Time for Change?
Organisational Study Support and the Full-time employee-part-time learner

A Research Paper submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Professional Education and Training

December, 2013
Candidate’s Statement

DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

I certify that the research paper entitled:

‘Time for Change? Organisational Study Support and the Full-time employee-part-time learner’

and submitted for the degree of Master of Professional Education and Training is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this Research Paper (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Full Name: Elizabeth Wapling...........................................................................................................

Signed: ........................................................................................................................................

Date: ....07.12.13..........................................................................................................................
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my family; my parents for their continuous support and generosity, my fiancé Tom for his extraordinary patience and belief and my brothers and their respective partners for their constancy and care.

To my present and past colleagues, thank you for your constructive feedback and encouragement. I would also like to express my gratitude to the online community.

Thank you to my supervisor Dr Athena Vongalis-Macrow, A Prof Lyn Harrison, Dr Andrea Gallant, Dr Kim Senior, Dr Jennifer Angwin and Dr Lauri Grace for your guidance and support throughout my enrolment in the MPET; your feedback and advice will stand me in good stead as I progress with further research studies.
Abstract

This research project investigates how the experiences of full-time employees undertaking part-time tertiary study influence perceptions of the value of undertaking part-time study whilst working full-time.

Using a grounded theory approach, relevant posts in open-source, online discussion forums detailing the perceptions of the experiences of full-time employees-part-time learners, were studied. A total of five discussion forums from the same hosting website were used; two for the purposes of open coding and category formation during the axial coding phase of the analysis and an additional three for the purposes of category development and saturation checking.

The concept of time emerged as a core category and a number of significant findings relating to the interaction between time and key aspects of employee-learner motivation were found. Specifically, these findings suggest that a model drawing interesting parallels with some aspects of Steel and Konig’s (2006) temporal motivation theory (TMT) and Lewin’s (1951) classic Force Field-type model, may be useful in accounting for both similarities and individual differences, in perceptions of experience, across diverse groups of part-time learners-full-time employees.

The model may also help to account for how stress arises from the experience of combining full-time employment with part-time study and highlights the potential role that intrinsic motivators may play in directly and indirectly, minimising the impact of stress and avoiding burnout. The emergent concept of learner responsibility also points to a need to reflect upon this new model within a broader socio-political context, particularly in relation to dominant discourses surrounding lifelong learning and earning. Key issues of access, equity and risk are also discussed.

The findings from this study may have important implications for the way that individual employee-learners and sponsoring organisations, understand study support. Specifically, the new model of work-study experience generated from this investigation raises the question of whether traditional study support provisions are meeting the needs of employee-learners and employers as well as they possibly could be.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candidate’s Statement</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures &amp; List of Tables</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1: Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Introduction/Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Significance of Study</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Research Aims</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Research Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Literature Review</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Study support and traditional theories of employee motivation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Contemporary Employee Engagement insights</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Adult learning and intrinsic motivation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Part-time learner support needs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3: Methodology</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Grounded theory</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Data Collection</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Purposive &amp; theoretical sampling for Open coding</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Theoretical sampling for selective coding</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.3 QSR N-Vivo and traditional qualitative data analysis</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 4: Results and Data Analysis</strong></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Overview</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Constant Comparison</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Open Coding</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Memos &amp; Diagrams</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Axial Coding</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1 Axial Coding - Stage A</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5.2 Axial Coding - Stage B
4.6 Selective Coding
4.7 Saturation
4.8 Reliability & Validity
4.9 Ethical Considerations

Chapter 5: A new temporal motivational model of work-study experience
5.1 Time: the core category
5.2 A new model of work-study experience
  5.2.1 Time & motivation: a force field framework
  5.2.2 Parallels with Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT)
5.3 Breakdown of Equilibrium: Employee-learner stress
5.4 Interest (Intrinsic Motivation) as a reinforcement coil?
5.5 Risk and learner responsibility
5.6 Research Question 1
5.7 Research Question 2

Chapter 6: Conclusion
6.1 Limitations of the study
6.2 Implications for further research
6.3 Conclusion

References

Appendices
Appendix A: Data Source Information
Appendix B: Coding Process Example
Appendix C: Diagrams
Appendix D: Written Memos

List of Figures

Figure 1.0: Example of Axial Coding process using the category ‘time’ and associated subcategories.
Figure 2.0: Temporal motivational force-field model of study support
Figure 3.0: Temporal motivational force-field model of study support showing a hypothesised reinforcement coil.
Figure C-1: Sample Diagram - Initial Category Formation in Axial Coding on a white board.
Figure C – 2: Sample Diagram - Initial Relationships forming during early Stages Axial Coding in MS word

Figure C – 3: Sample Diagram - Development of a rudimentary temporal-motivational, force-field model during early stages of Selective Coding on note paper.

List of Tables

Table 1.0: Open Coding – Sample codes and associated quotes from posts 14
Table 2.0: Axial Coding - Stage B category formation 18
Table A-1: Sample numbers and associated discussion thread information 48
Table B-1: Initial Category formation (axial coding) grid 48
Glossary

**Burnout** – The impairment of individual psychological and physical health characterised by ‘…overwhelming exhaustion; feelings of frustration, anger and cynicism; and a sense of ineffectiveness and failure’ (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998, p. 63).

**Code Notes** – Memo’s relating directly to the code that is being conceptualised, as part of grounded theory Research analysis.


**Employee Engagement** - ‘...an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional and behavioural state directed toward organisational outcomes’ (Shuck and Wollard in Shuck, Rocco & Alborno, 2011, p. 300); the extent to which an employee feels meaningfully connected to the work that they do.

**Extrinsic Motivators** - sources of direct gratification resulting from the receipt of tangible rewards; these may assist with the ability to appreciate or obtain intrinsic motivators, but are not able to offer intrinsic motivation directly (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 60).

**Intrinsic Motivators** - incentives or rewards that provide an inherent sense of meaning; they offer the individual a form of deep and personal satisfaction and purpose. (Vinson, 2001)

**Learning transfer** - the process that should occur when learners’ apply the knowledge and skills that they have developed during formal and abstract learning experiences, to operate and solve ‘real problems’ in the workplace (Earl, 2007, p. 4).

**Lifelong Learning** - the enduring process of ‘...learning to enrich and broaden adults’ lives through cultural or recreational pursuits’ (Bilet, 2010, p. 2) over the lifespan.

**Online Forum** – A meeting or medium for sharing ideas on a particular subject, hosted online via an internet webpage. Forums can be open (public-access) or private (require email and password to join group and make posts).

**Operational Notes** – ‘Memo’s containing procedural directions and reminders’ (Strauss & Corbin 1998, p. 217)’ that are completed throughout grounded theory analysis.
Post – An individual piece of writing relating to a thread and ranging in length, usually from a single sentence to a number of paragraphs.

Poster – A participant in an online forum who usually assumes an online pseudonym and contributes to online discussion with other posters by making posts that express a viewpoint on a particular topic.

Study Support - Also commonly referred to as ‘study assistance’, is the employer-sponsored provision of resources or incentives (i.e. funds toward course fees or leave time) designed to support an employee that is undertaking an accredited education or training course.

Theoretical Notes – ‘Sensitising and summarising memos that contain an analyst’s thoughts and ideas about theoretical sampling and other issues’, that occur as part of grounded theory Research analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 217).

Discussion Thread – A specific topic or item raised for discussion by the members or administrators of an online discussion forum for the purposes of sharing experiences and ideas related to that item or topic.
Chapter 1  Introduction

1.1  Introduction/Background

Whilst many organisational training practices have been influenced by theories of adult learning and employee motivation, it is significant that one of the most important provisions, for arguably one of the most important employee cohorts today – study support offerings for full-time employees undertaking part-time study, has been largely overlooked in terms of academic research and organisational inquiry (Darmody & Fleming, 2009).

Both early literature on employee motivation (Kovach, 1987; Herzberg, 1959) and more recent employee engagement research has shown that employees are motivated not only by external incentives, but also by more intrinsic factors (Gallup, 2010; Goleman, 1998; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Kahn, 1990; Kruse in Clark, 2012; Mahoney, 2012; Malik, Danish & Usman, 2010; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001; Olusola, 2011; Pourchot, 2000; Rothmann & Rothmann Jr, 2010; Saks, 2006; Shuck, 2010; Vinson, 2001).

Further, many studies have found support for the finding that adult learners are primarily motivated by intrinsic rewards over extrinsic incentives (Knowles, 2005; Merriam 2001 in Scott, 2008; Pourchot, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vinson, 2001).

However, despite these findings, many Australian organisations continue to offer study support provisions premised on the assumption that employee-learners are solely motivated by extrinsic factors. Specifically, this includes full or partial funding of course fees and/or small allotments of time of the job, in the form of recognised study leave. Whilst research indicates that there is a positive correlation between provisions of this kind and job satisfaction for employees undertaking part-time study (Coelli, Tabasso and Zakirova, 2012, p. 38), there is a lack of research to support the assumption that they are necessarily more effective than study support incentives based solely on intrinsic motivators, or incentives based on a well-considered combination of both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives.

1.2  Significance of Study

This is an important area of research as an increasing number of full-time employees are now engaged in part-time tertiary study (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006) and contributing to these employees is an already large and growing number of Generation Y employees (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). With many organisations facing increasing pressure (Shuck, Rocco & Albornoz 2011, p. 301) to engage and retain
employees, especially Generation Y employees, it is important to have a clear understanding of the effectiveness of current organisational study support provisions.

Despite this recognition, since the introduction of the popular employee engagement survey, there has been little advancement in terms of new initiatives to measure or enhance employee engagement (Gable, Seung Youn, Marker & Winiecki, 2010). Whilst a potentially powerful tool (Gable et al. 2010, p.17), the employee engagement survey still takes a broad-brush approach to measuring employee engagement and many organisations remain unsure as to how the data generated from it can be employed to enact pragmatic, meaningful and lasting change.

Further, a lack of governmental policies and guidelines means that many organisations are not currently provided with any clear incentive to conduct further investigations into the efficacy of their current study support offerings, contributing to a dearth of research on the topic.

Whilst re-designing job roles and tasks in order to maximise the use of intrinsic incentives may take more consideration to research and plan initially (Campion & Thayer, 1987, p. 78; Gallagher Jnr & Einhorn, 1976, p. 360), it may represent a much cheaper alternative to traditional employee engagement initiatives such as the employee engagement survey. Further, by providing employee-learners with the appropriate combination of incentives, informed by the relevant combination of motivators, learning transfer may be improved.

1.3 Research Aims

The aims of this research are threefold:

1. To investigate how the experiences of full-time employees undertaking part-time tertiary study influence perceptions of the value of undertaking part-time study whilst working full-time

2. To relate these perceptions to the provision of traditional organisational study support incentives in terms of their ability to meet employee/learner needs

3. Provide a conduit between business-focused employee motivation and engagement research and education-allied adult learning research to contribute to an enhanced understanding of employee/learner motivation, by presenting innovative research which will act as a touchstone for future descriptive and analytical studies.
1.4 Research Questions

The main research question investigated was: (i) how do the experiences of full-time employees undertaking part-time tertiary studies influence perceptions of the value of studying part-time whilst undertaking full-time employment?

A related sub-question that was investigated was (ii) how does an awareness of these perceptions relate to an understanding of the effectiveness of traditional study support provisions (those based solely on extrinsic motivation) in meeting employee/learner needs?

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As the experiences of full-time employees undertaking part-time study is an under-researched topic, it was necessary to draw on cross-disciplinary research literature from the fields of Education, Business, Psychology and Sociology. Further, the research was framed by a grounded theory approach, seeking to discover a new model of understanding, which meant that it was important to ensure the literature review remain open, broad-ranging and balanced. Whilst the gathering of relevant and seemingly discrete literature was initially viewed as a barrier to be overcome, when generating unique motivational models, achieving consilience or uniting theories across disparate disciplines, is crucial (Steel and Konig, 2006, p.889). It is through this linkage that we can develop a consistent understanding of motivation.

Maintaining an open perspective was vital to ensure that the field of enquiry was not prematurely narrowed as a result of researcher preferences or bias. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 45) suggest that engaging proactively with the literature and reviewing related yet diverse literature prior to the study, when done properly, can actually assist the researcher in gaining focus and orienting themselves to the research topic.

2.2 Study support and traditional theories of employee motivation

In attempting to understand why organisations persist with traditional study support provisions, it is useful to revisit some well-known theories of employee motivation. These theories have tended to take a largely dichotomous approach, focusing on disparities between manager and employee perceptions of employee motivation.
McGregor’s (1960) classic ‘XY theory’ of employee motivation suggests that there are two key types of managers – those that view employees as inherently extrinsically motivated (X managers) and those that view employees as more intrinsically motivated (Y managers). The former type of managers subscribe to Taylor’s (1911) ideas around managerial control and close supervision as being the most effective means of keeping employees motivated and productive.

In his study comparing employee rankings of what they considered the most important motivating factors, with their bosses’ perceptions of the most important employee-motivators, Kovach (1987) found support for the existence of ‘X’ managers. Specifically Kovach’s (1987) study found that employees ranked ‘interesting work’, ‘appreciation of work’ and ‘feeling in on things’ as the most important motivators, whereas the managers studied drew largely on ‘Theory X’ assumptions of employee motivation, rating ‘good wages’, ‘job security’ and ‘promotion’ as the most motivating factors for employees.

These findings are important as they suggest that current study support practices may be based on a potentially inaccurate management assumption; that employees are chiefly motivated by extrinsic factors. Certainly, extrinsic factors are important in motivating employees and learners to an extent, however, a further argument for their co-existence with study support provisions that are based on more intrinsic factors, can be found in Herzberg’s (1959) popular theory of employee motivation.

Herzberg (1959) offers a two-factor model whereby he argues that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction result from two different types of determinants. The first category - ‘motivators’ are those factors that yield an intrinsic sense of satisfaction for the employee, such as a sense of achievement, recognition or sheer engagement in the work itself. The second category – ‘hygiene factors’, are those that can de-motivate or cause dissatisfaction if they are unavailable, but do not necessarily create satisfaction when they are available.

Applying Herzberg’s (1959) theory to study support policies, extrinsic rewards such as reimbursement of course fees, maintain ‘hygiene’ only, whereas intrinsic incentives such as the opportunity to apply newly acquired knowledge, align more closely with Herzberg’s (1959) ‘motivators’ and may offer increased employee engagement. So whilst full-time employees undertaking part-time study may not be dissatisfied with the type of study support offered by their respective organisations, they may also not be truly satisfied. As Sapru (2008, p. 226) explains, if Herzberg’s (1959) theory is sound, then management has ‘the task of calling out the motivators to provide adequate hygiene through company policy’.
Herzberg’s (1959) ‘hygiene’ and ‘motivation’ factors relate closely to Maslow’s (1943) ‘safety and security needs’, and ‘esteem needs’, respectively. Motivators represent higher level needs on Maslow’s hierarchy whereas hygiene factors represent lower level needs, providing support for the existence of two distinct factors of employee motivation. This highlights the importance of transcending limiting dichotomies of ‘extrinsic’ versus ‘intrinsic’ motivation and instead considering the broader context of how motivation relates to individual differences. For example, a senior manager undertaking post graduate study may be in a very different financial position than an entry-level administrator or recent graduate, potentially placing a larger precedence on motivators and esteem needs over lower level or hygiene-like needs.

2.3 Contemporary Employee Engagement insights

The key ideas of employee motivation as presented in Kovach’s (1987) findings have been echoed in a number of more recent articles focusing on employee engagement. For example Kruse (in Clark, 2012) argues that ‘…people will feel engaged with their boss and their company if there’s a feeling of growth, appreciation, and trust…growth may include promotions or raises…but there are also other considerations’. For example, recognition of achievements such as a simple thank you for improving a process or procedure at work, has featured highly in recent discussions around employee engagement (Kruse, in Clark 2012; Whan, 2011; Mahoney, 2012).

The underlying theme in much recent employee engagement research relates to the benefits associated with loosening of control over communication and allowing employees to ‘co-construct’ internal business dialogue. In this way, Groysberg and Slind (2012) reason that organisations can gain ‘…a new way to tap into the talent, the insight, and the passion of their people’. Groysberg and Slind (2012) suggest that inviting users to help produce the content that they use, is key to building engagement. Mahoney (2012) provides further support for this argument by suggesting that organisations should be more creative in implementing engagement initiatives. He argues that one example of this is to provide Generation Y employees with new opportunities to apply their knowledge by assisting with multimedia and communications.

These findings seem to suggest that if there is a way in which full-time employees can be provided with recognition for using their newly acquired knowledge and skills (as achieved in their part-time studies) to enhance team operations or contribute to organisational efficiency, then more intrinsic forms of incentives, such as manager and team recognition, may be a cost effective alternative means of keeping these employee-learners engaged.
2.4 Adult Learning and Intrinsic Motivation

Research into adult learning also supports the finding that adults are primarily motivated by intrinsic factors (Knowles, 1998; Knowles, 2005; Merriam, 2001 in Scott, 2008; Pourchot, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000, Vinson, 2001). Knowles (1988) argues that this is because adults inevitably experience deep needs and interests, satisfied only by learning. They therefore come to associate the achievement of their innermost goals with personal growth and it is through this learning experience that cognitive development occurs.

Providing further support for Knowles’s (1988) theory, Pourchot’s (2000) findings indicate that graduate students score higher on measures of intrinsic motivation than extrinsic motivation, as compared to undergraduate students. This may be a result of graduate students having had greater formal and informal learning experiences than undergraduates, thereby having formed stronger learning-goal associations and having developed stronger intrinsic motivation over time. It is also a significant factor in terms of the present study, as contributing to the Full-time employee-part-time learner cohort, is a large number of graduate students.

2.5 Part-time learner support needs

Full-time employees who are concurrent part-time learners may face unique barriers, including limited eligibility for scholarships or grants, longer and less flexible working hours, time pressures from vocational commitments and limited access to academic staff and on-campus support activities (Bates & Goff, 2012). Part-time learners often report high levels of stress resulting from the challenge of juggling work and study concurrently, especially when they are not able to adequately plan their time around work demands (Wheelahan, Leahy, Fredman, Moodie, Arkoudis & Bexley, 2012, p 27).

Bates & Goff (2012) explain that part-time students often get lost in University reporting procedures, resulting in their ‘forgotten cohort’ (Barnacle and Usher, 2003 in Bates & Goff, 2012, p. 369) or ‘invisible student’ (Neumann & Rodwell, in Bates & Goff, 2012, p. 369) status. Further, Bates & Goff (2012, p. 369) argue that part-time research students are often sent conflicting messages, with Universities purporting that courses have been designed specifically to cater for their needs and underscoring the need for them to apply for grants and government funding, when due to their work status, ultimately they are ineligible for this funding.
However, once identified, these challenges could be turned into an opportunity for organisations to maximise employee performance. For example, Bates & Goff (2012, p. 373) suggest that ‘...the cross-pollination that occurs as we balance and manage both working in studying may be an advantage to our employers’. In their autoethnographical study, Bates & Goff (2012, p. 373) use the example of how in learning ‘...more about policy implementation issues in his research [Bates]...began to look more critically at his own teaching practice’, thereby applying his newly acquired knowledge directly and meaningfully, back into his role in the workplace.

Chapter 3  Methodology

3.1  Theoretical Framework

At the crux of this study is a focus on the experiences and perceptions of employee-learners and the impact that these perceptions have on the understandings of the appropriateness of organisational study support provisions. Thus, crucial to our understanding of the topic, is a methodology based on the epistemological assumptions of symbolic interaction; a theoretical approach that views social realities as being constructed through the way in which individuals experience and adjust, their emotions and behaviour, within complex and dynamic social milieu and through this action and interaction, ascribe meaning to life events (Corbin 2012 in Somekh & Lewin, 2012; p. 113, Tsang, 2012, p. 87),

Chenitz and Swanson (in Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2011, p. 1063-1064) maintain that ‘...conceptualising human behaviour in its context helps researchers to examine behaviour in relation to the social circumstances, rules, laws, and conditions that govern the shared meanings of objects and affect human behaviour’. Certainly, in attempting to understand how experiences of managing part-time study concurrently with full-time employment impact the perceptions of the value of studying part-time whilst undertaking full-time employment, we are abstracting personal reactions to dominant, organisational study support modes. In other words we are seeking to understand how full-time employees who work part-time, really understand their dual roles as employee and learner.

Two vital design requirements were identified: a qualitative approach with a ‘... focus on natural settings, an interest in meanings, perspectives and understandings’ (Woods, 2006) and an exploratory research design, which seeks to first understand rather than infer causality or merely describe the phenomena.
3.2 Grounded Theory

Given the importance of the sub-question in relating to how increased understanding of employee-learner perceptions may affect organisational study support practices, a coherent paradigm that may catalyse pragmatic opportunities for extended explanation and analysis, was preferred. For this reason grounded theory was employed.

The aim in ‘doing grounded theory’ is to ‘…generate a theoretical framework that explains how and why persons [and] organisations…experience and respond to events, challenges or problematic situations’ (Somekh and Lewin, 2012, p. 113). The key renderings of grounded theory application that emerge from the literature stem from the work of a number of prominent theorists, their associated formative publications and their ideas regarding the best ways to apply theory methods (Birks & Mills, 2011; McCallin, 2009).

‘Glaserian’ or traditional grounded theory posits that researchers should be passive, employ an open mind and let the theory ‘emerge naturally’ from the data (Jones & Alony, 2011, p. 5) whereas a ‘Straussian’ approach calls for a method that openly acknowledges the obduracy of the researcher’s initial conception or viewpoint (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, p. 205). In the latter approach, Strauss and Corbin (1998) maintain that it is credulous to deny that the researcher is always (and always should be) an active participant in the formulation and structuring of research questions and the interpretation of the research data generated from them. A third influential perspective comes from Charmaz’s (2006) approach which is less concerned with the identification of objective concepts and the generation of separate categories, than with deep and fluid description of social experience as understood subjectively and flexibly.

The researcher acknowledges both the strengths and limitations inherent in each of the main approaches to employing grounded theory methodology and for the purpose of this study, has drawn on the key strengths of all three approaches, with a major weighting on the use of selected components of the more systematic and methodical techniques espoused by Strauss and Corbin (1998). This includes recognition of the researcher’s inability to be entirely dissociated from the topic under investigation, therefore rendering the coding process an inherently subjective activity. This subjectivity must be both acknowledged and carefully managed through a focus on thorough and systematic coding techniques.

As it is recognised that in using this kind of approach there is always the possibility that researcher partialities will obscure the ‘true’ meanings of the research data (Jones and Alony, 2011, p. 3), I have ergo acknowledged Glaser’s (1992, p.5, in McCallin, 2009) caveat
that when adopting a more ‘Straussian’ approach, there is potential for ‘forced conceptual description’ and have attempted to mitigate the effects of this risk through careful, reflective memoing and diagramming.

Whilst a largely Straussian approach was applied to coding, systematic precision had to be balanced with the need for flexible coding, to ensure that the desire for neat categorisation did not come at the expense of innovative conceptual opportunity. Charmaz’s (2006, p. 61) suggestion that the rigorous axial coding recommended by Straussian approaches to data analysis may result in a limited version of the researchers original vision, was considered and ameliorated through the maintenance of memoing and deliberate ‘perspective taking’ during the ‘constant comparison’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) process.

3.3 **Data Collection**

Data was obtained from ‘naturally- occurring’, open-source, online discussion forum posts, beginning with an initial purposive sample. As the data was publically available and considered open-access (I did not require a log-in or password to access the site and/or discussion groups), neither a formal ethics application nor formal ethics exemption was required. This matter was discussed with the University Ethics Committee and Academic Staff within the School of Education and has not precluded me from addressing important ethical considerations informally and in more detail, in chapter 4.

A Google keyword search was used to obtain initial data, using non value-laden iterations of key terms (e.g. ‘full-time work, part-time study’; ‘full-time employment with part-time uni’) to identify relevant and content-rich discussion forum threads.

3.3.1 **Purposive & theoretical sampling for open coding**

Two threads were purposively sampled for the initial stage of coding – open coding. The first thread sampled was from an Australian open-source, broadband user website hosting an education forum that contained a discussion thread entitled ‘*Part-time Study. Yes or No*’ and comprised a total 13 posters and 18 posts (Appendix A: Table A-1). For the purposes of this study, the online posters in this forum and subsequently sampled forums were considered the participants and the aim (for the initial stages of open coding) was to collect a bare minimum sample of approximately 20- 30 participants. This is a flexible, rather than fixed minimum target of sample size, based on Creswell’s (1998, in Camargo, 2008) recommendation for achieving an appropriate level of detail in grounded theory research.
After open-coding was completed with the initial sample, a second forum thread was theoretically sampled using the same search process and selected on the basis that it was similar to sample 1, by virtue of its containing a large number of posters and posts, offering rich content and a broad and varied account of as many aspects of the phenomena (perceptions of the experience of undertaking full-time employment and part-time tertiary study simultaneously) under investigation as possible. This additional thread was entitled ‘Anyone studying part-time + working full-time’, and whilst on initial review it looked as though it shared many similar codes and concepts with sample 1, it also appeared that there was a number of new viewpoints that were either not adequately captured by the data contained in the initial source, or (as turned out to be largely the case) not adequately accounted for in the researcher’s early stage open-coding analysis of the original data source.

Therefore, considering Creswell’s (1998, in Camargo, 2008) recommendation for sample size, and Strauss and Corbin's (1998, p. 203) recommendation that theoretical sampling is important ‘…when exploring new or unchartered areas because it enables the researcher to choose those avenues of sampling that can bring about the greatest theoretical return’, it was decided that the second forum thread should be obtained for the purposes of further open coding.

Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 203) explain that

> ...if the aim of open coding is to discover, name, and categorise phenomena according to their dimensions, then it follows that the aim of data gathering at this time is to keep the collection process open to all possibilities

Therefore, it was important that this additional sample (sample 2) be obtained as early as possible for the purposes of open coding, as I was reluctant to continue with the latter stages of coding without feeling confident that a full range of perceptions had been adequately captured and that no significant data had been excluded from this early stage of the analysis.

3.3.2 Theoretical sampling for selective coding

The final data sources were theoretically sampled and took the form of three online discussion threads. As initial categories and relationships had already been formed, at this stage theoretical sampling was for the purposes of selective coding; to ensure that the categories were properly refined and that the relationships between them, and the
developing theoretical model, were validated (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 211). The Google search, was therefore modified to be more deliberate and targeted. This meant that the previously (and purposely) absent value-laden iterations of key phrases and terms around the topic of undertaking full-time work and part-time study simultaneously (i.e. ‘balancing’, ‘juggling’ and ‘coping’), could now be incorporated back into the key word search.

At this point, it should be noted that online threads were not used exclusively for the purposes of ease and efficiency. Whilst being open-source, public forums they did represent an easily accessible data source, they also dominated the search results in terms of volume and diversity of content. Further, a key strength in collecting data through naturalistic observation of open-source online content, is the avoidance of reactive behaviour (Ray 2012, p. 292). Reactive behaviour occurs when participants change their behaviour after they realise that they are being observed for the purposes of research. There are a number of strengths and limitations associated with conducting online research in this way and they are considered in more detail as part of a broader discussion on ethical considerations in chapter 4.

3.3.3 QSR N-Vivo and traditional qualitative data analysis

A number of researchers have suggested that both pen and paper methods and computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) tools such as QSR NVivo, offer unique strengths (Buchanan & Jones, 2010; Garcia-Horta & Guerra-Ramos, 2009; Hutchison, Johnston & Breckon, 2010; Walsh, 2003) and limitations (Garcia-Horta & Guerra-Ramos, 2009; MacMillan, 2005), in terms of assisting the researcher with the coding inherent in grounded theory analysis. However, the general consensus appears to be that the effectiveness of QSR-NVIVO and related CAQDAS tools are moderated by the way in which they are used. This prevailing viewpoint is well-summarised by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 276): whilst computer-aided text interpretation is unable to adequately ‘comprehend meaning’, a vital requirement for our data analysis, it is extremely expedient for ‘…ordering, structuring, retrieving and visualising tasks’. Therefore, during data collection and the early stages of data analysis, QSR NVivo was employed extensively, but later used more flexibly, alongside traditional pen and paper methods.
Chapter 4  Results and Data Analysis

4.1  Overview

Data was analysed by drawing on Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) approach to doing Grounded theory using three sequential stages of coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Three types of memo’s known as theoretical, coding and operational notes, in addition to conceptual diagrams, were used throughout all of the coding phases. This frequent and mixed memo-taking is in line with Strauss and Corbin’s (1998, p. 217) recommendations for careful memo-taking.

4.2  Constant Comparison

Data was analysed using the ‘constant comparative method’ (Glaser, 1965) whereby the emergence of new interpretations and findings arising from the data, were compared to existing interpretations and discoveries, using an inductive and iterative process. In constant comparison, the researcher compares codes with codes, codes with categories, categories with categories and then categories with abstract ideas or concepts (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). Making comparisons throughout all stages of the coding analysis is a vital component of doing grounded theory, as it is through this process of grouping ideas into categories and analysing the key links within and between them, that the researcher can then understand their similarities and differences, in order to relate them to broader emerging concepts (Corbin in Somekh & Lewin, 2012, p. 115).

4.3  Open Coding

All posts in the primary source document – the purposively selected online discussion thread entitled ‘Part-time Study. Yes or No’, were considered data for the initial sample. Borrowing Camargo’s (2008, p. 6) plain definition of open coding, ‘line-by-line analysis...to extract key concepts behind what the posters [were] trying to convey’, was conducted. Line-by-line analysis is one way of conducting open coding and requires the researcher to carefully examine the data, either word-by-word or phrase-by-phrase, to create and develop categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 120).

In the initial stages of open coding, QSR NVivo was used alongside traditional pen and paper methods. Initially, sample 1 was converted to a pdf document and printed double-sided on A4-size paper and a packet of 10 different coloured markers and 7 coloured pens, were used to highlight the codes as they emerged from a line-by-line analysis of each post in
the thread. Code Notes were added to the margins of the page and theoretical memos to a separate notebook.

Whilst pen and paper methods were useful during the very early stages of open coding, in terms of orienting me to the field, it quickly became apparent that unless I bought a 120-box of Derwent pencils in manifold shades of colour, I was unlikely to keep track of all the codes that were emerging from the discussion posts and likely run the risk of formulating codes that were too abstract or broad, for this early stage of the analytic process.

The initial discussion thread (sample 1) was therefore resaved as a pdf document, directly from the internet, using the NCapture function and uploaded into QSR NVivo. Line-by-line coding was recommenced using the QSR NVivo ‘code selection’ function. Later, as I became more adept at using the software, a combination of ‘code selection’ and ‘in-vivo’ coding was used. In-vivo coding is a way of naming categories in the open coding phase. Instead of the researcher placing a label or name on a category that they believe appropriately captures it’s underlying meaning, the researcher uses a word or phrase that the participants themselves have used; because these category names are verbatim representations obtained directly from participant dialogue, they are often a more impactful way of representing the coded data (Glaser, 1978, p.70).

The advantage of coding in-vivo was increased efficiency and codes that used language more representative of the poster’s unaffected thoughts and feelings, however coding the selection at a new node using the ‘code selection option’ in QSR NVivo presented the added benefit of allowing me to add a brief description of the code in focus; another useful form of memo-taking. This function was especially useful when the code was complex and had one explicit meaning when considered in-vivo, but when considered within the broader context of the post or thread, was indicative of an additional or multiple implicit codes. For example, in the second thread that was sampled, one poster expressed the view that ‘P’s get degrees’ and this was coded in-vivo. However, when considered within the broader context of the post and thread, this same code also needed to be re-coded for the concepts of sacrifice, stress and individual differences. Table 1.0 provides some examples of how concepts were coded in this stage of the analysis.
### Table 1.0 Open Coding – Sample codes and associated quotes from posts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Number</th>
<th>Code Name</th>
<th>Sample Quotes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hard (in-vivo)</td>
<td>‘However I do my study in the early morning – it’s hard but you just have to make the effort to fit it all in’. It can be pretty tough, but only got to the point of almost being unmanageable when major assignments for each of the subjects were due in the same week. ‘…the hardest part in working full-time and studying part-time is a combination of difficult things’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Options (in-vivo)</td>
<td>‘it’s good to have some options’. ‘I have decent career progression but to open up my options and further increase my abilities and knowledge’. ‘…and I’m glad I have those options’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Stress (‘code at selection – not in-vivo)</td>
<td>‘I’m burning the candle at both ends at the moment (doing 2 units instead of my normal 1)’. ‘Personally, I stuck to a full load because I could manage it (while stressful and difficult at times)’. ‘I’m currently working full-time and studying for a Masters part-time. I’m really starting to burn out’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An analysis of the initial sources (samples 1 and 2) yielded in excess of 100 (132) codes. This number might seem high but there was substantial overlap of codes; many of the codes that were identified early in the process were later classified again as new ‘nodes’ in QSR NVivo. This was a result of both the large amount of content to be coded and the time involved with conducting the line-by-line analysis. It was decided that recoding any lines that may have been slightly different from, or almost the same as, a previously identified code was preferable to taking a risk on having sufficiently coded them, only to discover later that a vital element of what the poster was really saying had been omitted from the analysis.

Therefore whilst more codes were generated from the initial sample at the open coding stage of the process, by coding in this way, I felt sure that maximal information was being captured. Taking an open approach at this stage of coding not only bought me more ‘conceptual thinking time’, it is also one of the hallmarks of doing sound Grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 206)

### 4.4 Memos and Diagrams

Being a novice researcher and new to Grounded theory methodology, I was acutely aware of the importance of memo-taking in undertaking reliable Grounded theory Research. Specifically, the role that detailed memos play in helping the researcher to achieve maximal
conceptual transparency by ensuring that cognitive jumps in reasoning, undertaken throughout the analytic process, are made explicit. Memos are considered by most Grounded Theorists, regardless of their approach, as a vital component of doing Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72-73; Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 218; Glaser, 1978, p. 83) and it is stressed that memo-taking should never be neglected or undervalued, even when the researcher is under mounting time pressure (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 218).

Beyond record-keeping for reliability, memos and diagrams proved vital tools for recording initial ideas about the codes, evolving categories and potential patterns and relationships emerging from the data sources. Where coding and conceptualising were interrupted by the pragmatics of work and daily life, operational notes served as critical recall cues.

Whilst the QSR NVivo memoing function proved somewhat useful for recording basic code notes and some theoretical memo’s when conducting analysis within the home office environment (I did not have access to a laptop with QSR NVivo installed), more often than not, serendipitous learning moments and conceptual breakthroughs came away from the computer. For example, during long commutes, lunch-breaks, meetings and conversations with friends or colleagues. Ergo, notes were often scribbled on note pads, scrap paper, even via the ‘SMemo’ smart phone application. Memoing began in this way during the open coding stage and increased in frequency, complexity and fervency throughout the later stages of coding analysis.

4.5   Axial Coding

4.5.1 Axial Coding - Stage A

Once concepts and ideas were extracted from each participant posting across each thread and forum, the next level of coding - axial coding, was conducted. Axial coding is explained by Camargo (2008) as a way of looking at similarities between the concepts that are generated from the open coding phase and grouping them based on analogous characteristics. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 124) suggest that the purpose of axial coding is to analyse the data that was dissected during open coding, in order to form new and meaningful categories of explanation. Using Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) suggested method for category formation, the initial stages of axial coding revealed 56 ‘high-order’ categories (See Appendix B) resulting from the analysis of the original 132 codes that were identified in the open-coding stage of analysis.
4.5.2 Axial Coding - Stage B

These still broad categories were considered in turn, drawing flexibly on Corbin’s (1998, p. 125) recommendation for category formation; that the researcher ask herself openly ‘...who, what, where, how and with what consequences' do the categories arise, how do they relate to their own properties and to all other categories (1998, p. 125) and Glaser’s (1978, p. 74) six C’s for robust category formation. The ‘six c’s’ relate to the analysis of the causes, contexts, contingencies, consequences, covariances and conditions of all categories, subcategories, their properties and relationship to each other. In order to hold myself accountable for ensuring reliability, it was important to apply these recommendations and constantly question my reasons for category and relationship formation during the analysis.

These category formation recommendations and the spirit of engaging in constant questioning, are crucial for avoiding a common pitfall of grounded theory analysis – ‘forced conceptual description’ (Charmaz, 2006, p. 32), by providing evidence of a consistent and systematic approach to data analysis.

Figure 1.0 – Example of Axial Coding process using the category ‘time’ and associated subcategories.

It should be noted that these category formation checking guidelines were generally employed reflexively, rather than fixedly. Where key links and relationships were developing between the categories (especially toward the selective coding-end of the process), I
became increasingly attuned to the need to consciously test the assumptions underlying the formulation of these relationships, against the category formation checking guidelines.

Oftentimes, this awareness also precipitated a need to revisit the original source data, specifically with reference to questions around context and applicability. The ‘node classification’, ‘highlighting’ and ‘coding stripes’ functions in QSR NVivo were all particularly useful for checking coding density, or the degree to which categories were developed, that is comprised of similar codes and defined as dense in terms of both magnitude and conceptual complexity.

Even when they had the same root cause, if the categories and subcategories failed to add any additional information to the developing model, even when considered in relation to their pre-conditions and carefully considered in context, then they were considered as one unit. For example, the Stage A category - *options and constraints* was initially grouped to encompass ‘options’, which was a very dense category and ‘constraints’ which was comparatively much lighter. But when considered in context, constraints were relevant to the emerging model only because they negatively impacted on options. When considered more broadly, the *constraints* category was actually more adequately accounted for by the superordinate categories of *finance, access* or as an antithesis to the category - *options*; best understood as the opposite side of the same ‘conceptual coin’ and therefore best superseded by the latter.

A rudimentary (6X9 + 2) grid in Microsoft Word (Appendix B: Table B-1) was also useful for ordering and sorting the coded data. During this stage of axial coding, codes were grouped only if there was evidence to suggest that they were not sufficiently unrelated to constitute a separate category and when considered as separate constructs, demonstrated particular and discrete effects on another category or categories. A white board and markers were also invaluable tools for conceptualising and diagramming the data, especially during the latter stages of axial coding where the categories and key relationships were emerging readily from the analysis (Appendix C: Figure C-1). The result of this latter-stage axial coding was 14 higher order, ‘Stage B categories as shown in the table on the following page.
Table 2.0: Axial Coding - Stage B category formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>University Constraints – tailored for full-time over part-time students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Spoilt &amp; Selfish</td>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Money and success, Debt, income, Financial Commitments (other)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interest (intrinsic)</td>
<td>Interest (intrinsic), Rewarding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Risk</td>
<td>Commitment, Luck, Employer support, control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Career Progression</td>
<td>Knowledge and skill, Feeling Stuck, Recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Clarity, Structure, Time Management, Time off work, Discipline, Distractions (minimising), Time to complete degree, Energy (time), Relevancy, Sacrifices, Organisation (planning),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>Family, Money isn’t everything, Work/life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>Struggle/Burnout, Challenges (Negative) – Hard, A Struggle, Something’s got to give,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Contemplation</td>
<td>Future, Weighing up pros and cons, Testing the waters,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Learner Responsibility</td>
<td>Asking for help, Individual differences, Workload – study &amp; work, Study as being easier than work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Light at the end of the tunnel, Drive (motivation), Challenges (positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td>Constraints, Flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td>Hope, Reassurance,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Selective Coding

Following a similar process of contrasting categories in higher levels of abstraction, 6 key superordinate ‘Stage C’ categories emerged: Motivation, Stress, Risk, Learner Responsibility and Interest and these were centred around the core category of Time. According to Glaser and Strauss (1998, p. 236) selective coding is the last stage in the analytic process and is the ‘...integration of concepts around a core category and the filling in of categories in need of further refinement and development’. It became clear that at this point in time, the axial coding phase had given way to this final stage of analysis – selective coding.

The relationship between the 5 superordinate categories and the core category – time, began to inform the blueprint for the foundation of a number of interesting relationships and a unique theoretical model, drawing a close resemblance to a classic Force-field analysis (Lewin, 1951), but also drawing on some elements of a temporal motivational-type model.

Whilst diagrams had assisted as a kind of ‘visual memo’ or conceptualising tool throughout the axial phases of the process, it was at this late stage of the process that all the sub-diagrams began to form part of a larger explanatory model; a graphical representation of the
final theory. This occurred naturally, prior to having reviewed Strauss and Corbin’s (1998, p. 238) view on diagram formation as being an inevitable result of the conceptual denseness and complexity of the theory not lending itself to solely text-based description. Therefore, the emergence of the diagram provided some reassurance that saturation had been achieved and the final grounded theory was almost fully formed. Lastly, in line with Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) experiences, the diagram also underwent several revisions until the final version was able to adequately explain all the key categories, including the subcategories, the core category and the key relationships between them.

4.7 Saturation

After the second sample had been coded, three additional online discussion forums were analysed for the purposes of ensuring saturation: ‘Full-time work + Study, motivation’, ‘Part-time study Experiences’, ‘Balancing Masters and full-time work’. Congruent with Grounded theory methods (Jones & Alony, 2011; Scott, 2009) these three forums (the sourcing of relevant ‘new data’ for the purposes of constant comparison) were theoretically sampled to ensure that saturation had been achieved.

In line with standard practice in Grounded theory methods, saturation was determined to have been reached once ‘…no new data result[ed] from additional data collection (Jones & Alony, 2011, p.13)’ and when all categories were equally well-developed; there were no categories more wholly developed than any of the others (Somekh & Lewin 2012, p. 116). It should be noted that equal development of the categories was also determined by conceptual specificity and exclusivity; when the categories could not be grouped with or superseded by another category.

The former component of this criteria was satisfied by obtaining a third sample and the final two threads– sample 4 and sample 5, were obtained primarily for the purposes of ensuring that all categories were robustly developed and contained an appropriate level of detail. Further, these additional samples provided me with maximum opportunity to discover a ‘negative case’, or a concept or relationship that disproved or challenged the emerging theory. Corbin (in Somekh & Lewin, 2012, p. 116) argues that the identification of a negative case in Grounded theory ‘…does not necessarily contradict a researcher’s theoretical formulation but adds to the theory’s breadth by expanding its possibilities’. At this point in the analysis, the additional forums sampled (samples 3, 4 and 5) did not reveal a negative case per se, but rather presented existing concepts that were expressed or packaged in sufficiently different ways to necessitate that I take a step back from the rapidly developing
theoretical model in order to check and re-check my theoretical assumptions underlying
category and relationship formation.

4.8 Reliability & Validity

Beyond the specific methodological limitations associated with employing the various
grounded theory approaches, it is important to note the more general admonitions when
assessing the quality of the research design. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 269-270) argue
that the soundness or reliability of the research findings stem from the research design and
the process itself and can be evaluated according to the following criteria: logical justification
for initial sample selection, explanation of grounds on which categories emerge, evidence of
robust indicators underlying category formation, justification for further sampling choices,
substantiation of rationales behind the drawing of conceptual links between categories,
explanation of researcher ‘gaps in understanding’ of data relations and substantiation of
‘core category’ selection. These criteria were not only assessed post-coding analysis but
also considered during the analysis, to ensure adherence and adjust processes, as needed,
to proactively ensure compliance.

4.9 Ethical Issues with Conducting Online Research

There are a number of ethical issues associated with conducting online research (Berry
2004; Capurro & Pingel, 2002; Knobel, 2003). As the data from this study was obtained from
postings on public, open-source online forums, an ethics exemption from Deakin University
was not required, however, ethical risks associated with collecting this kind of data still
needed to be carefully managed.

Prior to discovering that an ethics exemption was not required by Deakin University for this
research Project, I had pre-emptively contacted a number of website administrators from
some of the well-known forum hosting websites that I was hoping to research. Although all
of these were open-access and public forums, two out of the three website administrators
contacted, informed me that they were not comfortable with the research being conducted
using the forum data contained on their sites.

As I later discovered that an ethics exemption was not required from the University and there
was every possibility the site owners might not ever discover that the posts had been used, I
could have preceded with the study, using the data from these sites without University
sanction, but clearly it would have presented an ethical breach to do so and sorely out of
keeping with what Capurro and Pingel (2002, p. 194) refer to as an ‘ethics of care’, that is
responding honestly in a genuine and open exchange with all parties, not out of a sense of obligation but a sense of ‘shared mutuality’. This is a view shared by Knobel (2003, p. 208) who argues that when conducting research in online spaces it is the researcher’s responsibility to pay ‘…constant attention to the key points of ethical concern and to the bearer’s moral consequences associated with each study’.

The third site administrator contacted had indicated that neither he nor the website owners had any objections to their being used in research however he indicated that ultimately, copyright remained with the posters. The website privacy policy which all users must read and accept prior to joining the site was therefore reviewed. This policy indicated that user profiles show limited information to non-logged in users and search engines and that no personal details are shown to non-logged in users. When users sign up to the site they do so knowing that the information that they post is publically viewable and not protected, therefore users often select online pseudonyms to protect their online identity. Therefore, in deciding whether or not to use the data contained on this site, I felt it was important to reflect carefully on the exact use and demonstration of the data and any associated, projected ethical implications.

The process of conducting grounded theory research involves looking at key concepts and ideas and the relationships between them, with the aim of formulating highly abstract theoretical models (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As a qualitative research method, grounded theory is less concerned with publishing long pieces of descriptive text, than with the generation and presentation of new and high-level abstract theories. Often the grounded theory researcher reports only minimal amounts of person-specific written dialogue and when they do include sections of written dialogue in the body of the research publication, the aim is primarily to explain ‘behind the scenes’ coding processes for enhanced reliability, rather than to include large portions of dissected and detailed participant-specific text on the page.

Although, it should be noted that source links have been included in appendices for the purposes of replicability and peer review, after careful consideration of all relevant ethical considerations, it was determined that for the purposes of this study, given the way in which the data was used and ultimately presented, the use of the forum information would not present a copyright or privacy breach.
Chapter 5  A new temporal motivational model of work-study experience

This chapter reports the research findings and includes a discussion of the key factors and sub factors that emerged from the data. The findings are also discussed with reference to the main research question and related sub question.

5.1 Time: the core category

After the final six superordinate categories (Motivation, Stress, Risk, Learner Responsibility and Interest and Time) had been fully developed, the core concept; time, emerged during selective analysis. In grounded theory, the core category is a central category that links all other categories together around a conceptual fulcrum, as part of an emerging explanatory model (Glaser, 1978, p. 93). Corbin (in Somekh & Lewin, 2012, p. 115-116) explains that the core category is the ‘highest and most abstract’ concept of the research model and ‘…the theoretical thread that that unites the other categories into an explanatory whole’. If all other categories are integrated around a certain category, then this category is likely to be the core category. Another way of describing how the core category is selected, is the process of identifying the category (usually already pre-identified in the earlier stages of coding) that has the strongest explanatory power, or is most applicable, across a variety of situations and contexts (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 24).

The concept of time was identified early in the analytic process; at the open coding stage and contained a variety of subcategories including, but not limited to discipline, energy, sacrifices and organisation (planning). Time was also a bidimensional category, with time management and time pressures appearing to represent two distinct aspects of the same concept. This two-dimensional quality of the category - time was also able to account for one of the more dense categories – options, in terms of how having alternatives provided the employee-learners with more opportunity to manage time in the face of often excessive, time pressures.

Time was also able to explain the five other superordinate categories identified at the selective coding phase of analysis: Motivation, Stress, Risk, Learner Responsibility and Interest and was therefore determined as the category with the most explanatory power. It was in testing the relationship between time and the other superordinate categories that a basic version, of what would ultimately be a diagrammatic representation of the final theoretical model, emerged (Appendix C: Figure C-3).
Participants’ perceptions indicated that the ultimate goal of combining full-time work with part-time study was the procurement of ‘more time’. Although the rational for wanting to obtain more time varied somewhat between individuals, on the whole, the procurement of more time was generally perceived as an expected result of obtaining career situations that enabled flexible working arrangements. Having increased control over career prospects or improved financial circumstances were also linked to the belief that that greater flexibility would result in more time (in the long term) to spend engaging in meaningful activities outside of paid employment. Naturally, however there were individual differences in terms of what activities participants considered meaningful. Generally, the posters considered spending time with family and friends, achieving work life balance and having some kind of social life as being important and meaningful activities.

Participants were willing to sacrifice (another subcategory of time that was identified during open coding) often great portions time in the immediate term for more lasting temporal payoffs. The belief that having more time in the long term would be an inevitable result of achieving the immediate goal (completion of the degree) meant that the concept of time was best positioned to explain motivation, rather than the other way around. The sacrifice associated with forfeiting time in the short-term (due to studying part-time whilst working full-time), meant that it was the learner’s responsibility to manage the repercussions of this sacrifice. In an environment fraught with risk, stress was often perceived to be a significant by-product of this process.

5.2  A new model of work-study experience

Interestingly in this study, unlike the bidimensional core category – time, the concept of motivation emerged as a unilateral construct. This was a significant and surprising finding as I had expected the concept of motivation to emerge in two discrete dimensions (i.e. intrinsic and extrinsic motivation), not dissimilar to the concept of time. However, as a superordinate category, motivation was not preceded by virtue of its assuming a quality of being either intrinsic or extrinsic in nature, but rather, by its’ key role in describing the process by which the full-time employee-part-time learner progresses toward the attainment of the degree, in the face of challenges and setbacks, as mediated by time. Although largely unexpected, perhaps this finding was actually projected, albeit to a minor extent, in the foretold caveat regarding the importance of transcending limiting dichotomies of ‘extrinsic’ versus ‘intrinsic’ motivation, to account for individual or other demographic differences (see chapter 2, page 5).
The concept of motivation emerged as a type of ‘driving force’ or core impetus for the achievement of the full-time employee-part-time learners’ ultimate goal; the procurement of more time to engage in more meaningful activities, as a projected consequence of completing a tertiary degree course. It was inferred that the completion of a degree course would lead to the acquisition of flexible employment that would allow the individual to exercise more control over working conditions, specifically time spent at work. The two dimensions of the core category: time management and time pressures, were able to account for most of the previously identified subcategories and for variation in the perceptions of full-time employees-part-time learners’ experiences of undertaking full-time employment with part-time tertiary study. Motivation (in its’ current conception) therefore emerged as the constant variable and the emerging relationship between time and motivation exhorted me to use a diagram to express the rapidly developing temporal-motivational model of study support (Figure 2.0).

The long-term result of maintaining motivation throughout full-time employment and part-time studies (more time to spend in meaningful activities, through the achievement of more flexible working conditions) was viewed as an ultimate result of the completion of the tertiary degree and therefore best represented as a type of end goal and so ‘ultimate goal’ was scribbled on the far right side of a page of paper. Achievement of the degree was viewed as an immediate (shorter-term) goal and therefore preceded the ultimate goal in the developing model. Motivation, as a process constant, was best represented as a horizontal line with an arrow tip pointing toward the immediate goal.

As the two dimensions of time – time pressures (e.g. stemming from work commitments, family life etc) and time management (e.g. having options, flexibility, planning and organisation, access to resources, clear expectations) were the opposing variables affecting the sustainment of motivation, time pressures were listed as the restraining or prevailing forces and charted above the horizontal line, whereas time management skills represented the driving or countervailing forces and were therefore chartered below the line. At this stage it became clear that the diagram represented a kind of force field–type model (Figure 2.0).
5.2.1 Time & Motivation to study & work: a force field framework

The force-field model was introduced by Lewin (1951) to examine how various psychosocial and/or physical factors influence an individual’s ability to reach a particular goal or facilitate change. Lewin (1951) reasoned that in trying to achieve our goal, we strive to maintain a kind of balance or ‘equilibrium’ that facilitates the likelihood of us achieving the desired goal unthwarted. However in trying to maintain this equilibrium we also have particular needs that need to be met. More specifically, Lewin (1951, p. 259) explains that there are two forces affecting our ability to bring about a desired outcome – driving forces and restraining forces. The former propel us toward a positive or away from a negative outcome, the latter prevent us from moving toward a particular outcome or away from a usually, but not always, undesired result.

In order to reach the immediate goal (or what I also termed the ‘clear point’), to enable progression to the ultimate goal, employee-learners needed to maintain motivation (equilibrium) through the careful balancing of temporal demands. Time pressures needed to be addressed with sufficient time management skills in order to meet the immediate goal (completion of degree), without upsetting the motivational equilibrium and burning out from fatigue and exhaustion.
The pressures of workload (stemming from both paid work and study), access to resources, family and financial commitments all negatively impacted on the employee-learners perceptions of their ability to cope with simultaneous work and study commitments. The categories - clarity, planning, organisation, time management and having options (such as being able to study off campus or online), all related back to an attempt, on the employee-learners part, to maximise available time to balance study and work, whilst minimising stress and the risk of burnout. In the developing model, time pressures were therefore viewed as the restraining forces and time management skills or time provisions as the driving forces.

5.2.2 Parallels with Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT)

By integrating theories of motivation across disciplines, in order to create a unified explanatory theory of motivation, Steel & Konig (2006), have proposed their overarching explanatory model: Temporal Motivation Theory (TMT). The much contested, TMT uses an equation derived from several prominent theories of motivation to account for how likely we are to complete a particular task or achieve a specified goal. Steel & Konig (2006) reason that we can do this by assessing the degree to which we think we will succeed and the value that we place on achieving the set task or goal, with reference to the extent that we favour immediate gratification or rewards and our tolerance for delay in receiving those rewards.

The theory suggests that ‘...motivation can be understood by the effects of expectancy and value, weakened by delay with differences in rewards and losses’ (Steel & Konig, 2006, p. 897). The results from the present study seem to suggest that the value or satisfaction derived from completing studies whilst working full-time, and the expectancy that this (completing studies) will be successfully achieved, are key factors in motivating full-time employees to embark on and continue to undertake, full-time work with part-time study. However, the category - optimism, later superseded by the category risk, seems to suggest that the magnitude of the ‘expectancy value’ is grossly inflated in the full-time employee-part-time learner cohort studied.

Whilst this finding necessitates further investigation, one potential explanation could lie in the omnipresent rhetoric of lifelong learning. Some theorists have argued that political discourses surrounding the concept of lifelong learning have resulted in its’ becoming a necessary requirement for a successful and satisfactory life (Mantie, 2012; Biesta, 2012). As explained by Mantie (2012, p. 222) ‘not learning is not [no longer] an option’. Therefore to be pessimistic or unenthusiastic about another person’s ability to achieve success in their lifelong learning attempts, is to implicitly suggest that one has little confidence in their ability
to achieve a very fruitful or satisfactory life and this runs contrary to the more affiliative and agreeable aspects of human nature.

Moreover, it has also been suggested that the need for lifelong learning has become so pervasive and profound, that it is not only required for a successful life but considered a ‘moral obligation’ to be fulfilled (Edwards 2008, p. 31, in Mantie 2012, p. 223). Therefore, it is quite possible that in not wanting to make pessimistic and/or moralistic judgments about other posters’ lifelong learning circumstances (and avoid a feeling of unease that may have resulted from making such judgements), the posters showed great faith in and were optimistic about, other poster’s abilities (potentially overcompensating) to achieve success as a result of engaging in full-time work and part-time study.

Interestingly, despite the accompanying discussion of concurrent study-work being perceived as incredibly ‘difficult’ and ‘hard’, more often than not, posters were hopeful and optimistic that undertaking part-time work with full-time employment was achievable for other posters. Most posters provided reassurance and showed faith in other posters’ abilities (though they had never met them outside the online space) to achieve their immediate goal of successfully obtaining a degree, whilst working full-time, without burning out in the process.

Steel & Konig’s (2006) TMT argues that an individual is more likely to complete a set goal or task if reward or gratification delay is minimised. Given that a tertiary degree, especially one undertaken over many years when balanced with full-time work, is unlikely to yield any immediate reward or gratification, employee-learners must stay sufficiently motivated by other means. Carefully managing time and minimising unnecessary time pressures appears to be one way that the employee-learners in this study, tried to maintain motivation.

However, the emerging model did not completely account for why full-time-employees-part-time-learners were able to so often succeed when reward-delay is high. It could be that successful learners set themselves smaller, frequent goals, through chunking and rewarding. E.g. A shopping trip after completion of one unit of study or the confidence that they can now apply new knowledge and skills to excel in a paid work project. Personality may also play a part, with some learners being less impulsive and therefore less susceptible to delay. Lastly, the degree to which a learner is interested (intrinsic motivated) in a topic may mean that they view the learning of certain subjects as the reward itself. This particular model was therefore unable to adequately account for this aspect of Steel & Konig’s (2006) TMT but warrants further and more targeted investigations, to gain a clearer understanding of employee-learner motivation.
5.3 Breakdown of Equilibrium: Employee-learner stress

Stress (and the sub category burnout) emerged as one of the superordinate categories and was best explained as a result or by-product of a breakdown of equilibrium. As full-time employees-part-time learners tried to maintain motivation by countering time pressures with various time management strategies, the perceived threat of stress and burnout was pervasive. There were various ways in which the employee-leaners sought to maintain balance and minimise stress to avoid burnout. By removing time pressures such as ‘a social life’ or dropping down to part-time only, employee learners felt that they could directly reduce the restraining forces, thereby giving the driving forces the proverbial upper hand. Another way to alleviate the impact of stress was to increase the driving forces through superior time management skills – ensuring ready access to resources, gaining clarity around course expectations (to enable efficient planning) and studying off-campus or early in the morning with replete energy levels.

A common and clever way in which the participant’s indirectly managed time, was through engaging in studies that were directly relatable to the type of paid work that they were already involved in. This presented an indirect but effective way of managing time. Learners could apply their practical learnings to their tertiary studies and their theoretical learnings to their more pragmatic work environment. Whilst some learners may be more adroit at drawing parallels between academic and workplace learning, this tactic represents a potentially useful way in which learners can seek to maximise available time to complete work and study demands, potentially decreasing some of the stress associated with the experience of engaging in simultaneous full-time work and part-time study.

Taking an ‘early exit’ from the course (finishing the course early in order to take a lower-level degree) was another way in which the employee-learners could gain control over an increasingly unstable equilibrium. By taking an early exit, employee learners are able to move temporal threshold closer towards them, enabling them to reach the ‘clear point’ (the point at which the equilibrium is no longer at risk of instability) earlier than originally planned. Whilst the ‘ultimate goal’ (gaining increased time to spend in personally meaningful activities through more flexible working arrangements) overlaps with the clear point (finishing studies without burning out from extreme stress), taking an early exit moves this goal further away so that the employee-learner still has to bridge the gap via alternative means or accept a revised, potentially less complete, version of their ultimate goal.
5.4 Interest (intrinsic motivation) as a reinforcement coil?

As aforementioned, contrary to expectations, the neat intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation dichotomy that was reviewed and discussed as part of the literature review, was not as apparent in the findings. Curiously, interest (intrinsic motivation) presented itself as an independent code to the more generic category of motivation. The latter ended up being a category better described as a type of general propulsion toward goal achievement, neither defined in terms of its' intrinsic or extrinsic nature, but rather through its' relationship with temporal constraints and opportunities. Whereas the category – interest, seemed to represent 'genuine interest' or passion for a particular topic of study or what might be usually referred to as 'intrinsic motivation'.

For example, one poster explained that whilst he/she found a subject area was particularly ‘fascinating’, regardless of this interest he/she was beginning to ‘burn out’. Comments such as this seem to suggest that motivation (towards achieving the immediate goal of completing the degree) exists independently of intrinsic interest and is better defined in terms of goal motivation, ameliorated by highly effective time management skills and/or the minimisation of time pressures. At this stage it is too difficult to draw any conclusions from the resulting lack of influence that interest (intrinsic motivation) plays in the experience of undertaking full-time work with part-time study, however, as a minimum these findings raise a hypothesis worthy of investigation: does intrinsic motivation (derived from a genuine interest in or passion for the topic) represent an independent driving force that may assist with the management (either indirectly or directly) of stress only when equilibrium is already being maintained through superior time management?

For example, where time management skills are sufficiently strong and time pressures are sufficiently minimised (equilibrium is being maintained to a greater or lesser extent), appreciating or enjoying a subject for its own sake, may a) help to reduce the stress associated with having to maintain equilibrium (acting directly on stress) or b) result in the perception that the study is less of a time pressure, thereby weakening the sum total of restraining forces, acting indirectly on stress and adding thrust to the overall driving force (or goal motivation), by helping to maintain equilibrium and minimise the by-product of stress.
5.5 Risk and Learner Responsibility

Whilst risk and learner responsibility both emerged as superordinate concepts, they did not directly form part of the temporal motivational model itself, but rather presented as key themes operating within a kind of contextual milieu, surrounding the temporal motivational model.

Risk comprised a number of subcategories, one of which was contemplation. A well-developed concept that emerged out of the latter phases of axial coding, contemplation was subsumed by the category of risk, as ultimately, the construct of risk was better able to account for the reasons why the posters spent such a lot of time and energy weighing up the pros and cons of undertaking full-time work with part-time study.

The full-time employees-part-time learners in this study were aware that there were inherent risks associated with engaging in full-time study and part-time work simultaneously (i.e. experiencing stress and potentially burnout, as a result of not maintaining equilibrium), and this perception resulted from an awareness that time pressures were an undesirable inevitability, even though the exact nature and extent of these pressures was often contingent on factors outside their control (e.g. level of employer support, clarity around
course expectations, consistency of work demands). Therefore, any factor perceived as impacting on the amount of time available to undertake full-time employment with part-time studies was viewed as a constituent risk factor, with the total of all risk factors needing to be weighed against the total benefits associated with achieving the immediate goal (obtainment of a degree) and the poster’s expectation that they would be able to satisfactorily counteract time pressures through the employment of sufficient time management skills. Therefore, contemplation could be best explained by the presence of perceived risk and its relationship to balancing of full-time employment with part-time tertiary study.

As aforementioned, employer support (via the provision of diverse study support practices) represented a key example of a constituent risk factor affecting time management. The posters predominantly referred to employer support in terms of employer-sponsored study leave time, as provided through formal or informal study support policies or practices, rather than course funding. Even at a seemingly superficial level, this finding was notable in terms of providing additional support for the emergent temporal motivational model of study support; knowing how much study leave time would be provided was a more important consideration for the full-time employee-part-time learner, than knowing to what extent course fees would be subsidised.

Moreover, the subcategory - finance was typically viewed with reference to the short term, such as paying existing debts (e.g. mortgage) and maintaining day to day living expenses (rent etc), rather than the long term (e.g. payment of tertiary course fees and deferred student loans). With many universities offering commonwealth-supported or fee deferment options, payment of course fees can be postponed and employee-learners may view the payment of course fees as less of an immediate financial burden and more of a longer term obligation or investment, to be dealt with gradually. If university fee payments are nominal enough not to impact sufficiently on day-to-day living expenses and payment of debts, then the provision of study leave time trumps course-fee subsidisation as the preferred method of employer support.

This seems to suggest that the amount of time that an employee-learner has to earn a certain wage whilst undertaking studies in the short term may have a greater and more visible impact on personal finances in the immediate term. Therefore in relation to immediate goal achievement (obtaining the degree without burning out), having enough time to balance work and study in the short term may be perceived as a more important consideration to the full-time employee-part-time learner, than employer contributions towards course fee payment. In other words, employer-contribution to course fees is not perceived as having a
significant impact on the employee-learner’s ability to maintain equilibrium and achieve the immediate goal of obtaining the degree qualification and is therefore considered (at least in the short term) as less important than the provision of study leave time.

Not knowing if an employer would support their part-time tertiary studies (and if so to what extent and by which means), meant that full-time employees perceived this lack of clarity and uncertainty as a key risk factor. Full-time employees-part-time learners contributing to the forum discussion, articulated manifold and inconsistent experiences relating to employer support and shared these experiences willingly with the other posters. The risk of receiving inadequate employer support, along with the risk associated with being able to manage the immense time pressures associated with juggling full-time work and part-time study, were therefore seen as important considerations when ‘weighing up’ the pros and cons of undertaking part-time tertiary study with full-time employment.

Ultimately, learner responsibility was able to explain why risk was such an important concept in contributing to the environment surrounding the force-field model. Whilst in one way, the concept of learner responsibility enabled participants to experience a sense of control and stay optimistic in the face of almost certain set-backs, it also contributed to the perception that their decision to engage in continuous learning, through juggling part-time study with full-time work, was a fraught one. Whilst the majority of poster’s perceived the decision to undertake full-time study with part-time work as a courageous one; a virtuous demonstration of trying to better ones’ prospects in the professional and personal sphere, this view was not shared by all. The theme of spoilt and selfish, in relation to the concept of age, also emerged as an alternative view of the full-time employee-part-time learner’s motivations for enrolling in part-time study whilst undertaking full-time work.

As discussed earlier, in relation to optimism and Temporal Motivational Theory (Steel, 2006), this finding may be accounted for by the impact that the rhetoric of lifelong learning has had on the consciousness of today’s generation of employee-learners and how this is perceived by earlier generations that have not been exposed to the same sociopolitical circumstances. It has been suggested that through the popular, intense and pervasive political discourse of lifelong learning, the responsibility of continuing adult education has shifted from the civic sphere, to the individual (Mantle, 2012, p. 223; Biesta, 2012, p. 8).

Whereas before the introduction of the concept of lifelong learning in the 1970’s, education was seen as less of a necessity and more of an added benefit or optional investment in one’s personal and professional development, it has been argued that it is now viewed as an indispensable and unavoidable ‘investment in one’s own employability’ (Biesta, 2012, p. 8).
This disparity may explain some general differences in the perceptions between younger generations (predominantly Generation X and Y) who feel that undertaking further studies is not only a necessity but a responsibility, and older generations who see it as somewhat selfish or an indulgence. This is an important finding as it may partially account for the disjuncture between the prevalence of support for lifelong learning initiatives and the persistent variability in employer (and complete lack of governmental) readiness to provide realistic and appropriate study support provisions for today’s full-time employee-part-time learner.

5.6 Research Question 1

The experiences of full-time employees undertaking part-time tertiary studies influence perceptions of the value of studying part-time whilst undertaking full-time employment, largely in terms in temporal and motivational factors. Whilst there was variability in the experiences that were reported, generally, full-time employees-part-time learners perceived the experience of studying a tertiary course whilst working full-time, to be a difficult and often stressful life event.

Time pressures associated with undertaking full-time paid work with part-time tertiary study were perceived as substantial and often negatively impacted on the ability of employee-leaners to maintain an adequate work-life balance. Individual differences in full-time employee-part-time learner perceptions’ of the capability required to attain a tertiary degree without burning out, were best explained in terms of employee-learner abilities to effectively manage competing time demands (via sound organisational and planning skills) through the employment of careful time management.

Undertaking part-time study with full-time work was perceived as a risky undertaking. Whilst associated time pressures were seen as unavoidable, full-time employees-part-time learners perceived themselves as being most at risk if they lacked the ability (and or skills) to manage time and/or lacked control over their ability to manage time. The latter deficiency was perceived as stemming from a variety of factors, such as unforeseen and/or fluctuating changes in workload (paid employment), lack of clarity around course/unit expectations which impacted their ability to plan ahead, uncertainty around the level of employer support that would be offered (or certainty that no support would be offered), lack of flexibility to undertake studies during suitable hours (hours that fitted around set paid employment commitments, personal and caring responsibilities) and concerns around access to appropriate resources.
Intrinsic motivation or interest in the topic studied was perceived as a factor worthy of further investigation, in terms of its' potential impact on alleviating the stress associated with undertaking full-time employment with part-time study, in order to achieve a tertiary-level qualification.

The experiences of full-time employees undertaking part-time tertiary studies were often characterised by struggle and stress as ultimately the majority of full-time employees-part-time learners perceived themselves as solely responsible for their learning experiences and their learning success. However, far from being a wholly negatively influence, this sense of sole learner responsibility actually represented a kind of double-edged sword whereby employee-learners felt optimistic, not only in terms of their ability to achieve their own success, but also in terms of their belief in the ability of others (known only via the online space), to successfully to juggle full-time work with part-time tertiary study, to achieve their desired goals.

Self-efficacy - an individual's belief in their ability to achieve a particular outcome or goal, has been linked to increased motivation to learn (Bandura, 1977). So it is possible that the perceived optimism or confidence that was displayed by the posters in this study, may be related to increased perceptions of self-efficacy, representing an element of the motivating force toward goal achievement. As explained by Bandura (1997, p. 194):

> Not only can perceived self-efficacy have directive influence on choice of activities and settings, but, through expectations of eventual success, it can affect coping efforts once they are initiated. Efficacy expectations determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts.

Posters’ were confident in their belief in the value of the outcome of studying full-time whilst working part-time (the obtainment of a degree would lead to working prospects that allowed for increased flexibility and control, thereby contributing to improved work-life balance in the long term). However, it was largely held that this outcome was at the expense of short-term well-being and work-life balance. In other words, posters believed and or hoped that the end would justify the means, however this belief could only be put to the test if the employee-learner was able to reach the immediate end goal (obtainment of a degree) without experiencing so much stress that they 'burnt out' in the process.
5.7 Research Question 2

The findings indicate that full-time employee-part-time learners’ experiences of juggling full-time work with part-time study is perceived as being made difficult by a range of temporal factors. These factors contribute to often great time pressures and these time pressures are sustained throughout the duration of the studies. The ability of the individual employee-learner to manage and govern their time is perceived as crucial to their success in achieving the immediate goal of obtaining a tertiary degree. The immediate goal is perceived as preceding the ultimate goal - attaining a working role that allows for more flexible working hours and more control over employment conditions. The immediate goal being the conduit to having more time to balance paid employment with personally meaningful pursuits – whether this is the maintenance of a meaningful familial life, personal interests and/or friendships.

An awareness of these perceptions suggests that employer-sponsored study support provisions should be viewed less in terms of whether they are based on extrinsic or intrinsic motivational factors and more in relation to their potential to assist employee-learners with managing the time pressures that stem from the juggling work, study and personal responsibilities. Whether a full-time employee-part-time learner was intrinsically interested in a particular topic of study was found to be less critical, at least in the short term, to their perceived experience of undertaking full-time work with part-time study, than their ability to manage competing demands on their time. The results indicated that traditional study support provisions are still falling short in terms of providing the full-time employee-part-time learner with a comprehensive support system. Specifically, the provision of an adequate amount of time to complete work and study demands to a satisfactory level (as determined by the individual) is crucial to minimise stress and the risk of burnout.

Study leave time and clarity around whether it would be provided, and if so to what extent and in what form, emerged as a crucial factor over and above employer sponsored course funding, in assisting the full-time employee-part-time learner to cope with full-time work and part-time study. Finance emerged as a crucial concept not in terms of employer funded study support, but rather in relation to the more pragmatic and immediate fiscal constraints associated with undertaking full time employment and part time study. For example, personal debts such as mortgages required some employee-learners to engage in longer working hours than they would have preferred, whilst undertaking study at the same time and for some learners this was seen as impinging on their ability to achieve good marks or grades in their tertiary studies. The extent to which this resulted in frustration for the
employee-learner depended on the value that they placed on achieving more than a pass grade.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Limitations of the study

There are a number of limitations associated with collecting data from a single source such as online discussion forums. Whilst several different forums were investigated across the hosting website, the data is likely to be representative of a particular online population and this therefore has implications for the generalizability of the findings.

Further, although the majority of forum participants indicated that they were either considering or currently undertaking bachelor's or master's degrees, many posters did not specify the course that they were studying and due to the observational and non-participatory design of the research study (each poster was represented by their pseudonym and their posts only), demographic variables such as age, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status could not be determined. Hence, the website users are likely to be representative of a particular subset of the online (and off-line) community, with the data obtained for this study providing a broad overview of the experiences of full-time employee-part-time learners, rather than addressing perceptions specific to particular social cohorts and individuals.

Ideally, in order to gain a more varied account of the phenomenon, further research into this topic would benefit from a mixed methods approach that allows for the triangulation of data. Online blogs and other websites, interviews, surveys and focus groups may represent useful data sources for this purpose and provide a richer account of the full range of perceptions and experiences of full-time-employees-part-time learners. Further, the experiences of employers, university academics and the family, colleagues and friends of full-time employee-part-time learners have not been studied. The perspectives of these individuals may broaden our understanding of the topic by allowing for the obtainment of a broader range of perspectives, in order to gain a more reliable picture of the full-time employee-part-time learner experience and the employee-learner experience more generally.

Grounded theory is often criticized due to its' inherent subjectivity. In coding the posts, as a grounded theory researcher I have made judgements about key concepts and their relationships with each other in order to form an overarching explanatory model. Whilst this model is useful in understanding generalities in perceived experience, it cannot adequately
capture individual differences in perceptions of experiences nor provide a deep account of personal experience in the way that a phenomenological approach might be able to do. Whilst memos and diagrams were used extensively to illustrate researcher jumps in reasoning and logic (See Appendix C and D), as have details about the data sources for replicability, to go beyond Strauss and Corbin’s (1998, p. 269-270) suggested evaluation model for reliability, an independent researcher would need to conduct an analysis using the same data set and not only grounded theory methodology but potentially additional methodologies and methods in order to provide enhanced reliability.

It should also be noted that this model is intended as a substantive theory (or progress toward one) rather than a formal theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 32) point out the distinction between formal theory as being something that emerges over time and across multiple research studies and substantive theory as a ‘…conceptual theory with general implications…’ (Glaser, 2004), that is applicable in the context of the specific study in question and must be applied in novel situations to transcend the temporal bounds of a single study, in order to be considered a truly formal theory. Therefore the findings and theoretical model generated from this study should be considered as a preliminary glimpse of the area under investigation and further research only.

6.2 Implications for further research

This study has important implications for the way that employee-learners and employers understand the key challenges associated with the experience of studying part-time whilst engaged in full-time employment. Specifically, it raises questions around whether traditional forms of employer sponsored study support provisions are effective in supporting the full-time employee-part-time learner to a satisfactory extent. Given the central imperative of having high-level time management skills to successfully achieve a tertiary degree whilst working full time (without burning out) the findings from this investigation suggest that traditional forms of employer sponsored study support currently fall short of adequately supporting today’s growing number of full-time employees-part-time learners.

Given the importance of time management skills and the impact of stress on full-time employees-part-time learners, there is a lot of scope for traditional employer sponsored study support provisions to offer employee-learners more effective support, in terms of time-management and stress-management initiatives. Further, even at a seemingly basic level, employer recognition and understanding of the amount of stress that full-time employee-part-time learners are under, may assist managers and supervisors with creating more tailored
and proactive development plans, designed at keeping employee-learners motivated and engaged.

Although there may be additional time pressures and costs associated with implementing more tailored support strategies for employee-learners, this more nuanced approach may prove more beneficial to the modern organisation than rapid-fire, sweeping employee motivation and engagement tactics. For example, without addressing the needs of key cohorts comprising an organisation (i.e. employee-leaners), employee well-being programs and other initiatives aimed at minimising stress and maintaining a healthy ‘work-life balance’, are unlikely to be perceived as desirable employee incentives and worst case scenario, may actually be viewed as sources of additional and unwarranted time pressures by an already highly stressed workforce, rendering them largely ineffective.

Employers are often reluctant to provide study leave as they are concerned that once an employee has completed their degree or is appropriately ‘skilled up’, they will jump ship to a higher paying position, however, if an appropriate study support plan is negotiated early and clearly communicated between the employee and employer up front, then the employee-learner may be more engaged, less stressed and more productive in the workplace. Where the employee-learner has limited employer support, unclear or inconsistent support or feels that they are alone responsible for their learning success of failure, they may less engaged, more stressed, more prone to burnout and view their employer’s needs as impinging on their ability to plan and organise their time effectively. In this way, employers that take a negative view of employees, particularly Generation Y employees, undertaking further study, may be creating their own organisational self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby their expectation that employees requesting study leave are ‘out for all that they can get’, becomes their reality.

In terms of governmental policy making, the findings from this study suggest that learner responsibility and learner empowerment may contribute to a climate of hope and optimism in the short term, however the popular discourse of lifelong learning obscures the difficulty and struggle associated with continuing further education, whilst trying to manage the demands of full-time paid employment, family and personal life. Just as employers need to see the bigger picture with reference to stress-based and well-being initiatives aimed at maintaining work-life balance, so too does the Australian government need to realise the impact of its lifelong learning policy agenda on the workforce responsible for its enaction, specifically the individual employee-learner.

This study raises questions around who is ultimately responsible for supporting the employee-learner and to what degree; if the current level of governmental support and the
effectiveness of traditional organisation-sponsored study support is any indication, the responsibility rests firmly, albeit implicitly, with the employee-learners themselves.

6.3 Conclusion

This study investigated the perceptions of full-time employees concurrently undertaking part-time tertiary study. The analysis of user posts across a number of online discussion forum threads provided interesting insights into the experiences of current and prospective employee-learners. The analysis resulted in the creation of a useful theoretical model for understanding commonalities in perceptions of the experience of juggling full-time employment with part-time tertiary study. In particular, a kind of temporal-motivational, force-field framework was used to explain the key factors influencing perceptions of the experience of undertaking full-time employment with part-time tertiary study. Surprisingly, motivation did not emerge as a bi-dimensional construct (intrinsic or extrinsic) but rather a unilateral concept that was best positioned to explained goal motivation.

Time emerged as a core factor, with the presence of intense time pressures impacting employee-learner perceptions of their ability to successfully juggle the demands of work, study and other life commitments, to achieve the immediate goal of achieving a tertiary-level qualification.

Stress emerged as a key by-product of sustained exposure to juggling full-time employment and part-time tertiary-level study, ameliorated to an extent by the individual employee-learner’s ability to deploy high-level time management skills.

The experience of undertaking full-time work with part-time study was perceived as being characterised by much uncertainty and risk and learner responsibility emerged as a key consideration. Whilst full-time-employees-part-time learners appear to place great value on achieving a degree after balancing full-time work with part-time study, the process itself is viewed as a difficult and stressful undertaking, further complicated by a lack of consistency in levels of employer-support. Current study support policies and practices may therefore underestimate the importance of time and overestimate the importance of funding support. Moreover, a clear lack of considered support from the government has provided organisations with little incentive to revisit timeworn study support policies.

As the number of employees undertaking part-time study with full-time work continues to increase, the findings from this study, including the newly developed temporal-motivational model of study support, should be used to guide further research into this vitally important area of adult education research. In order to address educational, psychosocial and
organisational factors affecting experiences of work and study, it is important that a cross-disciplinary approach is taken, with the aim of achieving consilience for lasting and meaningful reform.
References


http://www.umsl.edu/~henschkej/Adult_Learning/AL%203.pdf


Mahoney, M 2012, Adjusting management style to fit a new generation for employees, *My Strategic View*, 3 May 2012, viewed 18 October 201,
http://marykmahoney.wordpress.com/2012/05/03/adjusting-management-style-to-fit-a-new-generation-of-employees/


Sapru, RK 2008, 'Administrative Theories and Management Thought', Prentice-Hall, New Delhi, 2nd Ed.


Appendix A – Data Sources Overview

Table A-1: Sample numbers and associated discussion thread information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Number</th>
<th>Discussion Forum Thread Title</th>
<th>Coding Type</th>
<th>Number of Posters: Posts</th>
<th>Cross-forum posters identified</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Part-time Study. Yes or No</td>
<td>Initial sample. Purposely sampled for Open Coding</td>
<td>18:13</td>
<td>None identified</td>
<td><a href="http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2085640">http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2085640</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Anyone studying part-time + working full-time</td>
<td>Theoretically sampled for Open Coding.</td>
<td>26:16</td>
<td>None identified</td>
<td><a href="http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/1727625">http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/1727625</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Full-time work + Study, motivation</td>
<td>Theoretical Sampled for the purposes of category development and to check saturation</td>
<td>19:21</td>
<td>One Identified: Also posted in Whirlpool 4</td>
<td><a href="http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/1268063">http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/1268063</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Part-Time Study Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>5:6</td>
<td>None identified</td>
<td><a href="http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/1366362">http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/1366362</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Balancing Masters and full-time work</td>
<td></td>
<td>19:26</td>
<td>Two identified. Both also posted in Whirlpool 2</td>
<td><a href="http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2114657">http://forums.whirlpool.net.au/archive/2114657</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix B – Coding Process Information

Table B-1: Initial Category formation (axial coding) grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Challenges (positive)</th>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Hope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constraints</td>
<td></td>
<td>Career Progression</td>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Individual differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td></td>
<td>Interest (intrinsic)</td>
<td>Contemplation</td>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>Debt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Motivational Themes</td>
<td>Challenges (Negative)</td>
<td>Strains / Difficulties</td>
<td>Income</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>'Light at the end of the tunnel'</td>
<td>Challenges (Negative) – 'Hard' 'A Struggle'.</td>
<td>Stress / Burnout</td>
<td>赞美</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Spoilt and Selfish</td>
<td>Study as being easier than work</td>
<td>Asking for help</td>
<td>Testing the waters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Management</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Time off work</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Weighing up pros and cons</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Workload – study &amp; work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luck</td>
<td>Drive (motivation)</td>
<td>Energy (time)</td>
<td>Reassurance</td>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>University Constraints – tailored for full-time over part-time students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Sacrifices</td>
<td>Rewarding</td>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
<td>Something’s got to give</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevancy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Distractions</td>
<td>Learner Responsibility</td>
<td>Time to complete degree</td>
<td>Money isn’t everything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Optimism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Commitments</td>
<td>Employer support</td>
<td>n = 56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix C – Diagrams**

*Figure C-1 Sample Diagram - Initial Category Formation in Axial Coding on white board.*
**Figure C – 2** Sample Diagram - Initial Relationships forming during early Stages Axial Coding in MS word

- **RISK** – how this relates to broader notion of lifelong learning discourse – ‘spoilt & selfish’ relation to lifestyle
- Need *Options* (counteracted by constraints?) Individual responsibility
- Uncertainty
  - Reassurance, Optimism, Luck PT issues - uni set up for FT students – no support for PT in terms of **TIME**

**Figure C – 3** Sample Diagram - Development of a rudimentary temporal-motivational, force-field model during early stages of Selective Coding on note paper.
Appendix D – Written Memos

July 2013 – Memo attached node: OPTIONS_CONSTRAINTS (superseded by time) in QSR NVivo – Axial Coding

Study options seen as vitally important however often associated with constraints - e.g. online learning means more time for group work, intensives - leave required, less access to resources etc - so whilst on surface desirable actually impacts negatively. Whereas flexibility (see superordinate category ‘TIME’ is viewed as offering freedom from the constraints associated with having more 'study options' Interestingly - work options feature less - could this be b/c there is a pervasive view that 'study must fit in with work'? And how does this relate to the view of education as a 'luxury'. Whilst study options (e.g. flexibility) is great given the close link with constraints associated with ‘flexible’ study - is not the true option the option to have flexibility in work and study time?

July 2013 – Memo attached nodes CONTROL & RISK and OPTIMISM in QSR NVivo – Axial Coding

-They can manage full time work with part time study (now) and also that they can complete (later) – taking a risk in doing so b/c factors out of their control
-Another ref says courses are diff but' you'll be fine’ – very optimistic especially when they do not know the other employee-learners outside the online sphere…
This is an interesting concept - it is reassurance that often stems from a proviso - depends on the course, depends on your job etc but you’ll 'probably be right' relates to this notion of risk and in the face of risk it appears that the posters are urging the main participant to 'go for it' so largely supportive of them taking this rather large risk based on little information and information that suggests the undertaking is fraught with risk.


Motivation/interest? > Career Prog > Lifestyle > Why?
Interesting that xxx (source 2) is not motivated to study - will maximise time management. Trade-off between doing the units and getting RPL in terms of time. Example of A type A hardest part is the motivation, why cont. studying when you’re already working in a related field?
Motivator - career advancement (individual differences code). But they present ultimate motivation or goal – not the short term – short term relates more to motivation through appropriate time management factors not intrinsic interest in the unit itself.
Piece of paper vs. staying interested and keeping challenged
Bridging the gap – ‘slack time’ at work meaning using work time to study or taking energy

**August/October 2013 – written memos from MS Word – Axial Coding/Selective Coding**

S&C asks what gives rise to these categories. E.g. why is lifestyle important? In this context what is lifestyle tied to? Money, family etc. Need to look more closely at context. Axial coding stage 2 - noted immediately - an interesting linkage b/w importance of options and relationship to constraints and also the relationship b/w flexibility and options in terms of ‘study options’ and ‘true flexibility’ representing separate constructs. Also a noticeable lack of musings in terms of ‘employer support options’ in sample 1 – this was seen as something to be ‘hoped for’, surrounded in uncertainty/risk, employer-dependant, out of participants control etc. and link b/w age and income and education as luxury.

Study options seen as vitally important however often associated with constraints - e.g. online learning means more time for group work, intensives - leave required, less access to resources etc - so whilst on surface desirable actually impacts negatively. Whereas flexibility (see superordinate category ‘TIME’ is viewed as offering freedom from the constraints associated with having more 'study options' Interestingly - work options feature less - could this be b/c there is a pervasive view that 'study must fit in with work'? And how does this relate to the view of education as a 'luxury'. Whilst study options (e.g. flexibility) is great given the close link with constraints associated with ‘flexible’ study - is not the true option the option to have flexibility in work and study time?

TIME – role of and relation to…?

MOTIVATION (TO GET MORE TIME IN THE LT) need a challenge - interested in the subject for its own sake –motivation is the only category that adds something extra to time – what about career progression…?

Some overlap/connection b/w time and motivation e.g. distractions – manage time better and do this you need to be motivated; motivated to organise your time effectively, say no, limit family time hence distractions is a time concern

Theme 1 (?) Learner ownership Study ‘fitting in with work’ (time but also wider discourse of study being easier or less important or a luxury – individual responsibility, discourse of lifelong learning; spoilt selfish; lifestyle; money; career progression – more challenge)
Theme 2 (?) ‘…but I am sure you will be fine’…Risk (uncertainty; control; options; constraints – also ties into theme no. 1; optimism; contemplation; stress)

**Memo – from notepad MS Word August 2013**

In terms of motivation it is Interesting that 2 participants mentioned that it was hard to keep motivated when you are already in the industry- you would think it would be easier – this could be b/c it will be better when they get degree – move up, across business or new job but whilst they do not have the degree they are perhaps not sufficiently motivated by their employer to put those skills into practice.

Travel approx. – ‘need to attend classes after a long, 8 hour day at work’. Check individual differences

Hard but ‘passion for subject matter’ listed as key motivation AND the goal. Despite time over and above the end goal’ – ‘the passionate motivates’ in the short term it is a driving force??

Interesting - be careful – re: poster quote ‘I assume a lot of it will be easy tho since the course relates directly to what I do for a living’.

This may help with things like readings etc., but they still have to write the assignments and do exams etc so indicated that interest in the topic is useful but not sufficient without well-honed time- management skills?? Different perspective.

Further evidence for time and motivation being two complementary constructs in pursuit of the goal – one poster IM says he is fascinated and interested in the subject so may have the ST motivation but perhaps no ‘clear goal’ or LT motivation. If he cannot manage time effectively no amount of interest is going to assist him in achieving goal.

Perceived as waste of money if just got certificate - ‘passing run-through’ of the content only –individual difference – success (time??). Contrary to others xxx sees the recognition as not sufficiently motivating and doesn’t wont to ‘trade off’ really understanding the content for ‘scraping through’ so would rather sacrifice the structure and money that work would provide..

Identify personal motivation – individual differences. Family and lifestyle rewards over money

**Memo – from notepad MS Outlook August 2014 - Selective Coding**

Time has more explanatory power than risk!!
Risk more of a theme. More broad? Investigate further – use diagram.
Time does have more EP - b/c achieving goal/degree will help them have 'more time' longer
time to complete life activities - e.g. family, leisure
Does more flexibility mean more time = more options = more time?
Internal or external motivation also doesn't sufficiently explain why they want to complete but
it does account for individual differences and variations in how time is managed so
motivation is a key category and important part of theory but not the CORE category?
Motivation needs to be checked in more detail.

Memo – Outlook Note. August 2014 – Selective Coding

*need to be motivated in order to help you to manage the TIME (e.g. minimise constraints
and maximise options)? But is this intrinsic OR extrinsic.

** motivated by the goal (then the goal will be strong enough for you to get there is you
maintain motivation e.g. continue to manage time by maximising options and minimising or
mitigating the effects of constraints) or intrinsically very interested in the subject matter (you
can lessen the gap between work constraints and buy more time by ravelling them into
together which gives you more breathing room).