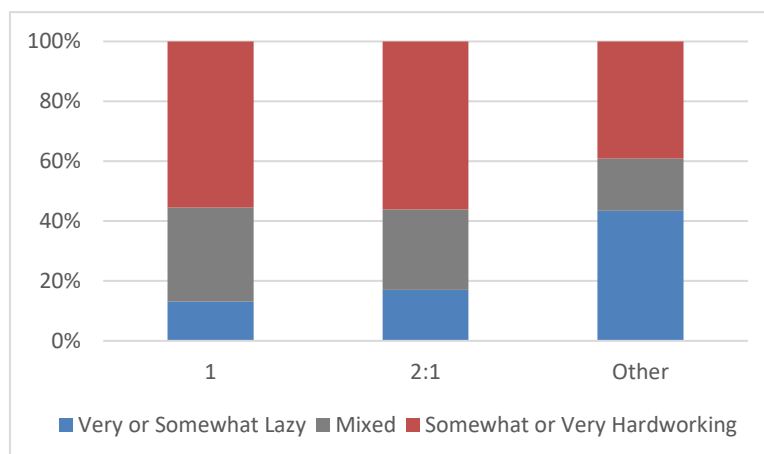


Figure 6.15 *Perceived Successful Outcome Grade by Hardworking attribute*

Qualitative findings diverged from the quantitative as academic expectations were high, despite the students' own views of the attributes of typical students as being less than hardworking. For instance:

P6: *"I think the majority of students - I'm not labelling everybody - but I think a lot of people are the party type. Because when some people think of university, they think of student life and going out and things like that but I think it's a split really - some people are here for education some people are here for education and experience."*

Had a high final expectation of success: *"I do kind of want to finish with a first"*.

P1: *"Society does seem to portray students as having an easy life."*

Also had a high expectation of success: *"To be able to complete the university, the post-graduate stages - which seems like a mighty task at the moment."*

P14: *"Everybody sort of has ideas of students, don't they? You know going out all the time."*

Also had high expectations of a successful outcome for themselves: *"getting high marks"*.

6.5.7 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Students and how do they Differ?

The full research question is: what are students' perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how? Here a part of this question is considered: do the self-reported attributes of students differ according to the programme type the respondent is studying, or by demographic variables such as their age.

6.5.7.1 Types of Programme. The quantitative study examined whether the students' self-reported attributes as students varied between students studying different types of programme (professional programmes such as nursing degrees or non-professional

programmes such as psychology degrees). Students enrolled on professional programmes saw themselves as more hardworking and enthusiastic than students on non-professional programmes and there was a significant difference. Students studying on professional programmes also saw themselves as more social than students on non-professional programmes, though there was no significant difference.

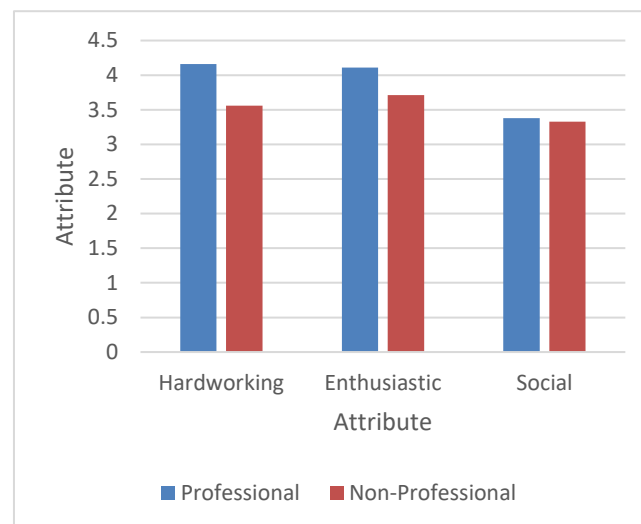


Figure 6.16 *Students' Own Attribute Scores by Programme Type*

There was convergence between the qualitative and quantitative findings with most interviewees described themselves as being hardworking, with divergence from this from those on professional courses being very rare:

P27: *"I'd like to say I'm hardworking but at times I'm just lazy [laugh]"*. (A 48-year-old Social Work student)

P22: *"My closest friends that I speak to all go to the library a lot."*. (A 19-year-old psychology student)

6.5.7.2 Demographic Variables. The quantitative study also examined how self-reported attributes of typical students differed between students according to demographic differences such as ethnicity, age and whether they were the first in their family to study at

university. Age was statistically significant with older students rating themselves as the most hardworking (see Figure 6.17).

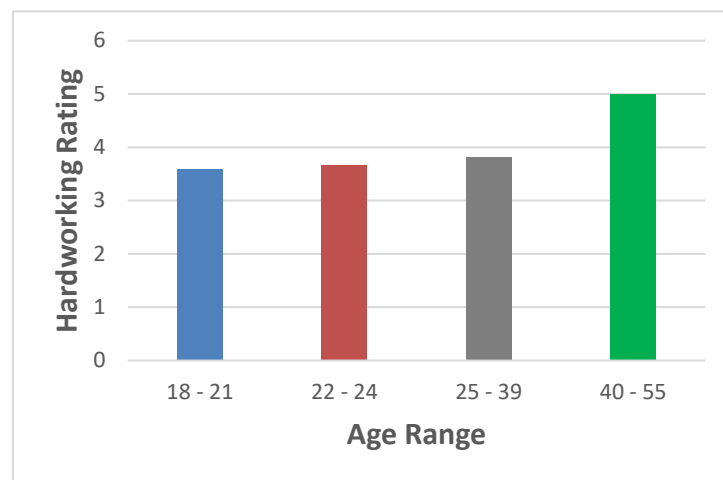


Figure 6.17 Students' Own Mean Hardworking Attribute Scores by Age Range

There was divergence between the findings as students in different age ranges did often talk about themselves in terms of how hardworking they were, but often this was in terms of the needs of balancing paid employment and studying.

P9: *“Yeah. So, I kind of - it was quite difficult to juggle it sometimes. I now don't work in retail. I now work in an office job in a building company so it's a lot more laid back.”*. (A 20-year-old student).

P17: *“For the last year I need to adjust it and prioritise the schoolwork. I didn't fail anything but I know my capabilities so I know I wasn't doing good enough.”*. (A 37-year-old student).

It may be that rating hardworking in terms of academic work rather than other calls on their time that are required such as caring requirements or the need to earn money to support themselves.

6.5.8 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Students and how might they be associated with Measures of Social Identification?

The full research question is: what are students' perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how? Here a part of this question is considered. The quantitative study examined the possible relationship between students' self-reported attributes and measures of social identification. For each attribute, it was considered whether qualitative data supported the quantitative findings

6.5.8.1 Hardworking Attribute. How hardworking students scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers. In the qualitative study several students of different types described themselves as 'hardworking'. They talked about some of the difficulties forming relationships with other students, such as one younger student who had found hard to connect with the majority of students and found it easier to make friends with older students:

P19: *"I didn't understand like their groups and they didn't try to mix with other people."* (A 23-year-old psychology student).

This was not the case for all mature students, for instance one student enjoyed attending university lectures and found making friends easy:

P3: *"I like going to lectures. I love learning new stuff but I also like the social part [image 6.1] of university."* (A 28-year-old psychology student).

6.5.8.2 Enthusiasm Attribute. How enthusiastic students rated themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers.

A few students did describe themselves as being enthusiastic:

P14: *“It's just - I love learning. It sounds so geeky! But I love it. I love learning new things.”*. (A 20-year-old psychology student).

They then talked positively of university experiences:

P14: *“I like listening to lecturers - because I like how passionate they are about things.”*

Again, an older student saw their enthusiasm for the subject as something only shared by other older students:

P20: *“I put this in [image 6.4] because I see them in a very energetic chat and it's kind of a lot what of happens here with me. [...] Normally when I'm at lectures I enjoy a lot of the subject that they are presenting me so I am always very attentive and I always try and participate in the lectures. Something that the youngest they kind of scared to do in my lectures.”*. (A 28-year-old psychology student).

Image 6.4 *Stimulus image* (see Appendix 3 for source)



6.5.8.3 Social Attribute. How social students rated themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers.

Several students who described themselves as being friendly or social went on to talk positively about university or university peers

P17: “[on moving into a flat in halls] - it was quite friendly. I didn't really feel out of place in coming in.” (A 27-year-old nursing student).

Some older students talked about identifying more with other older students seeing themselves as different from younger students:

P26: “I feel we're all in different places. Because some of us are more mature learners and then the other extreme of that is that there is some very, very young learners and so the mature learners we're all quite consistent in I'm tired, I'm working, I've got bills.” (A 50-year-old social work student).

P3: “I like going to lectures. I love learning new stuff but I also like the social part of university. [...] I think when you're a student right off college - you're 18 and I guess it's only fair that you want - you're not living at home anymore so you want to experience all these different things and you might be a little bit overwhelmed and try to balance things out and I think you'll always end up being very - 'OK. I'm 18. I want to go out. Everyone's going out. I don't want to miss out.'. FOMO and all of that.” (A 28-year-old psychology student).

6.5.9 What are the Self-Reported Student Attributes and how might they be associated with Students' Expected Achievement and Perceptions of Success?

The full research question is: what are students’ perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how? Again, here a part of this question is considered. The quantitative study examined the possible relationship between students’ own self-reported attributes and their expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success. For the hardworking and social attributes (the only attributes for which there was both qualitative and quantitative data), it was considered whether qualitative data supported the quantitative findings.

6.5.9.1 Hardworking Attribute. Students who rated themselves as hardworking expected higher End of Year and Programme grades and saw higher grades as being a successful outcome (see Figures 6.18, 6.19 and 6.20).

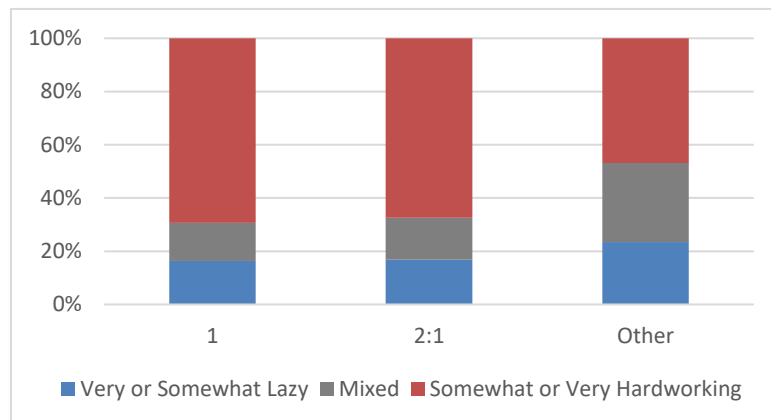


Figure 6.18 *Expected End of Year Grade for Self-Reported Hardworking attribute*

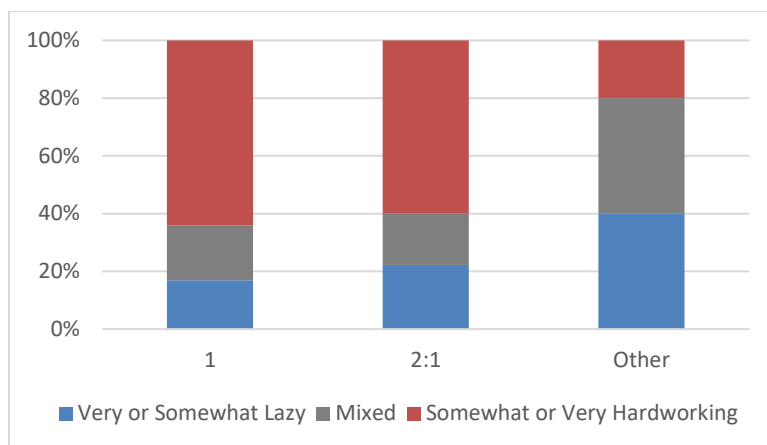


Figure 6.19 *Expected End of Programme Grade for Self-Reported Hardworking attribute*

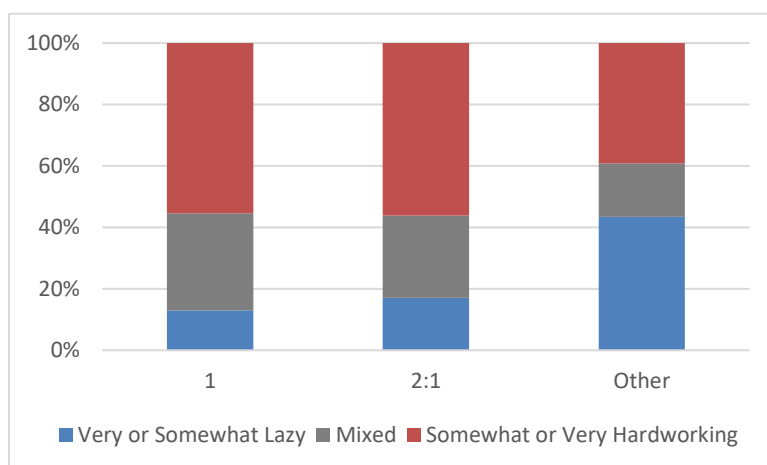


Figure 6.20 *Successful Outcome Grade for Self-Reported Hardworking attribute*

These quantitative findings were convergent with qualitative ones as most students who specifically described themselves as hardworking, described a first or upper second-class degree as a successful academic outcome for themselves. For instance:

P22: *“If I got below a 2:1 I think I'd be really upset.”*. (A 19-year-old psychology student).

P23: *“So I put a lot of stock in academics so success will be me getting a really good grade - like a first.”*. (A 19-year-old psychology student).

Only one student who self-reported as hardworking talked of others being happy with achieving a lower second degree.

P8: *“Everyone saying just be happy with two but I'm just - I just want to try. If it's a two two it's a two two - it's fine I did it.”*. (A 26-year-old Childhood and Youth Studies student).

However, there were some ‘hardworking’ students who would not state a grade when asked about academic success.

P19: *“Well from the jobs perspective you need to have a of course a high grade - but if it wasn't for that - I wouldn't give myself a grade - I will say 'you accomplished this journey'.”*. (a 23-year-old psychology student).

P5: *“I want to do as well as I can do. That's for sure.”*. (A 22-year-old psychology student).

6.5.9.2 Social Attribute. Students who rated themselves as being social expected higher End of Year and Programme grades than those who rated themselves as being less social (see Figures 6.21 and 6.22). How social students rated themselves did not affect the grade that was seen as being a successful outcome (see Figure 6.23).

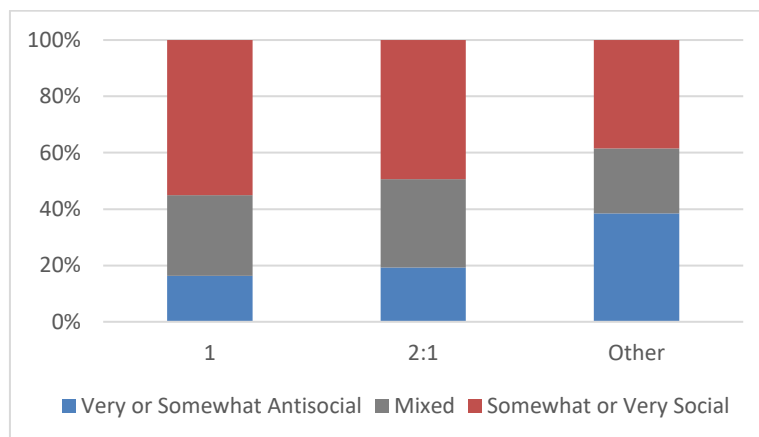


Figure 6.21 *Expected End of Year Grade for Self-Reported Social attribute*

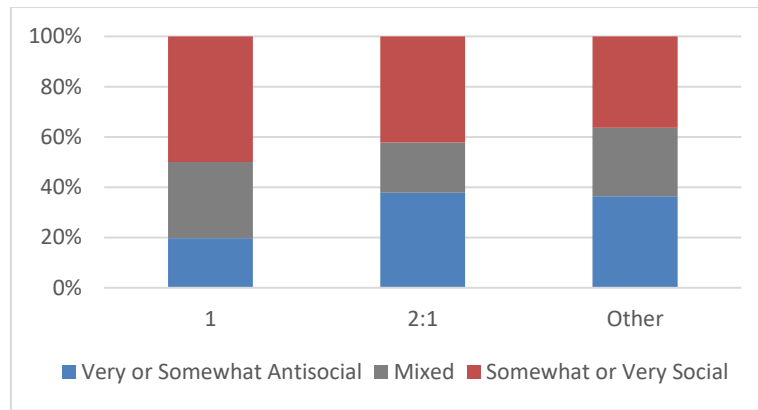


Figure 6.22 *Expected End of Programme Grade for Self-Reported Social attribute*

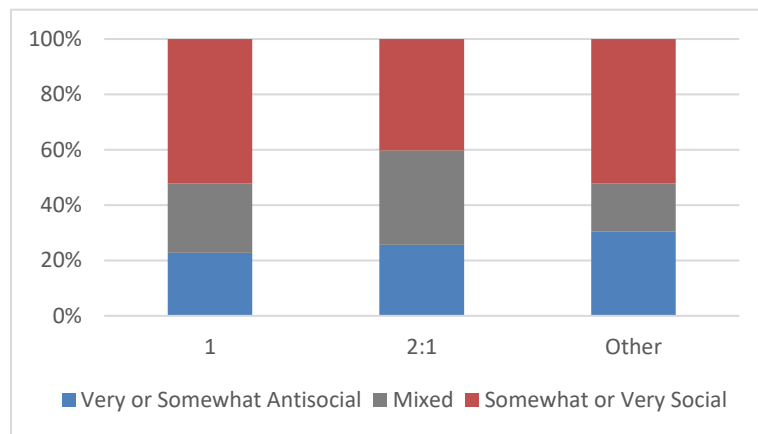


Figure 6.23 *Successful Outcome Grade for Self-Reported Social attribute*

The qualitative findings were divergent from the quantitative ones here: the few students who specifically described themselves as social, described a mix of academic outcomes as being successful for themselves.

P17: *“Well for now in my current situation is to get no less than a two one.”*. (A 37-year-old nursing student).

P26: *“A degree would be nice! I would consider that successful. Just completing.”*. (A 50-year-old social work student).

6.5.10 How Might Differences between Students' Self-Reported Attributes and the Ratings Given to Typical Students affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success?

The full research question is: what are students' perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how? Again, here a part of this question is considered. In the quantitative study participants were first grouped according to whether their self-reported score was greater, less or the same as the score they had given to typical students for each of the attributes (hardworking, enthusiastic, and social).

6.5.10.1 How Might Differences between Students' Self-Reported Attributes and the Ratings Given to Typical Students affect measures of Social Identity?

The quantitative study examined how the difference between student's own perceived attributes as a student and their perceived attributes of a typical student might affect their social identity as a student. For measures of identification with university and university peers, it was considered whether qualitative data supported the quantitative findings.

6.5.10.1.1 Identification with University. Whilst a statistically significant difference was only found on the difference between students self-scored social score and how they scored a typical student, there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same, to score more highly on Identification with University (see Figure 6.24).

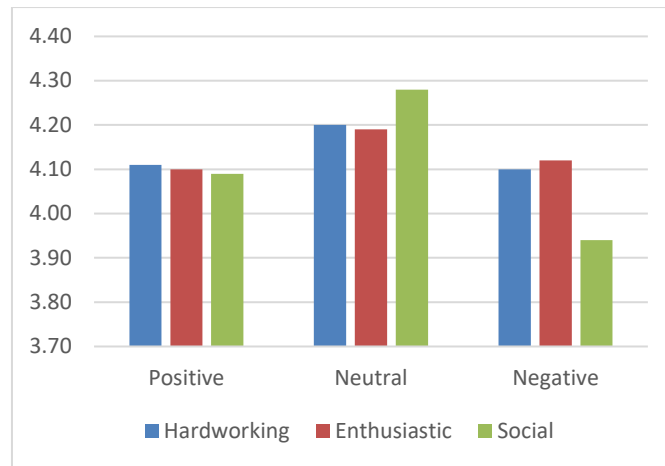


Figure 6.24 *Identification with University for attribute differences*

6.5.10.1.2 *Identification with University Peers.* The same trend was seen for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same, with those students scoring more highly on Identification with University Peers (see Figure 6.25).

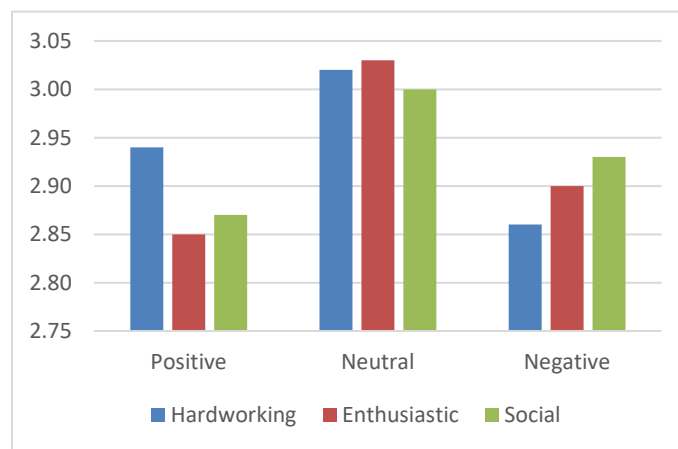


Figure 6.25 *Identification with University Peers for attribute differences*

Responses were more mixed here. There were some students who saw other students as more social than themselves when they described themselves as hardworking:

P23: *“I haven't actually met many students like me. I think that most of the students my age are the kind of partying students [...] we don't have that much in common”.* (A 19-year-old psychology student).

There was only one student who described themselves as both hardworking and sociable:

P3: *“I like going to lectures. I love learning new stuff but I also like the social part [image 6.4] of university.”* (A 28-year-old psychology student).

When talking about typical students, several assumptions were made:

P3: *“You're 18 and I guess it's only fair that you want - you're not living at home anymore so you want to experience all these different things and you might be a little bit overwhelmed and try to balance things out and I think you'll always end up being very - 'OK. I'm 18. I want to go out. Everyone's going out. I don't want to miss out.'. FOMO and all of that.”*

The relationship between how they see themselves and typical students in terms of how hardworking or social they are.

6.5.10.2 How Might Differences between Students' Self-Reported Attributes and the Ratings Given to Typical Students affect Students' Expected Achievement and Perceptions of Success? The quantitative study examined how the difference between student's self-reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student and their perceptions of attributes of a typical student affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success.

No statistically significant differences were found however there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same (the neutral group) in terms of being hardworking, enthusiastic, or social, to expect higher grades at the end of their current year (See Figure 6.26).

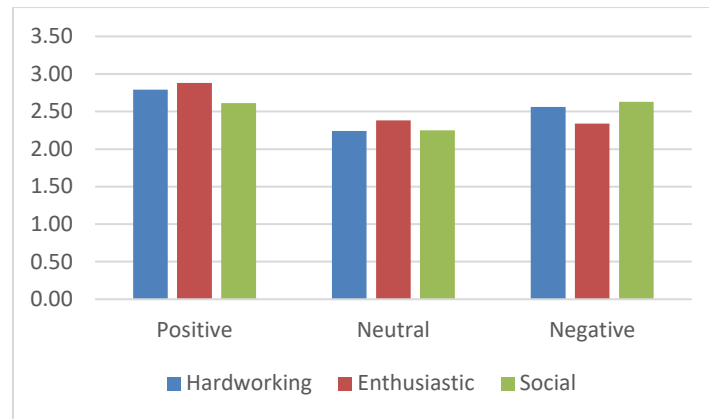


Figure 6.26 *Expected End of Year Grade for attribute differences*

The findings from the qualitative study were divergent from responses in the quantitative study: Generally, even if students felt different from other students, they continued to have high expectations for themselves and what constituted a successful academic outcome.

P12: *“I was worried - I thought everybody else would be fresh from school and I would stand out like a sore thumb. That was my biggest worry and still is - I still feel like that a little bit.”*. (A 55-year-old Childhood and Youth Studies student).

Expectation: *“So long as I come out with a good first-class degree, I’ll feel that I have been successful in my studies.”*

P23: *“It’s quite hard to find somebody who is like me.”*. (A 19-year-old psychology student).

Expectation: *“So I put a lot of stock in academics so success will be me getting a really good grade - like a first.”*

6.6 Discussion of Integrated Findings

Following a process of Joint Display Analysis, findings from the previous quantitative and qualitative studies were contrasted and compared to find if they converged or diverged.

6.6.1 Do students' choice of programme vary and if so, how?

When considering students' choice of programme, findings from the quantitative study found that older students tended to enrol on professional courses and the qualitative findings converged with this with mature students referring to the 'risk' of returning to education. Findings from the quantitative study also showed differences between ethnicities enrolling on the different course types with a larger proportion of those on professional courses being Black Caribbean/African as opposed to larger proportion of White British students studying non-professional courses. Most students interviewed in the qualitative study were White (British/European/Other) and studying non-professional courses so investigating this found difference was difficult. As all the Black (British/Caribbean/African) students interviewed here were studying professional programmes some convergence of results may be assumed.

6.6.2 Do measures of students' social identification with their university and their peers differ and if so, how?

Considering a relationship between social identification and choice of programme, the quantitative study found that students enrolled on professional and non-professional programmes are similar in terms of measures of identification with university and university peers and with family. There were also high scores for identification with external peers, being the only statistically significant difference between professional and non-professional programmes. However, in the qualitative study no participants described themselves as a student when asked to describe themselves at the start of the interviews, despite being on a university campus when asked the question. However, the importance of peers who understand what they are going through in placement was important to some students on professional programmes.

The quantitative study showed no statistically significant differences in scores of identification with university or university peers in terms of ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the first in their family to attend university. Older students did score significantly less in measures of identification with their external peers than their younger colleagues, though the qualitative findings tend to diverge from this however with students in different age groups talking of external peers in diverse ways.

6.6.3 What are students' perceptions of achievement and success and if these differ, how?

The quantitative study found that there were similar expectations for those on both professional and non-professional programmes in terms of their expected End of Year and End of Programme grades whilst those on professional programmes perceived lower grades as being a successful academic outcome, with a larger proportion of students studying professional programmes putting a Lower-Second class degree or lower as a successful outcome. Qualitative findings converged with the quantitative finding here with several non-professional students who talked of wanting a first-class degree with limited examples of students on professional courses accepting an outcome that would not generally be classed as successful being below an upper second-class degree.

Whilst no statistically significant effect of ethnicity, age, gender, or whether they were the First in their Family to study at university on expected End of Programme or perceived successful outcome grades was noted, when considering age, the largest proportion to expect a first-class degree or seeing this as the only successful outcome were from the youngest age group. There was divergence from the qualitative findings here with different mature student having varying expectations of what they saw as a successful outcome for themselves, from a bare pass to a first-class degree. Mature students are reported as a homogeneous group, with 25-year-olds being reported in the same manner as 35-, 45- or 55-year-olds, when in fact they can vary in

several ways. Age may be combined with the existing responsibilities they have as well as how supported they feel all impacting on their expectations of achievement and success.

The quantitative study examined possible indirect relationships between measures of social identification, perceived belonging support and students' expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success. Findings in the quantitative study did show statistically significant indirect effects of both social identification with university, social identification with university peers and social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course, through perceived belonging support. Findings from the qualitative studies showed divergence from this in terms of the importance of feelings of belonging and its relationship with views of successful outcomes with examples of students who said that they felt they did not belong at university though still thought of a high grade as a successful outcome.

A student's sense of belonging at university has been found to be positively associated with their motivation and academic self-efficacy (Freeman et al., 2007). Some interviews indicate factors inside the classroom (feeling 'academic') and outside the classroom (friendships and social life) foster a sense of belonging in students but even those students who felt they did not belong, still had high expectations.

The quantitative study also examined possible indirect relationships between measures of social identification, perceived tangible support and students' expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success. There was also an indirect effect of social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived tangible support. The findings from the qualitative study were this time convergent in terms of tangible support having an impact on the expected outcome grade.

6.6.4 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Typical Students and how do they Differ?

6.6.4.1 Types of Programme. The quantitative study noted that students enrolled on non-professional programmes rated typical students as more hardworking and enthusiastic than students on professional programmes did, though there was not a statistically significant difference. Students on non-professional programmes rated typical students as more social than students on professional programmes did, and there was a statistically significant difference. There was convergence in findings from the qualitative study with differences between students studying professional and non-professional programmes noted. Professional Students talked of students on professional courses as being different from typical students on other courses in terms of being able to have a social life and having to work hard.

Considering both data sets, those studying professional programmes do not seem to regard themselves as typical students due to combining study time as well as time on placement. Those studying non-professional programmes rated typical students as both more hardworking and enthusiastic as well as being more social.

6.6.4.2 Demographic Variables. Ethnicity was found to be statistically significant with Black students rating typical students as the most hardworking and White Other students rating typical students as the least hardworking. There was divergence between the qualitative and quantitative findings as interviews with students of different ethnicities talking of typical students as either having an 'easy life' or being hardworking.

When students rated how social they thought typical students were, ethnicity was statistically significant with White British students rating typical students as the most social and Asian students rating typical students as being the least social. Again, there was divergence from the quantitative findings in the qualitative findings. Students of different ethnicities chose images

showing students socialising to represent the typical student experience, with some saying that these represented only first year students.

6.6.4.3 Self-Reported Typical Student Attributes and Ratings of Social Identification with University and with University Peers.

How hardworking students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers, though this was a small size effect in both cases. There was some confirmatory evidence in the qualitative data where students spoke of other students studying hard in the library as being a typical experience. This was particularly the case for younger students who also had an active social life at university.

How enthusiastic students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, this was a small size effect and also significantly predicted social identification with university, this was a medium sized effect. Older students tended to see other older students as also being enthusiastic, but this did not extend to all students. Often their sense of belonging was restricted to other older students.

How social students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, with a small sized effect. How social students scored typical students did not significantly predict social identification with university. Some students talked of other students in a social sense, out ‘partying’ or ‘laughing with friends’ and then talked of their own student experience in the same terms but some saw London university life as having less ‘partying’ and so less social than their friends’ experiences elsewhere. Studying in London was also seen as being more expensive than studying elsewhere which greater necessitated the need for paid work.

6.6.4.4 Self-Reported Typical Student Attributes and Ratings of Expected Achievement and Success. Students who rated typical students as hardworking expected higher End of Year and Programme grades and saw higher grades as being a successful outcome. Qualitative findings diverged from the quantitative as academic expectations were high, despite the students' own views of the attributes of typical students as being less than hardworking.

6.6.5 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Students and how do they Differ?

6.6.5.1 Types of Programme. The quantitative study found that students enrolled on professional programmes rated themselves as significantly more hardworking and enthusiastic than students on non-professional programmes did. There was also a trend for students studying on professional programmes to rate themselves as more social than students on non-professional programmes, though there was no significant difference. There was convergence between the qualitative and quantitative findings with most interviewees described themselves as being hardworking, with divergence from this from those on professional courses being very rare.

6.6.5.2 Demographic Variables. The quantitative study also examined how self-reported attributes of typical students differed between students according to demographic differences such as ethnicity, age and whether they were the first in their family to study at university. Age was statistically significant with older students rating themselves as the most hardworking. There was divergence between the findings as students in different age ranges did often talk about themselves in terms of how hardworking they were, but often this was in terms of the needs of balancing paid employment and studying. It may be that rating

hardworking in terms of academic work rather than other calls on their time that are required such as caring requirements or the need to earn money to support themselves.

6.6.5.3 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Measure of Social Identification.

How hardworking students scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers. In the qualitative student several students of different types did describe themselves as 'hardworking'. Findings diverged as some who had described themselves as hardworking talked about some of the difficulties forming relationships with other students whilst others enjoyed attending university lectures and found making friends easy.

How enthusiastic students rated themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers. There was convergence here as the few students who did describe themselves as being enthusiastic then talked positively of university experiences.

How social students rated themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers in the quantitative study. There was convergence here as several students who described themselves as being friendly or social went on to talk positively about university or university peers with some older students talking about identifying more with other older students seeing themselves as different from younger students.

6.6.5.4 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Ratings of their Expected Academic Achievement and Perceived Success

Students who rated themselves as hardworking expected higher End of Year and Programme grades and saw higher grades as being a successful outcome. There was convergence here as most students who specifically described themselves as hardworking, described a first or upper

second-class degree as a successful academic outcome for themselves. However, there were some 'hardworking' students who would not state a grade when asked about academic success.

Students who rated themselves as social expected significantly higher End of Year and Programme grades. Findings were divergent as the few students who specifically described themselves as social, described a mix of academic outcomes as being successful for themselves.

6.6.6 How Might Differences between Students' Self-Reported Attributes and the Ratings Given to Typical Students affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success?

In the quantitative study participants were grouped according to whether their self-reported score was greater, less or the same as the score given to typical students for each of the attributes (hardworking, enthusiastic, and social).

Whilst a statistically significant difference was only found on the difference between students self-scored social score and how they scored a typical student, there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same, to score more highly on Identification with University.

The same trend was seen for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same, with those students scoring more highly on Identification with University Peers. Qualitative responses were more mixed here. There were some students who saw other students as more social than themselves when they described themselves as hardworking whilst only one student described themselves as both hardworking and sociable.

The quantitative study examined how the difference between student's self-reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student and their perceptions of attributes of a typical student affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of

academic success. No statistically significant differences were found however there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same (the neutral group) in terms of being hardworking, enthusiastic, or social, to expect higher grades at the end of their current year. Qualitative findings were divergent as generally, even if students felt different from other students, they continued to have high expectations for themselves and what constituted a successful academic outcome.

6.7 Summary of Chapter

In this chapter integrated findings were presented following Joint Display Analysis of the quantitative and qualitative findings presented in previous chapters. When considering the choice of programme, it was found that older students tended to choose to study professional degree programmes. This was confirmed in the qualitative study with older students discussing the ‘risk’ involved in leaving full-time paid work to take on full-time study. Choosing a professional degree programme, with a known exit career path could be seen as mitigating against this risk.

High scores for social identification with university and university peers were found across both types of programme but there was some divergence between the qualitative and quantitative studies as students did not choose to describe themselves as such during interview unless prompted.

Quantitative measures of social identification with university and university peers did not show statistically significant differences in terms of ethnicity, gender or whether they were the first in their family to study at university. Older students were found to identify less with their external peers with mixed findings from the qualitative study showing participants across age

groups identifying with peers outside of their university setting in both positive and negative ways.

Findings from the qualitative and quantitative studies concerning expectations of academic achievement and success converged in that students from both professional and non-professional programmes expected an upper-second- or first-class degree and saw only those grades as successful outcomes. Whilst the quantitative data indicated that ethnicity, age, gender and whether the student was the first in their family to study at university had no statistically significant effect on the expected end of programme grade, there was some divergence here in terms of older students in the qualitative study.

In the quantitative study, feelings of belonging support and tangible support were found to mediate the relationship between measures of social identity and expectation of academic achievement. However, participants in the qualitative student mostly gave high grades as being a successful outcome even without feelings of belonging, though perceived tangible support did seem to affect the outcome students expected at the end of their programme of study.

There were convergent findings from the qualitative and quantitative studies concerning the attributes of typical students with those on professional programmes considering those on non-professional programmes as being typical and different from themselves. Interviews confirmed this as meaning that students on professional programmes talked of typical students on non-professional programmes as being able to have an active social life and not having to work hard.

However, there were divergent findings as students of differing ethnicities talked of typical students as having an 'easy life' and having an active social life whereas there were statistically significant differences between ethnicities in the quantitative study. An additional finding of

the qualitative study was that students considered life at a London university as being different from the typical student experience.

Considering students self-reported student attributes, there was convergence between findings with interviewees across programme types describing themselves as hardworking. Whilst age was statistically significant in the quantitative study, students across age ranges described themselves as hardworking. However, the description 'hardworking' may refer to concepts outside of academia for instance, the need for paid employment or caring requirements. There was some divergence between findings on students' own ratings of how hardworking, enthusiastic, and social they score themselves and measures of social identification with university.

There were mainly convergent findings when considering how students' self-reported attributes related to descriptions of expected academic success. Though students generally did require guidance in order to consider success in academic terms rather than describing it more generally.

When considering differences between students' self-reported attributes and how they rate the attributes of typical students, findings were divergent as students continued to have expectations of high academic outcomes whether or not they described themselves as being different from a typical student.

The next chapter, Chapter 7, provides a discussion of the previous studies and of their findings, before the implications of these findings, recommendations for further research and final conclusions are given in Chapter 8.

Chapter 7. General Discussion

7.1 Chapter Overview

In this chapter findings are drawn together and related to the aim of the thesis and existing literature. This chapter starts with an overview of the research before a discussion of the studies and of their findings are presented.

Once the research findings are outlined, limitations of the research are considered and finally, some directions for future research are reflected upon.

7.2 Research Overview

The aim of this thesis was to explore how undergraduate students' different social identities might be associated with their expectations and perceptions of achievement in a post-1992 university. This was addressed through four main questions:

Do students' choice of Programme of Study vary and if so, how?

Do measures of students' social identification with their university, peers and family differ and if so, how?

What are students' perceptions of achievement and success and if these differ, how?

What are students' perceptions of their own attributes and those of typical students and if these affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success, how?

Addressing these questions was initially achieved through a quantitative study, presented in Chapter 4, the aims of which were to investigate whether membership of different groups and the concept of student held, impact social identification as a student. Also, under investigation was what affect the strength of social identification as a student in conjunction with other

factors including perceived social support may have in relation to views of student achievement and success.

A further qualitative study was presented in Chapter 5 in order to capture the voices of undergraduate students. This explored the experience of students' university life and their perceptions of the characteristics of themselves as students as well as how they see typical students. Students also discussed their expectations of achievement and success. Following thematic analysis, findings were presented including whether the concepts of being a typical student vary across identified groups and how perceptions of success differ.

Integration of qualitative and quantitative data presented in Chapter 7 occurs through joint displays. The chapter also included an assessment of fit of the integration leading to a discussion of areas of *confirmation* (where the findings from both types of data confirm the results of the other) and *discordance* (where the qualitative and quantitative findings are inconsistent, incongruous, contradict, conflict, or disagree with each other).

7.3 Discussion of Findings

7.3.1 Do students' choice of programme vary and if so, how?

When considering students' choice of programme, findings from the quantitative study found that older students tended to enrol on professional courses and the qualitative findings converged with this with mature students referring to the 'risk' of returning to education. The majority of nurses in the UK are aged over 30 (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2020), including a significant number over 50 and this may be another significant factor in older students choosing to enrol on nursing courses. In addition, many of these older students these are already in the workforce in allied roles such as that of Health Care Assistants.

Findings from the quantitative study also showed differences between ethnicities enrolling on the different course types with a larger proportion of those on professional courses being Black British/Caribbean/African as opposed to larger proportion of White British students studying non-professional courses. Most students interviewed in the qualitative study were White (British/European/Other) and studying non-professional courses so investigating this found difference was difficult. As all the Black (British/Caribbean/African) students interviewed here were studying professional programmes some convergence of results may be assumed.

Particularly considering students of Black and Asian ethnicities again there are visible minorities (over 12 percent in total) within the nursing profession (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2020) (and potentially more in the environs in which the study was conducted) which may be a significant factor in choosing to study nursing. If a previous definition of belonging is considered, a potential ‘sense of connectedness’ (Somers, 1999) may be taken into account, with potential students of Black and Asian ethnicities perhaps feeling that they would ‘fit in’ to a profession where their own ethnicity was a visible one.

7.3.2 Do measures of students’ social identification with their university and their peers differ and if so, how?

Considering a relationship between social identification and choice of programme, the quantitative study found that students enrolled on professional and non-professional programmes are similar in terms of measures of identification with university and university peers and with family. This finding is novel and goes against existing findings in literature on socialisation in students in health care professions for instance Mariet (2016) states that nursing students are more likely to consider themselves ‘nurses’ than ‘students’ for instance. However, in the qualitative study no participants from either professional or non-professional

programmes described themselves as a student when asked to describe themselves at the start of the interviews, despite being on a university campus when asked the question.

The quantitative study showed no statistically significant differences in scores of identification with university or university peers in terms of ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the first in their family to attend university. This finding differs from those in existing literature where research indicates that ethnicity does have a relationship with the social identity of student, such as that by Brewer et al. (2013) which indicated that students from ethnic minority groups are more likely to 'carry' their ethnic identity across social contexts so that their membership in other social groups is associated with their ethnic identity. Frings et al. (2020) also found an association between ethnic and social identities and achievement, finding that students studying at a London university of ethnic minorities did have similar levels of student identity to their White colleagues, but had higher levels of ethnic identity. They found the level to which these social and ethnic identities were compatible was seen to have an effect on academic achievement.

Some studies suggest that mature students find the transition to study in Higher Education more difficult than their younger peers (Baxter & Britton, 2001; Mallman & Lee, 2016) though mature students identifying less strongly with their university or university peers was not found here. Again, if social identity is considered as being a way in which belongingness may be measured, similarity in measures of social identification for mature students' and younger students may indicate a similar sense of belonging in terms of a sense of connectedness (that is being part of, feeling accepted, and fitting in) at university. Older students did score significantly less in measures of identification with their external peers than their younger colleagues. This perhaps indicates that university study for older students, where study is not the norm for their age group, causes students to identify less strongly with their peers they have

‘left behind’ who have either never studied at this level or did so some time ago. However, the qualitative findings tended to diverge from this finding with students in different age groups talking of external peers in diverse ways.

7.3.3 What are students’ perceptions of achievement and success and if these differ, how?

The quantitative study found that there were similar expectations for those on both professional and non-professional programmes in terms of their expected End of Year and End of Programme grades whilst those on professional programmes perceived lower grades as being a successful academic outcome, with a larger proportion of students studying professional programmes putting a Lower-Second class degree or lower as being a successful outcome. Qualitative findings converged with the quantitative finding here with most non-professional students who talked of wanting a first-class degree with limited examples of students on professional courses accepting an outcome that would not generally be classed as successful by academic institutions, being below an upper second-class degree.

Whilst no statistically significant effect of ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the First in their Family to study at university on expected End of Programme or perceived successful outcome grades was noted. However, there is an awarding gap in English universities for all of these aspects (*Qualifications Achieved HESA, 2018*). That participants in the studies were self-selecting may indicate they were already motivated to succeed and so results may not be generalised to a normal student population. Alternatively, it may also indicate that students have unrealistic expectations of their academic outcomes as the majority of students expected to achieve a First-class degree outcome.

When considering age, the largest proportion to expect a first-class degree or seeing this as the only successful outcome were from the youngest age group, those aged 21 years or younger.

There was divergence from the qualitative findings here with mature students of different ages having varying expectations of what they saw as a successful outcome for themselves, from a bare pass to a first-class degree. Mature students are generally reported as a homogeneous group within national statistics, with 25-year-olds being reported in the same manner as 35-, 45- or 55-year-olds, when in fact they can vary in a number of ways. Age may be combined with the existing responsibilities, for instance the financial and caring responsibilities they have, as well as how supported they feel all impacting on their expectations of achievement and success.

7.3.3.1 Expected Academic Achievement, Success, and Perceived Support. The quantitative study examined possible indirect relationships between measures of social identification, perceived belonging support and students' expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success. Findings in the quantitative study did show statistically significant indirect effects of both social identification with university, social identification with university peers and social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course, through perceived belonging support. These findings concur with existing literature which reports that a student's sense of belonging at university has been found to be positively associated with their motivation and academic self-efficacy (Freeman et al., 2007) or that there is a positive relationship between achievement motivation and social identification with fellow students (Zwettler et al., 2018). Findings from the qualitative studies showed divergence from this in terms of the importance of feelings of belonging and its relationship with views of successful outcomes with examples of students who said that they felt they did

not belong at university though still thought of a high grade as a successful outcome and expected a high outcome grade for themselves.

Some interviews in this thesis indicate factors inside the classroom (feeling ‘academic’) and outside the classroom (friendships and social life) foster a sense of belonging in students but even those students who felt they did not belong, still had high academic expectations of themselves. This indicates a difference between the findings here and existing literature where an association between a student’s sense of belonging and their intention to persist at university has been reported (Hausmann et al., 2007).

The quantitative study also examined possible indirect relationships between measures of social identification, perceived tangible support and students’ expectations of their own academic achievement and views of success. There was also an indirect effect of social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived tangible support. The findings from the qualitative study were this time convergent in terms of tangible support having an impact on the expected outcome grade and also supported literature finding an association between social support and academic achievement for university students (Li et al., 2018; Tinajero et al., 2019).

7.3.4 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Typical Students and how do they Differ?

The quantitative study noted that students enrolled on non-professional programmes rated typical students as more hardworking and enthusiastic than students on professional programmes did, though there was not a statistically significant difference. Students on non-professional programmes rated typical students as more social than students on professional programmes did, and there was a statistically significant difference. There was convergence in findings from the qualitative study with differences between students studying professional and

non-professional programmes noted. Professional Students talked of students on professional courses as being different from typical students on other courses in terms of being able to have a social life and having to work harder than others because of their combination of placement and university work.

Considering both data sets, those studying professional programmes do not seem to regard themselves as typical students perhaps due to combining study time as well as time on placement. Those studying non-professional programmes rated typical students as both more hardworking and enthusiastic as well as being more social than the ratings given by those studying on professional programmes. Whilst there has been research indicating that nursing students may see themselves more in terms of nurses than students (Mariet, 2016), the results here indicate specific student attributes where differences lie.

Ethnicity was found to be statistically significant with Black students rating typical students as the most hardworking and White Other students rating typical students as the least hardworking. There was divergence between the qualitative and quantitative findings as interviews with students of different ethnicities talking of typical students as either having an 'easy life' or being hardworking, rather than students of specific ethnicities describing typical students in one particular way.

When students rated how social they thought typical students were, ethnicity was statistically significant with White British students rating typical students as the most social and Asian students rating typical students as being the least social. Again, there was divergence from the quantitative findings in the qualitative findings. Students of different ethnicities chose images showing students socialising to represent the typical student experience, with some saying that these represented only first year students and that university life changed after that stage.

7.3.4.1 Typical Student Attributes and Social Identification

How hardworking students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers, though this was a small size effect in both cases. There was some confirmatory evidence in the qualitative data where students spoke of other students studying hard in the library as being a typical experience. This was particularly the case for younger students who also had an active social life at university.

How enthusiastic students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, this was a small size effect and also significantly predicted social identification with university, this was a medium sized effect. Older students tended to see other older students as also being enthusiastic, but this did not extend to all students. Often their sense of belonging was restricted to other older students, feeling very different to younger students.

How social students scored typical students significantly predicted social identification with university, with a small sized effect. How social students scored typical students did not significantly predict social identification with university. Some students talked of other students in a social sense, out ‘partying’ or ‘laughing with friends’ and then talked of their own student experience in the same terms but some saw London university life as having less ‘partying’ and so less social than their friends’ experiences elsewhere. Studying in London was also seen as being more expensive than studying elsewhere which greater necessitated the need for paid work. The potential difference of the student experience in London and of that experience being seemingly different from the experience of the typical specifically does not seem to be reflected in literature, though students perceiving themselves to have attributes different from those of the typical student is explored in section 7.3.6 below.

7.3.4.2 Typical Student Attributes and Expectations of Achievement and Success

Students who rated typical students as hardworking expected higher End of Year and Programme grades and saw higher grades as being a successful outcome. Qualitative findings diverged from the quantitative as academic expectations were high, despite the students' own views of the attributes of typical students as being less than hardworking.

7.3.5 What are the Self-Reported Attributes of Students and how do they Differ?

The quantitative study found that students enrolled on professional programmes rated themselves as significantly more hardworking and enthusiastic than students on non-professional programmes did. There was also a trend for students studying on professional programmes to rate themselves as more social than students on non-professional programmes, though there was no significant difference. There was convergence between the qualitative and quantitative findings with most interviewees described themselves as being hardworking, with divergence from this from those on professional courses being very rare.

The quantitative study also examined how self-reported attributes of typical students differed between students according to demographic differences such as ethnicity, age and whether they were the first in their family to study at university. Age was statistically significant with older students rating themselves as the most hardworking. There was divergence between the findings as students in different age ranges did often talk about themselves in terms of how hardworking they were, but often this was in terms of the needs of balancing paid employment and studying. Prior research has had mature students to be more negative in their self-descriptions (Taylor & House, 2010), but that was not the case here. It may also be that older students' rating of how hard hardworking they were was not only in terms of their academic

work but also in other calls on their time that may be required such as caring requirements or the need to earn money to support themselves or their families.

7.3.5.1 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Social Identification.

How hardworking students scored themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers. In the qualitative student several students of different types did describe themselves as 'hardworking'. Findings diverged as some who had described themselves as hardworking talked about some of the difficulties forming relationships with other students whilst others enjoyed attending university lectures and found making friends easy.

How enthusiastic students rated themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers. There was convergence here as the few students who did describe themselves as being enthusiastic then talked positively of university experiences.

According to Wilcox et al. (2005), 'making compatible friends' is the most important aspiration for students starting university and positive social interaction is one of the fundamental prerequisites for a sense of belonging. How social students rated themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers in the quantitative study, considering measures of social identity as a way to measure belongingness, this result supported an association between students' ratings of their sociability, and feelings of belonging at university. There was convergence here as several students who described themselves as being friendly or social went on to talk positively about university or university peers with some older students talking about identifying more with other older students seeing themselves as different from younger students.

7.3.5.2 Self-Reported Student Attributes and Expectations of Achievement and Success

Students who rated themselves as hardworking expected higher End of Year and Programme grades and saw higher grades as being a successful outcome. There was convergence here as most students who specifically described themselves as hardworking, described a first or upper second-class degree as a successful academic outcome for themselves. However, there were some 'hardworking' students who would not state a grade when asked about academic success.

Students who rated themselves as social expected significantly higher End of Year and Programme grades. Findings were divergent as the few students who specifically described themselves as social, described a mix of academic outcomes as being successful for themselves. Previous studies (Hambridge, 2012; March & McPherson, 1996; Wilkes et al., 2014) described successful nursing students as 'hardworking', 'enthusiastic' and 'friendly' and students who scored themselves highly on these attributes in the quantitative study or talked about themselves in these terms in the qualitative study tended to have high expectations of their academic achievement, whether they were studying an academic programme leading to a professional or non-programme degree.

7.3.6 How Might Differences between Students' Self-Reported Attributes and the Ratings Given to Typical Students affect measures of social identity and perceptions of achievement and success?

In the analysis for the quantitative study, participants were grouped according to whether their self-reported score was greater, less or the same as the score they had given to typical students for each of the attributes (hardworking, enthusiastic, and social). During interviews in the qualitative study students were asked to compare images they had chosen to represent themselves and typical students and to then discuss any differences between the images chosen.

Whilst a statistically significant difference was only found on the difference between students self-scored social score and how they scored a typical student, there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same, to score more highly on Identification with University. The same trend was seen for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same, with those students scoring more highly on social identification with University Peers. Qualitative responses were more mixed here. There were some students who saw other students as more social than themselves when they described themselves as hardworking whilst only one student described themselves as both hardworking and sociable.

The quantitative study examined how the difference between student's self-reported perceptions of their own attributes as a student and their perceptions of attributes of a typical student affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success. No statistically significant differences were found however there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same (the neutral group) in terms of being hardworking, enthusiastic, or social, to expect higher grades at the end of their current year. Qualitative findings were divergent as generally, even if students felt different from other students, they continued to have high expectations for themselves and what constituted a successful academic outcome. Previous research investigating students' perceived dissimilarity from student prototypes has been seen to predict poorer student retention (Lane & Gibbons, 2007) and worse academic achievement (Lane, 2017) if students viewed the typical student favourably and themselves as dissimilar.

7.4 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Asking students about their expected grades rather than having access to their actual end of year and end of programme grades means I have assumed a strong relationship between the intention to receive a given grade at a certain time points and the student actually receiving that

grade. However, it has been found that students tend to overestimate expected grades even after submitting work (Belski & Belski, 2013) and so this could be an issue. Therefore, future research should rely on actual grade scores collected at the end of the academic year rather than relying on student predictions. Future research could also investigate students engagement with feedback received and whether this engagement allows more accurate prediction of future grades.

The findings in these studies indicate a limited effect of ethnicity on students' social identity, however other research has pointed to a possible effect of an interaction with students' ethnic identity. For example, Frings et al. (2020) reported that students who were not from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds had similar levels of student identity to those who were from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic backgrounds, but had lower ethnic identities. Future research on student social identity should consider including students' ethnic identity as an additional measure.

In the thesis I have referred to some of these dimensions of intersectionality such as gender, ethnicities, first generation status and mature/traditional age and reported on findings in relation to them. It will be important to consider this in more detail including combinations of different identities in a more detailed way in future research: considering the intersectional nature of holding multiple, perhaps conflicting, social identities for students in Higher Education.

A number of additional factors beyond the scope of the study may also ameliorate or exacerbate the observed effects. For example, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) students may have identities which differ in strength and meaning to non-STEM students (whilst Psychology students are awarded a B.Sc. it is not considered a STEM subject). Collecting additional data from students enrolled on a STEM programme of study in addition

to comparing those on professional and non-professional degree programmes of study would increase the generalisability of the findings.

Membership of student social/support societies may buffer stress responses, whilst these were mentioned in the qualitative study, they were not asked about in the quantitative. Also, both the levels of, and responsibility for, tuition fees may also change the meaning of identities and the psychological and academic attainment impact of their interaction. In this vein, it is also worth noting that the current research utilised a relevantly superordinate identity (one which encompasses others, see Tajfel & Turner, 1979) - being 'a student'. More granular identities (i.e., 'a psychology student', a 'nursing student', etc.) may operate differentially, to the extent the contents differ.

A further limitation is the voluntary and opportunistic nature of sampling from the target population without being able to calculate the optimal sample size through a power calculation (Onwuegbuzie & Levin, 2003). Related to the sampling, limitations exist in the under representation of those studying on professional programmes in both the qualitative and quantitative data. There was a low response rate from nursing and social work students to the flyer recruitment and the online recruitment process even after visiting lectures in person and it was not possible to give more time to sample more data due to constraints of the academic term, students' placements off campus and PhD research timescales.

Data from participants of more ethnicities could have embellished the findings from those studying professional programmes in particular as this group were made up of students who were nearly all of Black ethnicities.

7.5 Summary of Chapter

This chapter provided an overview of the research put forward in this thesis, before the previous studies and their findings were discussed in relation to previous literature. Some limitations of the thesis were outlined and directions for future research were given.

The implications of the research findings in terms of Higher Education generally and for teaching and learning as well as professional practice are given alongside some final conclusions next in the final chapter.

Chapter 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Chapter Overview

In this final chapter conclusions and recommendations are given based on the findings discussed in the previous chapter. After the conclusions, implications for teaching and learning on professional and non-professional academic programmes are given as well as implications for practice and for Higher Education as a whole.

8.2 Conclusions

Our social identity comes from the social groups that we belong to, like our professional identity, discipline identity, cohort identity, course identity and even cultural identity. Previous research has shown that social identity is important for positive attitudes about study. It increases commitment and reduces attrition. Identity increases satisfaction. It is why we aspire to commence study and helps us finish our study. This is because social identity is what allows norms and attitudes to influence our behaviour.

Identity is also important for engagement. It increases our willingness to work for the group, minimises social loafing and helps groups function. Identity is important for mental health as it satisfies fundamental psychological needs. It lowers stress and enables social support to work. Identity is important for academic integrity because it allows us to learn the attitudes and behaviours that promote integrity.

A shared social identity increases motivation to learn. It improves communication within a group and improves encoding of information and deeper processing of that information.

This thesis focused on the experiences of undergraduate students in a post-1992 university in London. It explored how students' different social identities might be associated with their

expectations and perceptions of achievement in Higher Education. The social psychological theory of Social Identity was the main context through which these elements were examined. The participants who took part in the qualitative or quantitative studies were undergraduate students studying either professional or non-professional programmes. After separate analyses, the data was brought together through the mixed-method process of Joint Display analysis.

Students enrolled on either professional or non-professional academic programmes were found to differ with younger students more likely to enrol in non-professional programmes. Considering Social Identity on its own was not sufficient. Measures of social identification with university, university peers or peers external to university were similar for students on both programme types and also did not differ by ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the first in their family to attend university. However, older students did score significantly less in measures of identification with their external peers than their younger colleagues.

Belonging is a part of a shared social identity: Identity is essential for a sense of belonging, with previous research (Walton & Cohen, 2007) showing raised achievement motivation for those students who felt they belonged. In this thesis, the association between social identity and expected achievement was not a simple one: there were indirect effects of social identification on the grade the student expected at the end of their course, mediated through perceived belonging support.

While friendships can be important for building social connections and a sense of belonging, it is more than that. We should start with students' disciplinary identities where possible as this is what students are saying is important to them because they are invested in these identities through their enrolment in their programmes.

When students' expectations of academic achievement and success were considered, those on professional programmes perceived lower grades as being a successful academic outcome. There was no effect of ethnicity, gender, or whether they were the First in their Family to study at university on expected academic outcomes or perceived successful outcome grades. This indicated that a lack of aspiration is not a factor in any awarding gaps for these groups. Age did have an effect: with the youngest age group being more likely to expect to obtain a first-class degree.

Considering attributes assigned to the typical student and attributes students gave to themselves, students studying professional academic degree programmes tended not to view themselves as being typical. There were associations between the attributes students gave themselves, typical students and measures of social identification and expected achievement and perceived success. Understanding these relationships between students' identities and the attributes associated with them, and their expectations and perceptions of achievement in Higher Education could enable Higher Education Institutions to develop systems and processes to better support the diverse student body enrolled on both professional and non-professional academic degree programmes. Being an applied thesis, possible interventions, or actions that Higher Education Institutions may implement in order to support the inclusion and achievement of students are next considered.

8.3 Recommendations

Being an applied thesis, this section considers possible interventions or actions that may support the inclusion and achievement of students.

8.3.1 Implications for Teaching, Learning and Assessment

8.3.1.1 Implications for Teaching on Professional Academic Programmes. Undertaking a pre-registration nursing programme is challenging. Academic demands alongside practice requirements ensure that nursing students do not experience the traditional higher education year, with only seven or eight weeks off, unlike the rest of the university student community. Students on professional academic programmes in this thesis did see themselves as being different from ‘typical’ students, and so belonging is likely to be expressed and interpreted differently by groups of students in nursing. As such, feelings of belonging to the discipline may be more important.

During teaching, students may be helped to see themselves in the discipline by making sure that there is talk about positive exemplars of people from different backgrounds, whether they are researchers in the discipline or professionals who practise. Learning about the disciplines’ expectations and norms are also important ways to build identity. This should be explicitly stated to students, for example talking about professional codes of conduct or standards as a way of helping to define what it means to be a person in this discipline.

This may also be achieved at university by talking about expectations around academic integrity and what that means for how students and academics work. Further reinforcement of what it means to belong can be made by making it clear how one discipline is positive and distinct from other disciplines. By making the boundaries between groups clearer, we more clearly define the group that we are in. This could be achieved in multidisciplinary health or social settings, for example, by being explicit about how each different discipline contributes to positive outcomes for service users.

Ceremonies can also help to build a sense of belonging. This is because we are publicly welcoming people to the discipline or group. One example of this is could be an event where new nursing students receive their uniform in front of academics, people from the profession, their peers and family. This would represent a public commitment to that identity by students, that is recognised by others who are important to the students.

8.3.1.2 Implications for Teaching on All Types of Academic Programmes. Participants in both the quantitative and qualitative studies reported in this thesis generally expected very high academic outcomes for themselves, with the youngest students in particular largely expecting to obtain a first-class degree. Previous research has found that students tend to over-estimate their expected academic achievement with students expecting high grades for themselves than they actually attain (Belski & Belski, 2013). Whilst the scope of this study did not allow comparison between expected academic outcomes and actual academic outcomes, a clearer understanding of what is expected in order to achieve a certain grade would help students to foster realistic academic expectations. It is suggested that before receiving feedback on any submitted piece of work, students should reflect on their learning practice on individual pieces of work and also predict their mark. Reflective practice forms part of the placement practice for those studying professional practice but could be expanded to include the academic elements of their programmes whilst reflection should form an integral part of non-professional programmes too.

A systematic review (Winstone et al., 2017) revealed that students engagement with feedback is often poor with many students failing to look at written feedback or only looking at it once with students being only interested in their grade ('grade fixation'). There may be reasons that students do not engage with feedback – if they do not understand it for instance (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006) or it could represent a more general lack of engagement with

university. Dedicated improvement and assessment time is widely used in secondary education with 58 percent of secondary teachers using this method (Winstone & Winstone, 2021) in order to get their students to engage with feedback they have received. Applying this in a tertiary setting has been considered (Burke, 2011) with the use of feedback tutorials as a means of shifting students from being passive consumers of feedback to active participants in the process. Seminars in each programme module should be dedicated to peer marking of sample answers already graded at different levels for sample questions in order for students to have clear examples of how work is graded and the difference between work of different grades.

8.3.2 Implications for the Higher Education Sector in General

8.3.2.1 Hidden Social Identities. Whilst some student identities are visible, some student identities are hidden. For instance, those who are first generation students or those who are parents or carers who have additional responsibilities outside of university. It is important that Higher Education Institutions recognise, appreciate, and affirm that differences exist within their student communities. Some high tariff universities have made being a first-generation student a ‘celebrated’ identity with dedicated support. This has already been done in some high tier universities (e.g. Stanford University First-Gen and/or Low Income (FLI), 2020) where programs offer specific advice as well as academic and social support. Whilst this may not be feasible for lower tariff universities (such as the one reported in this thesis) where the student population is made up of a far larger proportion of first generation students, the addition of a national day of celebration of first generation students such as that run on November 8th in some American colleges (First-Generation College Celebration, 2021) may be a way to make this hidden identity visible.

In a similar way, parents and carers could have specific support provided by universities in order that students may not feel alone in their experiences. This could be practical support in

the form of accessible childcare (such as crèches or holiday clubs for older children) but also social support by encouraging and enabling social groups for parents and carers so that these hidden identities may be celebrated and shared.

8.3.2.2 Mature Students. Mature students are less likely to be hidden, depending on their age. In these studies, mature students' feelings of belonging appeared to be associated with being able to be enthusiastic about their programmes of study with other older students. With many mature students there was little time or energy for socialising away from the lecture room or classroom which was particularly the case for older students on professional programmes. In addition, older students tended to identify less strongly with their peers outside of university. Given that research has shown the importance of relationships both with fellow students (Masika & Jones, 2016) and with friends outside of university (Busher et al., 2017) on learner identities, institutions should stress the importance building relationships with peers. The support received from those outside the university should also be acknowledged.

It should be noted that the participants' responses in this thesis suggest that the cohort of those classed as mature students in particular are not a homogeneous group, with findings of those over 40 often differing from those under 30 who are also considered to be mature students. When considering additional support for these students their life experiences rather than simply age should be considered. In terms of offering academic support it should be noted that mature students may have had prior experiences of learning which were unsuccessful (Busher et al., 2017) and are generally more likely to have 'academic concerns'. In these studies, older students were less likely than the youngest age group to expect the highest grades for themselves, though this could be related to having realistic expectations rather than low aspirations. When encouraging social interaction with other students in order to foster a sense

of belonging, daytime events should be included in order to encourage all students with responsibilities outside of university, including mature students to attend.

Participants' responses suggested that mature students in particular are not a homogeneous group. Reporting them as one group and treating them as such should be avoided. Even those with caring responsibilities are not a homogeneous group with different needs for those caring for children under school age or older children and those caring for vulnerable adults.

8.3.2.3 Belonging. Findings in this thesis indicate an indirect association between student social identity, perceived social support and expectations of academic achievement. As social support may be conceived in both terms of belonging support and tangible support, considering ways in which students may increase their feelings of belonging at university is important.

When we do bring people together for class contact or social events, we can help build identity, and hence belonging, by creating a context where people have common goals, where they are of equal status, and where they have to cooperate. Group assessment tasks are one way that we can do all of these things.

8.3.3 Implications for Practice.

Identifying strongly as a nurse implies taking on the norms and expectations of that profession. This includes the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) and reflection in practice, both informally and formally as part of the revalidation process needed every three years for a registered nurse. As well as practice hours and feedback, revalidation includes 35 hours of CPD including 20 hours of participatory learning, five written reflective accounts and reflective discussion. Nurses who want to progress in their careers need to have digital, presentation and communication skills, and be able to understand an evidence base and interpret legislation and policy. Emphasising that these academic and soft skills are essential

to their careers as nurses will help students understand the link between academic practice and their practice as a nurse.

Undertaking a pre-registration nursing degree is challenging (Wray et al., 2014) and there are enduring themes of stress amongst students studying across professional programmes including those studying on nursing programmes (Robotham, 2008). Post-qualification and registration, while retirement was the primary reason for leaving the profession, around 26% leave due to high-stress and poor mental health (*The NMC Register*, 2020), though research has indicated that early career nurses left their first jobs because of job dissatisfaction caused by unit conflict (Welling, 2015). A student's sense of belonging has been seen an indicator of a student's intention to persist at university (e.g. Tinto, 2017; Tinto, 1999). In a similar way, a sense of belonging contributes to early career nurses intention to stay in role (Welling, 2015), where job satisfaction is impacted by nurses' sense of belonging. Established working environments that help the entry level nurse gain a sense of belonging may increase their job satisfaction and retain them in nursing.

Employers could implement programs that improve the sense of belonging by exploring measures that improve job satisfaction and allow the new nurses to voice concerns and opinions. Referring back to Teaching and Learning, educators could model and infuse characteristics into practice that promotes ingroup identity and a sense of belonging. This should occur by infusing the concepts of belonging into the curriculum of their academic programmes.

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Appendix 1: Online survey schedule.



Welcome to the research study!

You have been invited to take part in a psychology research study which is part of PhD research supervised by Prof. Pam Maras, Director of Research & Enterprise and Professor of Social & Educational Psychology. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. The **aim** of this study is to explore how the identities held by undergraduate students might be associated with their progression and achievement whilst at university. We will be looking at different types of courses, either professional degrees (such as Nursing) or non-professional degrees (such as Childhood and Youth Studies or Psychology) and comparing student experiences.

How much time will the research take?

This initial online survey should take less than 20 minutes to complete, however you will be asked to include contact details so that you may be included in a later interview, which may take up to an hour of your time.

What do you want to find out about?

The initial questionnaire will ask questions on your age, gender, ethnicity, working and caring responsibilities, how often you come to campus and how far away you live. It also asks about how you feel about studying, your identity as a student and what you think are typical student characteristics.

During the later interview you will be asked further questions about why you have chosen to come to university and why you have chosen your specific course as well as what you think you need to be successful on it.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research. If you decide to take part, you are still free to stop at any time and without giving a reason. Choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your marks, assessments or future at the university. If you start to take part, then change your mind, you can request that your data be removed from the research (provided this is done within a month of taking part in the

project). The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) has ethically approved this project and there is no foreseeable risk or disadvantage to you in taking part in it.

So why bother taking part?

Research projects would not be possible without people like you who volunteer to take part in the research. Participation should be seen as a valuable opportunity to experience research ‘in action’ and to further understand the principles of research design.

What happens to any personal information I give?

All research takes place under very strict ethical guidelines. We comply with the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018) and personal information is therefore treated in strict confidence; no-one except the researcher ever gets to know people’s individual results. The scientific results will always be communicated in print in such a form that it is impossible to identify information about any particular individual. All data gathered will be stored securely and will be retained only for the duration of the project and not kept any longer than necessary. It will then be either shredded or purged from the media device where it was stored.

Data collected here is anonymous, unless you choose to leave your email address at the end of the survey. However, any serious concerns over participant's welfare raised in this survey will be flagged with the relevant programme leader.

Data may also be used for a further project in anonymous form, but you are able to opt out of this if you wish, by ticking a box on the participant consent form on the next page.

If you have any questions about this research, your rights as a research subject or have a complaint, please contact the lead researcher Karina Hanson. You can email her at karina.hanson@greenwich.ac.uk or call her on [REDACTED]. Alternatively you may contact the research supervisor Prof. Pam Maras at P.F.Maras@greenwich.ac.uk. This is a long term project, but results of the research, may be published in the interim. If you would like an opportunity to be provided with information about the findings, please leave your contact details at the end and I will send them to you in due course. Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that your participation in the study is voluntary, you are 18 years of age, and that you are aware that you may choose to terminate your participation in the study at any time and for any reason.

Please note that this survey will be best displayed on a laptop or desktop computer. Some features may be less compatible for use on a mobile device.

- Continue
- I do not wish to participate

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

- I have read the previous information page about this study
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study
- I have received satisfactory answers to any questions I had
- I have received enough information about this study
- I understand that I am / the participant is free to withdraw from this study:
 - At any time (until such date as this will no longer be possible, which I have been told)
 - Without giving a reason for withdrawing
 - Without affecting my future with the University

Please create a personal 4-digit code and enter it here.

We ask for this code only so that we can identify your response should you like us to withdraw your data from the study.

Your data is completely anonymous and you are the only person who will be able to identify your response based on this 4-digit code.

I understand that my research data may be used for a further project in anonymous form, but I am able to opt out of this if I so wish, by clicking here.

- I do not want my research data used in the future
- My data may be used in future projects

If you understand the statements above, and freely agree to participate in the study, click on the "I Agree" button to begin the survey.

- I Agree
- I do not want to participate in the study

Skip To: End of Survey A. = I do not want to participate in the study

Demographic questions

Q2 Do you study full time or part time?

- Full time
- Part time

Q3 What programme of study do you follow?

- BSc Nursing (any field)
- BSc Psychology
- BA Childhood and Youth Studies
- BA Education Studies
- Other

Q4 You started your studies in which year?

- 2018
- 2017
- 2016
- 2015

- 2014
- earlier

Q4A Have your studies at university been interrupted?

[Display This Question: If You started your studies in which year? = 2015 Or You started your studies in which year? = 2014 Or You started your studies in which year? = earlier]

- Yes
- No

Q4B Have you repeated a year at university?

[Display This Question: If You started your studies in which year? = 2015 Or You started your studies in which year? = 2014 Or You started your studies in which year? = earlier]

- Yes
- No

Q5 What gender do you identify as?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q6 Age range?

- 18 – 21

- 22 – 24
- 25 – 39
- 40 - 55
- over 55

Q7 Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Q8 What is your ethnic group? (Categories gathered from those used by the Office of National Statistics). Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background

- White
- Gypsy, Roma or Irish Traveller
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic backgrounds
- Asian/Asian British
- Black African/Caribbean/ Black British
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q8A Choose a further option that best describes your ethnic group or background

[Display This Question: If What is your ethnic group? = White]

- English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- Irish

Other (please describe)_____

Q8B Choose a further option that best describes your ethnic group or background

[Display This Question: If What is your ethnic group? = Mixed/Multiple Ethnic backgrounds]

White and Black Caribbean

White and Black African

White and Asian

Other (please describe)_____

Q8C Choose a further option that best describes your ethnic group or background

[Display This Question: If What is your ethnic group? = Asian/Asian British]

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Other (Please describe)_____

Q8D Choose a further option that best describes your ethnic group or background

[Display This Question: If What is your ethnic group? = Black African/Caribbean/ Black British]

African

Caribbean

Other (Please describe)_____

Q8E Choose a further option that best describes your ethnic group or background

[Display This Question: If What is your ethnic group? = Other]

- Arab
- Other (Please describe) _____

Commitments outside University

Q9 Do you have paid work in addition to your studies?

- No
- Yes

Q9A Do you work unsociable hours?

[Display This Question: If Do you have paid work in addition to your studies? = Yes]

- Yes
- No

Q9B Approximately how many hours a week do you work?

[Display This Question: If Do you have paid work in addition to your studies? = Yes]

Q10 Do you have caring commitments in addition to your studies?

- No
- Yes - children within my family unit
- Yes - other family members
- Yes - other (Please describe)

Parental Education

Q11 Did either of your parents gain a university degree?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

Q11A Which parent gained a degree?

[Display This Question: If Did either of your parents gain a university degree? = Yes]

- Mother
- Father
- Both

Q11B How old were they when they gained their degree?

[Display This Question: If Did either of your parents gain a university degree? = Yes]

	Under 25	Under 40	Over 40	Don't know
Mother	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Father	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11C What is the highest level of education reached by either of your parents?

[Display This Question: If Did either of your parents gain a university degree? = No Or Did either of your parents gain a university degree? = Don't know]

- Left education when Under 16
- Left education when Under 18

- Left education when Over 18
- Don't know

Q12 Does anyone else in your family have a university degree or is currently studying for one?

- Yes (please describe eg: sibling)_____
- No

University Studies

Q13 Have you ever had to submit work late?

- Yes
- No
- N/A - I have not had to submit any coursework yet.

Q14 Have you ever filed for extenuating circumstances regarding coursework or exams whilst at university?

- Yes
- No
- N/A - I have not completed any coursework or exams yet.

Q15 Have you ever had circumstances that have affected your studies that you have not claimed for?

- Yes - I could have claimed, but didn't
- Yes - but my circumstances weren't covered by the extenuating circumstances rules
- No

N/A - I have not completed any coursework or exams yet

Q16 Have you ever had to resit an examination?

Yes

No

N/A - I have not sat any exams yet

Campus life

Q17 Do you live on campus?

Yes

No

Q17A How long is your commute? (In minutes)

Display This Question: If Do you live on campus? = No

Q17B How long is your commute? (In miles)

Display This Question: If Do you live on campus? = No

Less than 5 miles

5 to 10 miles

10 to 20 miles

More than 20 miles

Q18 How often are you on campus...?

	How many times in a week?					
	Rarely/Never	1	2	3	4	5 or more
Attending lectures/seminars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Studying independently (e.g: reading, writing up notes, preparing for lectures, writing essays or coursework)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Going to the library	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Socialising (e.g: meeting up for coffee, lunch or a chat, going to the Students' Union, or attending clubs or societies)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Social Identity

Q19 Below is a list of 16 statements dealing with how you feel in different contexts

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
My family think it is great that I go to this university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friends think that it is great that I go to this university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like doing the same things as other students in my university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like being with my university friends more than anything else	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like being with my non-university friends more than anything else	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like being at university more than doing anything else	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like doing things at home on my own more than doing anything else	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My non-university friends are very similar to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family are very similar to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

It is great that I go to [this] University	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students in my university are very similar to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like doing the same things as my non-university friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like being with my family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like hanging around with my non-university friends	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most of the academic staff here think that it's great that I go to this university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like doing the same things as my family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q20 Below is a list of 12 statements dealing with how you feel about your academic progress. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree)
I like doing most of the assignments I get given	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My friends think my work is of a high standard	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I work really hard at university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I always read feedback I am given on my assignments

It is important to get a good degree

I attend all my lectures

I submit all my assignments on time

I think I will do well in my exams

My work is of a high standard

I put a lot of effort into my assignments

My family think my work is of a high standard

Doing well at university will make me more successful in life

Q21 Below is a list of 5 statements dealing with how you feel about yourself. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

Strongly disagree

Somewhat disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly agree

I am very happy being the person I am

I like the way that I look	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My course tutors like me a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Students on my course like me a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My family like me a lot	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21A Below is a statement dealing with your identity as a student at this university. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

[Display This Question: If What programme of study do you follow? = BSc Nursing (any field)]

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I identify as a nursing student at [this university]	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I identify more as a nurse than a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21B Below is a statement dealing with your identity as a student at this university. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

[Display This Question: If What programme of study do you follow? = BSc Psychology]

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I identify as a psychology student at [this] university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q21C Below is a statement dealing with your identity as a student at this university. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

[Display This Question: If What programme of study do you follow? = BA Childhood and Youth Studies]

I identify as a Childhood and Youth Studies student at [this] university

<input type="radio"/>	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Neither agree nor disagree
<input type="radio"/>	Agree
<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Q21D Below is a statement dealing with your identity as a student at this university. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

[Display This Question: If What programme of study do you follow? = BA Social Work]

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I identify as a social work student at [this] university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I identify more as a social worker than a student	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Perceived Support

Q22 Below is a list of statements each of which may or may not be true about you. For each statement please click Probably True if the statement is true about you or Probably False if the statement is not true about you. You may find that many of the statements are neither clearly true nor clearly false. In these cases, try to decide quickly whether probably true or probably false is most descriptive of you. Although some questions will be difficult to answer, it is important that you pick one alternative or the other. Please read each item quickly but carefully before responding. Remember that this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers.

	Probably True	Probably False
I know someone who would loan me £100 so I could go away for the weekend.		
There are people at university or at home who I regularly run with, exercise with, or play sports with.		
I know someone who I see or talk to often with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about problems I might have budgeting my time between school and my social life.		
I don't know anyone who would give me some old furniture if I moved into my own place.		
I am not a member of any social groups (such as church groups, societies, clubs, teams, etc.)		
There isn't anyone at university or home with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have with making friends.		
I know someone who would loan me £200 to help pay my tuition.		

I hang out in a friend's room or flat quite a lot.

I know someone who I see or talk to often with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have adjusting to university life.

Even if I needed it my family would (or could) not give me money for tuition and books.

Lately, I often feel lonely, like I don't have anyone to reach out to.

There isn't anyone at university or home with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have getting along with my parents.

If I needed it, my family would provide me with an allowance and spending money.

If I decided at dinner time to take a study break this evening and go to a movie, I could easily find someone to go with me.

I know someone who I see or talk to often with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about any problems I might have meeting people.

I don't know anyone at university or home who would help me study for an exam by spending several hours reading me questions.

I don't often get invited to do things with other people.

There isn't anyone at university or home with whom I would feel perfectly comfortable talking about my feelings of loneliness and depression.

Student Attributes

Q23 Listed below are a series of characteristics that could be used to describe someone.

For the descriptions below, click which **you think best fits the typical university student**.

	Very	Somewhat	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	
Lazy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Hardworking
Unenthusiastic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enthusiastic

Antisocial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Social
Stupid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clever

Q24 Listed below are a series of characteristics that could be used to describe someone.

For the descriptions below, click which **your family would think best fits the typical university student.**

	Very	Somewhat	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	
Lazy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Hardworking
Unenthusiastic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enthusiastic
Antisocial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Social
Stupid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clever

Q25 Listed below are a series of characteristics that could be used to describe someone.

For the descriptions below, click which **best fits you.**

	Very	Somewhat	Slightly	Somewhat	Very	
Lazy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Hardworking
Unenthusiastic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Enthusiastic
Antisocial	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Social
Stupid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Clever

Views of Success

Q26 What grade do you expect to achieve at the end of this academic year?

- First
- Upper Second
- Lower Second
- Third/Pass
- Fail

- Don't know
- I don't know what these descriptions mean

Q27 What grade do you hope to achieve at the end of your programme?

- First
- Upper Second
- Lower Second
- Third/Pass
- Fail
- Don't know
- I don't know what these descriptions mean

Q28 What would you class as a successful degree outcome?

- First
- Upper Second
- Lower Second
- Third/Pass
- Fail
- I don't know what these descriptions mean

Further Participation

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you have any questions, please contact the lead researcher, Karina Hanson at karina.hanson@greenwich.ac.uk or call her on 0208 331 7855. This study is not expected to create any psychological distress, however, in the event that you do feel psychologically distressed by participation in this study, we encourage you to go to the university [Wellbeing hub](#) for relevant online and telephone advice and support.

A request for further participation! The next stage of research is to run one-to-one interviews to find out more about your feelings about being at university and the course you are studying.

It will take up to an hour (depending on how much you have to say!) and will take part in one of the meeting rooms on campus.

Please leave your **email address** below:

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule: Student's Experience of University Life

A. Identity

- a. How would you describe yourself in 3 words?

Prompt: explain the words

B. Student characteristics (picture task)

- a. Which of these pictures best represents you?
- b. How do your family see you as a student?
- c. Which of these pictures do you think best represents a typical student?

Prompts: compare with media/general public's views

- d. What do you feel you have in common with the typical student, if anything?

C. Expectations

- a. Thinking back, what were your expectations of university?
- b. In what ways has your experience of university so met these expectations

D. Identity 2






- a. Describe your first day at university – what happened when you first went into a classroom or lecture theatre?
- b. How did you decide where to sit?

E. Success




- a. What does success mean to you?

Appendix 3: Sources of Images used as Interview Stimuli

Number	Image	Source
1		www.gre.ac.uk
2		www.suug.co.uk
3		www.gre.ac.uk
4		www.gre.ac.uk
5		www.gre.ac.uk

6		www.shutterstock.com
7		www.gre.ac.uk
8		www.megapixl.com
9		www.nursingtimes.net
10		www.diverseeducation.com

11		www.timeshighereducation.com
12		www.vice.com
13		www.vice.com
14		www.gre.ac.uk
15		www.gre.ac.uk

16		www.gre.ac.uk
17		www.shutterstock.com
18		www.gre.ac.uk
19		www.gre.ac.uk
20		www.gre.ac.uk

21

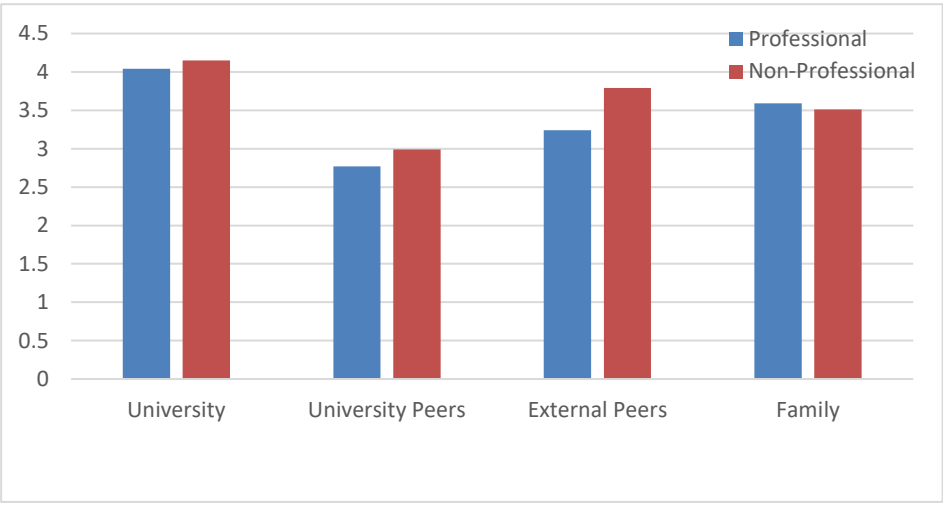


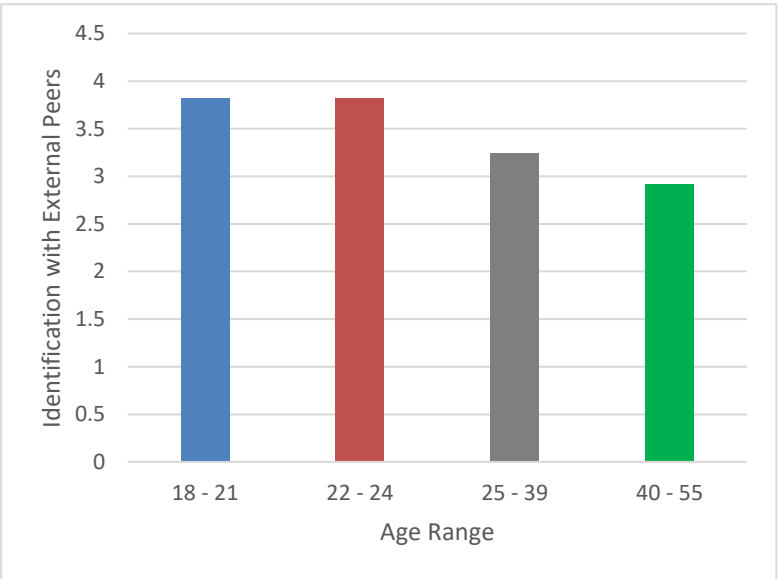
www.gre.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Joint Display Analyses for Integrated Chapter

Joint Display for the Research Question: **Do measures of students’ social identification with university, friends and family differ and if so, how?**

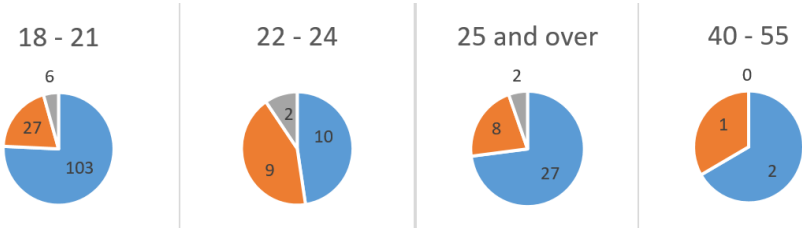
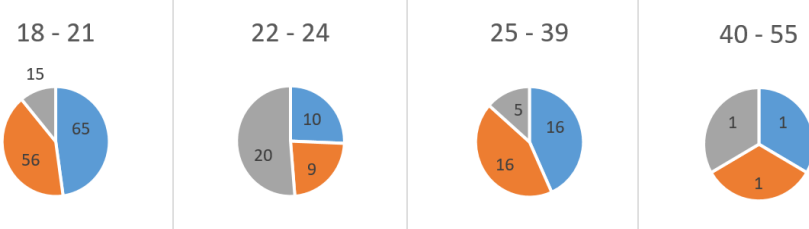
Quantitative	Qualitative
<p>Students on professional and non-professional programmes are similar in terms of measures of identification with university and university peers and with family. There are also high scores for identification with external peers, only the difference between professional and non-professional programmes are statistically significant.</p> <p>Graph showing mean identification scores.</p>	<p>Divergence: no interviewees described themselves as a student when asked to describe themselves at the start of the interviews.</p> <p>Convergence: The importance of peers who understand what they are going through in placement was important to some students on professional programmes.</p> <p><i>P25 (a 30-year-old nursing student): “When you're feeling really low or when you're feeling really lost or overwhelmed you just need to talk to someone on your course because - however much I love my boyfriend to pieces - he doesn't really necessarily understand possibly what I've seen or - however much I can explain it - or quite how to process it.”</i></p>

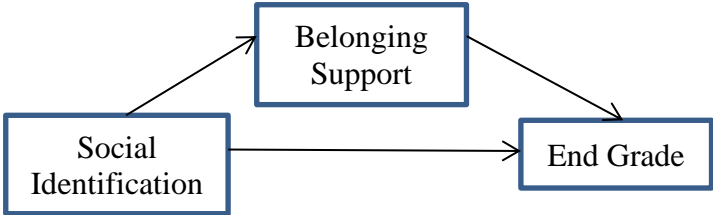
Quantitative	Qualitative															
 <table border="1"> <caption>Quantitative Data: Identification Scores</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Professional</th> <th>Non-Professional</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>University</td> <td>4.0</td> <td>4.1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>University Peers</td> <td>2.8</td> <td>3.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>External Peers</td> <td>3.2</td> <td>3.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Family</td> <td>3.6</td> <td>3.5</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Professional	Non-Professional	University	4.0	4.1	University Peers	2.8	3.0	External Peers	3.2	3.8	Family	3.6	3.5	
Category	Professional	Non-Professional														
University	4.0	4.1														
University Peers	2.8	3.0														
External Peers	3.2	3.8														
Family	3.6	3.5														
<p>There were no differences in scores of identification with university or university peers in terms of ethnicity, age, gender, First-Generation</p>																
<p>Older students identify significantly less with external peers than their younger colleagues.</p>	<p>Divergent: One younger student said how they have grown apart from sixth form friends and another older student felt they did not need to make new friends at university.</p> <p>P18 (a 19-year-old psychology student): <i>“OK I just feel like - it sounds like kind of sad but like since moving to uni some of my old girl mates - like my group split in half.”</i></p>															

Quantitative	Qualitative										
 <table border="1"><caption>Identification with External Peers by Age Range</caption><thead><tr><th>Age Range</th><th>Identification with External Peers</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>18 - 21</td><td>3.8</td></tr><tr><td>22 - 24</td><td>3.8</td></tr><tr><td>25 - 39</td><td>3.2</td></tr><tr><td>40 - 55</td><td>2.9</td></tr></tbody></table>	Age Range	Identification with External Peers	18 - 21	3.8	22 - 24	3.8	25 - 39	3.2	40 - 55	2.9	<p>P28 (a 25-year-old White British Childhood and Youth Studies student): <i>"I've got no interest in [university] friendships. I've got loads of friends in London so [...] so I've got loads of friends here so I don't need more."</i></p>
Age Range	Identification with External Peers										
18 - 21	3.8										
22 - 24	3.8										
25 - 39	3.2										
40 - 55	2.9										

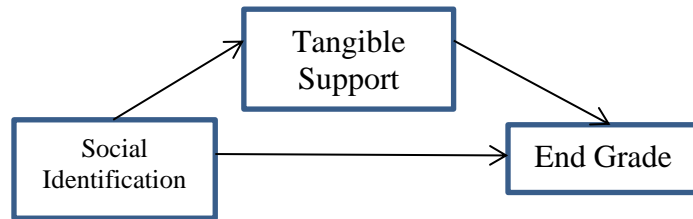
Joint Display for the Research Question: **What are students' expectations of achievement and success, and if these differ, how so?**

Quantitative	Qualitative												
<p>There were similar expectations for those on both professional and non-professional programmes for End of Year and End of Programme grades.</p> <p>Those on professional programmes perceived lower grades as being successful outcomes, with a larger proportion of students studying professional programmes putting a Lower-Second class degree or lower as a successful outcome.</p> <div> <table border="1"> <caption>Grade Expectations by Programme Type</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Programme Type</th> <th>First</th> <th>Upper Second</th> <th>Other</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Professional</td> <td>13</td> <td>16</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-Professional</td> <td>79</td> <td>66</td> <td>17</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	Programme Type	First	Upper Second	Other	Professional	13	16	6	Non-Professional	79	66	17	<p>Convergence: There were numerous non-professional students who talked of wanting a first-class degree.</p> <p>P12 (a 55-year-old Childhood and Youth Studies student): <i>“So long as I come out with a good first-class degree, I’ll feel that I have been successful in my studies.”</i></p> <p>P22 (a 19-year-old psychology student): <i>“If I got below a 2:1 I think I’d be really upset.”</i></p> <p>There was some limited evidence of students on professional courses accepting an outcome that would not be classed as successful.</p> <p>P26 (a fifty-year-old Black American Social Work student with caring responsibilities): <i>“I think I’m just trying to get through it.”</i></p>
Programme Type	First	Upper Second	Other										
Professional	13	16	6										
Non-Professional	79	66	17										

Quantitative	Qualitative
<p>There was no effect of ethnicity, age, gender, or whether they were the First in their Family to study at university on expected End of Programme grades or on what they thought as successful outcome grades.</p> <p><u>Expected End of Programme Grades</u></p>  <p><u>Successful Outcome Grades</u></p>  <p>■ First ■ Upper Second ■ Other</p>	<p>Divergence: Different types of mature student here with different expectations.</p> <p>P26 (a fifty-year-old Black American Social Work student with caring responsibilities): <i>“I don't think I'm a typical student. I think I'm just trying to get through it.”</i></p> <p>P20 (a 28-year-old Brazilian psychology student without caring responsibilities): <i>“I do want to continue my studies. Like I don't just want a degree - I want to eventually get a PhD as well.”</i></p>

Quantitative	Qualitative
<p>There were statistically significant indirect effects of both social identification with university, social identification with university peers and social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course, through perceived belonging support.</p>  <pre> graph LR SI[Social Identification] --> BS[Belonging Support] SI --> EG[End Grade] BS --> EG </pre>	<p>Divergence: In terms of the importance of feelings of belonging and its relationship with views of successful outcomes. For example:</p> <p>P7 (a 19-year-old psychology student living in halls of residence): <i>“the first two months I was like – well I felt really, really lonely... I thought I’d just start making friends and we would be hanging out.”</i></p> <p>This student said <i>“I’m totally happy [with a 2:1], but I need to score better”</i></p> <p>P23 (a 19-year-old psychology student living in halls of residence): <i>“I haven’t met many students like me. I think most students my age are kind of partying students ... we don’t have that much in common... so it’s quite hard to find somebody who is like me.”</i></p> <p>The student went on to say <i>“Success will be me getting a really good grade – like a first”</i></p>

There was also an indirect effect of social identification with external peers and family on the grade expected at the end of their course through perceived tangible support.



Convergence: In terms of support having an impact on the expected outcome grade. For example:

P12 (a 55-year-old Childhood and Youth Studies student): *“A very supportive second husband who's financially and emotionally, critically everything - supports me really well.”*

The student expected *“a good first-class degree”*

Lack of support from parents may have an effect, even for mature students. For example:

P26 (a 50-year-old Social Work student): *“I think my parents - they're - you know - they're from a different time - you know so my mum - she's like 'Why?' - you know? And my dad is just like - he thinks I'm mad really.”*

The student wanted only *“to get through it.”*

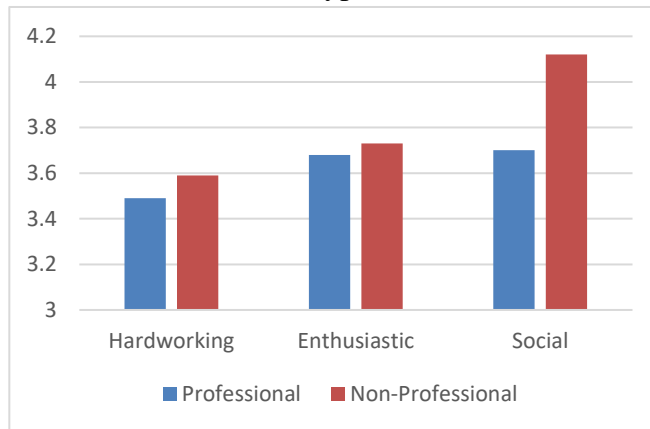
Joint Display for Research Question: **What are students' self-reported perceptions of their own traits and those of typical students?**

Quantitative

Students on non-professional programmes saw typical students as more hardworking and enthusiastic than students on professional programmes did, though there was not a significant difference.

Students on non-professional programmes saw typical students as more social than students on professional programmes did, and there was a significant difference.

Traits of a Typical Student



Qualitative

Image 6.1



Image 6.2

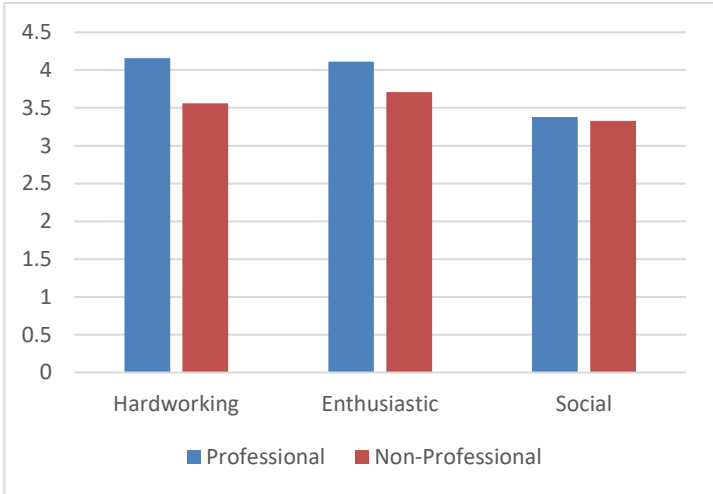


Professional Students saw students on professional courses as being different from those on other courses in terms of being able to have a social life and having to work hard:

P25 (a 30-year-old nursing student): “I mean that was me first time round [image 6.1] I don’t think that the young ones in my cohort tend to go crazy too much – there’s too much time needed to study and on placement to really let your hair down enough I think.”

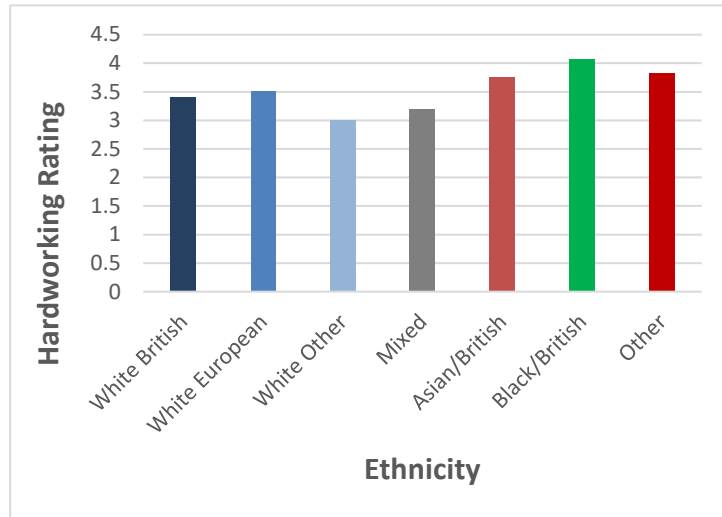
P24 (a 21-year-old psychology student): “I feel a lot of people are like this [image 6.2]!”

P23 (a 19-year-old psychology student): “I think there are different categories of students – like mature students and people who kind of come for a kind of party culture that would be more like this [image 6.1].

Quantitative	Qualitative												
<p>Students on professional programmes saw themselves as more hardworking and enthusiastic than students on professional programmes and there was a significant difference.</p> <p>Students on professional programmes saw themselves as more social than students on professional programmes, though there was no significant difference.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Students' Own Traits</u></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Students' Own Traits Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Trait</th> <th>Professional</th> <th>Non-Professional</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Hardworking</td> <td>4.1</td> <td>3.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Enthusiastic</td> <td>4.1</td> <td>3.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Social</td> <td>3.4</td> <td>3.3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Trait	Professional	Non-Professional	Hardworking	4.1	3.5	Enthusiastic	4.1	3.7	Social	3.4	3.3	<p>Convergence: most interviewees described themselves as being hardworking, with divergence from this from those on professional courses being very rare:</p> <p>P27 (a 48-year-old Social Work student): “I’d like to say I’m hardworking but at times I’m just lazy [laugh]”</p> <p>P22 (a 19-year-old psychology student): “My closest friends that I speak to all go to the library a lot.”</p>
Trait	Professional	Non-Professional											
Hardworking	4.1	3.5											
Enthusiastic	4.1	3.7											
Social	3.4	3.3											

Quantitative

Ethnicity was found to be significant with Black students rating typical students as the most hardworking.



Qualitative

Divergence: Students from different ethnicities did not see typical students as being hardworking.


P1 (WB): *“Society does seem to portray students as having an easy life.”*

P21 (WE): *“I’m very disciplined I would say. I love like health, nutrition and being active and stuff and I feel like a lot of students don’t.”*

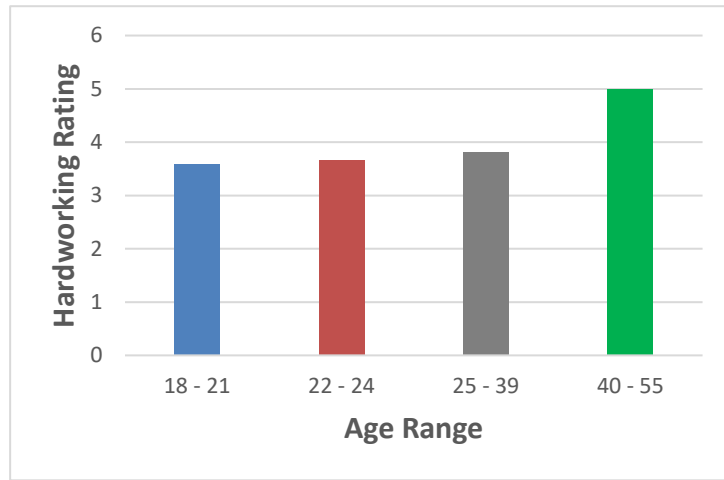


P17 (BA): *“Typical is different [from image above]. I think this more me than the majority.”*

However, some students did see other students as being hardworking.

Quantitative	Qualitative
	 <p>P13 (BA): <i>“All of that as well [image above]. Being overworked and tired.”</i></p> <p>Though the same image was used by others as an indication of how ‘lazy’ students tended to be:</p> <p>P24 (A): <i>“Yeah. There are too many - there are a lot of different people. There's a lot of different people. But I guess - this one [image above] I feel like a lot of people are as well [laugh]”</i></p>

Age was significant with older students rating themselves as the most hardworking.



Divergence: Students did often talk about themselves in terms of how hardworking they were, but often this was in terms of the needs of balancing paid employment and studying.

P9: “Yeah. So, I kind of - it was quite difficult to juggle it sometimes. I now don't work in retail. I now work in an office job in a building company so it's a lot more laid back.”

P17: “For the last year I need to adjust it and prioritise the schoolwork. I didn't fail anything but I know my capabilities so I know I wasn't doing good enough.”

Ethnicity was significant with White British students rating typical students as the most social.

Divergence: Students of different ethnicities chose images showing students socialising to represent the typical student experience.

P18 (WB): “Yeah I'm not ashamed to say that like it's just how it is really.”

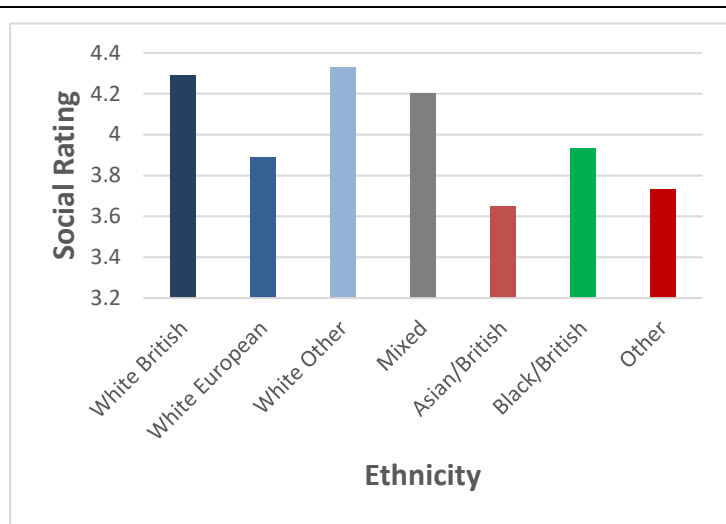


Image 1

P13 (BA): *“That would probably be it”* [image 1].

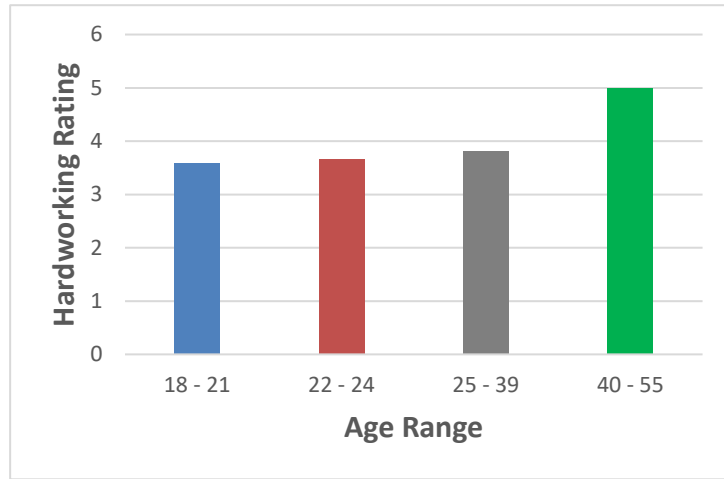
P15 (WE): chose the image below as being representative of the typical student experience, one that they would like to have themselves.



P24 (A): *“I’m a Netflix type person and not a party type person. It’s a crazy crowd around.”*

Some students who were not first years saw the images above as representing only first year students.

Age was significant with older students rating themselves as the most hardworking.




Divergence: Students did often talk about themselves in terms of how hardworking they were, but often this was in terms of the needs of balancing paid employment and studying.

P9: "Yeah. So, I kind of - it was quite difficult to juggle it sometimes. I now don't work in retail. I now work in an office job in a building company so it's a lot more laid back."

P17: "For the last year I need to adjust it and prioritise the schoolwork. I didn't fail anything but I know my capabilities so I know I wasn't doing good enough."

P28 (WB): "I think [image 1] is the entire of first year."

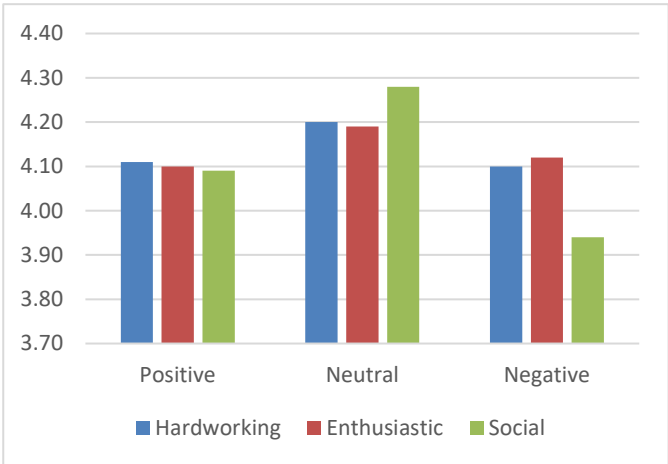
Joint display for Research Question: **How might students' self-reported perceptions of their own traits be related to their social identification with university or university peers?**

Quant	Qual
<p>How enthusiastic students rated themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers.</p>	<p>A few students did describe themselves as being enthusiastic:</p> <p>P14 (20-year-old psychology student): <i>“It's just - I love learning. It sounds so geeky! But I love it. I love learning new things.”</i></p> <p>They then talked positively of university experiences:</p> <p>P14: <i>“I like listening to lecturers - because I like how passionate they are about things.”</i></p> <p>Again, an older student saw their enthusiasm for the subject as something only shared by other older students:</p>  <p>P20 (28-year-old psychology student): <i>“I put this in [image above] because I see them in a very energetic chat and it's kind of a lot what of happens here with me. [...] Normally when I'm at lectures I enjoy a lot of the subject that they are presenting me so I am always very attentive and I always try and participate in the lectures. Something that the youngest they kind of scared to do in my lectures. People</i></p>

Quant	Qual
	<p><i>from the back they are always eating and they don't talk at all in the lectures. The older ones are always the ones talking, talking, talking - with the teacher I mean - in the lectures."</i></p>
<p>How social students rated themselves significantly predicted social identification with university and university peers.</p>	<p>Several students who described themselves as being friendly or social went on to talk positively about university or university peers</p> <p>P17 (27-year-old nursing student): <i>"[on moving into a flat in halls] - it was quite friendly. I didn't really feel out of place in coming in."</i></p> <p>Some older students talked about identifying more with other older students seeing themselves as different from younger students:</p> <p>P26 (50-year-old social work student): <i>"I feel we're all in different places. Because some of us are more mature learners and then the other extreme of that is that there is some very, very young learners and so the mature learners we're all quite consistent in I'm tired, I'm working, I've got bills."</i></p> <p>P3 (28-year-old psychology student): <i>"I like going to lectures. I love learning new stuff but I also like the social part of university. [...] I think when you're a student right off college - you're 18 and I guess</i></p>

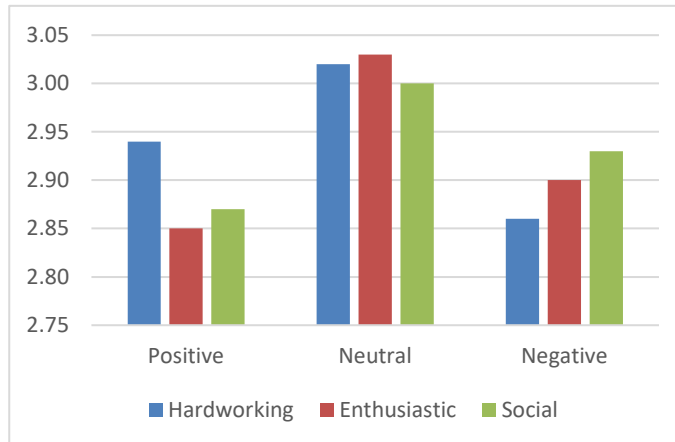
Quant	Qual
	<i>it's only fair that you want - you're not living at home anymore so you want to experience all these different things and you might be a little bit overwhelmed and try to balance things out and I think you'll always end up being very - 'OK. I'm 18. I want to go out. Everyone's going out. I don't want to miss out.'. FOMO and all of that."</i>

Joint Display for Research Question: **Do differences between the self-reported traits of typical students and their own self-reported traits affect measures of identification with university or university peers, if so, how?**

Quant	Qual																
<p>Whilst a statistically significant difference was only found on the difference between students self-scored social score and how they scored a typical student, there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same, to score more highly on Identification with University.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Identification with University</u></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Identification with University Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Hardworking</th> <th>Enthusiastic</th> <th>Social</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Positive</td> <td>4.10</td> <td>4.10</td> <td>4.09</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>4.20</td> <td>4.19</td> <td>4.28</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Negative</td> <td>4.10</td> <td>4.12</td> <td>3.94</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Category	Hardworking	Enthusiastic	Social	Positive	4.10	4.10	4.09	Neutral	4.20	4.19	4.28	Negative	4.10	4.12	3.94	<p>Responses were more mixed here. There were some students who saw other students as more social than themselves when they described themselves as hardworking:</p> <p>P23 (a 19-year-old psychology student): <i>“I haven't actually met many students like me. I think that most of the students my age are the kind of partying students [...] we don't have that much in common”</i></p> <p>There was only one student who described themselves as both hardworking and sociable:</p> <p>P3 (a 28-year-old psychology student): <i>“I like going to lectures. I love learning new stuff but I also like the social part [image below] of university.”</i></p>
Category	Hardworking	Enthusiastic	Social														
Positive	4.10	4.10	4.09														
Neutral	4.20	4.19	4.28														
Negative	4.10	4.12	3.94														

The same trend was seen for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same, with those students scoring more highly on Identification with University Peers.

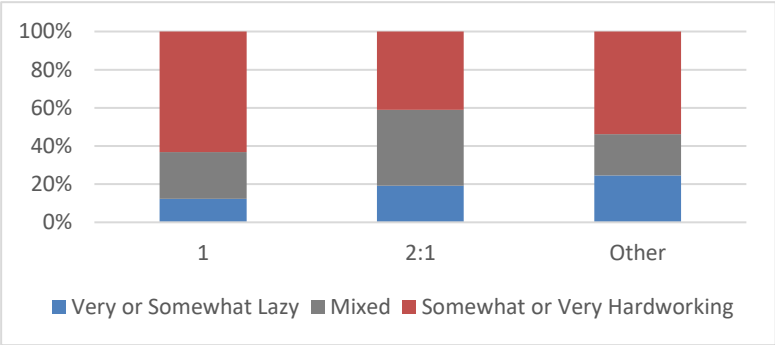
Identification with University Peers



When talking about typical students, several assumptions were made:

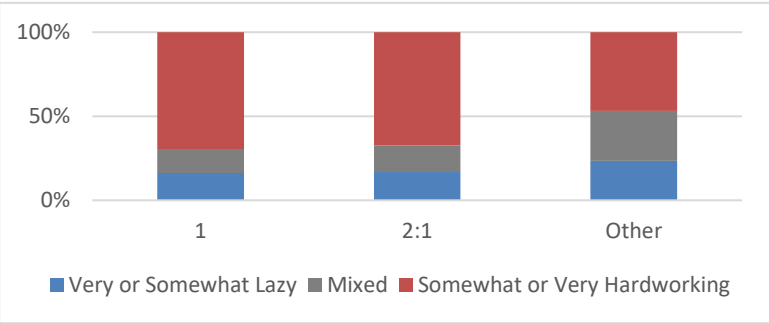
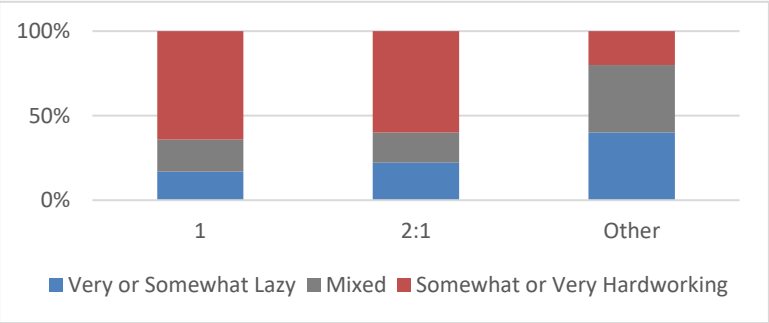
P3: "You're 18 and I guess it's only fair that you want - you're not living at home anymore so you want to experience all these different things and you might be a little bit overwhelmed and try to balance things out and I think you'll always end up being very - 'OK. I'm 18. I want to go out. Everyone's going out. I don't want to miss out.'. FOMO and all of that."

Joint Display for Research Question: **How might students' self-reported perceptions of typical student traits affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success?**

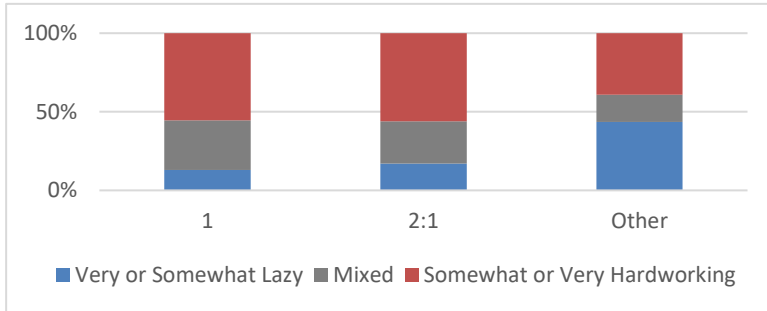
Quant	Qual																
<p>Students who rated typical students as hardworking expected higher End of Year and Programme grades and saw higher grades as being a successful outcome.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Expected End of Year Grade</u></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Expected End of Year Grade Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Expected End of Year Grade</th> <th>Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)</th> <th>Mixed (%)</th> <th>Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>10</td> <td>25</td> <td>65</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2:1</td> <td>18</td> <td>40</td> <td>42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>25</td> <td>20</td> <td>55</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Expected End of Year Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)	1	10	25	65	2:1	18	40	42	Other	25	20	55	<p>Divergence: Academic expectations were high, despite the students' own views of the traits of typical students.</p> <p>P6: "I think the majority of students - I'm not labelling everybody - but I think a lot of people are the party type. Because when some people think of university, they think of student life and going out and things like that but I think it's a split really - some people are here for education some people are here for education and experience."</p> <p>"I do kind of want to finish with a first"</p>
Expected End of Year Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)														
1	10	25	65														
2:1	18	40	42														
Other	25	20	55														
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Expected End of Programme Grade</u></p>	<p>P1: "Society does seem to portray students as having an easy life."</p> <p>"To be able to complete the university, the post-graduate stages - which seems like a mighty task at the moment."</p>																

Quant	Qual																
<p>Stacked bar chart titled "Quant" showing the distribution of student effort levels across three grade categories: 1, 2:1, and Other. The y-axis represents percentages from 0% to 100%. The legend indicates three categories: Very or Somewhat Lazy (blue), Mixed (grey), and Somewhat or Very Hardworking (red).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)</th> <th>Mixed (%)</th> <th>Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>15</td> <td>25</td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2:1</td> <td>25</td> <td>25</td> <td>50</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>50</td> <td>20</td> <td>30</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)	1	15	25	60	2:1	25	25	50	Other	50	20	30	
Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)														
1	15	25	60														
2:1	25	25	50														
Other	50	20	30														
<p>Stacked bar chart titled "Successful Outcome Grade" showing the distribution of student effort levels across three grade categories: 1, 2:1, and Other. The y-axis represents percentages from 0% to 100%. The legend indicates three categories: Very or Somewhat Lazy (blue), Mixed (grey), and Somewhat or Very Hardworking (red).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)</th> <th>Mixed (%)</th> <th>Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>15</td> <td>30</td> <td>55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2:1</td> <td>20</td> <td>25</td> <td>55</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>45</td> <td>20</td> <td>35</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)	1	15	30	55	2:1	20	25	55	Other	45	20	35	<p>P14: "Everybody sort of has ideas of students, don't they? You know going out all the time."</p> <p>"Getting high marks" "I've always wanted to do a Masters"</p>
Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)														
1	15	30	55														
2:1	20	25	55														
Other	45	20	35														

Joint Display for Research Question: **How might students' self-reported perceptions of their own student traits affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success?**

Quant	Qual																																
<p>Students who rated themselves as hardworking expected higher End of Year and Programme grades and saw higher grades as being a successful outcome.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Expected End of Year Grade</u></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Expected End of Year Grade</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)</th> <th>Mixed (%)</th> <th>Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>~15</td> <td>~10</td> <td>~75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2:1</td> <td>~15</td> <td>~10</td> <td>~75</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>~20</td> <td>~30</td> <td>~50</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Expected End of Programme Grade</u></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Expected End of Programme Grade</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Grade</th> <th>Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)</th> <th>Mixed (%)</th> <th>Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>~15</td> <td>~15</td> <td>~70</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2:1</td> <td>~15</td> <td>~15</td> <td>~70</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Other</td> <td>~40</td> <td>~40</td> <td>~20</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)	1	~15	~10	~75	2:1	~15	~10	~75	Other	~20	~30	~50	Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)	1	~15	~15	~70	2:1	~15	~15	~70	Other	~40	~40	~20	<p>Convergent: Most students who specifically described themselves as hardworking, described a first or upper second-class degree as a successful academic outcome for themselves.</p> <p>P22 (a 19-year-old psychology student): <i>“If I got below a 2:1 I think I'd be really upset.”</i></p> <p>P23 (a 19-year-old psychology student): <i>“So I put a lot of stock in academics so success will be me getting a really good grade - like a first.”</i></p> <p>Only one student who self-reported as hardworking talked of others being happy with achieving a lower second degree.</p> <p>P8 (a 26-year-old Childhood and Youth Studies student): <i>“Everyone saying just be happy with two two but I'm just - I just want to try. If it's a two two it's a two two - it's fine I did it.”</i></p> <p>However, there were some ‘hardworking’ students who would not state a grade when asked about academic success.</p>
Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)																														
1	~15	~10	~75																														
2:1	~15	~10	~75																														
Other	~20	~30	~50																														
Grade	Very or Somewhat Lazy (%)	Mixed (%)	Somewhat or Very Hardworking (%)																														
1	~15	~15	~70																														
2:1	~15	~15	~70																														
Other	~40	~40	~20																														

Successful Outcome Grade

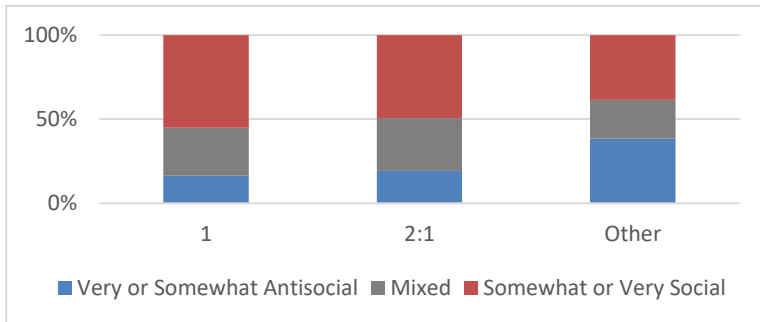


P19 (a 23-year-old psychology student): *“Well from the jobs perspective you need to have a of course a high grade - but if it wasn't for that - I wouldn't give myself a grade - I will say 'you accomplished this journey'.”*

P5 (a 22-year-old psychology student): *“I want to do as well as I can do. That's for sure.”*

Students who rated themselves as social expected higher End of Year and Programme grades.

Expected End of Year Grade

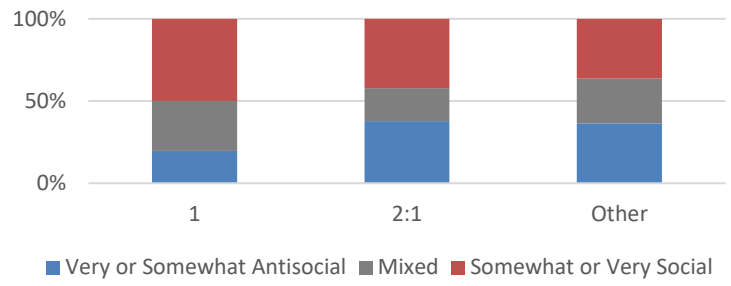


Divergent: The few students who specifically described themselves as social, described a mix of academic outcomes as being successful for themselves.

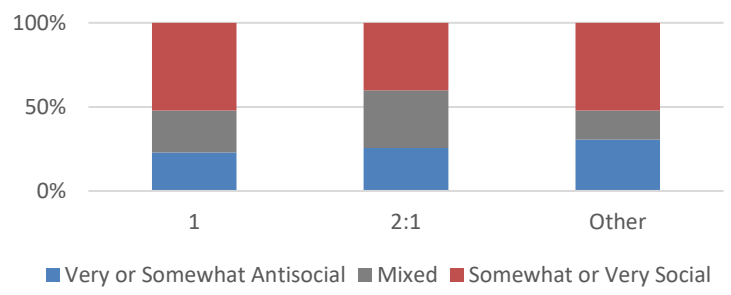
P17 (a 37-year-old nursing student): *“Well for now in my current situation is to get no less than a two one.”*

P26 (a 50-year-old social work student): *“A degree would be nice! I would consider that successful. Just completing.”*

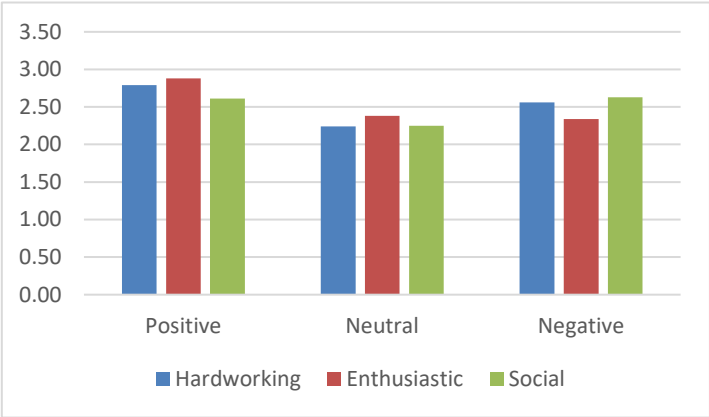
Expected End of Programme Grade



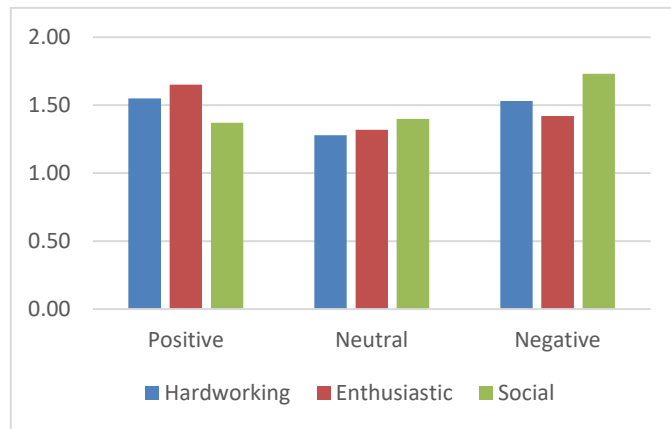
Successful Outcome Grade



Joint Display for Research Question: **Do differences between the self-reported traits of typical students and their own self-reported traits affect their expectations of their own academic achievement and perceptions of academic success, if so, how?**

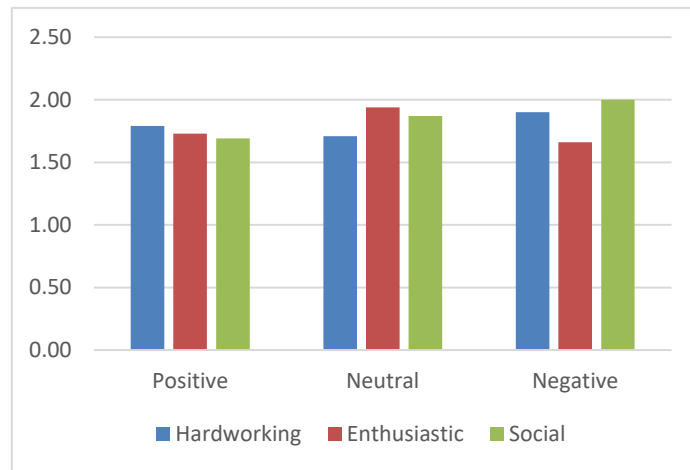
Quant	Qual																
<p>No statistically significant differences were found however there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same (the neutral group) in terms of being hardworking, enthusiastic, or social, to expect higher grades at the end of their current year.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Expected End of Year Grade</u></p>  <table border="1"> <caption>Expected End of Year Grade Data</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Hardworking</th> <th>Enthusiastic</th> <th>Social</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Positive</td> <td>~2.8</td> <td>~2.9</td> <td>~2.6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Neutral</td> <td>~2.3</td> <td>~2.4</td> <td>~2.3</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Negative</td> <td>~2.6</td> <td>~2.4</td> <td>~2.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Group	Hardworking	Enthusiastic	Social	Positive	~2.8	~2.9	~2.6	Neutral	~2.3	~2.4	~2.3	Negative	~2.6	~2.4	~2.7	<p>Divergent: Generally, even if students felt different from other students, they continued to have high expectations for themselves and what constituted a successful academic outcome.</p> <p>P12 (a 55-year-old Childhood and Youth Studies student): <i>“I was worried - I thought everybody else would be fresh from school and I would stand out like a sore thumb. That was my biggest worry and still is - I still feel like that a little bit.”</i></p> <p>Expectation: <i>“So long as I come out with a good first-class degree, I’ll feel that I have been successful in my studies.”</i></p> <p>P23 (a 19-year-old psychology student): <i>“It’s quite hard to find somebody who is like me.”</i></p> <p>Expectation: <i>“So I put a lot of stock in academics so success will be me getting a really good grade - like a first.”</i></p>
Group	Hardworking	Enthusiastic	Social														
Positive	~2.8	~2.9	~2.6														
Neutral	~2.3	~2.4	~2.3														
Negative	~2.6	~2.4	~2.7														
<p>No statistically significant differences were found however there was a trend for those whose scores for themselves and typical students to be the same (the neutral group) in terms of being hardworking, enthusiastic, or social, to expect higher grades at the end of their programme.</p>																	

Expected End of Programme Grade



The trends here varied with those rating themselves more hardworking or more social than typical students (the negative group) seeing a lower grade as a successful outcome. Those who rated themselves as enthusiastic as typical students gave lower grades as a successful outcome when compared to the positive or negative groups.

Successful Outcome



Appendix 5: University Research Ethics Committee Confirmation



Karina Hanson
University of Greenwich
Faculty of Education & Health
Department of Psychology, Social Work & Counselling
Avery Hill Campus

Direct Line 020 8331 8842
Direct Fax 020 8331 8824
Email researchethics@gre.ac.uk
Our Ref UREC/17.3.5.3
Date: 4th April 2018

Dear Karina,

University Research Ethics Committee – Minute 17.3.5.3

TITLE OF RESEARCH: Identity and Achievement in Higher Education: Enablers and Barriers to Success

I am writing to confirm that the above application has been **approved** by Chair's Action on behalf of the Committee and that you have permission to proceed.

I am advised by the Committee to remind you of the following points:

- You must notify the Committee immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware, which would cast doubt upon, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment, submitted to the Committee and/or which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research;
- You must comply with the Data Protection Act 1998;
- You must refer proposed amendments to the protocol to the Committee for further review and obtain the Committee's approval thereto prior to implementation (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the subject is paramount).
- You are authorised to present this University of Greenwich Research Ethics Committee letter of approval to outside bodies in support of any application for further research clearance.

On behalf of the Committee may I wish you success in your project.

Yours sincerely


John Wallace
Secretary, University Research Ethics Committee

cc. Professor Pamela Maras, FEH
Dr Russell Luyt, FEH
Dr Karen Cleaver, FEH

Appendix 6: Information Sheet for Qualitative Study

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET (INTERVIEW)

Identity and Achievement in Higher Education: Enablers and Barriers to Success

You have been invited to take part in a psychology research study which is part of PhD research supervised by Prof. Pam Maras, University of Greenwich, Director of Research & Enterprise and Professor of Social & Educational Psychology. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

The **aim** of this study is to explore how the identities held by undergraduate students might be associated with their progression and achievement whilst at university. We will be looking at different types of courses, either professional degrees (such as Nursing) or non-professional degrees (such as Childhood and Youth Studies or Psychology) and comparing student experiences.

How much time will the research take? This interview may take up to an hour of your time.

What do you want to find out about? During the interview you will be asked questions about how you view yourself as a student, why you have chosen to come to university and why you have chosen your specific course as well as what you think you need to be successful on it.

Do I have to take part? It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this research. If you decide to take part, you are still free to stop at any time and without giving a reason. Choosing to either take part or not take part in the study will have no impact on your marks, assessments or future at the university. If you start to take part, then change your mind, you can request that your data be removed from the research (provided this is done within a month of taking part in the project). The University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) has ethically approved this project and there is no foreseeable risk or disadvantage to you in taking part in it.

So why bother taking part? Research projects would not be possible without people like you who volunteer to take part in the research. Participation should be seen as a valuable opportunity to experience research 'in action' and to further understand the principles of research design.

What happens to any personal information I give? All research takes place under very strict ethical guidelines. We comply with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (2018) and personal information is therefore treated in strict confidence; no-one except the researcher ever gets to know people's individual results. The scientific results will always be communicated in print in such a form that it is impossible to identify information about any particular individual. All data gathered will be stored securely and will be retained only for the duration of the project and not kept any longer than necessary. It will then be either shredded or purged from the media device where it was stored.

Data collected here is anonymous, unless you choose to leave your email address at the end of the survey. However, any serious concerns over participant's welfare raised in this survey will be flagged with the relevant programme leader. Data may also be used for a further project in

anonymous form, but you are able to opt out of this if you wish, by ticking a box on the participant consent form given to you before the group starts.

If you have any questions about this research, your rights as a research subject or have a complaint, please contact the lead researcher Karina Hanson. You can email her at karina.hanson@greenwich.ac.uk or call her on [REDACTED]. Alternatively you may contact the research supervisor Prof. Pam Maras at P.F.Maras@greenwich.ac.uk.

This is a long term project, but results of the research, may be published in the interim. If you would like an opportunity to be provided with information about the findings, please leave your contact details at the end and I will send them to you in due course.

Please be assured that your responses will be kept completely confidential.

Appendix 7: Blank Consent form for Qualitative Study

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have read the information sheet about this study • I understand that the focus group session will be recorded • I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study • I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions • I have received enough information about this study • I understand that I am / the participant is free to withdraw from this study: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At any time (until such date as this will no longer be possible, which I have been told) ○ Without giving a reason for withdrawing ○ Without affecting my future with the University • I understand that my research data may be used for a further project in anonymous form, but I am able to opt out of this if I so wish, by ticking here. <input type="checkbox"/> • I agree to take part in this study 	
Signed (participant)	Date
Name in block letters	
Signature of researcher	Date
This project is supervised by: Prof. Pam Maras P.F.Maras@greenwich.ac.uk .	
<p>Researcher's contact details: Karina Hanson karina.hanson@gre.ac.uk Department of Psychology, Social Work and Counselling Dreadnought Building Greenwich Campus, London, SE10 9LS Tel: <input type="text"/></p> <p>Supervisor's Contact details: Prof. Pam Maras P.F.Maras@greenwich.ac.uk Director of Research and Enterprise Department of Psychology, Social Work and Counselling M130 Mansion Building Avery Hill Campus, London SE9 2PQ Tel: <input type="text"/></p>	