

**A factorial survey experiment to examine how  
the class background and perceived gender of  
job applicants influences shortlisting decisions  
for entry-level academic posts in higher  
education in England**

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## Abstract

**A factorial survey experiment to examine how the class background and perceived gender of job applicants influences shortlisting decisions for entry-level academic posts in higher education in England.**

Previous research on the mechanisms that reproduce class advantage and disadvantage in higher education (HE) has focused on students, with limited attention paid to class discrimination in the academic labour market. Whilst numerous studies have explored the effect of applicant gender on hiring decisions for academic positions, little is known about the influence of applicant class background, or its intersection with applicant gender. Understanding this is important, considering the increasing focus on universities as engines of social mobility. Using Bourdieu as the theoretical framework, this study examined the effect of applicants' class background, gender, and their intersection on entry to the academic profession in elite and non-elite universities in England. A between-subjects factorial survey experiment was conducted with 166 participants from 57 universities to examine how hypothetical applications, which were identical except for markers of class and gender, were evaluated as part of a shortlisting process. The study found that, in both elite and non-elite universities, higher-class male applicants were significantly more likely to be invited to interview than higher-class females, lower-class males, and lower-class females. In non-elite universities, class background was a more dominant variable than gender, indicating that recruitment practices may act as a strategy for growing institutional capital to gain advantage in the highly stratified HE field. However, in elite universities, gender was a more dominant variable than class, indicating that the male-dominated historical formation of these universities still creates barriers to women's entry to the academic profession. This study provides evidence of the role of class, and its intersection with gender, in shaping life opportunities and outcomes, thereby contributing to the growing body of research that repositions class as important in thinking about contemporary issues such as increasing social inequalities. The findings support the case for implementing the socio-economic duty in England.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and background

## 1. Introduction

This thesis explored a topic that has received little attention in the UK to date: whether markers of class background, perceived gender, and their intersection influence how job applicants are evaluated by those responsible for hiring academic staff. The research focused on practices in the initial shortlisting stage of the hiring process for entry-level jobs in the academic profession in universities in England. The key research question was whether these status characteristics influenced the hiring decisions made by recruiters in universities in England when applications were otherwise identical. The study explored three measures: i) the likelihood of being invited to interview; ii) the level of the recommended starting salary; and iii) evaluations of applicant attributes (competence, warmth, hardworking, fit). The research was motivated by a commitment to contribute to a body of knowledge which seeks to understand how the constructs of class and gender influence organisational culture within higher education (HE). It aligns to two United Nations (2015) Sustainable Development Goals – Goal 5 Gender Equality and Goal 10 Reduced Inequality – which are concerned with group-based differences in terms of opportunities, resources, and rewards.

Within HE, academic recruiters are gatekeepers to the academic profession. Their hiring decisions affect entry to the profession and impact the demographic of the UK academic workforce. Reducing discrimination in hiring practices is important from a fairness and equality perspective for those wishing to join, or already in, the profession. Discriminatory practices in the hiring process may indicate a potential culture of broader prejudicial behaviour. Acker (2009, paragraph 4) uses the term “inequality regimes” to explain how the hiring process forms part of the “complex, interlocking practices and processes that result in continuing inequalities” in all workplaces. In HE, such cultures could impact on student recruitment and retention, which is important considering that universities are increasingly seen as having a significant role in enabling social mobility. The UK State of the Nation 2021 report (Social Mobility Commission, 2021) notes that whilst universities continue to focus on widening participation for the student body, not much has been done to consider social mobility within their staff base. Atkinson (2023) describes socioeconomic diversity in the HE workforce as having “flatlined”, arguing that class is the forgotten diversity dimension in universities.

This thesis aimed to contribute to this important topic by identifying potential discriminatory practices in hiring processes, which may indicate a lack of social mobility and equality in the academic profession. The findings shine a light on the “dark, spidery basement full of

inequalities” (Robertson et al., 2018, p. 14) that lurks in universities in England, but with a new focus on the role of class background. The disaggregation of the findings by university status provides evidence of different patterns of potential discrimination, which suggests further barriers to entry to the profession. More generally, the findings provide evidence of the role of class background, and its intersection with gender, in shaping life opportunities and outcomes, therefore contributing to the growing body of research that positions class once again at the fore in thinking about contemporary issues such as increasing social inequalities.

Section 2 provides an overview of the theoretical framework and the key topics relevant to this thesis. This includes a summary of the macro concepts of, and relationships between, capitalism, inequality, meritocracy, and social mobility to contextualise the wider environment in which HE operates. It introduces the HE field in England and begins the process of historicizing the objects of study, a core theme in Bourdieu’s work and one which is central to this thesis. Section 2 also provides a summary of the key studies from the literature review that present evidence of class and/or gender-based discrimination in hiring practices. In Section 3, the key concepts and variables are introduced and defined, and the hypotheses for the thesis are stated. The research methodology is summarised in Section 4, including an introduction to the pragmatic research paradigm. Section 5 provides a summary of the importance of this research and its contribution to knowledge and practice. Section 6 provides an overview of the layout of the thesis.

## **2. Theoretical framework and key topics**

The key topic of interest was whether the hiring process is a mechanism of institutional discrimination in HE, and therefore potentially a contributor to social reproduction, similar to Acker’s (2009) inequality regime concept. Bourdieu’s (1995) theory of practice was used as the framework for the study, with a focus on his concepts of capital, habitus, field, practice and doxa. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus was adapted by incorporating Dewey’s (1981 [1922]) philosophy of habits to accentuate the dynamic characteristics of habitus and locate it within a broader concept of agency, as well as accommodating a moral dimension to the study. Elements of Fiske et al.’s (2002) Stereotype Content Model (SCM) were used alongside theories from Bourdieu and Dewey to explore how evaluations of attributes might be influenced by applicant class background and gender. The research investigated this topic by focussing on practices in the initial shortlisting stage of the hiring process for entry-level jobs in the HE academic profession in universities in England. This is important in the broader context of the UK’s widening inequality gap, particularly when considered against the widely held perception that society is meritocratic with universities acting as engines of social mobility. Other key topics relevant to this thesis were UK social mobility patterns, the stratification of HE in the UK, and, crucially,



discriminatory practices in hiring processes. A summary of the key topics of interest to this thesis is provided in this section.

### ***2.1 Bourdieu's theoretical framework***

Bourdieu's theoretical approach was chosen as the framework for this thesis as it provides a comprehensive and established structure through which hidden inequalities can be explored, the process of social reproduction can be investigated, and the concept of meritocracy can be challenged. Bourdieu saw class divisions as defined by social relations:

“by different conditions of existence, different systems of dispositions produced by differential conditioning, and differing endowments of power or capital” (Brubaker, 1985, p. 761).

By emphasising the cultural and symbolic as well as the economic, Bourdieu developed a complex theory of the processes of social reproduction, inequality, and dominance.

Bourdieu examined the relationship between the objective structures and the subjective agents that comprise social fields (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu's methodology combined theory and action to understand the negotiation of structure and agency over time and he emphasised the role of theory in understanding and challenging practice. His work has gained significant momentum and has been highly influential in contemporary sociological debates around culture, class, inequality, and the intergenerational transmission of advantage (and disadvantage). Bourdieu's work provides a framework to explore and understand how the relationship between structure and agency develops in a practical sense to reinforce the dominant preferences, principles of vision and division (tastes), and a system of robust and enduring cognitive structures and schemes of action, which form and influence the perceptions and responses of subjective agents.

Class and gender are social constructs that influence the volume and configuration of capital (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) that agents inherit or accumulate. They come to life through the habitus as actions and worldviews. When recognised and classified by other agents, this provides varying levels of access to opportunities and resources in society and determines how the agent is treated in the field, for example, in the workplace. This includes how agents discriminate/are discriminated against and dominate/are dominated in society. Within this framework, meritocracy operates as a powerful doxa through which the class structure and gender inequality are naturalised as fair, inevitable, and legitimate and therefore remain hidden and unquestioned. Bourdieu argues that universities contribute to the perpetuation and

reproduction of the class structure, gender inequality, and the doxa of meritocracy. Chapter 2 provides an analysis of Bourdieu's theory and approach in relation to this thesis.

## **2.2 Inequality and meritocracy**

Capitalism is the economic ideology in which the means of production are controlled by private business.<sup>1</sup> Individual citizens run the economy, without government interference in production or pricing. Many countries have mixed model capitalist economies, but no country has yet achieved a completely capitalist economy (World Population Review, 2022). Economic freedom is synonymous with capitalism as it permits everyone from producer to consumer the freedom to enter or leave the market. The Heritage Foundation's (2022) Index of Economic Freedom ranks 184 countries according to 12 measures to give an overall indication of each country's economic freedom, defined as the right of every human to control their own labour and property. Figure 1 presents a heatmap of countries ranked by the Index's economic freedom score. The highest-ranked countries are those with the most capitalist economies; 88 countries (48%) are categorised as economically free, mostly free, or moderately free. The UK is ranked as the 24<sup>th</sup> freest economy in the world, having dropped from seventh in 2021, with a rating of mostly free.<sup>2</sup> This indicates that the UK has a highly capitalist economy compared to most other countries.

Capitalist economies do not uphold equality of opportunity. When combined with the free market, this tends to result in greater inequality of incomes across the population. Britain is one of the most unequal countries in this respect due to its economy being one of the least regulated. Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) present evidence that countries with the widest income inequalities experience significant societal problems compared to countries with less income inequality (Figure 2). They provide a similar ranking of countries to the Index of Economic Freedom, with the USA, Portugal, the UK, New Zealand, and Australia having some of the most capitalist economies, combined with high income inequality and relatively high levels of societal problems in comparison to other countries.

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<sup>1</sup> Alternative economies include socialist and communist. An example of an alternative model is North Korea, a Juche socialist state with a hereditary caste-based system ('songbun') ascribed to individuals based on the political, social, and economic background of their ancestors and the behaviour of their relatives. Individuals are classified into one of three groups (further divided into 51 categories), membership of which determines their opportunities, quality of life, access to resources, and whether they are trusted with responsibilities.

<sup>2</sup> The cause of this decrease was increased government spending and decreased fiscal health.

A frequently identified characteristic of democratic capitalist states is the concept of meritocracy, in which power and success are achieved by the most able and industrious (Young, 1994). In a meritocratic society, social status and success become increasingly reliant upon an individual's educational attainment and achievements, "rather than having it merely 'ascribed' by accident of birth" (Moore, 2004, p. 39). It is contended that meritocratic societies enable fluidity in social mobility as there is equality of opportunity, with class and status being the outcome of an individual's attainment and hard work.

Figure 1: The Heritage Foundation's 2022 Index of Economic Freedom Heatmap

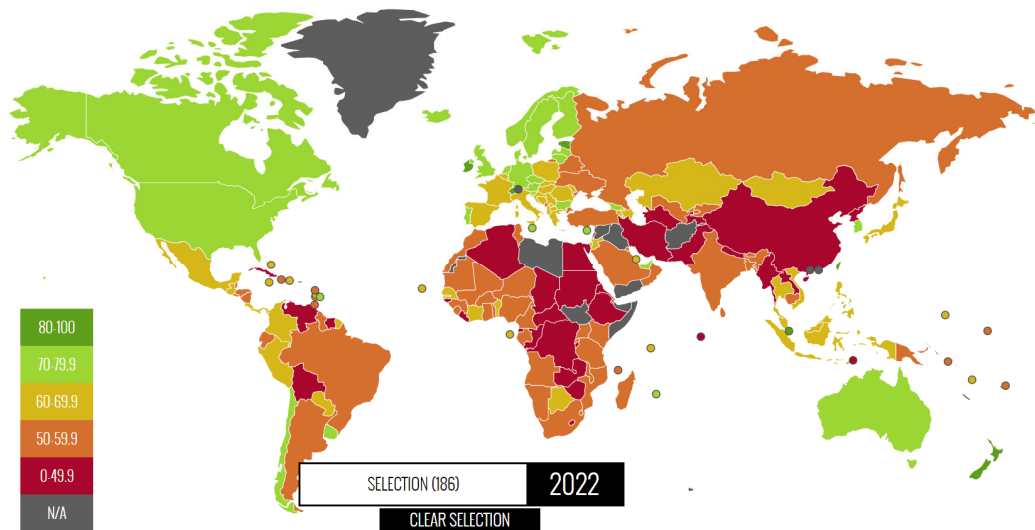
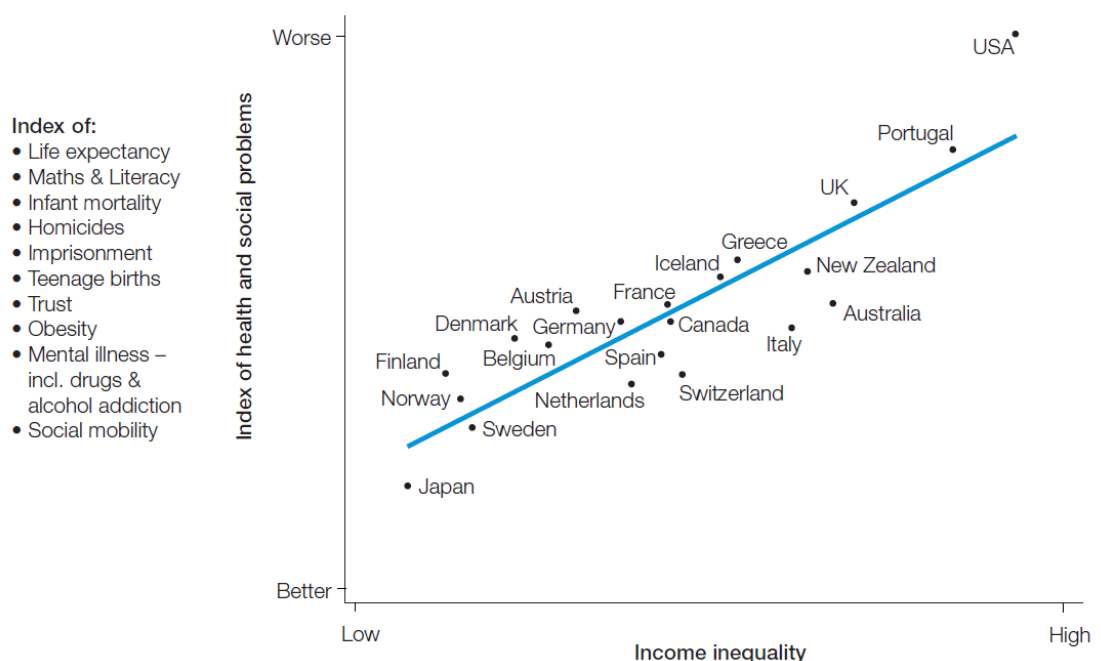


Figure 2: Correlation between inequality and an index of health and social problems demonstrating that problems are worse in more unequal countries (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009)



However, there is considerable evidence that in capitalist economies an individual's class largely determines the opportunities and experiences available to them, which influences their attainment and success, which in turn reinforces their class position and status. It has been argued that the most dominant classes control access to – and secure most benefit from – the opportunities and experiences available, at the expense of the other classes. For example, Goldthorpe (2015) presents evidence that higher-class parents have access to greater resources to provide their children with a competitive edge in the labour market, so their children are more likely to secure higher-class jobs and be protected from downward mobility. The finite number of higher-class jobs are therefore taken by higher-class children, thus preventing upward mobility for lower-class children whose parents do not have access to the same resources and opportunities to help them secure higher-class jobs.

As capitalist economies do not uphold equality of opportunity, it can be argued that capitalist meritocracy is paradoxical. Writing about meritocracy in the USA, Markovits (quoted in Appiah, 2018) emphasises that most people aiming to achieve a position in the top tier of wealth, power and privilege need to have a background in the same tier. Bourdieu's concept of doxa is useful in this context. Doxa is defined as:

“a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 57).

Arguably, the UK's ideology of meritocracy is a national doxa through which it is accepted that reward is based on merit and hard work, thus dismissing and obfuscating accounts of inequality and discrimination (such as those based on class, gender, race, or ethnicity). This enables the conditions for hidden discriminatory practices to exist in hiring processes and to remain unchallenged. Halewood (2022) argues that capitalism has a moral dimension, with those praising it also condemning covertly other forms of organisation. Moralism is also embedded in the capitalist ideal of meritocracy, for example, through values of impartiality and equality of opportunity. However, studies present evidence that meritocratic culture results in increased inequalities. For example, Castilla and Benard (2010) found that when an organisational culture promotes meritocracy as a core value then managers showed greater bias in favour of men over women, despite identical performance evaluations, and assigned them greater rewards. They conclude that the ideology of meritocracy assures people of their own moral sincerity, making them less inclined to question their prejudices. Moreover, it legitimises the status quo and convinces people society is fair, thus sustaining class boundaries. By framing success as the impartial outcome of skill, merit, and industriousness, meritocracy encourages selfishness,

discrimination, and indifference to, and the demonisation of, the unfortunate (Bloodworth, 2016; Mark, 2020).

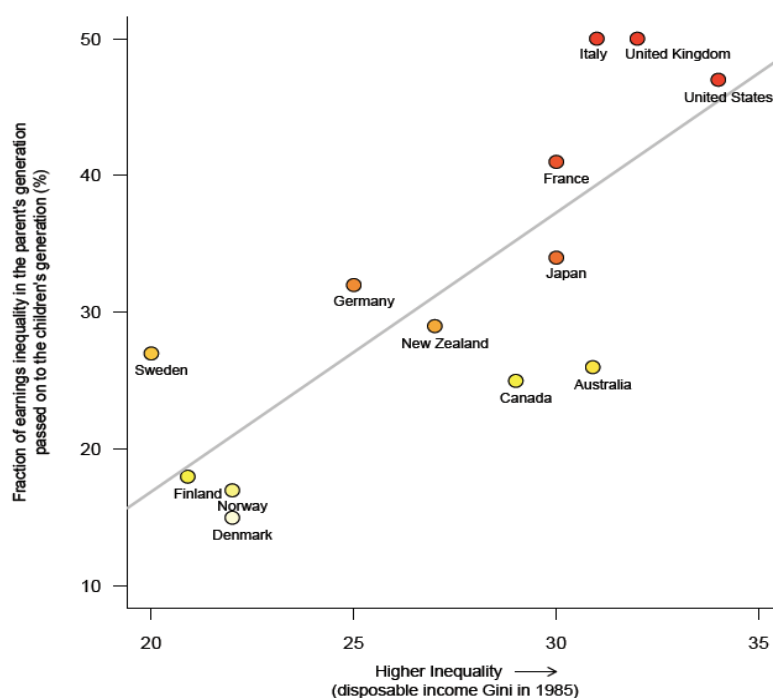
### **2.3 Social mobility in the UK**

Goldthorpe's (2013; 2015) research provides evidence that the UK experienced significant rates of upward mobility in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Class structural changes, resulting from changes to the occupational structure, were powered by a combination of high levels of economic growth, the expansion of state secondary education (including grammar schools), and an improved standard of living. Payne (2017) demonstrates that between the 1920s and 1990s the proportion of the workforce doing higher-grade managerial, administrative, and professional occupations increased from 15% to 37%; therefore, some people from lower-class backgrounds were able to secure employment in these occupations simply because there were more of them available. Since the 1990s, Goldthorpe (2015, paragraph 11) notes that there has been a "hollowing out" of the class structure" whereby a continued (but slower) expansion in managerial, administrative, and professional occupations has taken place alongside a sharp decrease in intermediate-grade jobs and a notable growth in low-grade jobs. He concludes that these class structural changes are resulting in a levelling out of upward mobility rates in the UK. Crucially, his work demonstrates that whilst there was an increase in the absolute number of people who were upwardly socially mobile, the relative chances of upward social mobility remained consistently low throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Similar research by Blanden et al. (2004) highlights the fall in intergenerational mobility for people born in Britain in 1970 compared to those born in 1958 and demonstrates the strong links in economic position across generations in the UK compared to other countries.

Based on research by Corak, Krueger's (2012) Great Gatsby Curve indicates that countries with greater income inequality tend to be those where a greater fraction of economic advantage is transmitted from parents to children, which aligns to Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. This demonstrates how difficult it is for children to overcome their parents' income level, thus providing an indication of social mobility by country. In the UK, roughly 50% of economic advantage or disadvantage is transmitted from the parent's generation to the children's generation. This finding is reinforced by more recent research by Corak (2013; 2016) in which the UK is highlighted as having the least amount of social mobility compared with the other countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), except for Italy (which is equal with the UK) (Figure 3).

In a similar vein, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2014) provide considerable evidence of the strong and persistent relationship in Britain between parental income and children’s income, which is stronger in only two countries (Brazil and the USA). This research presents evidence that in Britain almost half of children with at least one parent in the highest income quartile will end up in the same quartile themselves; for those with parents in the lower income quartile, only c.12% will move to the highest income quartile. The result demonstrates a distinct lack of fluidity in social mobility in the UK compared to other developed countries.

Figure 3: Krueger’s Great Gatsby Curve for OECD countries (Corak, 2016)



Friedman and Laurison’s (2020) analysis of the UK Labour Force Survey data (2013-16) provides evidence of a strong link between people’s origins and destinations in terms of the National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) occupation categories (Figure 4). In Britain, roughly half of people who get elite jobs<sup>3</sup> are from privileged backgrounds<sup>4</sup>, whilst only c.10% of people from working-class backgrounds<sup>5</sup> make it into elite jobs. They calculate that people from privileged backgrounds are therefore about 6.5 times more likely to get an elite job than those from working-class backgrounds. Figure 4 presents evidence that social mobility in the UK is

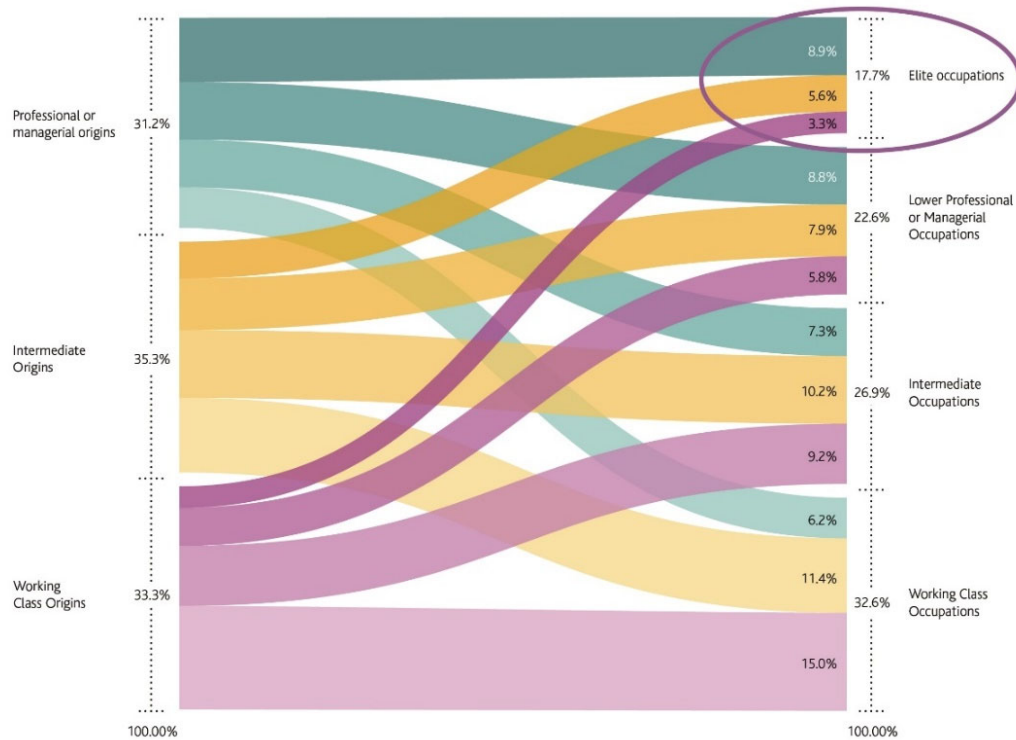
<sup>3</sup> Friedman and Laurison (2020, p. 11) define elite occupations as the ‘higher professional and managerial occupations’ that make up the top class of the UK government’s NS-SEC.

<sup>4</sup> (*Ibid.*, p. xvi) define privileged backgrounds as those of people who had at least one parent whose job was included in the managerial, administrative, and professional occupations category in the NS-SEC.

<sup>5</sup> (*Ibid.*, 2020, p. xvi) define working-class backgrounds as those of people whose parents did routine or semi-routine jobs in the NS-SEC, or who were long-term unemployed.

limited and there is more class reproduction than equality of opportunity. Friedman and Laurison (2020, p. 10) conclude that the link between people’s class origins and destinations “remains doggedly persistent in contemporary Britain.”

Figure 4: Flows from class origins to class destinations in the UK (Friedman and Laurison, 2020)



Research provides evidence that the UK’s lack of social mobility is longstanding. For example, Clark and Cummins (2013) and Clark (2014) highlight the surname persistence amongst graduates from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge (Oxbridge) and holders of top positions in the UK since the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, arguing that this demonstrates that social status in Britain is more strongly inherited than height.

#### 2.4 The role of universities in social reproduction

Bourdieu (1977; 1990, p. 54) described universities as significant contributors to social reproduction, which he defined as “the reproduction of the structure of the relations of force between the classes.” He argues that universities play a fundamental role in the transmission of social inequality across generations. Universities continue to occupy an important space as the key institutions that control access to and certification of qualifications that provide admission to occupations and professions, particularly those at the elite end of the labour market. Holding a degree bestows power and privileges, leads to increased future earnings, and protects/increases one’s class position (based on occupation), for example:

- Working-age graduates earned £10,000 more than non-graduates in 2021 and had higher employment rates (86.7% compared to 70.2%) (Department for Education (DfE), 2022a).
- Over the course of a lifetime, women graduates can expect to earn c. £250,000 more than non-graduates, and the figure is £170,000 for men (Belfield et al., 2018).
- Graduates are healthier than non-graduates; they are more likely to access preventative care and are less likely to smoke or experience obesity and depression (University and College Union (UCU), 2014).

Universities have a reputation as being elitist, with power hierarchies permitting access to knowledge to a select few, traditionally resulting in the exclusion of the lower classes and women (Perkin, 1976; Archer, 2003; Bathmaker, 2003; Trow, 2006; Reay, 2011b). Exclusion from HE ultimately results in exclusion from higher status occupations and professions, higher salaries, and upward social mobility (Bourdieu, 1989; Lamont, 1992; Skeggs, 2015). Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that HE reinforces, reproduces, and legitimises the hegemonic patterns of domination, power, and social inequalities in wider society, and has a history and reputation of being a field dominated and controlled by higher-class, white men. Previous studies present evidence that those able to access and succeed in HE do so because they:

- Possess social, economic, and cultural capital and a higher-class habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Reay et al., 2009, Savage et al., 2015).
- Have access to resources that protect them from downward mobility (Goldthorpe, 2015).
- Possess cultural knowledge and understand how to navigate universities as institutions (Lareau, 2015).
- Experience primary socialisation that enables them to fit into the HE field (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Altbach, 2012).

Some of these power hierarchies have been challenged. Relevant notable changes in the UK in the past 150 years include women being able to earn university degrees from 1880; the first female professor being recognised in 1908; and the expansion in university student places since the 1960s. Several high-profile initiatives exist to challenge inequalities in UK HE such as the Athena Swan and Race Equality Charters (Advance HE, 2020c). These changes and initiatives contribute to an impression that the power hierarchies are weakening, and that meritocracy is working; however, it can be argued they serve to disguise and reinforce inequalities and discrimination. Fox-Kirk et al. (2020) use the term 'genderwashing' to describe how organisations create a myth of gender equality by making superficial attempts to address



inequalities without disrupting entrenched power dynamics. Bhopal and Henderson (2019) explored the impact of the Athena Swan and Race Equality charter marks on equality policy and inclusion in universities. They conclude that the charter marks enabled difficult conversations and provided evidence for the need for equality work; however, even with the charter marks, cultural change (such as a more diverse professoriate and a decolonised curriculum) was slow. They identified barriers to long-term structural change, including ambiguous institutional processes, a lack of clear responsibility for equality work, and resource allocation and workload. They found that the charter mark processes often burdened individuals without adequate recognition or rewards, a finding that is concerning when the workload disproportionately affects women and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) staff. Tzanakou and Pearce (2019, p. 1204) argue that support in universities for Athena Swan can be understood as a form of feminised labour in which women are:

“...typically overrepresented ... and in which the most marginalized women are disproportionately tasked with the job of securing their own equality.”

In terms of class, widening participation initiatives have been implemented based on government policy with the aim of increasing the number of HE students, particularly from under-represented groups. This has been complemented by fair access initiatives that aim to ensure everyone has a fair chance to be accepted on to HE courses. Despite investment in these initiatives, there is evidence that HE’s expansion since World War II, implemented in the UK via the Robbins Report (1963) and Dearing Report (1997), has not resulted in equal representation from lower classes – their participation remains low. Using eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM) as a proxy for class background, recent data demonstrate that:

- Only 26% of students from lower-class backgrounds enter HE, compared with 45% of those from higher-class backgrounds. This is the largest the gap has been for more than a decade and it has been amplified by COVID-19 (Social Mobility Commission, 2021).
- Only 4.5% of students from lower-class backgrounds enter highly selective universities compared with 46.8% of those from higher-class backgrounds (Bolton and Lewis, 2023).
- 12 months after enrolling in HE, 9.7% of students from lower-class backgrounds had withdrawn from their studies compared to 5.4% of students from higher-class backgrounds (Bolton and Lewis, 2023).

### ***2.5 The history and stratification of HE in the UK***

UK universities have a long history of reputational diversity, which has evolved to be predominantly based on institutional age. Raffe and Croxford (2015) present evidence that the status hierarchy of universities is correlated with the date they were founded or achieved

university status. There is a clear divide between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities, with the latter being considered more vocational and therefore having less power, status, and prestige than the former, which are considered more academic (Boliver, 2015; Raffe and Croxford, 2015).

Reay (2011a, p. 3; 2011b) demonstrates the impact of this divided system on students, with many post-1992 universities enrolling large groups of lower-class students and then “languishing at the bottom of the university league tables”, whilst the pre-1992s (particularly the Russell Group) have high proportions of privately educated students and are repeatedly ranked at the top. She argues that post-1992 universities have been “demonized as ‘bog-standard’” for enrolling large cohorts of lower-class students, despite widening participation being a key government policy. Furthermore, pre-1992 universities provide their students with symbolic capital that enables them to progress to elite professions more readily. For example, Oxbridge graduates comprise 71% of senior judges, 57% of Cabinet members, and 56% of permanent secretaries (Sutton Trust, 2019).

The stratification of UK universities is reinforced by national and international league tables and rankings. The widespread acceptance of the validity of such rankings and the hierarchy they produce has magnified, reinforced, and reproduced the perception, both in the field and wider social space, that some universities are simply ‘better than others’ and that this is an expected and fair outcome of meritocracy. Savage et al. (2015) argue that the rankings give the impression of objectivity, fairness, and rigour, yet are based on subjective judgements about what is considered as ‘good’. This obscures the power relations endemic in the HE field that allow the imposition of systems of meaning and value upon agents, groups, and institutions in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate, a practice referred to as symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990).

This indicates the existence of strong and causal interconnections between elite schools, pre-1992 universities, rankings, and access to elite professions, thus supporting Bourdieu’s theory that universities reinforce and reproduce systems of social classification. Higher-ranked institutions are more likely to attract and recruit students with greater volumes and configurations of capital (and a higher-class habitus) whilst lower-ranked institutions are more likely to attract and recruit students with less capital (and a lower-class habitus). This is reminiscent of the Tripartite System of education in England, which was phased out from 1965. The stratification produced by university rankings ensures greater value and symbolic capital is given to the qualifications awarded by the higher-ranked universities, thus providing social classification and associated advantages to their graduates who tend to come from higher-class

backgrounds. This is communicated and explained as legitimate, fair, and objective, whilst concealing the class relations at the heart of the HE field.

## **2.6 Discriminatory hiring practices**

Prior studies present evidence of the existence of over-simplified stereotypes that influence how people perceive others' personality traits, attributes, aspirations, and motivations, which can result in discrimination and bias. The SCM (Fiske et al., 2002) purports that group stereotypes consist of two fundamental dimensions: competence and warmth. Research by Fiske et al. (2002), Durante and Fiske (2017), and Durante et al. (2017) mapped class and gender stereotypes to the SCM (Section 3.2, Chapter 2). This concept is of interest when exploring practices in hiring processes, especially as previous studies demonstrate that workplaces are not meritocratic and present evidence of discriminatory practices within the hiring process. For example, Jackson (2009) investigated recruitment to professional and managerial positions in the UK, finding that applicants whose *curriculum vitae* (CV) contained three or more signals of higher-class background received more replies.

Writing about class and privilege in UK HE, Macfarlane and Jefferson (2021) describe a cycle of patronage and 'academic inbreeding', which they argue leads to class-based discrimination in the recruitment process. However, there are almost no studies that explore class-based discrimination in the hiring process in the academic profession, particularly in the UK. In contrast, there is a much greater body of research on gender-based discrimination in academic hiring processes, although most of these studies were undertaken outside the UK. Most highlight the disadvantages that women face when applying for academic posts. For example, Moss-Racusin et al.'s (2012) hiring experiment in the USA found that, despite having otherwise identical CVs, the female applicant was regarded as less competent and was less likely to be hired, mentored, or paid as high a salary than the male applicant for a university lab manager position.

Acker (2009) argues that it is essential to take an intersectional approach as the influence of status characteristics is complex; these can be mutually reinforcing or contradicting processes. Despite this, she notes that most research on social reproduction has focused on single characteristics. This may be because applying complex intersectional frameworks to research is a relatively new approach and is likely to require large sample sizes, which makes the feasibility of such research studies challenging (Cole, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2019). Whilst only a handful of studies relevant to this thesis have taken an intersectional approach, these demonstrate that impacts are often compounded. Friedman and Laurison (2020) present evidence that upwardly

mobile women in elite occupations face a double disadvantage, earning less than their male counterparts based on both their class background and gender. Another study of note is that by Rivera and Tilcsik (2016), which explored recruitment to the legal profession in the USA and found that class and gender work together to give applicants advantages and penalties in the labour market, with higher-class signals benefitting men but not women.

No previous study has investigated the effect of the intersection of class background and gender on how job applicants are evaluated by those responsible for hiring academic staff. This is surprising when considering the substantial body of research on the class and gender-based discrimination and experiences of students in UK HE. Whilst the class and gender demographic of students and the gender demographic of academic staff in UK HE is systematically recorded, monitored and analysed, little is currently known about the class demographic of academic staff in UK HE or the potential effects of this on practices in the HE field, such as in hiring processes. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study to explore the effect of the intersection of class background and gender on decisions made by academic staff responsible for hiring to entry-level academic posts in universities in England.

### **3. Conceptual framework, variables, and hypotheses**

#### ***3.1 Conceptual framework***

Figure 5 illustrates the conceptual framework for this study and depicts the connections among key elements of the theory, constructs, and phenomena of interest. Four independent variables (applicant class background; perceived applicant gender; their intersection; the status of the universities at which the participants were based) and three dependent variables (likelihood of being invited to interview; level of recommended starting salary; evaluations of applicant attributes) were identified. Nine hypotheses were developed and tested, alongside three research questions (Table 1).

#### ***3.2 Class background***

A key aspect of the research was the inclusion of class as a status characteristic. Class was a fundamental concept in sociology until the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when postmodern scholars claimed that such analysis was no longer relevant or useful. For example, Beck's (1992) description of class as a 'zombie category', Lyotard's (1984) theory of the end of metanarratives and the rise of individualisation, Clark and Lipset's (1991, p. 397) view that "class is an increasingly outmoded concept", and Pakulski and Waters' (1996) claim that class was a historical concept as the distribution of wealth was becoming progressively more egalitarian.

Underpinning these claims was not the belief that social inequalities no longer existed, but the assertion that social changes such as globalisation, individualisation and modernisation meant individuals were no longer constrained by static identities and prescribed social forms, and instead had more freedom and greater reflexivity to determine their own identities and life paths. For example, Beck et al. (1994, p. 13) note “the individual must produce, stage and cobble together their biographies themselves.” Modernisation was therefore compelling and enabling individuals to master their own destinies, rather than being slaves to their background and prescribed characteristics.

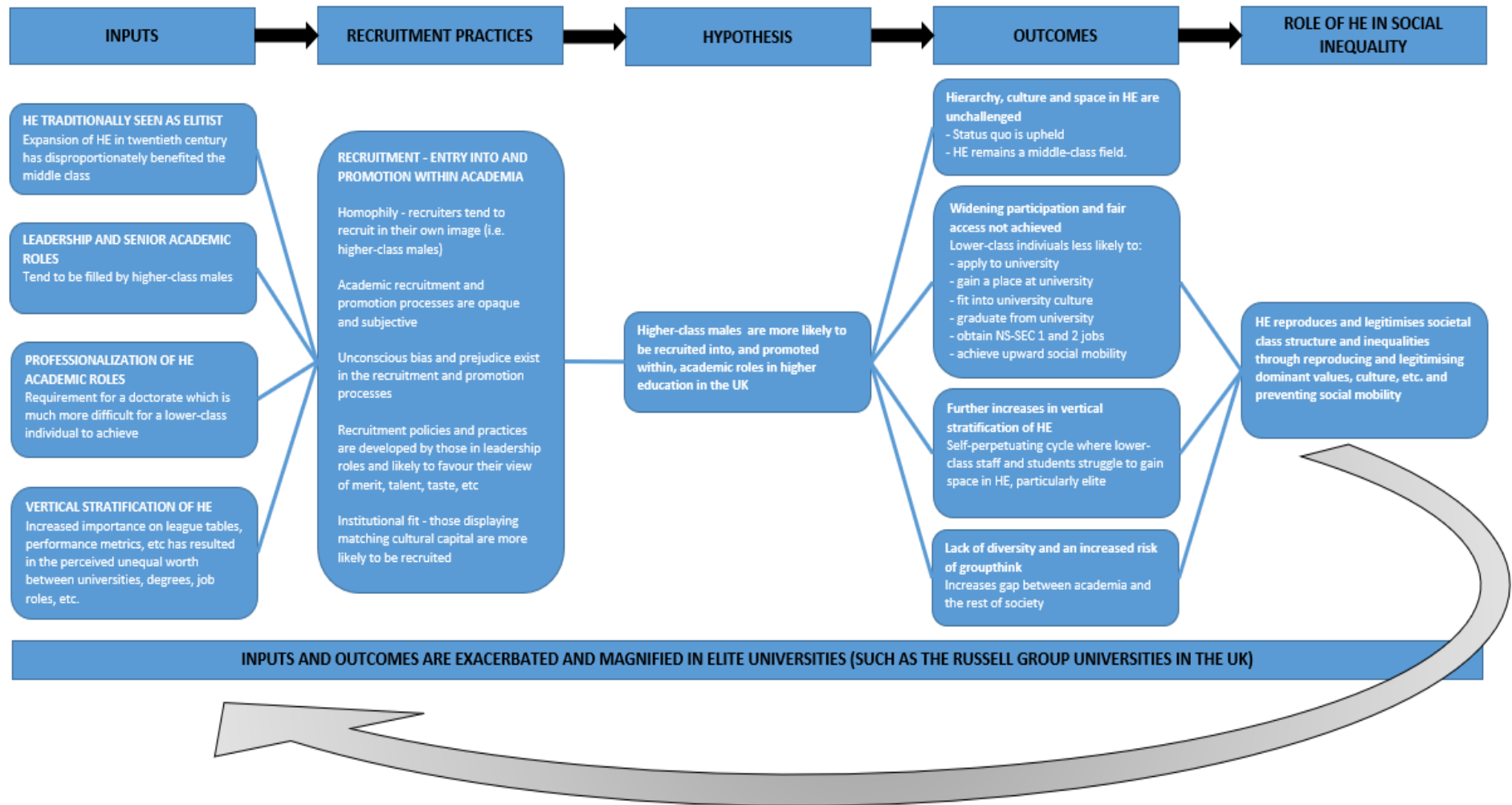
Table 1: Research hypotheses and questions

Predictor variables		Hypotheses	Research question
Class background	Status of universities at which participants were based (elite or non-elite)	H <sub>1</sub> : Applicants from a higher-class background are more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be invited to interview. H <sub>0</sub> : Applicants from a higher-class background are no more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be invited to interview.	How do participants describe applicants who are from higher-class or lower-class backgrounds?
		H <sub>2</sub> : Applicants from a higher-class background are more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary. H <sub>0</sub> : Applicants from a higher-class background are no more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary.	
		H <sub>3</sub> : Applicants from a higher-class background are more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be evaluated highly in terms of their attributes. H <sub>0</sub> : Applicants from a higher-class background are no more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be evaluated highly in terms of their attributes.	
Predictor variables		Hypotheses	Research question
Perceived gender	Status of universities at which participants were based (elite or non-elite)	H <sub>4</sub> : Applicants perceived to be male are more likely than other applicants to be invited to interview. H <sub>0</sub> : Applicants perceived to be male are no more likely than other applicants to be invited to interview.	How do participants describe applicants who are perceived to be male or female?
		H <sub>5</sub> : Applicants perceived to be male are more likely than other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary. H <sub>0</sub> : Applicants perceived to be male are no more likely than other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary.	
		H <sub>6</sub> : Applicants perceived to be male are more likely than other applicants to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes. H <sub>0</sub> : Applicants perceived to be male are no more likely than other applicants to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes.	

Predictor variables		Hypotheses	Research question
Class background and perceived gender	Status of universities at which participants were based (elite or non-elite)	H <sub>7</sub> : Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are more likely than other applicants to be invited to interview. H <sub>0</sub> : Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are no more likely than other applicants to be invited to interview.	How do participants describe applicants who are from higher-class or lower-class backgrounds and who are perceived to be male or female?
		H <sub>8</sub> : Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are more likely than other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary. H <sub>0</sub> : Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are no more likely than other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary.	
		H <sub>9</sub> : Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are more likely than other applicants to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes. H <sub>0</sub> : Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are no more likely than other applicants to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes.	

Figure 5: Rationale for the hypotheses (diagram is the researcher's own)

How the key inputs could influence decision-making during staff recruitment, and how this could result in micro and macro-level outcomes that reinforce the role of HE in society as reproducing and legitimating social inequalities





The 'cultural turn' at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in which Bourdieu's work had a central influence, combined with rising social and economic unrest, meant that, by the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, class was increasingly back on the radar. High-profile reports, such as those discussed in Section 2.2 by Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) and Krueger (2012), demonstrate that economic inequality is not based on a fair process and there is a lack of equality of opportunity. Instead, other factors such as class background give individuals and groups advantages and disadvantages in terms of access to the professions and higher salaries. Other studies present evidence that parental class is the most powerful determinant of life paths (Muzzatti and Samarco, 2006; Reay, 2011a; Lareau, 2015).

Class, privilege, and power (or lack of) are intertwined in all capitalist economies. Roberts (2011) notes that the upper class in the UK constitutes less than 1% of the population yet is by far the most powerful of all classes. A contemporary example of the relationship between class, privilege and power is the UK Parliament's House of Lords, for which membership was made up entirely of unelected hereditary peers (i.e. the aristocracy) until the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when membership was reformed. However, there remain 92 places (c.12%) reserved for representatives from this group (note that most hereditary peerages can be inherited only by men and none of these 92 members are female at present, demonstrating an interrelationship between class and gender in relation to power and status).

Contemporary sociologists have sought to develop the theories of Marx and Weber by increasing their complexity and sophistication, so that they relate to today's more developed and mature capitalist system. However, there remains no universally agreed definition or measurement of class. Recent theories tend to define class through the lens of either: i) prestige, status, culture, or lifestyles; ii) patterns of structured social and economic inequality (based on the possession of resources); and/or, iii) actual or potential social and political actors. As class spans such a great range of meanings and areas both within and beyond sociology, it is not possible, and arguably not desirable, to have one universally agreed definition or sociological perspective of class.

Much of the recent sociological analysis into class still has its roots in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century approach of identifying class theoretically within the structure of employment and by far the most popular and reliable way of recording and analysing class to date has been to use occupations as a marker of social position and therefore class (Lambert et al., 2012). The norm is the statistical interrogation of large quantitative datasets, particularly of occupational data. For example, Friedman and Laurison (2020) used the UK Labour Force Survey data. Recent studies and

approaches tend to use occupational data as a starting point from which to develop an understanding of class as the outcome of the advantages available to individuals in social fields, based on the accumulation and transmission of capitals, assets and/or resources, and influenced by other factors such as culture (for example, Bourdieu, 1997; Devine, 2004; Savage et al., 2015).

Utilising occupational data as a starting point was not feasible for this study as the data are not routinely collected in England. Instead, this study adopted a definition and approach to class background based on Bourdieu's concept of theoretical classes and class habitus. Bourdieu (1995) described classes as the shared positions of agents in social space (based on agents holding similar volumes and types of capitals), which results in agents being likely to share similar conditions of work and life and therefore being more likely to develop similar lifestyles, tastes, dispositions, and outlooks. Bourdieu argues that this leads to the development of a shared class habitus among agents sharing a similar position. To signal class background to participants, this thesis built on the proven methodological practice of Rivera and Tilcsik (2016, p. 1105) and Jackson (2009) of indicating class background by using a "constellation of higher, lower and neutral class signals" that served as markers of lower- or higher-class background linked to varying volumes and types of capitals. All class-based markers were informed by relevant research, for example, forenames were determined based on Jackson's (2009) research and surnames were determined using Clark and Cummins' (2013) list.

### ***3.3 Perceived gender***

Gender is a social construct that refers to the characteristics and stereotypes associated with women, men, girls, and boys, including norms, behaviours, roles, and relations. Understanding of gender changes over time, and it is increasingly being understood as a fluid spectrum, rather than a binary classification, that incorporates various identities, which may include (but are not limited to) female, male, intersex, transgender, pangender, and non-binary.

Bourdieu (2001b) used the term 'masculine domination' to explain how specific roles in society are determined for men and women, which results in unequal access to resources and opportunities. He contends that this is so entrenched and pervasive in society that the habitus for femininity is strongly fixed, and has therefore become naturalised, operating at a largely imperceptible level. The inferior status of women in society is inculcated into children as part of the primary socialisation of norms, values, and behaviours, which influences the capitals they accumulate and forms the habitus. This includes gender stereotypes about how society expects men and women to think and act. Bourdieu (2001b, p. 1) contends that these expectations are so deeply embedded that institutional mechanisms such as hiring processes impose symbolic

violence on women through the “imperceptible and often invisible” exertion of the social relations in wider society.

The nature of this study necessitated a restricted range of gender classifications to address the research questions and maintain comparability of the data. The vignettes were therefore designed to give signals of female or male gender. In line with Bourdieu’s (2001) theory of masculine domination, the concept used in this study was based on the dimension of social gender. This covers how agents signal their gender to others and interact with, and attempt to shape, the gender of others, and therefore includes social practices, gender roles, expectations, and stereotypes.

### ***3.4 Elite and non-elite universities***

The historical formation of the university system in the UK, combined with neoliberal HE policies and an intensely competitive and marketized environment, has resulted in the increasingly stratified positioning of institutions in the HE field. In particular, the arbitrary division between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities led to a growing divergence in reputational diversity, status, power, and resource allocation. Boliver’s (2015) hierarchical cluster analysis of UK universities presented evidence of the continuing divide between pre- and post-1992 universities, as well as charting four tiers of institutions: i) a distinct elite tier comprising only the Oxbridge universities; ii) a higher tier comprising the pre-1992s (39 institutions); iii) a middle tier of post-1992s (67 institutions); and iv) a distinctive lower tier of post-1992s (19 institutions) (Appendix 1). As the most recent analysis to demonstrate how differentiation is structured in the contemporary UK HE system, Boliver’s clusters were used to analyse this study’s results, with tier 1 and 2 institutions being referred to as ‘elite’ universities and tier 3 and 4 institutions being referred to as ‘non-elite’ universities.

## **4. Summary of research methods**

### ***4.1 Research paradigm***

The research paradigm used to frame this study was pragmatism and particularly the philosophy of Dewey, an early proponent, who described pragmatism as “a philosophy of experience” (Dewey, 2008, p. 86). Goldkuhl (2012) explains that pragmatism is concerned with action, intervention, and constructive knowledge, with the primary purpose of research being the creation of knowledge that will enable change and improvement. There are strong similarities between this view and Bourdieu, and this perspective is crucial to this research, which aimed to shine a light on potential inequalities and discrimination with the purpose of effecting change in

HE. The research is therefore situated within the pragmatic belief that reality is existential, with knowledge based on experience. Change is achieved through experience and action, steered by purpose and knowledge. Human thoughts, perceptions and knowledge are therefore intrinsically linked to action.

#### **4.2 Methodology**

Bourdieu (2006, p. 101) advocates for “methodological polytheism” through which researchers should select the methods that are most appropriate to the research question(s), an approach that fits comfortably within the pragmatic paradigm. A concurrent nested quantitative and qualitative mixed methods design was used to develop a factorial survey experiment (FSE). The participants reviewed hypothetical job applications (vignettes) that were identical other than markers of class background and gender. Extensive pretesting and piloting were undertaken to develop the survey design, instruments, and vignettes. The quantitative data were analysed using SPSS, with a content analysis method adopted for the qualitative data.

#### **5. The importance of the research and its contribution**

Bourdieu (1995) argues that the purpose of social research is to raise awareness of hidden issues and to effect change. The UK State of the Nation 2021 report (Social Mobility Commission, 2021) notes that whilst universities continue to focus on widening participation for the student body, not much has been done to consider social mobility within their staff base. This research study contributes to this by shining a light on potential class and gender-based discriminatory practices in the hiring process for academic staff in the HE field in England, an area that has not been researched to date. Not only do these practices have the potential to create and maintain unfair working conditions for academics, but it is also likely that these biases are an embedded (and hidden) part of the wider HE field (such as Acker’s (2009) inequality regime concept). Discrimination may be present and influential in other practices, for example, impacting student entry to and progression within HE, as well as academic promotion, particularly to leadership positions. This is important considering the academic capital and therefore power associated with these positions, and their potential role in social reproduction. Establishing whether there is a relationship between class, gender and the academic profession is of consequence. Any government interested in achieving a meritocratic society (as successive UK governments claim to be) needs to understand how class and gender influence the shape of the academic profession.

The findings, particularly the potential effect of class background, may also have a broader application outside of HE as class-based discrimination is likely to be a hidden but pervasive part of the culture in other sectors and environments (as evidenced, for example, by Friedman and Laurison, 2020). As such, the findings are likely to be relevant to changing practices to improve hiring processes in other professions and sectors. The findings also highlight the importance of including class background as a characteristic in the UK Equality Act (2010) and provide evidence to advocate the implementation of the socio-economic duty in England, an element of the Equality Act (2010) that has not yet come into force (Section 5.1, Chapter 3). In line with the pragmatic paradigm, action-based recommendations are proposed in Chapter 8.

## **6. Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is composed of nine chapters, including this introduction. Chapter 2 presents and critically appraises the study's theoretical framework and explains how the framework and key concepts relate to the thesis. Chapters 3 and 4 present a review of the existing literature, which was undertaken using Bourdieu's three-stage approach to field analysis. Chapter 5 is concerned with the methodology used for this study and provides a detailed description and justification for the decisions to situate the research within the pragmatic paradigm and adopt a mixed methods approach with an FSE design. The chapter describes the pretesting and pilot studies, sampling strategy, and ethical considerations and approvals. Chapter 6 reports and analyses the findings in relation to the influence of applicant class background and/or perceived gender on the dependent variables of being invited to interview and the recommended starting salary, and whether this was influenced by the elite/non-elite status of the universities at which the participants were based (hypotheses H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>5</sub>, H<sub>7</sub>, H<sub>8</sub>). Chapter 7 presents the findings in relation to the influence of applicant class background and/or perceived gender on the evaluations of applicant attributes, and whether this was influenced by the elite/non-elite status of the universities at which the participants were based (hypotheses H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>6</sub>, H<sub>9</sub>). Chapter 7 also presents the findings from the content analysis, which was used to identify the frequently cited strengths and weaknesses of the classed and gendered identities and answer the epistemological research questions. Chapter 8 discusses the core findings and conclusions and situates these within the existing body of literature, explaining how the findings contribute to knowledge. The limitations of the study are discussed, and recommendations are made for future research and implementation. Finally, Chapter 9 provides a summary of the thesis linked to the conclusions.

## Chapter 2: Theoretical and conceptual framework

### 1. Introduction

This research examined how the class background and gender of applicants influenced shortlisting for entry-level academic posts in HE in England. The research paradigm was pragmatism, particularly the philosophy of Dewey, and the broad theoretical framework was based on Bourdieu. There is close correspondence between Bourdieu and Dewey; however, there are also some slight but important differences in how they conceived cognition and action (Section 2.2, Chapter 5). For this thesis, some adaptations were made to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, for example, emphasising its cognitive and reflexive capabilities (Crossley, 2001; Sweetman, 2003; Lizardo, 2004; Adams, 2006; Sayer, 2009) and expanding it to include dimensions of growth and morality (Dewey, 1922).

In Section 2, Bourdieu's concepts are explored and analysed. Section 3 introduces the concepts of stereotypes and symbolic violence, situating the SCM within the theoretical framework. Sections 4 and 5 summarise Bourdieu's theory in relation to class and gender. Section 6 critically analyses the ability of Bourdieu's theories to explain social change and the interplay between habitus, agency, and fields. Consideration is given to the role and importance of cognition as well as morality in determining practice, drawing on Dewey (1922) to augment Bourdieu's concept of habitus. The relevance, applicability, and accessibility of Bourdieu in contemporary society is also considered. Section 7 provides a chapter summary. Justifications are provided throughout as to the relevance of the chosen theoretical and conceptual framework for this thesis.

### 2. Bourdieu's key concepts

Bourdieu's concepts are considered separately in this section, whilst acknowledging that these are "necessarily interrelated, both conceptually and empirically" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 96-97). Within the context of this study's pragmatic paradigm, these concepts were employed as heuristic thinking tools and were utilised to understand action and practice.

#### 2.1 Capital

Bourdieu (1984, p. 114) defined capital as "usable resources and powers" that determine an individual's place in social space and can secure a higher position, ultimately enabling domination. He developed a complex theory about how individuals inherit and accumulate

different volumes and configurations of capital, which they use as a resource to gain differing degrees of advantage in fields. Capital, Bourdieu argues, is therefore a social relation that structures habitus and fields. Unlike Marx, Bourdieu saw capital not just as economic but also encompassing a symbolic dimension, therefore bearing a resemblance to Weber's theory of class and status. Bourdieu (1995) identifies four broad categories of capital – economic (how much economic power an individual has in society), cultural (cultural competencies that demonstrate familiarity with the legitimate culture, including accents, etiquette, aesthetic tastes, knowledge, behaviour, attitudes, cultural experiences, etcetera), social (family, networks and connections to people that help to give advantage), and symbolic (resources that demonstrate honour, prestige, recognition, or reputation). The latter highlights that the value of any form of capital is dependent, at least partially, on social recognition. As Crossley (2012, p. 86) notes, "capital is valuable because we, collectively and sometimes in spite of ourselves, value it." Whilst arguing that it is the volume and configuration of these forms of capital that is important, Bourdieu identifies economic capital as the primary determinant of the other capitals.

Bourdieu (1988) stresses that HE values an institutionalised form of cultural capital, based on prior educational achievement, academic disposition, and certain competencies, which are largely predetermined by class background. Bourdieu (1988; 2001) distinguishes between academic capital (linked to power over the instruments of reproduction of the university body) and intellectual capital (scientific authority or intellectual renown). Agents with academic capital are permitted to act as gatekeepers to the academic profession and therefore have the power to classify; they are a critical part of the machinery of social reproduction. Gatekeeper academics tend to select new staff using an implicit social classification (based on capital) and reproduce the same staff according to an explicit academic classification (symbolic capital such as status, titles, and promotions) (Section 3.2, Chapter 4) (Bourdieu, 1996). Therefore, institutionalised cultural capital is objectified as symbolic capital, with the most prized being characterised by its scarcity, such as a Nobel Prize. This classification operates through objective, institutionalised mechanisms that produce and guarantee the distribution of symbolic capital, therefore reinforcing and legitimating relations of dominance. Bourdieu (2000, p. 170) argues that this disguises inequality and social reproduction by "legitimate[ing] the dominators, while judging and excluding the lower classes."

This study utilised Bourdieu's concept of capital to explore how social and economic inequality can be reinforced unconsciously through normally imperceptible processes. The concept was used to explore how applicant class background (signalled through different volumes and

configurations of capital) influenced shortlisting decisions made by gatekeepers. When the term capital is used in this thesis, it always refers to Bourdieu's definition of capital (therefore encompassing economic, cultural, social, and symbolic), unless otherwise specified.

## **2.2 Habitus**

Bourdieu (1995) argues that practice cannot be understood solely through the lens of individual behaviour, nor can social structures be assumed to have unilateral control over individual behaviour. His concept of habitus aims to connect these opposing views, thus providing a bridge between the objective and the subjective, the macro and the micro. Habitus is a socially constituted system of embodied dispositions that determines the values, practices, and beliefs that a group of individuals adopt.

The structures constitutive of a certain condition or environment produce habitus, which forms according to an agent's position in society. Habitus is the product of history, and, through the process of socialisation, it produces similar individual and collective practices over structures. Bourdieu (1990, p. 87) describes habitus as a "transforming machine that leads us to 'reproduce' the social conditions of our own production." Habitus is transposable within the boundaries established by the conditions of its formation, meaning it could be compatible across different fields. As habitus formation is derived from the position in social space, habitus is therefore class-specific and, whilst the concept allows for individual agency, Bourdieu argues that it predisposes agents to behave in certain ways. Practices therefore typically proceed on a pre-reflexive basis, with the habitus generating actions. However, when the habitus is operating in an unfamiliar situation, Bourdieu contends that the actions tend to rely more on conscious reflection on norms and rules or estimations of possible risks and results.

A further component of the practice generated by habitus is what Bourdieu (2000) terms 'misrecognition'. This is the everyday and dynamic social process that occurs when an agent confronts something (such as a situation, process, or action) that is not known within the habitus' range of dispositions, inclinations, and experiences and is therefore not recognised for what it is. Instead, Bourdieu argues, the agent attributes it to another schema of meaning, therefore enabling the effects of the thing (which could include inequality) to be maintained and, crucially, remain hidden.

For this thesis, Bourdieu's conceptual tool of habitus was employed to bring the markers of capital to life as fictitious identities in the vignettes, which indicated that each applicant belonged to a position in social space based on their class background and gender. Habitus



encompasses the performative aspect of identity and therefore the markers in the fictitious identities indicated the habitual practices that might be associated with someone belonging to each position in social space. For example, the higher-class applicants were more likely to be associated with what Bourdieu referred to as practices of distinction (Section 4.6). Bourdieu's concept of habitus has been the subject of much criticism, predominantly that it is deterministic and fatalistic and does not explain cognition and practice sufficiently. This is discussed in Section 6, and, for the purpose of this thesis, the concept was augmented based on Dewey's concept of habit.

### **2.3 Field**

Fields are relatively autonomous and largely homologous spheres that are based on a historically generated system of shared meaning within which habitus becomes active (Bourdieu, 1995). They represent a network of positions, relations, and strategies of power, and have tacit field-specific rules. Agents within the field internalise these rules to demonstrate appropriate practices and strategies to fit in. They use these to classify others and determine their legitimate field position. The concept of field provides a framework for the analysis of individuals and their positions within a given social formation.

Bourdieu uses the metaphor of a game to explain the workings of a field, where the aim of the game is to achieve domination (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Social space is made up of various arenas (fields) in which games take place, each with their own rules and structural conditions. Contestants (agents) enter fields and use their resources (capital) and knowledge of the rules of the game (habitus) to try to win. Agents classify, and are classified by, other agents based on the varying types and volumes of capital held, which determines field positions. Agents deploy various strategies (practice) to win the game such as using capital to compete, collude, negotiate, and contest with each other for dominant and subordinate positions. As Hodgkinson et al. (2007) argue, participation in the game assumes a commitment to and the value of the activities and a recognition of the capital prized in the field.

Bourdieu (2001a) identified HE as a distinct field because it can be conceptualised as a social structure that is irreducible to its constituent parts and interactions and to other social fields, whilst also possessing its own distinctive structure, logic, and powers. HE occupies a relational position in social space between the field of power (large-scale political and economic forces) and individual institutions (universities) and agents (university staff and students). It consists of structural and cognitive mechanisms that mediate whilst simultaneously reproducing social classification (Bourdieu, 2001a). Of critical importance to deploying a robust theoretical

framework for this thesis was the determination of HE in England as a distinct field. Bourdieu contends there are several keystones that determine a field's status – hierarchy and autonomy, and conflict and transformation – which are considered in turn.

### *2.3.1 Hierarchy and autonomy*

Fields are hierarchical, with dominant institutions and agents wielding considerable power to determine how the field operates and establishing the 'rules of the game' (Bourdieu, 2001a). His research demonstrates how field hierarchy tends to mirror that of wider society and is based on claims of legitimacy and possession and control of resources. Field hierarchies operate to marginalise and exclude, enabling social reproduction and the perpetuation of the dominant values of the social order. HE in England is characterised by its differentiation and stratification, which has increased significantly since the 1990s (Section 2.1.3, Chapter 4). This hierarchisation impacts the perception of institutional status and legitimacy, the capital and resources controlled by institutions, and the type of students recruited.

Autonomy is another critical component of a field, although Bourdieu's work evolved over time to consider the power struggles created by the increasing heteronomy in different fields (Bourdieu, 1993; 1996b). Field autonomy is threatened by external constraints, with social change occurring because of changing relations between existing fields and/or new fields emerging. Therefore, transformations in social space and directives from the field of power affect the HE field and the institutions and agents within. For example, the government-led expansion of HE in England since the 1960s changed the power relations between the field of power and the HE field, the subfields of the HE field (such as institutions, disciplines, faculties, academic roles, etcetera) and the relative positions between agents (such as staff and students), as well as the interrelations between these levels. Despite a reduction in autonomy, Maton (2005) argues that the HE field in England can still generate its own values and markers of achievement relatively independently from social practices in the broader social environment (Section 3.3, Chapter 3).

### *2.3.2 Conflict and transformation*

Bourdieu (1996) saw the HE field as in a state of permanent conflict, differing from common fields in which the location of agents and institutions is based on a minimum level of agreement around basic principles. This conflict over relational positions in the field exacerbates differentiation and stratification in HE and reinforces and reproduces relationships of inequality (of which, Bourdieu argues, class is the most pronounced). Academic power and intellectual

prestige (economic versus cultural capital) are “weapons and stakes in the academic war of all against all” (Wacquant, 1990, p. 680).

Agents and institutions struggle for the preservation or transformation of the HE field, which can result in changes within the field and in the wider social field. Individually or collectively, agents and institutions implement strategies to improve or defend their position in relation to other occupants in the field. Bourdieu therefore conceives practices in HE as strategic position-takings that are shaped by the interaction between an agent’s habitus and their relational position in the field, which results in the agent acting or thinking in certain ways (Naidoo, 2004; Maton, 2005). Position-takings reflect relational positions in the field, for example, dominant agents are more likely to take a conservative position, whilst dominated agents may take a more radical position (Maton, 2005). Position-takings are practices that are directed towards the maximisation of symbolic gain through both the accumulation of capital and the endeavour to make their existing capital the dominant measure of achievement in the field.

### *2.3.3 HE in England as a distinct field*

Bathmaker (2015) explains how Bourdieu’s concept of field can be used to reveal the hidden workings of power and inequality in society, which is the crux of this thesis. Whilst the consideration of hierarchy, autonomy, conflict, and transformation justify how, within Bourdieu’s framework, HE can be perceived as a distinct field, it was necessary also to locate HE within a politically and geographically defined field. England was chosen rather than the UK because of the diverse historical and political context of how HE has evolved in the four nations (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland). Donnelly and Evans (2018) highlight the differences in how HE functions between the nations, for example, Scotland has different forms of HE provision, including the four-year degree, which differs from the traditional three-year degree in the other nations. There are also differences in the governance and resourcing structures for HE, which impact the relations between the HE field and the field of power as well as between institutions within the field. Furthermore, there are distinctions between the rates of student participation in HE, including differences in participation by class background and gender. As fields are largely homologous spheres, based on a historically generated system of shared meaning, it would be challenging to identify the UK as a distinct field for the purposes of this study. Evidencing how HE in England is a distinct field was important conceptually as “it is the field which is primary and must be the focus of research operations” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 107).

## **2.4 Practice**

For Bourdieu, practice is based on the dispositions contained in the habitus, which come to life as actions (including strategies) within a field, but which are ultimately limited by doxa. Practice is therefore a dialectical relationship between a structured environment and the structured dispositions engendered in habitus, which guides agents, in most situations, to reproduce and reinforce the environment. Bourdieu (1984, p. 101) explains that practice is the product of the combination of habitus, capital and field, using this formula:  $(\text{Habitus} \times \text{Capital}) + \text{Field} = \text{Practice}$ . Reay (2004) explains that habitus is subjective, whilst field is objective; practice is shaped by how they come together.

## **2.5 Institutional habitus or doxa**

### **2.5.1 Institutional habitus**

As discussed in Chapter 1, an aim of this study was to explore the decisions made by the participants through the lens of the status of the university at which they were based, elite or non-elite, using Boliver's (2015) analysis. Therefore, a concept was required through which to explore this. Initially, the concept of institutional habitus was considered, a construct that has been developed by several scholars to elaborate on Bourdieu's concepts of individual and class habitus (Section 4.4). This stems from research by McDonough (1997), who found that class background strongly influenced college choices among American high school students. However, she also found that there was an influence from the specific school attended, particularly the school's principles, processes, and practices. McDonough argues that Bourdieu's theory assumes that the education system, and the schools within it, are largely homogeneous and apply the same criteria to filter out the lower classes. To explain her findings, she developed the concept of 'organizational habitus'. McDonough's concept was further elaborated and applied to the UK education system by Reay et al. (2001, p. 127) who used the term 'institutional habitus' to define:

"the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organization".

This expansion of individual habitus to an institutional level is problematic. Habitus develops in response to experience, resultant from the agent's relational position in social space. This position and its corresponding experiences shape the agent's scheme of perception and assumptions in a way that predisposes them to certain practices such as ways of thinking and acting. As Atkinson (2011) argues, the shift of this concept to an institutional level requires the acceptance of an ontological position that institutions have a consciousness and possess human traits and capacities such as the ability to experience, perceive, assume, and act. This conflicts

with the ontological position adopted for this thesis, which assumes that institutions are not supra-individual ontological entities and do not act independently to the agents within them.

More concerningly, the concept of institutional habitus assumes homology among agents within an institution, which therefore assumes that they share similar experiences and perspectives and leaves little room for reflexivity. This, argues Rainford (2021), is overly deterministic, which is especially problematic in universities due to the scale of such institutions and the diversity and heterogeneity within university communities. In addition, this assumption places the concept of institutional habitus in conflict with the critical principle of Bourdieu's theory that agents exist in institutions and fields in relation to one another and are in a constant struggle for positions. It therefore detaches the concept of habitus from its ontological and theoretical framework and reduces it to a "baggy, anthropomorphic label for shared expectations" (Atkinson, 2011, p. 338). As such, institutional habitus as a concept was deemed to conflict with Bourdieu's theory of relationism, which was problematic for this thesis from a theoretical and ontological perspective.

The final point of consideration was whether it would be possible to use the concept at the required level of analysis. In this study, this was between elite and non-elite universities. The concept of institutional habitus, as proposed by McDonough (1997) and Reay et al. (2001), indicated that each specific institution may have a different habitus, which would need to be considered when analysing the results. This was not appropriate for this study, which required a more macro approach.

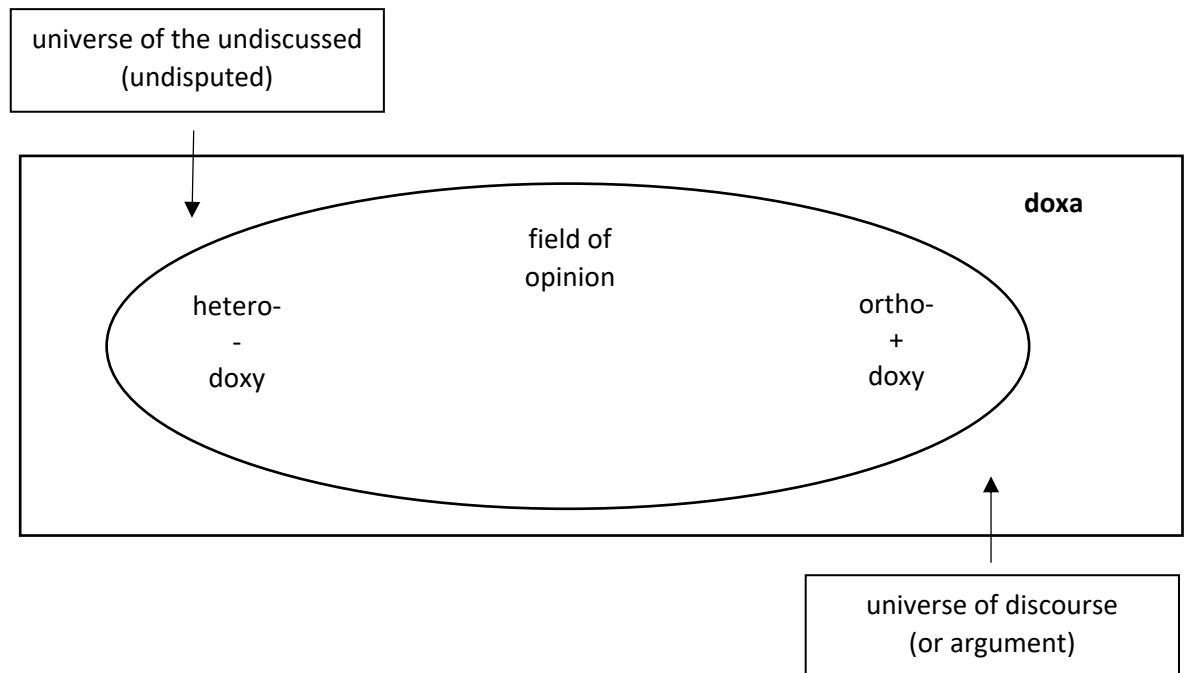
### *2.5.2 Doxa*

Rather than seek an alternative from outside of Bourdieu's theoretical framework, his lesser-known concept of doxa was utilised as a stronger notion through which to explore the influence of university type on hiring practices. Doxa is the primary experience that agents have of the social world, described by Bourdieu (1998, p. 57) as "the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view". Doxa is accepted as a taken-for-granted reality, which results in adherence to the social order (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990) (Figure 4). The dominated classes have an interest in challenging doxa and exposing the arbitrariness of what is assumed, whilst the dominant classes have an interest in defending and reinforcing doxa (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 169).

In HE, the concept can be applied to explain how the history, culture, and ideology have evolved to shape organisational practices through shared assumptions, most of which is deeply ingrained

and operates at a subconscious level, so that universities reproduce and legitimise inequality through mechanisms that are largely unquestioned (Atkinson, 2011). For this thesis, the HE field in England was perceived to have an overarching doxa of undisputed assumptions that reinforce discourses about excellence and quality, reasons for unequal participation, and the role of universities in resolving inequalities (Rainford, 2021). Doxa is continuously ingrained and fortified through symbolic violence (Section 3.1), for example, via university rankings (Section 2.1.3, Chapter 4). Davey (2012) uses doxa to consider the relational position of institutions in a field and identify the volumes and configurations of capital valued by the field. This thesis took a similar approach, utilising doxa as a concept to inform understanding of how hiring decisions were influenced by evaluations of capital held by applicants and how this differed depending on the relational position of a type of university (elite/non-elite) in the field.

Figure 6: The fields of doxa and opinion (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 168)



### 3. Symbolic violence, stereotypes, and the Stereotype Content Model (SCM)

#### 3.1 Symbolic violence and stereotypes

Bourdieu contends that agents bring order and meaning to the world through symbolic classification systems generated from history and relational positioning. These classifications shape habitus to (mis)recognise the capital and habitus of others so that practice, whilst appearing fair and objective, is imbued with unconscious prejudice and bias, which leads to discrimination and inequality. These classifications are generally concealed within doxic practices and accepted as universal truths, therefore going largely unquestioned. Bourdieu

argued that these classifications benefit the powerful and enable their continued domination of others. He used the term 'symbolic violence' to refer to such practices, asserting that these operate as a two-way process – "the violence... is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 167). There are similarities with Dewey's (1910, p. 4) theory that thoughts and beliefs are based on "real or supposed knowledge going beyond what is directly present" and are "marked by acceptance or rejection of something as reasonably probable or improbable". However, Dewey argues that people tend to construct beliefs based on insufficient knowledge and then reject evidence to the contrary, which can produce prejudice.

Bourdieu and Dewey may not have used the term stereotypes, but the concept aligns with their theories. Originating from the field of social psychology, stereotyping describes a form of cognitive categorisation through which individuals simplify and rationalise information as a mechanism through which to make it easier to identify, recall, predict, and react to that information in future (Denmark and Williams, 2014). People use stereotypes to make sense of their environment by forming biased perceptions of their social contexts. For example, standardised and usually oversimplified conceptions about groups of people, which could be based on gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, religion, etcetera.

Stereotypes, which can be positive or negative and can change across time and culture, influence how people perceive others' traits, aspirations, motivations, appearance, and abilities, which may or may not reflect reality. When assumptions are made about individuals based on a group stereotype, this can result in explicit or implicit prejudice and bias by upholding invisible rules that advantage some and disadvantage others, therefore resulting in inequality and discrimination. In accord with Bourdieu, Oldmeadow and Fiske (2007) argue that stereotypes provide legitimacy for hierarchy and inequality in social systems.

Prejudice and bias often operate at a subconscious, or implicit, level. This has been measured by the implicit-association test, a procedure designed by Greenwald et al. (1998, p. 1464) that aims to "measure implicit attitudes by measuring their underlying automatic evaluation." Nosek et al. (2007) analysed large datasets of completed implicit-association tests and found evidence of gender and career stereotypes, namely a stronger association of men with careers and women with family (76% of people held this bias). It was present in both men and women, although was stronger among women. It was also found to increase with age and was particularly strong among UK-based participants. Within Bourdieu's framework, stereotypes and

implicit bias reside within the habitus, which becomes active in fields when interacting with and judging others.

### **3.2 Stereotype Content Model (SCM)**

Recruitment stereotyping occurs when hiring managers make assumptions about the attributes, behaviours, and capabilities of applicants based on group stereotypes, which can result in discrimination and inequality in hiring decisions. When designing this study, it was necessary to identify a model to explore whether the evaluations of the applicants' attributes were influenced by stereotypes of class and/or gender. The Stereotype Content Model (SCM), developed by Fiske et al. (2002), is based on a body of research that presents evidence that group stereotypes consist of two fundamental dimensions – competence and warmth – the premise being that people wish to know others' intent (i.e. warmth) and their capability to pursue it (i.e. competence). Qualities that define competence include those such as being perceived as intelligent, skilful, efficient, and assertive, whilst qualities that define warmth include being perceived as friendly, well-intentioned, trustworthy, and tolerant (Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, 2018).

Relative status and intergroup competition are used in the SCM as the social structural predictors of competence and warmth, respectively. The SCM (Table 2) describes and illustrates how people stereotype members of a group to identify in-groups (competent and warm), out-groups (not competent or warm), and mixed groups (competent or warm). The model links these groups to distinct emotional prejudices (pride, pity, contempt, envy), which predict discrimination (active and passive; help and harm) (Fiske, 2018).

In accord with traditional gender stereotypes, the SCM predicts that men will be perceived as more competent, whilst women will be perceived as warmer (Fiske et al., 2002). However, this tends to be influenced by gender subtypes and, whilst some groups of men can be perceived as both competent and warm, women tend to be either respected or liked, but not both. Housewives, for example, are predicted to be perceived as warm but less competent, whilst women in a professional job tend to be perceived as competent but less warm. Fiske's (2012) research indicates that intellectual women tend to be stereotyped as competent but cold and are seen as competitive and treated with contempt and are sometimes scapegoated, whilst intellectual men are stereotyped as competent and warm and therefore perceived as cooperative and consequently admired and given privileges. This aligns with Bourdieu's (2001b, p.68) theory of masculine domination that women in employment who have access to cultural capital and power face a "double bind" of either being viewed as unfeminine and treated with



disdain or appearing as feminine and therefore being perceived as “incapable and unfit for the job.”

Table 2: The Stereotype Content Model, adapted from Fiske et al. (2002), Durante and Fiske (2017) and Durante et al. (2017)

		Perceived competence	
		Low	High
Perceived warmth	High	<p><b>Paternalistic prejudice</b></p> <p>Low status, not competitive. Pity, sympathy. For example, poor people, housewives, disabled people, elderly people.</p>	<p><b>Admiration</b></p> <p>High status, not competitive. Pride, admiration. For example, middle-class people, intellectual men, close allies.</p>
	Low	<p><b>Contemptuous prejudice</b></p> <p>Low status, competitive. Contempt, disgust, anger, resentment. For example, homeless people, welfare recipients.</p>	<p><b>Envious prejudice</b></p> <p>High status, competitive. Envy, jealousy. For example, rich people, feminists, intellectual women.</p>

Fiske et al. (2002), Durante and Fiske (2017) and Durante et al. (2017) mapped class-based stereotypes to the SCM, providing evidence that rich people are stereotyped as intelligent, competent, and worthy but cold, whilst poor people are stereotyped as incompetent but warmer, and middle-class people are stereotyped as competent and warm. Durante and Fiske (2017) demonstrate how these stereotypes support and justify inequality, with class-based stereotypes being more strongly reinforced in countries with greater inequality, like the UK. Less is known about stereotypes where class and gender intersect, particularly in relation to the SCM dimensions of competence and warmth; however, stereotypes are likely to disadvantage individuals perceived to be both lower-class and female, particularly in an environment where people with these characteristics are in the minority, such as the HE field.

The findings from some studies have not supported the SCM. For example, Rivera and Tilcsik (2016) found that evaluations of commitment, rather than competence and warmth, influenced decisions on who to invite to interview. To explore the applicability of the model to HE in

England, this study adopted elements of the SCM in the research design and analysis of the results.

#### **4. Class within Bourdieu's theoretical framework**

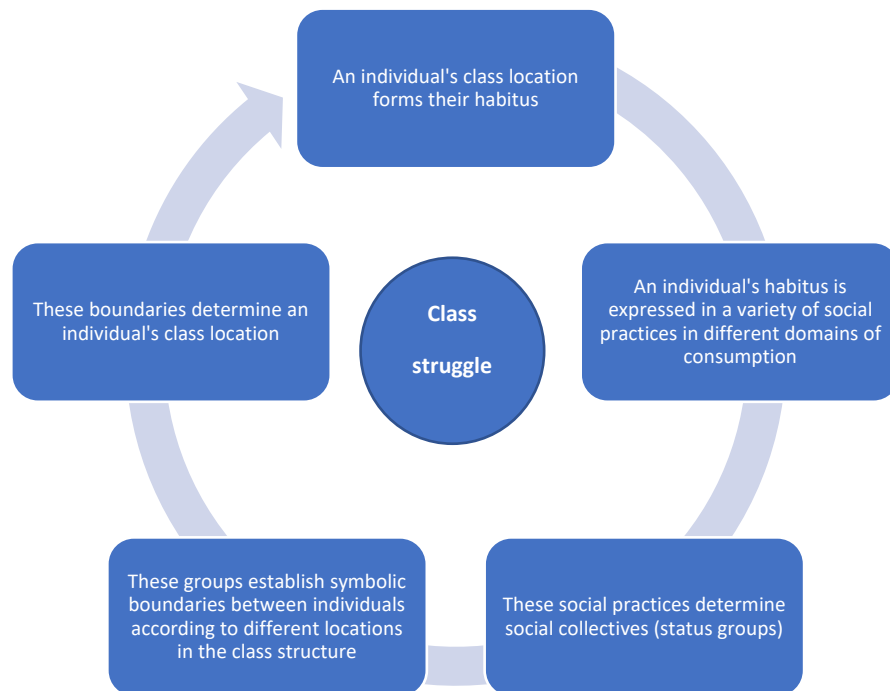
##### **4.1 Class structure and relations**

In terms of the class structure, Bourdieu's work differs from other class analysts. His system encompasses the whole occupational division of labour, therefore claiming a considerably more inclusive and sophisticated approach than that proposed by Marx (limited to the relationships to the means of production) or Weber (class and status are nominal entities rather than co-existing, relational, and formative) (Bourdieu, 1985). Bourdieu's class analysis has economic and cultural dimensions; differences in status (i.e. lifestyle) are manifestations of differences in class positions. Bourdieu's theory presents a radical new vision in which class relations are defined in terms of misrecognition within a social order, that is, the arbitrary properties of securing legitimacy, recognition, and value in the eyes of others (Atkinson, 2021).

##### **4.2 Class boundaries**

Another distinguishing feature is Bourdieu's assertion that classes should not be demarcated from one another *a priori*, as this is a form of political conflict and increases the risk of considering classes as preformed entities, thus reifying the social order, characterising social phenomena, and reducing class theory to substantialist logic (Weininger, 2002). Instead, Bourdieu argues that class boundaries should be comprehended in terms of social practices and relations. An agent's class location influences their habitus, expressed through myriad social practices. These practices inform the social collectives (status groups) to which an individual belongs, thus establishing symbolic boundaries between agents according to their class locations. This legitimates and reinforces their position in the class structure (Figure 7). Bourdieu describes this as a classificatory struggle through which symbolic power is exercised.

Figure 7: Simplified model demonstrating the causal connections between an individual's class location, habitus, social practices, and social collectives (diagram adapted from Weininger, 2002)



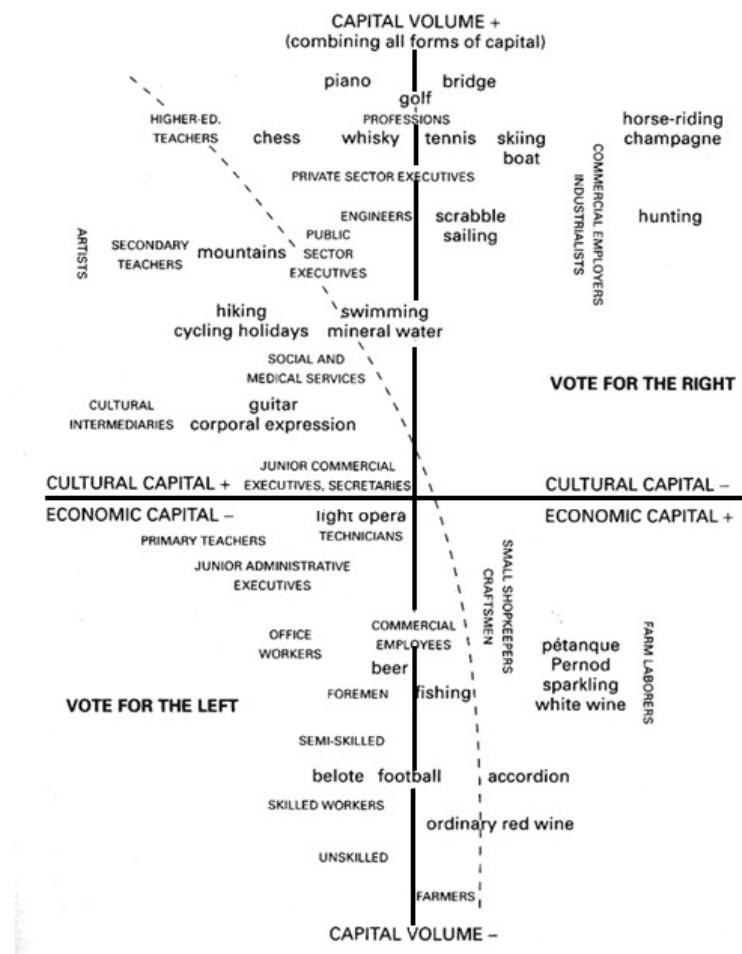
#### **4.3 Modelling of the class system**

Bourdieu adopted a spatialised approach to modelling the class structure that was not linear and hierarchical but was relational and multidimensional (Atkinson, 2021). He analysed large amounts of survey data that included a broad range of indicators of economic and cultural capital linked to individuals' positions in the occupational division of labour. The data were used to construct a map that represented the population, with a sample of individuals located on the map in accordance with their individual portfolio of capitals. This multidimensional mapping differs from other class systems and measurements in that each of its three axes represent a different continuous dimension of capital – volume, composition, trajectory. This combination is important as it incorporates a historical dimension that enables the determination of the temporal dynamics of the social structure (Honneth, 1986). This allows for an analysis of mobility (through the conversion of capital and its impact on trajectory) and conflict. Bourdieu described the map as a conceptualisation of the social space of the social formation under analysis; it forms the basis of his conception of class. The multidimensionality is important for depicting the origin and formation of divergent ways of life and for demonstrating the operation of domination (Atkinson, 2021).

Based on his research in France in the 1960s, Bourdieu mapped occupations onto quadrants of economic and cultural capital to indicate social space tendencies towards taste, cultural activities, and political leanings (Figure 8). Bourdieu situated academics on the subordinate side of the diagram, acknowledging that their position in social space is dependent primarily on their possession of cultural capital, which is not as powerful as economic capital. As this occupation provides an institutionalised form of cultural capital, a bureaucratic career and a regular income, academics occupy a more dominant position than creative types, such as artists (Bourdieu, 1995).

This mapping of French social space and class positions was revisited by Atkinson (2021) who found it to be remarkably like Bourdieu’s mapping thirty years before, despite economic and societal change. He discovered that the relationship between occupational groups and geographical space also remained similar, but with gender and age playing an increasingly prominent role in determining social positions.

Figure 8: Social space of the social formation under analysis (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 5)



#### **4.4 Theoretical classes and class habitus**

Bourdieu's approach enables individuals to be allocated to theoretical classes – theoretical as individuals who are grouped in social space do not necessarily identify with one another or act collectively. However, Bourdieu (1995, p. 85) argues that there is an indirect causal link between positions in social space and practices, based on the concept of habitus:

“Social class, understood as a system of objective determinations, must be brought into relation not with the individual or with the ‘class’ as a population, i.e. as an aggregate of enumerable, measurable biological individuals, but with the class habitus, the system of dispositions (partially) common to all products of the same structures.”

Therefore, a shared position in social space (based on capital) means that individuals are likely to share similar conditions of work and life (Bourdieu termed this the ‘class condition’) and are therefore more likely to develop similar lifestyles, tastes, dispositions, and outlooks. This leads to the development of class habitus, which influences patterns of social contact and interpersonal proximity, determining where individuals are likely to work, live and socialise, and how individuals come together in social groups.

Bourdieu (1990, p. 69) claims that the practical competencies constitutive of class habitus are “social necessity turned into nature, converted into motor schemes and body automatisms”. Whilst Bourdieu did not explain the process for how this might happen, research by Lizardo (2007) attempts to bridge the gap between neuroscience and the acquisition of culture to explain class habitus. He argues that the brain's mirror neurones provide agents with the capabilities to produce, recognise, predict, and understand practical action, both for the self and others. Lizardo therefore concludes that mirror neurons are the neural structure that enables practical capacity and action, thus providing a neuroscientific explanation for Bourdieu's (1990, p. 89) theory of the “bodily generalization” of class habitus. He states:

“the most important practical competences constitutive of the ‘class habitus’... are never the subject of explicit instructions, but are ‘picked up’ by the actor by virtue of being surrounded by other actors who display the same competences” (Lizardo, 2007, p. 337).

As argued by Cerulo (2010, p. 128), by combining Bourdieu's theory with findings from neuroscience, Lizardo “doubles the power of Bourdieu's work”.

#### **4.5 Reproduction and class formation**

One of Bourdieu's main ambitions was to demonstrate how schools and universities function to reproduce existing social and power structures. He argues that the dominant classes use their high levels of capital (particularly inherited economic and cultural capital) to compete for power,

thus reproducing their social position. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) contend that parents with higher-class habitus pass on cultural capital to their children through embodied dispositions, which are recognised and valued by institutions, such as schools and universities. This embodied cultural capital enables their children to obtain qualifications and have additional power in the labour market. The dominant classes therefore use the education system to objectify their domination through classification (the bestowing of symbolic capital). Cultural reproduction privileges children from higher-class backgrounds, reduces opportunities for children from lower-class backgrounds, and curtails social mobility. It is an important process in class formation as it enables individuals with a higher-class habitus to use their power and resources to close ranks, retain power, and maintain the legitimacy of the inequality in the system.

Within this theory, schools operate as sorting mechanisms to categorise children into different educational trajectories. Those with high levels of capital are more likely to be perceived to have academic merit, succeed at school, and gain access to HE, with higher volumes of capital resulting in access to the most prestigious schools and universities. Bourdieu (1996) asserts that universities select students based on an implicit social classification (based on economic and cultural capital) and reproduce the same students according to an explicit academic classification (symbolic capital). The same forces are embedded in the processes for hiring and promoting staff, with existing academics acting as gatekeepers.

#### ***4.6 Distinction and class formation***

Class habitus shapes, and is shaped by, class struggles as agents sharing a similar habitus develop cultural peculiarities that distinguish them from others. This results in cultural differences and the criteria for judgement, with higher-class habitus acting as universal “taste-maker” and being accepted as embodying better taste and legitimate culture, therefore forming part of doxa (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 91). The lower-class lacks the power and resources to assert itself so becomes an involuntary negative reference point against which the higher-class affirms its cultural distinction (Weininger, 2002). As the differences in taste between classes are doxic practices then they are accepted as natural, inevitable, and legitimate, with members of the lower-class “imbue[d] with a sense of their cultural unworthiness” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 251).

#### ***4.7 Group formation and social collectives***

As noted previously, Bourdieu used the mapping of positions in social space to identify groups of theoretical classes (‘classes on paper’). Although theoretical, these classes can be reified, at least partially, in practical terms as positions in social space that predict and explain variances in habitus and lifestyle (Crossley, 2012). The processes through which Bourdieu asserts that class

formation takes place result in an understanding of class boundaries, which can shift and change and are “necessarily indeterminate and fuzzy” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 234). These groups do not constitute classes in themselves. Instead, Bourdieu contends that they can be transformed into historically effective class groups through two mechanisms: i) group formation in social space which resonates with the sense that individuals have of their class position and representations of class; and ii) representations of class which are used by individuals to advocate these representations and organise individuals as groups.

Bourdieu argues that tangible groups and social collectives (such as families, friends, workplaces, neighbourhoods, interest groups, etcetera), determined by positions in social space, provide individuals with a tacit sense of belonging in society through the combination of symbolic acts of self-classification and classification by others. These social groups and collectives map onto the theoretical class groups. He uses an example of how labour parties and trade unions (such as the University and College Union) have organised and constituted class groups, persuading members to recognise themselves as members with a shared class condition and habitus, and therefore helping to form and shape the class group.

### **5. Bourdieu on gender**

Gender was a concept largely omitted from Bourdieu’s work until the publication of *Masculine Domination* in 1990 (Bourdieu, 2001b), which focused on gender as a relation of domination. Bourdieu argues that gender, like class, is a powerful classification that is used by agents to make sense of the world. Operating as a highly complex and differentiated symbolic order, gender discrimination and the domination of women by men is deeply ingrained in society.

Bourdieu (2001b) argues that gender is different to other social classifications because it is based on bodily differences, sexuality, and the reproduction of human life. Despite being social constructs, differences in gender roles and expectations appear natural. Bodies are shaped by social constructions of masculinity and femininity, which determine how they are perceived by others; therefore, shaping the body’s habits and limiting possibilities for expression (Krais, 2006). Thus, it is through the habitus that gender classification and the social relations of dominance and exploitation come to life, resulting in gender being a fundamental element of identity. Bourdieu (2001b, p. 93) argues that masculine domination is so deeply ingrained in social space and habitus that women are detached from men “by a negative symbolic coefficient which ... negatively affects everything that they are and do”.

## 6. Critique of Bourdieu's theory

Before selecting Bourdieu's work as the overarching theoretical framework for this study, it was important to analyse it critically to identify potential weaknesses and limitations, and to consider alternative theories that challenge the perspective. Despite being considered "one of the foremost social philosophers of the twentieth century" (Grenfell, 2012, p. 1), if not "the single most influential sociologist of the later twentieth century" (Atkinson, 2016, p. 1), Bourdieu's work has been subject to criticism, which has tended to focus on claims that his theory is "too materialistic, structuralist or determinist" (Yang, 2014, p. 1523). Atkinson (2016) and Robbins (2000) assert that much of this criticism is political rather than social scientific, with accusations of Bourdieu's antipathy towards 'cultural Marxism' as well as those who see his work as an attack on liberal capitalism. Scholars, including some critics of Bourdieu, acknowledge that his *oeuvre* is vast and complex, and many criticisms are perhaps based on a limited understanding. Wacquant (1990, p. 677) states that:

"Bourdieu's writings... scarcely allow for easy entry... [and] their scattered and daunting appearance has often encouraged superficial assimilation... [leading to] fragmentation, misunderstanding, and selective ignorance."

This section considers the main criticisms of Bourdieu's work in four areas relevant to this study: i) determinism; ii) habitus and agency; iii) ethics and morality; and iv) relevance, applicability, and accessibility.

### 6.1 Determinism

The main charge against Bourdieu's theory is that of determinism, with critics viewing the concept of habitus as fully denying reflexivity to agents. Jenkins (1982, p. 270) argues that Bourdieu's theory explains that objective practices are the result of the subjective structures of habitus but then conflicts itself by making those subjective structures the product of the objective structures – "his scheme remains essentially deterministic and circular." However, this is a misinterpretation as Bourdieu argues that agents must adapt to the world they are born into, and they do this by incorporating objective social structures through the process of socialisation. These objective social structures precede individuals and therefore influence their subjective structures. Crossley (2001, p. 91) notes:

"In a broader historical and ontological sense, however, the relations of objective and subjective structures are... 'circular'... Across generations and through history, the circle of subjective and objective structures turns, without any 'final instance', determinate or otherwise."

Other scholars have argued that there is too much emphasis on structural reproduction and inadequate consideration of social resistance, combined with insufficient explanations for the



conditions of social change. For example, upon reviewing Bourdieu and Passeron's *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1990), Bredo and Feinberg (1979, p. 330) claimed there was no convincing method for changing the relations of dominance in the education system, which they said indicates a problem with the wider theory – its “inability to account for social change.” Likewise, Silver (2021) argues that Bourdieu's explanation of social change is too narrow as Bourdieu only perceived it as occurring through new entrants displacing incumbents or advancing knowledge into the nature of social or aesthetic creativity. Reviewing similar charges leads Yang (2014, p. 1531) to conclude that Bourdieu can be perceived as a “pessimistic determinist.”

It has been posited that Bourdieu's description of contemporary society has been demonstrated to be *a priori* true. For example, Silver (2021) states that Bourdieu's theory has “come to describe aspects of our social life with frightening accuracy”. However, some scholars contend that Bourdieu provides insufficient explanation of the conditions for how contemporary society developed. Lash (1993) admits that the real world is becoming increasingly akin to Bourdieu's theoretical world; however, he highlights historical struggles and conflict, arguing that Bourdieu's theory does not allow for this because it describes social space as passive and based on social reproduction. This is a hasty conclusion as conflict and struggle are emphasised throughout Bourdieu's work. As Crossley (2001, p. 92) notes:

“The various ‘unconscious’ expectations, assumptions and beliefs that hold the status quo in place are outcomes of a historical process, and have often been preceded by open conflict.”

Atkinson (2016) argues that it is the sense of position within social space and the possibilities and limitations this brings that enables agents to develop and implement strategies that can lead to social change and mobility. Therefore, rather than being absent or marginalised in Bourdieu's theory, reflexivity, choice, resistance, and change are endemic.

Bourdieu denies the charge of determinism, arguing that it based on a superficial understanding of his theory (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). This is supported by scholars such as Yang (2014), who asserts that the role of change is clearer in Bourdieu's later work. Reay (2004, p. 437) undertook a comprehensive reading of Bourdieu's work and concluded, “there is little evidence of determinism here.” Lizardo (2004) highlights that scholars charging Bourdieu with determinism tend to focus only on Bourdieu's explanations of habitus as a reproductive force, ignoring those where he emphasises its flexible capabilities. Even Jenkins (1982, p. 12) notes that many of the critiques do not “...span the full range [of Bourdieu's work] ...or even a substantial slice of it.” However, to firmly rebuff the charge of determinism, this thesis argues

that pragmatism, particularly Deweyan, offers a remedy to Bourdieu's pessimism and cynicism by incorporating the ethic of melioration and the belief that research can lead to social improvement. The combination of Deweyan pragmatism with Bourdieusian theory provides a means to neutralise the charge of determinism levied against Bourdieu. This is explored further in terms of habitus and agency in the next section.

## **6.2 Habitus and agency**

### *6.2.1 Choice and reflexivity*

As Reay (2004, p. 432) notes, "habitus is probably Bourdieu's most contested concept", chiefly criticised for its perceived latent determinism. Some scholars have argued that Bourdieu's description gives the impression that habitus is just an internalisation of social structures and agents are therefore nothing but "idiotic 'judgemental dopes'" (Atkinson, 2016, p. 1). Boltanski (2011, p. 20) claims that Bourdieu regards agents as "deceived beings", passive, indoctrinated, and blind to their domination, whilst Archer (2007) argues that the conceptualisation of habitus depicts agents as incapable of reflexivity and unable to behave in ways that do not accord with dominant social relations or discourses. Alexander (1995, p. 130) argues that habitus is "irredeemably flawed", accusing Bourdieu of using it to explain non-rational action (by predetermining actions based on inherited cultural traditions) whilst using the same concept to explain rational motivation (with habitus enabling agents to determine action based on rational choice and strategy). In this sense, Bourdieu's critics argue that he underestimated or ignored the critical and reflexive abilities of agents.

Jenkins (1982) highlights Bourdieu's explanation that agents' expectations are influenced and limited by objective life chances so that they do not expect more than they think they are able to achieve, which results in agents self-limiting their expectations and therefore life chances. Yang (2014, p. 1528) argues that Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus evolved over time to become less deterministic; however, his earlier work could be perceived to describe a circular system whereby:

"...social agents are only allowed to move within a predefined circle – certain fields with which their habitus is compatible."

In such a society there would be no social mobility, which is not the case in the UK – there is social mobility, even if it is somewhat limited (Section 2.3, Chapter 1). Bourdieu did not claim there was no social mobility and his mapping of social space, mentioned in Section 4.3, included an axis to measure this trajectory. Indeed, Bourdieu's own life trajectory provides proof that there are examples of upward social mobility in capitalist societies. Crossley (2001) observes

how Bourdieu, particularly in this later work, went to great lengths to explain that the habitus is not a mechanical blueprint for action, but is generative in terms of innovation and creativity, allowing for improvisation. It is responsive to experience and can adapt and learn different practices. Bourdieu (1990, p. 116) argues that, when confronted with different fields, “the same habitus can lead to very different practices and stances”. His metaphor of the field as a game (Section 2.3) explains how habitus predisposes agents to act in certain ways but does not unilaterally determine practice.

Many scholars support Bourdieu’s concept of habitus and argue for its role in predetermining action whilst also permitting reflexivity, therefore acknowledging that agents have agency and are not cultural dopes; they can make rational choices that override habitus. Crossley (2001, p. 84) emphasises Bourdieu’s inclusion of competence and improvisation in his description of habitus, with it providing an “underlying grammar” that enables agents to decide upon various courses of action and innovative forms of expression, within limits and boundaries relative to the field in which the agent is based. Harker (1984, p. 168) emphasises the mediating role of the habitus, arguing it is “no more ‘fixed’ than the practices which it helps to structure” and highlights that the determinants of practice incorporate change and agency. McNay (1999) stresses that Bourdieu’s description of habitus as generative does not deny the possibility of reflexivity, self-awareness, or change. Sayer (2009, p. 3) explains that:

“some social influences get beneath our radar, shaping our dispositions and responses without our even noticing them, while others are mediated in a more conscious way.”

McNay (1999), Weininger and Lareau (2003), McLeod (2005), and Bathmaker (2015) maintain that habitus allows for agency, whilst also providing a corrective to theories of reflexive transformation, such as Beck et al. (1994). They contend that such theories portray an overly agentic understanding of social practice where everything is seen as possible, and individuals have complete freedom to choose their own futures (Section 3.2, Chapter 1).

Furthermore, it is realistic to acknowledge that the expectations of groups in society are shaped by their social position – some life paths are open and easier to follow, whilst others are not (Crossley, 2001; Reay, 2004; Yang, 2014). Agents are repeatedly subject to expectations from dominant groups and learn to predict those expectations. A shared understanding of expectations is often produced within social groups and is transmitted from parents to their children, who accept and internalise them through their own experiences, thus reproducing habitus. Bourdieu (1990, p. 54) describes this as the “subjective expectation of the objective probability”.

Crossley (2001, p. 91) describes this as “pragmatic adaptation and realism” and asserts, “the agent is wholly active ... in constructing an inductive picture of the world.” Reay (2004, p. 435) argues that:

“choice is at the heart of habitus... but at the same time the choices inscribed in the habitus are limited” and she depicts habitus as a “deep, interior, epicentre containing many matrices... [which] demarcate the extent of choices available to any one individual.”

The critical point is that whilst Bourdieu’s deployment of the notion of habitus could, on occasion, be charged with being relatively deterministic, fatalistic and/or reductive, acknowledgement of this does not mean that the concept of habitus itself can be accused of the same limitations. To enable its use and application in non-deterministic ways requires some clarification and modification (Lizardo, 2004). To fully respond to the charge of determinism, it is useful to consider Dewey’s work on habits and deliberation, which, whilst being similar Bourdieu’s rendering of habitus, incorporates a stronger dimension of growth and agency. Drawing on an Aristotelian interpretation of habits as morals, virtues, and capacities (Section 6.3), Dewey (1981, p. 32) saw habits as composed of a series of acts, instigated by a problem, which develop over time as the problem is tackled and ultimately resolved. Agents learn from experience and habits therefore arise from the cumulative linking of acts which structure experience and result in “an acquired predisposition to ways or modes of response”. Central to Dewey’s (1981, p. 190) concept of habits is the capability for deliberation:

“Deliberation is an experiment in finding out what the various lines of possible action are really like. It is an experiment in making various combinations of selected elements of habits and impulses, to see what the resultant action would be like if it were entered upon”.

Habits, Dewey (1981a, pp. 31-32) argues, are “projective, dynamic in quality, ready for overt manifestation”. They are functions that enable adaptation and therefore do not reside in an individual agent but are inherently social and produced through the interaction of agents with the environment. In contrast to Bourdieu, Dewey therefore conceptualises habits as enabling, not constraining, and incorporating an interaction of both automatic and deliberative cognitive processing.

Taking a pragmatist approach and emphasising the habitus’ capabilities for growth and deliberation serves to accentuate its dynamic characteristics; thus, highlighting the performative and processual qualities of practice, whilst retaining recognition of the importance of historicity and structure. This broadens the complexity and applicability of habitus as a concept, whilst firmly rebuffing charges of determinism and fatalism. It enables a deeper understanding of the

complex interactions between agency, structure, and environment within different fields and situations whilst maintaining a critique of mechanisms that lead to social reproduction.

### *6.2.2 Pre-habitual action*

Accepting that habitus is not deterministic or fatalistic and allows for reflexivity and strategic capabilities (especially when incorporating elements of Dewey's concept of habit) unfortunately leads to a somewhat troublesome point with Bourdieu's conceptualisation of habitus. Whilst acknowledging that agents have strategic capacities, Bourdieu (2000) then explains that this only happens as an exception in times of significant and large-scale crisis and disruption, rather than on a more regular basis. Bourdieu (2000, p. 19) states:

“But there is also change. Conflict is built into society. People can find that their expectations and ways of living are suddenly out of step with the new social position they find themselves in.”

This is problematic because people make choices every day and the relationship between agents and structures is dynamic and constantly changing (Crossley, 2001; Sayer, 2005; Atkinson, 2016; Brett, 2022). Whilst most choices are embedded within and constrained by habitus and field rules, agents can, and do, take spontaneous and tactical actions. Sayer (2005) argues that Bourdieu exaggerates the habitus' unconscious actions, thus neglecting everyday reflexivity. Mouzelis (2007, p. 2) asserts that Bourdieu “underemphasizes the rational, calculative, and reflexive aspects of human action.” Mouzelis recommends expanding the role of habitus to incorporate connections to interactive and figurational structures,<sup>6</sup> in addition to Bourdieu's positional and institutional connections.

Moore (2012) describes habitus as based on settled or regular practices (habits) that often develop from repeated actions and become the rules of the game. Crossley (2001) argues that action precedes habit and cannot be reduced to habit; therefore, there must be pre-habitual action. Bourdieu's theory does not allow for this. He contends that Bourdieu “allows the concept of the habitus ... to pre-empt his conception of agency” (Crossley, 2001, p. 94). Even though it may influence and shape practice, habitus does not, by itself, act, improvise, or strategise – these are choices made by the agent. This was an important point in the context of this thesis – the habitus of recruiters may strongly influence their hiring practices, but the agent is still making the choice.

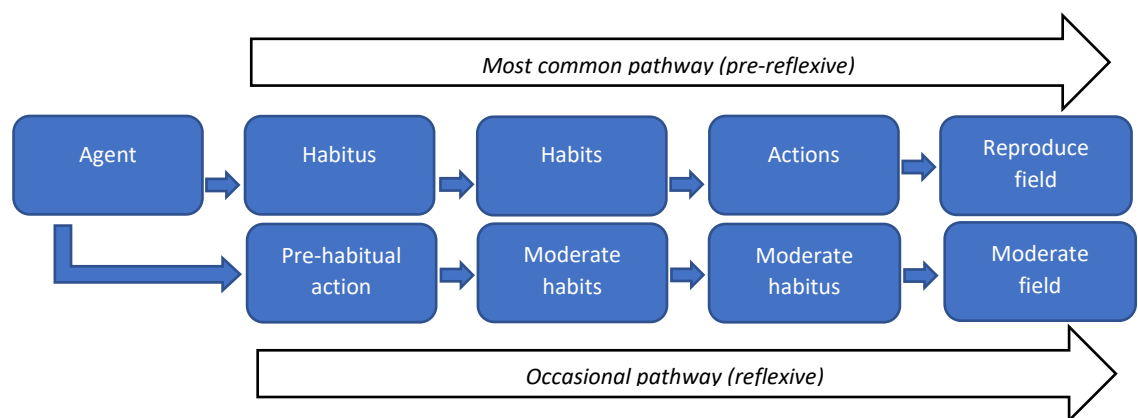
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<sup>6</sup> Evolving networks of interdependent humans.

Moreover, whilst Bourdieu asserts that habits facilitate improvisation within fields, he does not explain sufficiently how fields change over time, nor the habitus required to produce them. As the social world changes, there is the “potential for creativity and forms of innovation in practice, which generate a transformation of habits” (Crossley, 2001, p. 95). Changes to field structures are the result of actions made by agents, which “transcend their own habitual root, modifying that root and, on occasion, giving rise to new habits” (Crossley, 2001). Therefore, there is not only a unidirectional linear path through which habitus creates habits that determine actions, but also a path along which creative and innovative actions by agents generate and moderate habits, which moderate habitus and therefore field (Figure 9). This aligns with the early pragmatist perspective that, when habits fail to solve a problem, agents use the creativity to identify alternative solutions, later incorporating some of these into habits for future use (Dewey, 1981).

Crossley (2001) argues for expanding Bourdieu’s theory by locating habitus within the broader concept of agency and acknowledging the generative role of agency in moderating habitus and field. Others who have argued for a more active and agentic conception of habitus include Sweetman (2003) and Adams (2006) who talk of the reflexive habitus, and Sayer (2009), Ignatow (2009) and Halewood (2022) who argue that habitus should be expanded to include moral and ethical dispositions (Section 6.3).

Figure 9: Different pathways for social practice (diagram is the researcher’s own)



Dewey’s (1981) social pragmatism is useful in broadening the conceptualisation of habitus. Dewey perceives habit and deliberation as interwoven and, whilst acknowledging that habit is the predominant mode of action, Dewey argues that the disruption of habit and the emergence of deliberation is a regular and important occurrence. Dewey (1981, p. 175) contends that agents with numerous habits have “a wider ... field of possible observation and foretelling”, which augments the range of alternative possibilities to action, thus diminishing the perception

that habits are mechanical blueprints for action and instead stressing that habits promote intelligent behaviour by shaping perception and creating the capacity for change (Miyahara and Robertson, 2021; Halewood, 2022).

Pragmatism's explanation of practical action occurring within the habituality-creativity continuum provides a more robust and plausible account of the diversity of action and practice than adopting Bourdieu's concept of habitus alone. Therefore, for this thesis, Bourdieu's concept of habitus was augmented with elements from Dewey's concept of habit. This situated habitus within a broader and more sophisticated concept of agency, which reduced, and arguably negated, the charge of structural determinism and fatalism by locating and explaining choice, pre-habitual action, deliberation, and social change within Bourdieu's broader theoretical framework.

### ***6.3 Ethics and morality***

Despite not delving deeply into ethics and morality, Bourdieu (1998, p. 143) discusses what he termed the "paradoxical foundations of ethics" – the struggle for dominance to distinguish what is "right, true, good" and to determine universal values and virtues, which become accepted as doxa and form the basis of symbolic violence (Section 3.1), with power struggles ultimately explaining ethics and morality. Therefore, virtues (and vices) are dispositions shaped by objective social position and conditioning, with habitus providing a foundation for judgements of the self and others (Ignatow, 2009; Sayer, 2009). Habits become virtues when they lead to intelligent action and may be recognised differently depending on the field. Ultimately, they are a means to achieving excellence and power.

However, as Pellandini-Simányi (2014) argues, Bourdieu's view of ethics and morality as driven by power struggles is tautological. She asserts that ethics are not always created by power or social position as esteem and symbolic power can be generated by ethical and moral practices. In other words, an agent can choose to act in a virtuous way, regardless of their relative position, and this will generate esteem and power. As ethics are involved in obtaining or establishing power, she argues that ethics and morality must be acknowledged as having their own influence. Likewise, Halewood (2022, paragraph 2) explains that Bourdieu's binding of class and its representation together "so tightly that they become mirror images of each other" results in the exclusion of morality or, at best, subsumes it into the aesthetic, giving it no force of its own. He contends that this undermines the importance of moral judgements and practices, other than when they are defined within Bourdieu's specific and limited definition of doxa and the universal. Gross (2009) states that Bourdieu's explanation of most practical action being

motivated by power dynamics and hierarchies is reductional and ignores other factors that can motivate individual and social practice, including identity, morality, and tradition, which coexist and intersect with strategic concerns about positioning. Therefore, in explaining ethics and morality solely through power, Bourdieu's argument fails to account for the complexity of human behaviour and choice.

Dewey's concept of habit again provides a means to resolve this problem. Dewey (1981) conceptualises morals as habits (virtues or vices) – acquired dispositions to certain ways of responding – that are developed through the interaction of the individual with the environment. Morality is seen as inherently social, with morals being the alternative possibilities to action and moral judgements playing an active role in the world and influencing human behaviour. Everyday practice results in actions that lead to judgements that lead to morality (Halewood, 2022). For Dewey, morals are therefore habits in the sense that they are acquired tendencies and capacities for action, influenced by previous activity.

Incorporating elements of Dewey's (1922) concept of habit into habitus creates space for the recognition of the role of morality within Bourdieu's theory of class struggles. It expands Bourdieu's concepts of class habitus and class boundaries by including a moral element to enhance understanding and explaining how these are sustained. As this study is about fairness, which is a product of moral judgement, then expanding habitus in this way added value by accommodating a moral dimension. This helped with understanding and revealing the connections between the hidden and insidious moralism in the field of power, the HE field, and the institutions and agents in the field, where judgements about goodness are portrayed as objective facts (for example, university rankings or discrimination in recruitment). Accommodating a moral dimension within this study's research design and analysis strengthened the understanding of the judgements that participants made about the hypothetical applicants and the possible consequences of those judgements.

#### ***6.4 Relevance, applicability, and accessibility***

A further criticism against Bourdieu's work is its apparent lack of applicability to other countries and cultures, for example, claims that his theory is limited by its 'Francocentrism'. Scholars have argued that Bourdieu's work cannot be applied outside of France because his theory is too saturated in France's cultural uniqueness (DiMaggio, 1979), whilst other countries are too ignorant of the intricacies of the French system (Gorder, 1980). However, as Robbins (2000) notes, this implies a stance whereby social theories only ever explain the societies in which they were formulated, or those like them. Bourdieu (1984; 1995; 1996) acknowledges the



Francocentrism of his findings but not of his approach. He explains that a comprehensive understanding of the social space of the object of study is essential, and it is only possible to understand interactions between agents, or to explain an event or social phenomenon, by examining the social space in which the interactions, transactions and events occurred. Therefore, Bourdieu argues that his method can be applied universally. Lambert (1981, cited in Robbins, 2000) supports this view, arguing that Bourdieu's work can be understood and applied in other countries, providing the conditions of its production are understood. Bathmaker (2015) provides evidence of the application of Bourdieu's theory in lots of countries over the past fifty years and Robbins (2016) explores numerous case studies demonstrating the international deployment of Bourdieu's theory, including China, Japan, Europe, and Latin America.

Adopting Bourdieu's advice that his theory is applicable in other environments, providing a thorough understanding of the appropriate social space is undertaken, a funnel method was used for this study's literature review, informed by Bourdieu's approach to field analysis, starting with the environment in which HE operates and then narrowing the focus to institutions and then agents. This provided a detailed analysis of the social space in which HE operates in England, which then contextualised the research design and analysis of the results.

A final criticism is that Bourdieu's work is inaccessible. It has been argued that his writing style makes "simple points unnecessarily opaque" (Speller, 2011, p. 21), whilst DiMaggio (1979, p. 1466) notes that Bourdieu's "plays on words makes his work no less inaccessible to readers." Bogart (1987, p. 131) critiqued *Distinction* and concluded that: "Bourdieu delights in the use of obscure words ... His convoluted sentences meander on and on." Billig (2013) argues that Bourdieu's writing is dense, abstract and unexampled, and states this is ironic considering Bourdieu's research that shows language is linked to power, capital and privilege. Bourdieu (1984, p. *xiii*) himself appears aware of his writing style, noting his "long, complex sentences may offend." One unfortunate outcome of this inaccessibility could be that most people only engage at a superficial level, which can lead to misunderstanding of Bourdieu's theory as well as the misuse of his conceptual tools (Section 6.1).

There is no doubt that Bourdieu's work is challenging to read, not only in terms of his writing style (and its translation into English) but also because of its depth and complexity, the vastness of his *oeuvre*, and its change and development over time. For a PhD student, these challenges are hard to surmount; the most successful strategy was found to be copious amounts of reading, re-reading, pondering, discussing, and re-reading. These challenges also represent the strength of Bourdieu's theory. It pushes the reader to reach new depths of understanding, encouraging

constant reflexivity and questioning at many levels. Whilst not an easy read, it is certainly a memorable one, interspersed liberally with moments of both bewilderment and inspiration.

## **7. Chapter summary**

This chapter has provided an overview and analysis of Bourdieu's theoretical framework and has provided a justification as to the rationale for the decision to adopt this framework for this study. Bourdieu's concepts of capital, habitus, field, practice, and doxa were analysed, with justifications provided as to how they can be applied within the scope of this thesis. Critiques of Bourdieu's theory were considered, and evidence-based justifications provided to refute them where appropriate. Dewey's pragmatic philosophy and concept of habit were discussed, and elements were utilised to bolster Bourdieu's concept of habitus by situating it within the broader concept of agency and accentuating its dynamic and generative role and its capacity for growth. This also enabled habitus to incorporate a moral dimension and resolved the tautological reasoning in Bourdieu's notion of ethics and morality. The theory of stereotyping, taken from the field of social psychology, was summarised, aligned to the theories of Bourdieu and Dewey, and an explanation provided of its relevance to potential discriminatory practices in the recruitment process. The decision to utilise the SCM in the study's research design and the analysis of the findings was justified. The next chapter presents an analysis of the position of the HE field vis-à-vis the field of power.

## Chapter 3: The field in context – HE in England

### 1. Introduction

Pragmatic inquiry starts with a feeling that something is amiss and then developing an understanding of the situation by explaining its elements and identifying their relations (Dewey, 2008). This aligns to Bourdieu's (1995) approach and the belief that it is only possible to understand interactions between individuals, or to explain an event or social phenomenon, by examining the social space in which the interactions, transactions and events occurred. To contextualise the wider environment in which the HE field operates, Chapter 1 introduced the macro concepts of, and relationships between, capitalism, inequality and meritocracy, social mobility in the UK, and the role of universities in social reproduction. The evidence presented casts doubt on the veracity of meritocracy in countries with capitalist economies, particularly where those countries have rising inequality coupled with low rates of social mobility, such as the UK. In such countries, it has been argued that a "person's class of origin leaves a powerful stamp on her or his life chances" (Savage et al. 2015, p. 216) or a "long shadow... on [their] life destinations" (Lareau, 2015, p. 22). Chapter 2 used Bourdieu's theoretical framework to establish HE in England as a distinct field. This was important conceptually as "it is the field which is primary and must be the focus of research operations" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 107).

Following on from the previous chapters, this chapter is structured using the first level of Bourdieu's approach to field analysis and aims to analyse the position of the field vis-à-vis the field of power (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu argues that researchers should always historicize their objects of study as it is only by understanding how history has shaped phenomena that one can denaturalise social constructions and identify the dynamics that underpin modes of domination (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). Chapter 3 therefore explores the social space in which the field of HE in England functions, including locating universities and the academic profession within the field's specific historical and relational context. An overview of the governance structure of HE institutions in England is provided in Section 2. In Sections 3 to 5, the HE field in England is considered in relation to the impact exerted on it from the field of power, with a focus on three interrelated drivers and pressures that are pertinent to this study due to their importance in the context of potential discrimination in determining who participates in the field. In Section 3, the expansion and marketisation of HE in England is analysed, whilst in Section 4 consideration is given to the perception of universities being institutions of social change and mobility. Finally, in Section 5, the field is considered in relation

to the political rhetoric and policy drivers to increase the diversity of academic staff in the HE profession in universities in England. A summary of the chapter is provided in Section 6.

## **2. Governance structure of universities in England**

Francis Bacon (1597) wrote “*ipsa scientia potestas est*” (‘knowledge itself is power’). As the key generators and owners of knowledge in society, universities are powerful institutions with the authority to control access to knowledge and higher-level qualifications (symbolic capital). Universities in England are independent bodies, and most are exempt charities. They are regulated by the Office for Students (OfS), a non-departmental public body of the UK Government’s Department for Education (DfE). The Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017 (UK Parliament, 2017) was the first major regulatory reform to the UK HE sector for 25 years. Like its predecessor (Further and Higher Education Act 1992), HERA (UK Parliament, 2017, part 1, paragraph 2.8) states that universities in England have institutional autonomy for day-to-day management, the content and structure of courses, academic judgment, admissions, and staffing.

Although considered autonomous institutions, universities are subject to influences, pressures and rules exerted by the field of power. These include some significant public features, a practical example of which is the capping of student tuition fees by the DfE (tuition fees are the main source of income for most universities). Furthermore, the government’s increasing control over universities, for example as legislated through HERA (2017) and practiced through the OfS, has weakened positional autonomy in English HE (though it remains relatively strong in comparison to other public sector institutions).

## **3. The expansion and marketisation of HE**

### ***3.1 The history of universities in the UK prior to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century***

The first degree-awarding universities in Europe were established in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. Developed under the aegis of the church, they trained and prepared elite men for classical professions such as priests, doctors, and lawyers (Torstendahl, 1993). In England, the ancient universities of Oxford (established 1096) and Cambridge (established 1209) served this purpose. Early universities were therefore the domain of privileged, wealthy men and were a vehicle for social reproduction. The age of enlightenment, the industrial revolution, and the development of capitalism in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries led to an expansion in the breadth of knowledge particularly in the sciences. This ultimately led to the remodelling of universities as non-

denominational institutions, illustrated through the establishment of University College London in 1826 as the 'Godless institution of Gower Street'. However, as Boden and Epstein (2011) note, universities remained the sole preserve of society's elite men.

Oxford and Cambridge endured as the only universities in England until 1832 when the University of Durham was founded. This was followed in 1836 by the University of London, which was formed by the joining of King's College London and University College London. However, none of these institutions admitted women as students. New universities were founded from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s ('red brick' and 'civic' universities). They focused on developing new forms of knowledge and they served a different purpose from the ancient universities, for example, civic universities aimed to benefit the economy and society of the cities in which they were based. Boden and Epstein (2011, p. 15) state that these new universities "...were liberated from theological orthodoxy" that characterised the ancient universities yet remained the domain of the wealthy and the powerful.

The 19<sup>th</sup> Century also saw the first polytechnics established in England, which aimed to deliver applied education for professional practice, particularly in engineering and applied science. These included the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society (1832) and London Polytechnic (1838). Polytechnics offered HE courses and were governed and administered by the Council for National Academic Awards. The polytechnics occupied a different space to the universities and provided access to HE to people from poorer backgrounds.

The establishment of the North of England Council for Promoting HE to Women in 1867 led to some universities delivering lectures for women and, in 1868, the University of London voted to admit women to sit the General Examination, thus becoming the first university in the world to accept women. Yet it was not for many years that women were allowed to be awarded degrees. This differed by university, for example, 1878 at the University of London, 1895 at Durham, 1920 at Oxford, and 1948 at Cambridge. The red brick and civic universities were co-educational from the start. However, women's participation in HE was highly segregated by, for example, women-only colleges.

### ***3.2 The expansion of universities and student numbers from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century***

There was scant government funding for UK universities until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when the University Grants Committee was established in 1918. In the early 1950s, the Committee predicted a demographic bulge in the number of university places required from 1965 onwards, due to the post-war increase in the UK birth rate and an increasing trend for children to remain

in education for longer (Perkin, 1972; Shattock and Berdahl, 1984). Modelling presented by the Committee in 1956 indicated that the existing institutions would be unable to accommodate the predicted expansion and, if this increase in demand for university places was to be supported, then the creation of new universities was necessary. Accommodating the expansion was politically supported, thus paving the way for the Robbins Report (1963), which resulted in the immediate expansion of universities in the UK at the expense of the state. By the end of the 1960s, the number of UK universities had increased from 22 to 45. One of these new universities was the Open University, which was established in 1969 to provide access to HE for people who had previously been excluded from traditional HE, including women and people from poorer backgrounds. During the 1960s and 1970s, there was significant freedom in HE and decisions over what to research and teach were largely determined by academics (Boden and Epstein, 2011).

From the 1980s the Conservative government embarked on a radical agenda to disband the welfare state and let free market economic theory (neoliberalism) dominate. For HE, this was expounded in the controversial Jarratt Report (1985), which downplayed the social and cultural role of HE and took the stance that HE was an enterprise in which students were the customers, academics were deliverers of education, and vice-chancellors (VCs) were chief executives, thus accelerating the espousal of business models within HE. Brennan et al. (2007) explain that this neoliberal approach assumes that market competition within and between universities will increase quality, efficiency, and effectiveness, and is underpinned with management principles from the private sector (often termed new managerialism, Section 2.2.3, Chapter 4). In this political and economic context, the policy driver for HE was to continue the strategy to expand HE, whilst reducing government expenditure and increasing efficiency. Maitlis (2000) notes that, between 1980 and 2000, public spending on HE increased by 45% in real terms, whilst student numbers increased by more than 100% (from 800,000 to 1.7 million). He asserts that universities were only able to withstand these funding pressures by reducing expenditure on academic staff, for example, by providing older staff with early retirement.

The funding cuts have been, and continue to be, expressed using terms such as efficiency gains, value for money and cost savings. Naidoo et al. (2011), Brown (2015), and Welch (2021) have emphasised how the funding cuts were introduced alongside quasi-market mechanisms such as competition for funding, competitive assessment of research, private sector forms of management, the remodelling of university governing bodies on corporate lines, and the introduction of sector-wide performance indicators focussed on outputs. The aim has been to

marketise the provision of HE so that the supply and demand of university activities are balanced through the price mechanism.

In the mid-1980s, the growth was accelerated to such an extent that HE in England was considered to have transformed from an elite into a mass system of education (Mayhew et al., 2004; Trow, 2006). In the early 1990s, alongside the continued growth of universities and student numbers, the Government's HE policy focused on promoting competition in the sector and restructuring the HE market. Between 1980 and 2010, the number of students increased from 800,000 to over 2.5 million (213% increase) (Welch, 2021). To acknowledge and support this rapid expansion, from 1992 many polytechnics were granted university status, increasing the number of UK universities from c. 46 in 1991 to 89 by 1994. From the mid-1990s, the costs of HE tuition started to be transferred to the students through the removal of undergraduate grants and the introduction of student maintenance loans and tuition fees, part of the long-term plan to marketise the HE system, reduce public spending on HE, and change public perception of HE education as a private benefit rather than a public good (Welch, 2021). There was a further wave of institutions being granted university status in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; 51 new universities were created between 2000 and 2018. Despite this expansion, participation in HE remains unequal – this is discussed in Section 4.

### ***3.3 Competition, autonomy, and power***

Alongside this expansion in the number of universities and students, the UK Government introduced other neoliberal policies into the HE system, including hyper-competition (Welch, 2021). Naidoo (2018, p. 605) refers to this as “competition fetish”, arguing that competition is used to displace and conceal fundamental issues in HE. It is presented as the solution to issues such as increasing quality, achieving equity, and realising efficiencies. Examples of how the UK Government has introduced such fierce competition into the HE field include: encouraging universities to compete on price (the premise being that higher ranked universities would be empowered to charge higher fees and attract more students, whilst lower ranked universities would have to reduce fees to survive); making it easier for private providers to be registered as universities (part of HERA, 2017); and removing the student number controls from 2015/16 (Jones, 2019; McNay, 2021; Welch, 2021). The underpinning belief in introducing this competition was that universities would have to increase the quality of their offering. The competition for student numbers reflects two key principles of capitalism – constant growth and inequity – with higher ranked universities using their reputational capital to compete fiercely against lower ranked universities (McNay, 2021).

It is important to note that, as a relatively autonomous field, HE is not completely powerless when confronted with this increased pressure from the political field. For example, in relation to the government coercion for universities to compete on price, in practice, the field exerted influence over the field of power by almost universally charging the maximum fee level and therefore choosing to compete on quality rather than price (Watson and Widin, 2015; McNay, 2021). This resulted in the elevated importance of performance league tables and metrics, further differentiating and stratifying institutions in the HE field (Section 2.1.3, Chapter 4), whilst also undermining the government's public commitment to enabling social mobility through widening participation and fair access (Section 4.1).

Since the 1980s, the field of power has also forced a change in the perceived purpose of HE, from being knowledge for its own sake (autonomy) to HE serving a role in supporting the economic field and the knowledge economy (heteronomy). Maton (2005) argues that governments have increasingly viewed HE as a policy lever that will enable the country to achieve greater competitiveness within the globalised knowledge economy. Deer (2003) identifies Prime Minister James Callaghan's Ruskin College speech (Callaghan, 1976), which advocated for the greater responsiveness of HE to external social and economic needs, as one of the first signs of the move to integrate and functionalise HE within the broader social environment that has resulted in academic activities becoming increasingly dominated by the economic field. She notes they are "subjected to forms of rationalisation justified for economic purposes" (Deer, 2003, p. 197). Maton (2005) highlights how universities are subject to an ongoing political discourse that views them as an instrument for achieving politically desirable outcomes such as meeting the skills needs of business and industry. Furthermore, the expansion of the number of students and universities has increased the overall cost of HE to the public purse, which has resulted in a growing expectation for universities to demonstrate their relevance and impact to society (Brennan, 2007). The inclusion of the assessment of impact in the Research Excellence Framework, an exercise which is linked to funding for universities, is a prime example of how the government is using power to coerce universities to change. Maton (2005) argues that this has resulted in weaker relational autonomy for the HE field.

Mayhew et al. (2004, p. 77) note that the relationship between government and universities in the 1960s was one of "high trust" with "relatively few systematic checks on how universities spent their money [or] ... conducted their internal affairs". However, they argue that the number of audits and checks imposed on universities in modern society suggests the relationship has become "too low trust". Welch (2021) highlights how the government-introduced market disciplines, hyper-competition, and the growing subordination of academic interest to economic



needs has resulted across the sector in reduced funding and resources, course closures, departmental and organisational restructurings, institutional mergers, and redundancies (particularly through waves of voluntary severance schemes). The impact of the field of power has shaped the functioning of the HE field and has resulted in tensions between the HE sector and government (with the government exerting increasing control over universities and providing less funding), reduced power and influence of the HE field in social space, increased competition between universities (particularly in terms of reputation, funding and student numbers), increased competition within universities such as between academic staff (for example, for promotion or for greater job security), and increased competition to enter the academic profession (for example, recruitment at entry-level stage).

Furthermore, the historical evolution of the relationship between the field of power and universities in the field, exerted particularly through the mechanisms of expansion and marketisation, has resulted in a highly differentiated and increasingly stratified HE field, which is considered in Section 4. Despite increasing regulation and control from the field of power, universities in England are still able to operate semi-autonomously and with a high degree of independence from their social practices in relation to the broader social environment, as detailed in HERA (2017), which confirms that they have institutional autonomy for day-to-day management, the content and structure of courses, academic judgment, admissions, and staffing. This is important from a Bourdieusian perspective as it explicitly confirms that the HE field is responsible for the key mechanisms of social reproduction, including determining academic judgement and controlling the processes for the entry, progression and exit of staff and students.

Politically and socially, one of the ways in which the field of power has been able to exert greater control over the HE field has been through the increasing capital held by politicians. A high proportion of MPs have been privately (29%) or grammar school educated (17%) and are Oxbridge graduates (24%, rising to 31% for Conservative MPs and 57% for the Cabinet, compared to <1% of current 18-year-olds) (Sutton Trust, 2019). Deer (2003) notes how the accumulation of social capital by the political elite has better positioned it to influence the academic field according to its own values, which tend to be those of the dominant class. Many scholars highlight how marketisation, tight controls on resources and neoliberal mechanisms have enabled the UK Government to exert greater financial control over the operation of the UK HE field, whilst restricting the financial independence of universities by capping tuition fees (Deer, 2003; Brown, 2015; Holmwood, 2016; Jones, 2019; Welch, 2021). Deer (2003) argues that

by promoting a discourse based on HE's role in supporting the economic field, the political field has increased its ideological power (Deer, 2003).

#### **4. Universities as institutions of social change and mobility**

##### ***4.1 Universities as 'engines of social mobility'***

As noted in Chapter 1, the concept of meritocratic society is a frequently identified characteristic of democratic capitalist states, such as the UK. Notwithstanding the capitalist meritocracy paradox, these states require widespread acceptance of meritocracy to enable the smooth running of society. Therefore, alongside the expansion and marketisation of HE, successive UK governments have pursued a strategy that labels universities as institutions that enable social mobility for those with merit, regardless of background, through the transformative experience of education (Department for Education and Skills, 2003; Sutton Trust, 2009; BIS, 2010; Milburn, 2012; BIS, 2015; Savage et al., 2015). Politically and economically, universities are represented as critical to the demonstration of a successful meritocracy through their role as "powerful engines of social mobility" (Johnson, 2015, p. 8). This view is supported by the Sutton Trust (2009), which claims that academia could be a much more significant driver of social mobility than all other professions. In 2021, the Trust presented research to support the important role of universities in driving social mobility, whilst acknowledging the wider social and educational inequalities that constrain HE (Sutton Trust, 2021).

The Robbins Report (1963) identified HE as a mechanism for social mobility; however, as noted in the Dearing Report (1997), the expansion that followed its implementation did not lead to a notable broadening of the class constitution of the student demographic that entered HE. The Dearing Report (1997, paragraph 5.41) reiterated the view from Robbins and stated that HE "should promote greater equality of social and economic opportunity", recommending that HE needed to "take active steps to encourage access by under-represented groups." Since the report's publication, political and economic policy for HE has focussed on increasing the number of student entrants to HE from under-represented social groups (widening participation policies), whilst attempting to ensure that everyone has a fair chance to be accepted on to HE courses, especially those at selective universities (fair access policies).

In England, the Social Mobility Commission (previously Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, 2012-16 and Child Poverty Commission, 2010-12) is an advisory non-departmental public body of the DfE, tasked with promoting social mobility in England by challenging universities to play their part. Universities feature heavily in its annual report setting out

progress with improving social mobility. As the regulator for universities in England, the OfS has a strategic priority to increase access, participation, and outcomes for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. The impact of this political and economic discourse and regulation has increased the pressure on universities in the HE field to invest resources in staff posts and activities to support this agenda, whilst also considering the class constitution of current and future student cohorts, reviewing access to courses, and engaging more closely with the field of secondary education.

This role of universities in enabling social mobility is not a view shared by all those in the HE field, particularly those institutions that perceive this as a threat to their capital, prestige and relative positioning in the field. For example, during her tenure as VC of the University of Cambridge, Alison Richards stated that the purpose of elite universities “is not to be engines for promoting social justice” and they should be left to educate and research and not be forced to fix problems of social mobility (Shepherd, 2008; van Gilder Cooke, 2013). A further example is the Russell Group’s response to the government’s proposal to include widening participation targets in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (BIS, 2015) in which they argued against the inclusion of such targets, stating that teaching excellence should not be linked to widening participation (Russell Group, 2016). Responding to the same Green Paper, other groups in the sector welcomed the government’s commitment to widening participation from those from disadvantaged backgrounds and supported the proposal to include widening participation targets to the TEF. For example, the University Alliance (2016, p. 12), representing predominantly post-1992 universities, wrote that they “strongly support[ed] the need for targets to widen participation” and the UCU (2016, p. 4) said that they welcomed the “special emphasis on widening participation and social mobility in the proposed TEF”. This split of opinion suggests that elite universities may be less committed to fair access and widening participation for students to HE. It could also suggest that recruiting managers in elite universities may be more likely than those in other universities to apply similar thought processes to the recruitment of academic staff.

#### ***4.2 Unequal participation in HE***

The expansion of HE provision in England contributed to a greater proportion of women participating in HE as students. Women are now more likely than men to enrol on a degree course in the UK. In 2017/18, for example, the HE participation level for young women reached 56.6%, compared to just 44.1% for young men; however, women graduates are less likely than male graduates to reach senior positions and have lower lifetime earnings (Hewitt, 2020).

In terms of class, despite the political and economic policies, including significant investment in widening participation and fair access, student admissions data demonstrate that the expansion of HE since the 1960s has not resulted in equal representation from the lower classes and their participation in HE remains low. Table 3 shows the progression rate for pupils from state schools in England to HE by age 19, split by eligibility for Free School Meals (FSM). Whilst the proportion of disadvantaged pupils progressing to HE increased from 19.8% in 2010/11 to 28.1% in 2020/21, the gap in progression rates between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils widened from 17.7% in 2010/11 to 18.7% in 2020/21. The gap in 2019/20 (19.1%) was the largest since 2005/06. This suggests that strong and powerful barriers remain that prevent equal access from different class backgrounds and that HE remains a distinctly higher-class field.

Table 3: Percentage of 15-year-old state-funded pupils in England who entered HE by age 19 by free school meal (FSM) status (DfE, 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022c)

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
<b>FSM pupils</b>	19.8%	20.3%	21.3%	22.3%	24.1%	25.7%	26.2%	26.3%	26.3%	26.6%	28.1%
<b>Non-FSM pupils</b>	37.4%	38.3%	38.8%	39.1%	41.6%	43.3%	43.9%	44.9%	45.1%	45.7%	46.8%
<b>Gap</b>	17.7%	18.0%	17.5%	16.8%	17.5%	17.6%	17.7%	18.6%	18.8%	19.1%	18.7%

Furthermore, access to the highest ranked universities remains highly socially polarised and admissions data indicate that there has been little change in these trends over time. Boliver (2013) used data from the Universities and College Admissions Service to provide evidence that students from disadvantaged backgrounds (based on the occupations of their parents) were less likely to apply to Russell Group universities than students from advantaged backgrounds, even when they held similar qualifications. Research by the Office for Fair Access (2014) indicates that teenagers from the most advantaged 20% of families in England were 6.3 times more likely to enter a top UK university in 2011-12 than those from the most disadvantaged 40% of families – almost the same level as in 1998. In addition, data from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2015) demonstrate that only 3% of 18-year-olds from disadvantaged backgrounds enter highly selective universities compared with 21% of those from the most advantaged backgrounds. The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (2013) presents data to evidence that the proportion of young full-time undergraduate entrants to Russell Group universities who are from lower class backgrounds (NS-SEC classes 4-7) decreased from 19.9% in 2002-03 to 19.0% in 2011-12.

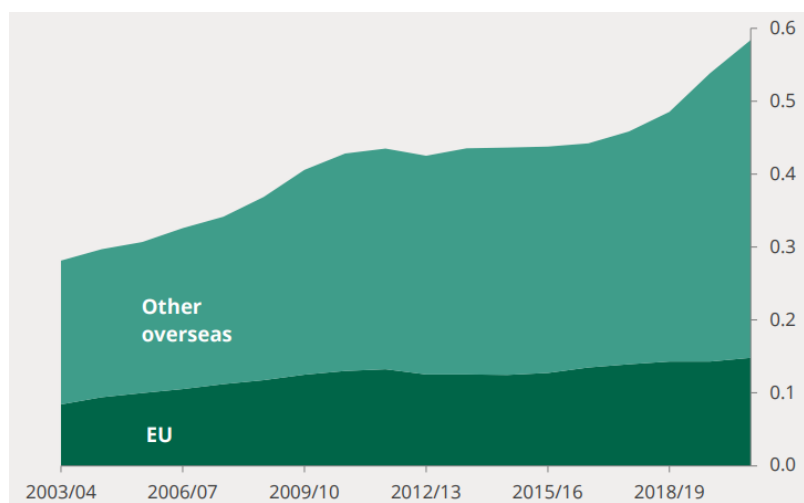
Despite the uneven progression rates to HE and uneven participation rates in attending highly ranked universities, it has been argued that the expansion of HE and the political discourse on widening participation has further embedded the general myth of meritocracy within the UK at large, blinding society to endemic bias and discrimination – Bourdieu’s concept of doxa. Reay (2006) argues that despite Britain being held up as a meritocracy, social mobility rates demonstrate that education in the UK is characterised by stasis. In this vein, Reay (2011b, p. 125) also refers to social mobility as “the chimera of modern times, continuously talked about, endlessly exaggerated, but more myth than reality.” Young (2001, paragraph 9), who coined the term and concept of meritocracy as a satirical warning, reflected on the situation in the UK and said:

“Education has put its seal of approval on a minority and its seal of disapproval on the many who fail to shine from the time they are relegated to the bottom streams at the age of seven or before.”

### 4.3 International students

The expansion of HE has led to an increase in the number of international students studying at UK universities (Figure 10). In 2020/21, international students constituted 22% (584,100) of the total student population in the UK, with China, India and Nigeria sending the most students (Bolton and Lewis, 2023). International students are omitted from the analysis on student access and participation based on class background due to the proxies used for class, which are UK-based, and the challenges with defining class across countries because class is located and relational within sociocultural contexts. However, the increase in international student numbers may impact the access and participation rates for UK students, especially those from lower-class backgrounds.

Figure 10: International student numbers at UK universities, all modes and levels, in millions (Bolton and Lewis, 2023)



The universities with the most international students tend to be Russell Group or specialist institutions (Figure 11), with international students attracted by high league table positions. Tuition fees for international students are not capped and therefore provide a mechanism for universities to increase their economic capital and therefore power within the field. The UK Government asserts that universities do not prioritise places for international students, whilst acknowledging they plan the size and shape of their student intakes (DfE, 2022b). Therefore, they can pursue a strategy to enrol large numbers of international students and reduce the places available for UK students. Mountford-Zimdars (2020) contends that this is at the expense of UK students from lower-class backgrounds. Within a Bourdieusian context, it can be argued that such an approach enables elite universities to portray an inclusive and diverse image without meaningfully addressing social mobility or equality in the UK.

Figure 11: International students in UK universities 2020/21: Top 10 (Bolton and Lewis, 2023)

<i>rank</i>	By absolute number	Number	% of students	<i>rank</i>	By % of students	% of students	Number
1	University College London	23,360	51%	1	London Business School	80%	1,965
2	The University of Manchester	17,625	39%	2	Royal College of Art	79%	2,155
3	The University of Edinburgh	15,590	41%	3	LSE	67%	9,030
4	King's College London	15,550	40%	4	Royal College of Music	55%	510
5	Coventry University	13,760	35%	5	Imperial	53%	11,265
6	The University of Glasgow	13,245	36%	6	London Sch of Hygiene & Tropical Med.	48%	530
7	Imperial	11,265	53%	7	Royal Academy of Music	48%	385
8	The University of Sheffield	11,260	37%	8	Cranfield University	43%	2,160
9	University of the Arts, London	11,230	53%	9	King's College London	40%	15,550
10	The University of Leeds	10,455	28%	10	Courtauld Institute of Art	40%	230

## 5. Increasing the diversity of academic staff

### 5.1 Equality legislation in the UK

Thane (2010) presents research that tracks the UK's long history of inequality and discrimination, for example, on grounds of class and gender, and notes that in post-war Britain inequalities based on personal characteristics were a deep-rooted, unquestioned part of British culture. Since 1945, there have been significant increases in awareness and understanding of inequalities and the UK Government has passed numerous laws to legislate against such discrimination, largely in response to reports of persecution and lobbying by campaign groups. In 2010, the Equality Act was introduced in the UK to bring together 116 separate pieces of legislation into one single Act. It recognises nine characteristics which are protected, i.e. it is against the law to discriminate against someone because of: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Class is not a protected characteristic under the Act. However, one of the elements of the Act that did not come into force in 2010 was socio-economic inequalities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. The socio-economic duty requires public bodies to adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class. This has since been implemented in Scotland (2018) and Wales (2021) but there are no plans yet to implement it in England. The Sutton Trust's *Elitist Britain* report (2019) recommends that data on the class background of employees should be collected and monitored in the same way as gender and ethnicity, with a particular focus on how class background interacts with seniority in an organisation. It also recommends that class pay gaps should be monitored and addressed.

## **5.2 Workplace diversity**

Whilst not eradicating inequalities and discrimination, this flurry of legislation, culminating in the Equality Act 2010, has raised the importance of matters of equality, diversity and inclusion in the political and economic fields, which has influenced other fields. This coincided with the development of human resource management (HRM) (as opposed to personnel administration), which emerged in the 1980s in response to the impact on organisations of globalisation, deregulation, rapid technological change, and the increasing volume of legislation (Cushway, 1994). HRM aims to ensure the effective utilisation of employees towards achieving strategic goals. As such, it recognises the benefits to an organisation of a diverse workforce, particularly in terms of globalisation, competitive advantage and labour market shifts, and is a process of valuing and developing people at work (Yakura, 1996; Paillé et al., 2014).

When an organisation adopts specific HRM practices, and implements them well, they can have a positive impact on workforce equality and diversity, which can have positive psychological benefits for the workforce and other stakeholders. For example, Chorobot-Mason and Aramovich (2013) explored the relationship between employee perceptions of workplace diversity and their likelihood of leaving their employer. They found that employees who perceived there to be equality of opportunities and fair treatment were more likely to want to stay with their employer. In a similar vein, Kundu and Mor (2017) explored perceptions of workplace diversity in the IT industry in India, finding that employees positively acknowledged diversity and diversity management and that employees' perception of the promotion of gender diversity was positively associated with organisational performance.

Professions with members that span a diverse range of backgrounds can more effectively cater to a diverse society. In *Unleashing Aspirations*, The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions

recommended each profession to review its practice on fair access, report findings publicly and develop an action plan of recommendations to improve fair access and diversity of professionals (Milburn, 2009); this has yet to be done for HE.

### ***5.3 The HE field and workplace diversity***

The Dearing Report (1997, paragraph 14.39) stated:

“Although higher education has made good progress in recent years in providing equal opportunities for different types of students, the record on staff is less good.”

The report highlighted the significant underrepresentation among academic staff of women, ethnic minorities, and people with disabilities, noting “such inequalities run counter to the claimed values of higher education.” However, there was no mention in the report in relation to the underrepresentation of those from lower-class backgrounds, which is of interest considering the report’s focus on class background in relation to broadening the diversity of the student body. Since then, and alongside the political and economic policies to expand and marketise HE and the drive to recruit students from a more diverse class base, universities have been increasingly presented as beacons of equality and there has been much rhetoric about increasing the diversity of academic staff.

Traditionally, the academic profession was the privilege of white, middle-class men; however, by the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the demographic profile of academics was becoming more socially representative (Boden and Epstein, 2011). Further improving equality and diversity in the academic workforce features in the strategies of non-governmental bodies overseeing HE in England, including the OfS, UK Research and Innovation, and Research England. It is also a key topic for sector representative groups, such as Universities UK, and the University and College Union, the main trade union for academic staff in the UK. Gender equality is a key priority, with gender distribution among academic staff being the most common policy in national strategies on human resources in HE in Europe (OECD, 2020).

In the UK, the HE funding bodies established the Equality Challenge Unit in the early 2000s to support the UK HE sector to promote equality and diversity for all staff and students (the Unit was replaced by Advance HE in 2018). It launched high-profile initiatives that aim to address inequalities in HE such as the Athena Swan Charter (established in 2005) and the Race Equality Charter (established in 2016). This has contributed to the increased focus in universities, particularly over the past two decades, on the equality and diversity of academic staff, with most universities adopting this as a specific HRM policy. An example of the outward demonstration



that universities have participated with this agenda is provided by the number of institutions that have engaged with the equality and diversity charter marks, which shows their commitment to reducing inequalities (in November 2021, 147 UK institutions held an Athena Swan institutional award and 80 were members of the Race Equality Charter). However, these initiatives have been criticised for providing a public facade and building a myth that institutions value equality and diversity, whilst hiding the lack of desire or progress to make structural changes or disrupt power dynamics (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020) (Chapter 1, Section 2.4).

#### ***5.4 The HE field and class diversity***

Whilst the underrepresentation of some groups of people in HE occupations has been explored – particularly in terms of gender and to a lesser extent race – class background has been left virtually unexamined, particularly in the UK where such studies are rare. This is surprising, considering the substantial body of research and continuing focus in the UK on the strong link between students' class background, access to HE and social mobility. Explanations for this lack of research include claims that the class analysis of academia threatens “the ‘standards’ and ‘discipline’ of the essentially conservative [HE] institution” (Dews and Leste Law, 1995, p. 6) and that academia downplays class as an issue of importance, privileging abstract academic knowledge over lived experiences through a form of indirect stigmatisation (Lee, 2017). Bhopal (2018) argues that outwardly universities promote a diverse and inclusive stance; however, internally there is little leadership or academic attention given to such debates. It is probable that characteristics such as gender and race are more visible than class as a mechanism for inequality, with class inequalities arguably being concealed through practices of symbolic violence, indirect class-based stigma, or signals of a lower-class background being hidden by agents. Despite the somewhat limited scope of the research to date, Altbach (2012) suggests that it is possible to make some general assumptions about the link between the class background and the academic profession: i) it is largely drawn from the middle and upper classes; ii) it is almost exclusively the preserve of relatively privileged groups in society; and iii) academics from lower-class origins do not tend to reach the pinnacle of the profession.

Much of the research on class, the HE field, and the academic profession has been autoethnographic and most was undertaken in the USA during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. These studies report similar findings, namely that academia is a distinctively higher-class space in which academics from lower-class backgrounds find it challenging to adapt and feel comfortable, particularly in terms of identity and culture. For example, a study by Blau (2020 [1973]) found that the reputation of an institution has a profound connection to the class origins of the faculty, with those with a parent who has a degree being disproportionately more likely

to be employees at more prestigious institutions. Light et al. (1973) found that 35% of the faculty at the top twelve US universities held their highest degree from the same institutions, concluding that access to and seniority within these institutions is largely a function of class background. Presthus (1978) demonstrated that the eight Ivy League institutions employed staff denied tenure from another Ivy League institution before they chose to employ an academic from outside the group. More recently, Oldfield and Conant's (2001) research demonstrated that most US academics had parents in the top two tiers of the Nam-Powers-Terrie scale (similar to NS-SEC 1-2). Their research revealed that this was the case even in universities with a broad class diversity of students with academics being three times more likely to come from socially privileged backgrounds than their students.

In the UK, despite the government rhetoric, investment and incentives, there is considerable evidence that inequalities persist in the academic profession and there remains a lack of diversity in the academic staff base, especially at the more senior levels. In terms of class background, a report by the Sutton Trust (2019) uses secondary education as a proxy for the class backgrounds of UK VCs, demonstrating how this is skewed towards those from more privileged backgrounds when compared to the current UK school population (Table 4). The same report also uses the type of university from which the VCs graduated as another proxy of class background. This indicates that 51% of UK VCs graduated from a Russell Group university (compared to 6% of the population who hold such a degree) and 19% graduated from Oxbridge (compared to less than 1% of the population).

Table 4: The type of secondary education attended by UK VCs compared to the current UK school population (Sutton Trust, 2019)

Type of secondary education	UK VCs*	Current UK school population	Variance
Private	19%	7%	+12%
Grammar	40%	5%	+35%
Comprehensive	41%	88%	-47%

\* Only those who attended secondary education in the UK are included – 83% of UK VCs.

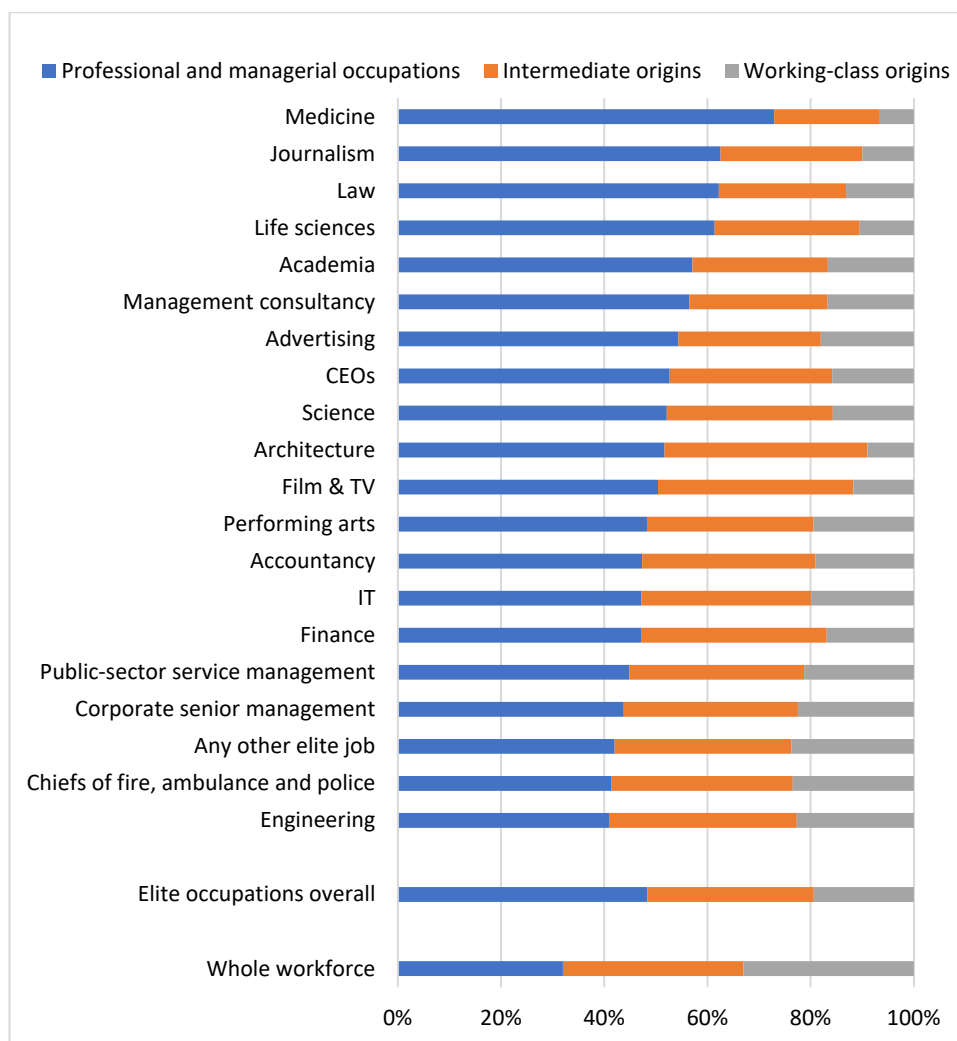
A review of the biographies of the 24 Russell Group VCs in post (November 2021) indicated that, of those who attended a university in the UK, all but two (90%) were awarded doctorates from another Russell Group institution, with 32% of those awarded their doctorate from Oxbridge.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Five VCs were awarded their doctorates at non-UK institutions (three of which are in the top 10 of the World University Rankings 2021).

Research by Breakwell and Tytherleigh (2008) reinforces this by indicating that Oxbridge experience at either under- or postgraduate level was a marker for VCs. They also found evidence of an intra-sub-sector recruitment strata with VCs being recruited from pre-1992 institutions to pre-1992 institutions and from post-1992 institutions to post-1992 institutions, which provides evidence of the continuing binary divide between these types of university.

Laurison and Friedman’s (2019) research to identify the class backgrounds of those working in the occupations in the top tier of the NS-SEC is presented in Figure 12. The graph ranks these occupations with the largest proportion of people from privileged backgrounds at the top and the most ‘class diverse’ occupations at the bottom. This provides considerable evidence that the academic profession contains a high proportion of people from privileged backgrounds (nearly 60%) and is markedly less class diverse than most other elite occupations.

Figure 12: Class origins of those working in the occupations in the top tier of the NS-SEC (UK Labour Force Survey, Laurison and Friedman, 2019)



This indicates that the class demographic of the academic profession mirrors the pattern evidenced in the student body and is predominantly made up of people from privileged backgrounds. Furthermore, Friedman and Laurison (2020) found evidence of micro-class reproduction in academia, where there is a tendency of children to undertake the same occupation as at least one of their parents. Their research demonstrated that people with parents who are academics are at least five times more likely to be academics than children whose parents did any other type of work. Bourdieu (1990 [1977]) asserts that cultural reproduction occurs when parents pass on specific forms of knowledge to their children, which shapes their capital and habitus. On a micro-class level, Jonsson et al. (2009), Weeden and Grusky (2012), and Jonsson et al. (2018) argue that occupations are an important conduit for social reproduction, with parents providing their children with occupational advantage by sharing specific forms of knowledge and guidance about what is valued in their own profession, as well as sharing social capital (such as occupational contacts) and sometimes leveraging opportunities (such as organising internships).

Whilst this suggests that the HE field is a firmly middle-class space, it raises a question as to whether there are differences in terms of the stratification of HE, with higher ranked universities employing more staff from privileged backgrounds compared to lower ranked universities (as per the student demographic). This is explored in Chapter 4.

### ***5.5 The HE field and other measures of diversity***

In terms of gender, Sutherland (1985) describes the university as a man's world and Benschop and Brouns (2003, p. 195) highlight how universities undertake extensive research into gender, work and organisation, yet turn a "deaf ear and blind eye" to the application of this knowledge to their own structures. Whilst the representation of women in UK academia has increased steadily over time, data from Advance HE (2021) provides evidence of the noticeable underrepresentation of women in senior academic roles (Table 5) and of the gender pay gap in professorial salaries (Table 6). When considering the higher ranked universities, the review of the biographies of the 24 Russell Group VCs in post (November 2021) indicated that only eight of these VCs are female (33%). This suggests that women are underrepresented in senior decision-making roles in HE and face significant barriers to promotion compared to men.

In terms of race, the Advance HE (2021) data demonstrate little evidence of a race pay gap for professors who are UK nationals, but there is a notable race pay gap for non-UK nationals (Table 6). However, the data provide clear evidence of the underrepresentation of academic staff who identify as BAME in senior academic positions (Table 5). Among UK academic staff, BAME staff

comprised 11.2% of those in professional occupations compared with just 6.6% of those who worked as managers, directors and senior officials (Advance HE, 2021). This gap was wider among non-UK academics, of whom BAME staff comprised 33.2% of those who worked in professional occupations compared with 7.6% who worked as managers, directors, and senior officials. Bhopal (2018) argues that the perpetuation of white senior academic managers reinforces the status quo and the dominance of whiteness, thus protecting and reproducing white privilege in UK HE. The Runnymede Trust (2015) found that only 85 professors in the UK were Black (0.49%), among which only 17 were women. This suggests that race and gender may combine to create a double disadvantage, and potentially a triple disadvantage if also combined with class – particularly for Black female academics (Bhopal, 2019). Friedman and Laurison (2020) highlight the significant and complex relationship between class and race in the UK, with Black, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi people being far less likely to come from privileged backgrounds than white people.

Bhopal (2018, p. 56) argues that equality and diversity policy making in the UK “has focused on gender equality at the expense of intersectional identities.” She highlights that the most disadvantaged group in HE is BAME women, who continue to experience overt and covert processes of racism, exclusion and marginalisation (Bhopal, 2019). As these issues fail to be addressed, BAME women continue to experience far greater barriers to promotion and success than white women. Bhopal (2018) states that whilst the Athena Swan charter mark has helped to raise awareness of gender inequalities, the main beneficiaries have been white middle-class women (particularly those in STEMM subjects). She presents evidence that 23.9% of professors are white women whilst only 2.1% are BAME women, and that there are 40 female VCs but only one is Black (Bhopal, 2020). One possible explanation for this is that equality and diversity work undertaken in HE often conflates gender with race because of the logic of efficiency – this privileges work on gender and enables universities to publicly work towards equality and inclusion without having to address the deep-rooted structures and practices that lead to white privilege (Bhopal and Henderson, 2021). Furthermore, most gender equality work in UK universities is led by white women who tend to lead agendas based on their experiences. Munir et al. (2014, cited in Tzanakou and Pearce, 2019) found that a disproportionate majority of Swan champions in universities were white women. Furthermore, BAME women face multiple forms of discrimination in academia, based on both their gender and race (and class background), which means that the barriers and challenges they face are unique and not solely related to gender. Whilst focussing specifically on gender, the Swan work might not sufficiently tackle the underlying systemic issues that impact BAME women (Bhopal and Henderson, 2021).

Bhopal (2018) argues that there is little recognition in UK HE of the existence of racism, with examples of racist behaviour being dismissed as anecdotal or isolated incidents. The introduction of the Race Equality Charter in 2016 is therefore regarded by Bhopal (2018, p. 53) as an important development in “challenging whiteness and white privilege in the white space of the academy.” However, many universities implement equality and diversity policies as tick box exercises, focused on figures and audits rather than structural change (Bhopal, 2018; 2019). This gives the illusion that universities are addressing racial inequalities, despite most change being superficial.

Table 5: Proportion of academic staff in UK universities in 2019/20 by contract level, gender, race identity and disability status, with England and Wales Census (2011a, 2011b, 2011c) data included as a benchmark

	Gender		Race identity		Disability status	
	Female	Male	BAME	White	Disabled	Non-disabled
<b>England and Wales Census 2011</b>	51%	49%	14%	86%	18%	82%
<b>All academic staff</b>	46.7%	53.3%	11.2%	88.8%	4.6%	95.4%
<b>Breakdown by senior academic roles:</b>						
<b>Head of institution: VC/principal</b>	31.2%	68.8%	4.7%	95.3%	2.7%	97.3%
<b>Deputy/pro VC, chief operating officer, registrar, university secretary</b>	36.5%	63.5%	4.7%	95.3%	2.2%	97.8%
<b>Professor</b>	27.9%	72.1%	9.3%	90.7%	3.2%	96.8%
<b>Head/director of major academic area</b>	34.7%	65.3%	6.2%	93.8%	4.4%	95.6%

In respect of disability, Kumari Campbell’s research (2009) demonstrates how ableism occurs at multiple levels, including not only in relation to the physical environment, infrastructure and the use of technology, but also with regard to how disabled people negotiate, mix or communicate with other people. She notes how ableism is an industrial-level concern, as the very idea centres around what it means to be productive, with a historical and pervasive underpinning discourse of disabled people as somehow lacking or unproductive. The expansion and marketisation of HE

in a neoliberal, unregulated economy (Chapter 3, Section 3) has had implications on the working lives of all academics, including increasing precarity and working hours. These implications are exacerbated for disabled academics who already must engage in additional work to organise their own support (Sang, et al., 2021; Merchant et al., 2020). Disabled people are underrepresented in UK HE, with the Advance HE (2021) data demonstrating that only 4.6% of academic staff in the UK have disclosed as disabled (Table 5). Disabled people constitute 18% of the population of England and Wales, which highlights the significant underrepresentation of disabled people in the academic profession, a trend that is exacerbated in senior academic positions. Leathwood (2017) presents evidence that disabled academics are less likely to be included in research assessment exercises, whilst Emira et al. (2018) demonstrate that disabled people they are less likely to be found in academic leadership positions. The Advance HE (2021) data also indicate that there is a disability pay gap among professors, although this is not as large as the pay gaps by gender and race identity for non-UK nationals (Table 6). Smith and Andrews (2015) argue that HE is not supporting disabled staff sufficiently and is failing to address their specific needs.

Table 6: Median pay gaps between professors in UK universities in 2019/20 (Advance HE, 2021)

	<b>Median pay gap</b>
<b>Gender</b>	6.3%
<b>Race identity: UK nationals</b>	0.6%
<b>Race identity: Non-UK nationals</b>	6.6%
<b>Disability status</b>	3.9%

The diversity data presented in Sections 5.4 and 5.5 demonstrate that, despite the political discourse of equality and diversity, strong and persistent inequalities and barriers remain embedded in the academic profession in the UK. Furthermore, the data provide considerable evidence that those with academic capital and therefore power in the HE field are predominantly male, white, and non-disabled (Advance HE, 2015). This accords with Bourdieu's theory, as well as the underpinning assumption of social dominance theory in that social hierarchies are configured with a hegemonic group at the top (Sidanius et al., 1992). One important variable that is not fully understood in terms of the academic profession is class background and how this may intersect with other diversity characteristics to impact (in)equalities.

Despite the significant weight of evidence as to the inequalities faced by underrepresented groups in academia, the League of European Research Universities (2018) notes that many universities claim to have embraced diversity, without having yet developed processes and cultures to facilitate equality of opportunity to staff or implement the required cultural changes. Robertson et al. (2018, p. 14) describe universities thus:

“The ivory tower, like other stately homes in the UK, might present a grand façade to the world but closer inspection reveals a dark, spidery basement full of inequalities.”

## **6. Conclusion**

Bourdieu’s first level of field analysis has been used to analyse the HE field in relation to the field of power. Charting the historical development of universities in England demonstrated that prior to the 1960s English universities were fairly homologous, prestigious institutions that educated a low number of students (virtually all of whom came from the dominant classes). The scarcity of a university degree translated the qualification into symbolic capital that was used to gain access to the top tier of occupations, thus ensuring that children from the dominant classes were employed in dominant occupational positions upon graduation. Therefore, it is argued universities were significant contributors to social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1997).

The rapid expansion in the number of universities and students since the 1960s has coincided with the field of power exerting increasing pressure and control over the HE field, reducing universities’ autonomy and altering their purpose. These changes have resulted in the perceived divergence of the HE field from an elite system serving the dominant classes to a mass system serving a wider cross-section of society. However, within this mass system there remains persistent inequality in terms of access to and participation in the HE field, including inequalities in terms of class background and gender. These barriers are magnified in higher ranked and therefore more powerful universities. The dominant classes remain significantly overrepresented in HE, particularly in higher-ranking universities, and men remain overrepresented in more senior academic positions. It can be argued therefore that the HE field continues to reproduce class and gender inequalities, but these are masked by political discourse and the promotion of socially desirable policies (such as equality, diversity, widening participation, fair access, social mobility). This rhetoric provides society with superficial and arguably misleading evidence of the role of HE in achieving meritocracy, whilst simultaneously ensuring that the field continues to serve and benefit the dominant classes (Bourdieu, 1996).



## Chapter 4: Institutions and agents in HE

### 1. Introduction

Chapter 3 discussed HE in England in relation to the field of power and examined changes over time. Three drivers and pressures were identified: i) the expansion and marketisation of HE; ii) the perception of universities as engines of social mobility; and iii) political rhetoric and policy drivers to diversify the academic profession. HE's rapid expansion, implemented alongside neoliberal policies, has altered the purpose of universities and reduced their autonomy. Persistent inequalities in access and participation remain, despite HE's expansion; these are magnified in higher-ranked universities. HE continues to reproduce class and gender inequalities, which it is claimed are concealed by acts of symbolic violence and political discourse.

This chapter deploys Bourdieu's next levels of field analysis to continue the literature review. Section 2 explores the structural topography of the field, i.e. its institutions and agents, their interconnections, and their power, positions and capital. As fields are always hierarchised, this section is organised around the key theme of diversity, differentiation, and stratification, considered in terms of institutions and the academic profession. In Section 3, the habitus of agents is explored to identify the field's most valuable forms of capital. This is reviewed to ascertain how capital may be used to determine agents' inclusion/exclusion from the academic profession, with a focus on hiring practices.

### 2. Interconnections between agents and field institutions

#### ***2.1 The diversity and stratification of the HE field in England***

The expansion of HE has further grouped universities into clusters that determine, and are determined by, their relational positions in the field. This differentiation has influenced the role of universities, aligning with Bourdieu's view that field institutions hold unequal positions. Whilst HE is no longer the sole preserve of the dominant classes, there remains a close correspondence between specific universities and the dominant classes, which, as argued in Chapter 3, is to some extent masked by the political discourses around matters such as fair access, widening participation, equality and diversity, and the expansion of HE.

### *2.1.1 Historical differentiation*

UK universities have a long history of reputational diversity (Chapter 1). Raffe and Croxford (2015) identify a correlation between the status hierarchy of universities and their age. The two oldest universities, Oxford (established 1096) and Cambridge (established 1209), have always been the UK's most revered and, along with St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh, were considered 'ancient' universities. This distinguished them from the 'redbrick' universities established in the 1800s and early 1900s and the 'civic universities' established in the mid-1900s. These universities became known as 'old' or 'established' to distinguish them from the 'new' universities formed as part of the expansion of HE in the 1960s and 1970s, as recommended by the Robbins Report (1963) (Boliver, 2015).

The 'new' universities were distinguished in name and legal status from the polytechnic institutions established at the same time. This divide between universities and polytechnics was important in terms of institutional autonomy and power within the field; universities were independent bodies, whilst polytechnics were under local authority control; universities were based on the disinterested search for knowledge (autonomy), whilst polytechnics offered more vocational courses to meet local skills needs (heteronomy) (Boliver, 2015; Raffe and Croxford, 2015). In 1992, the UK government sought to abolish this binary divide by offering university status to polytechnics, creating a unitary system for HE.

The creation of the unitary system, combined with the publication of the first university league table, catalysed change in the field, significantly increasing competition between institutions. The Times Good Universities Guide (The Times, 1993, p. 7) stated, "all universities were by no means equal in the new higher education world", predicting that the expansion of universities and student numbers would "make a pecking order inevitable." The league table demonstrated a clear divide between the pre-1992 and post-1992 universities; this divide remains visible today (Boliver, 2015). Rankings and league tables are discussed further in Section 2.1.3.

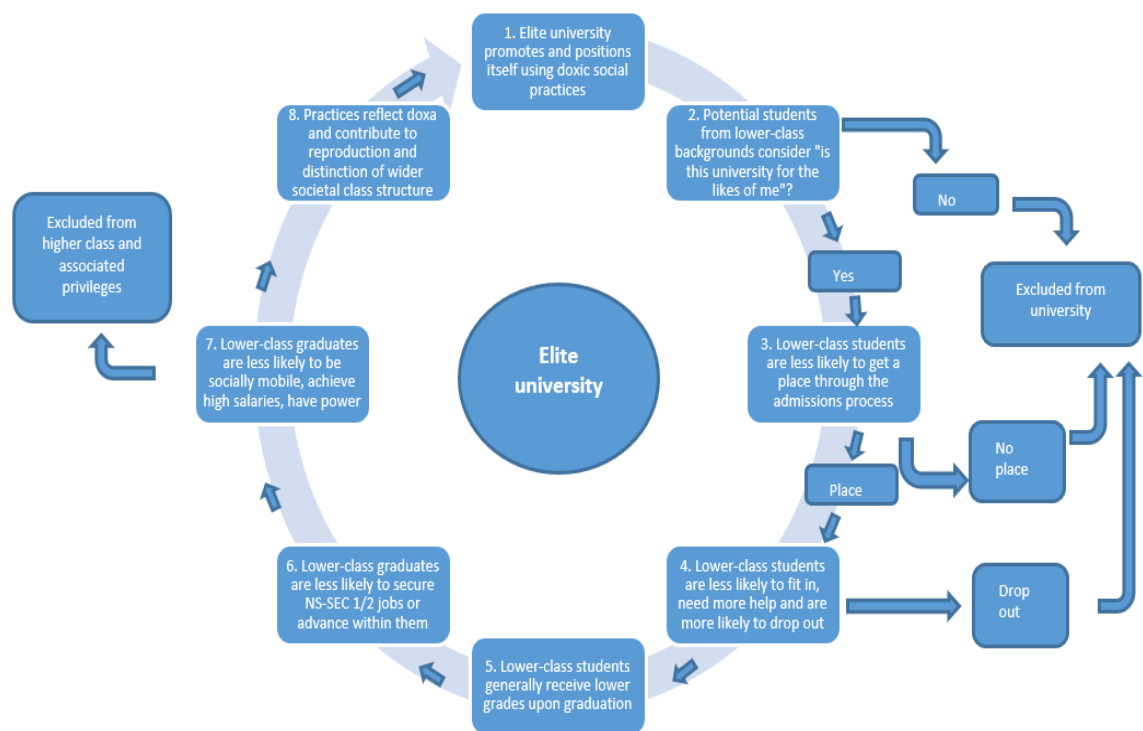
### *2.1.2 Status and reputational diversity of universities*

According to Bourdieu (1995), universities use capital to maintain their distinction and defend and advance their position in the field in the struggle for dominance. Dominant universities determine the value of specific capital, based on the claimed legitimacy of their own, which is used as a benchmark to determine the intrinsic and relational position in the field of all other institutions. Dominant universities maintain their positions by promoting their distinction successfully, thus legitimating their status and position. Dominated universities compete to

accumulate capital that will enable them to advance within the field. The relational positioning of universities in the field determines their perceived status, operating in a similar way to how Bourdieu describes class formation for agents in terms of reproduction and distinction (Sections 4.5 and 4.6, Chapter 2).

The alignment of the dominant universities to the dominant classes results in the status position of other universities mapping onto other class groups and therefore class habitus. How each university frames and promotes itself and its potential students can influence who applies and who gains entry, which can lead to the reproduction of inequalities (Rainford, 2021). Figure 13 presents an example of a self-perpetuating cycle whereby an elite university's doxic social practices are used to promote and position itself, which can exclude lower-class agents and legitimate and reproduce inequalities and hierarchy.

Figure 13: A self-perpetuating cycle created by doxic social practices (diagram is the researcher's own)



Dominant universities use their capital and status to maintain or advance their field position. For example, they attract and retain academics with desired capital, who in turn attract higher volumes of research funding and high-performing students, thus providing the university with additional economic and symbolic capital. This pattern of behaviour, argue Watson and Widin (2015), ensures that dominant universities can increase their capital and status and retain

power. Crucially, dominant universities use this power to ensure that other universities remain less powerful.

Upon analysing university rankings, Boliver (2015, p. 612) concludes that “the status differentiation of UK universities is undoubtedly complex and multifaceted”; however, she identifies five key dimensions of status differentiation in the UK HE field: research activity; teaching quality; economic resources; academic selectivity; and socioeconomic student mix. To demonstrate the structural differences in power and status, she undertook hierarchical cluster analysis of UK universities using these dimensions. Her findings present evidence that a divide remains between the pre-1992 and post-1992 institutions, with pre-1992s having higher levels of research activity, greater wealth, and more academically successful and socioeconomically advantaged student intakes, but similar levels of teaching quality to post-1992s. Boliver identifies four clusters of institutions (described in Section 3.4, Chapter 1). As Boliver’s research is the most recent analysis to demonstrate structural differentiation in the UK HE system, her classification between clusters 1 and 2 (elite) and clusters 3 and 4 (non-elite) was used as an analytic lens for this study.

### *2.1.3 Hierarchical stratification of universities*

Since the 1990s, a global industry has developed in university league tables and rankings. Alongside the increasingly competitive HE environment caused by pressure and increasing control from the field of power (Chapter 3), these rankings have further entrenched the reputational diversity and status of universities and contributed to the field’s hierarchical stratification. It is argued that rankings provide information to help potential students decide where to study, whilst also stimulating competition between institutions (Harvey, 2008). This stratification is “desirable from the [neoliberal] standpoint of consumer choice and efficiency of provision” (Greenaway and Haynes, 2000, p. 62). Other scholars highlight that, for some institutions, rankings provide good, worldwide free publicity (Stella and Woodhouse, 2006; Yerbury, 2006; both quoted in Harvey, 2008).

Within Bourdieu’s framework, rankings are viewed as an act of symbolic violence. Whilst giving the impression of objectivity, fairness, and rigour, they are based on subjective judgements about what is considered as ‘good’ (Savage et al., 2015). Their portrayal of the stratification as fair and objective obscures the power relations endemic in the field that allow the imposition of systems of meaning and value upon agents, groups, and institutions in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). They operate to a logic of inclusion

and exclusion, “inscrib[ing] hierarchized social identities in the objectivity of social existence” (Wacquant, 1993, p. 42). Enders (2015) contends that rankings construct legitimacy and positional advantage in the field by promoting a particular logic based on research reputation and existing dominance, whilst subordinating other field logics. Harvey (2008) argues that rankings are arbitrary, inconsistent, and based on metrics of convenience, rather than measuring what is important or relevant. Carey (2006) describes how the interests of most universities are ‘held hostage’ against the interests of a handful of elite universities that occupy the most advantaged positions and have the power to influence the ranking methodologies. The best interests of elite universities lie in maintaining the status quo, and therefore protecting their privileged and powerful positions, which, Carey argues, includes preventing the incorporation of measures that would question their position. As noted by Wedlin (2011), rankings produce material consequences for universities, which can become enacted as self-fulfilling prophecies.

Enders (2015) and Naidoo (2018) contend that the UK Government introduced deliberate strategies to develop and augment hierarchical stratification in the HE field. It is claimed that these policies exist to reinforce traditional and dominant intellectual capital in the field, thus rewarding its legitimacy whilst reaffirming the status diversity of universities and power. Using the UK’s research assessment exercises<sup>8</sup> as an example, Naidoo (2018, p. 610) argues that the central role of academics (mostly from elite universities) in judging the submissions and creating the hierarchical ordering of units and universities results in the stratification being accepted as legitimate by external stakeholders. McNay (2021) argues that the REF meets Young’s (1994) dystopian vision of meritocracy by adopting standardised procedures that appear fair but are made unfair because circumstances (university and individual) are not identical.

Carey (2006) argues that rankings reduce autonomy for universities, particularly in terms of their identity and brand management, as well as reducing the diversity of and within institutions. Moreover, the widespread acceptance of their validity and the stratification they produce has magnified and naturalised the perception, both in the field and wider social space, that some universities are ‘better than others’ and that this is an expected and fair outcome of meritocracy. Archer (2003) argues that meritocratic assumptions support the binary divide between universities, protecting dominant universities and excusing them from meaningfully addressing matters of equality, diversity, and inclusion.

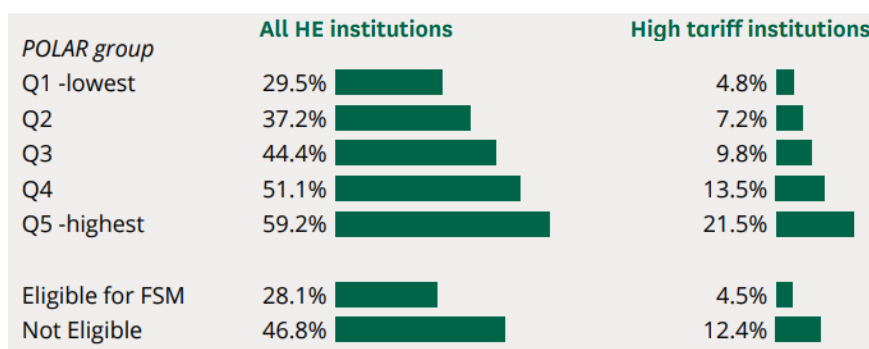
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<sup>8</sup> Currently termed the Research Excellence Framework (REF).

### 2.1.4 Student participation

Reviewing data on the proportion of students from lower-class backgrounds, Garner (2016) presents evidence that this increased marginally in Russell Group universities (from 19.5% to 20.8% between 2004/05 and 2014/15) but increased more significantly and from a higher starting point in other universities (from 32.5% to 37.5%). More recent analysis by Bolton and Lewis (2023) demonstrates that progression to HE is much lower in the bottom Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) group (areas with the lowest historical levels of participation) and among those eligible to receive FSM, with the gap widening in high tariff institutions (the third of institutions with the highest entry qualifications; generally perceived to be the most prestigious) (Figure 14). Bolton (2021) found that the proportion of state school entrants to Oxbridge increased from c.20% in the 1920s to c.67.5% in 2020. However, students from a small number of private schools, state grammar schools, and state schools constitute a significant proportion of entrants to Oxbridge, with approximately half of entrants coming from c.150 such schools.

Figure 14: Progression to HE, 2020/21: state school pupils by age 19, England (Bolton and Lewis, 2023)



Higher-ranked universities provide students from higher-class backgrounds with symbolic capital that enables them to progress to elite professions more readily. For example, Oxbridge graduates comprise 71% of senior judges, 57% of Cabinet members, and 56% of permanent secretaries (Sutton Trust, 2019). Williams and Filippakou (2009) found that whilst Oxbridge remained the dominant route to elite professions throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, their share fell from approximately one third to one quarter of the total. They identified increases in the contribution of other high-ranked universities. Williams and Filippakou (2009, p. 1) conclude that Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic capital is useful in explaining the continued dominance of well-known high-status universities, and, while there was considerable change throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in general it was “evolutionary and slow”.

There are strong and causal interconnections between elite schools, dominant universities, and elite professions, thus supporting Bourdieu's theory that universities contribute to social reproduction. Higher-ranked universities attract and recruit students with greater capital (and higher-class habitus) whilst lower-ranked universities attract and recruit students with less capital (and lower-class habitus). The stratification produced by the rankings ensures that greater value (symbolic capital) is given to qualifications from higher-ranked universities, thus providing social classification and associated advantages to their graduates. This is communicated and accepted as legitimate, fair, and objective, whilst concealing the class relations that lie at the heart of the field.

#### *2.1.5 Collaboration between universities*

Universities sharing a similar field position have a similar status and can form groups, thus establishing symbolic status boundaries between them and other universities. These groups enable universities to compete for power within and beyond the HE field by collectively promoting their distinction with the aim of advancing and defending their position relative to other institutions and increasing their influence (Watson and Widin, 2015). It is through this process of classificatory struggle between universities that symbolic power is exercised in the field.

An example of this are coalition groups, which emerged soon after the publication of first league table. Coalition groups are based on comparative field position, determined through self-classification and classification by others. The first group, established in 1994, was the Russell Group. Its purpose was to distinguish its members from the growing number of universities, particularly the post-1992s with their vocational background and focus on education. Also established then was the 1994 Group (predominantly pre-1992s in lower-status positions to Russell Group universities). In 1997, the Coalition of Modern Universities was established (predominantly post-1992s). Other groups were founded subsequently. They represent the collective needs and strengths of their member universities, lobbying for power, dominance, and legitimacy in the field.

Examined through a Bourdieusian lens, universities have a desire for increased power and dominance in the field and will adopt collaboration as a strategy to achieve this by joining forces with institutions to access additional capital. Baker (2021) provides evidence that the upper echelons of global university rankings include examples of pairs of institutions in close geographical proximity to one another, indicating they collaborate to maximise their capital and

therefore their rankings. Several studies provide evidence that capital is important in stimulating HE:HE collaboration. Dahlander and McFarland (2013) demonstrate that interorganisational research collaborations are motivated by opportunity and preference based on factors such as proximity; status and value homophily; and cumulative advantages (including capital). Lander (2014) found that potential collaborators need to offer the opportunity to access different (ideally rare and specialised) capital, while also advantaging the dominant institutions in the collaboration. In some cases, collaboration is driven by government policy, for example, Research England initiated a competitive funding process to support university-to-university collaboration in commercialisation (Research England, 2018; Wall, 2021).

Capital valued in HE collaborations includes: access to equipment, facilities and materials; theoretical knowledge; specialized techniques; and increased popularity and status (Lander, 2014). This is evidenced through examples of UK universities collaborating at institutional level, such as: research centres (for example, Birkbeck and UCL's Institute of Earth and Planetary Sciences); academic schools (for example, Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry, a collaboration between the universities of Exeter and Plymouth); commercialisation services (for example, the SET Squared partnership between the universities of Bath, Bristol, Cardiff, Exeter, Southampton and Surrey); and facilities (for example, the VSimulators shared between the universities of Exeter, Bath and Leicester).

As capital is distributed unequally across the HE field, dominant universities are more likely to hold desired and rare capital and are therefore more likely to collaborate with each other than with lower-ranked universities. Lundy and Ladd (2020) argue that dominant universities collaborate with similarly positioned universities for the opportunities they present, whereas collaboration is a survival strategy for those in a weaker position (i.e. lower-ranked universities). With little to offer (having lower volumes of capital and/or less desirable capital), weaker universities will struggle to partner with those in more dominant positions. Collaborations between more dominant universities will further differentiate and stratify the field, therefore increasing inequality between the highest- and lowest-ranked universities.

#### *2.1.6 Conclusion*

Boliver's (2015) mapping of UK universities demonstrates the continuing binary divide between pre- and post-1992s universities, predicated on historical differences in how and when they were established. Class-based power dynamics, argues Bourdieu (2001a), are the foundation for differentiation and reputational diversity. These are concealed and enabled through



symbolically violent practices, such as rankings, which impact the status and power of universities and strongly influence the class background of students that are recruited. Students from higher-class backgrounds are more likely to attend higher-ranked universities, whilst lower-ranked universities recruit and support a much higher proportion of lower-class students. This suggests that higher-ranked universities may be more likely to recruit academics from higher-class backgrounds and are perhaps more likely to demonstrate bias against job applicants from lower-class backgrounds.

## **2.2 The academic profession**

### *2.2.1 The academic profession, the HE field, and the field of power*

Musselin (2007, p. 175) undertook a historic review of the academic profession, concluding it has always been in a state of flux. Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, significant changes to the profession have been driven by the increased pressure from the field of power, which has reduced professional autonomy, particularly HE's capacity for self-regulation. Boden and Epstein (2011, p. 18) argue that the 1980s Conservative government launched an aggressive attack on universities to "supplant professional autonomy with government-inspired hierarchies."

The expansion of HE has increased the number of academic positions in UK universities, thus reducing the profession's rarity and decreasing the relative salary, prestige, and social position of its members (Musselin, 2007). Shattock (2014) describes the profession's declining status, highlighting changes such as the weakening role of academics in institutional governance, determination of conditions of service, and self-regulation of academic standards, as well as no longer being able to claim exclusive control of knowledge and expertise. Whilst expansion has occurred alongside a reduction in per capita funding to universities, the overall cost of HE to the public purse has grown. The impact is an increasing expectation for universities, and academics, to demonstrate their relevance to society (Brennan, 2007) (Section 3.2, Chapter 3). Garratt and Hammersley-Fletcher (2009) argue that the pressure from the field of power has resulted in a reformulation of academic habitus, particularly in post-1992 universities.

This environment, Henkel (2005) argues, creates tensions for academics as their roles are subjected to regular and radical redefinition and alteration. Black (2005) and Locke (2007) contend that the profession has changed in terms of the backgrounds, specialisations, expectations, and work roles of academics, resulting in the differentiation of positions and status. Academic roles can be differentiated by various features, all linked to status within the profession, including their: main activities (teaching and/or research); discipline; the type of

institution in which they work; contractual status and hours; management responsibilities; career path; and demographic backgrounds (Crosier et al., 2017). Brennan et al. (2007) identify several themes of differentiation in academic roles in the UK, two of which (relevance and management) were pertinent to this study.

### 2.2.2 *The pressure to demonstrate relevance*

In Section 3.2, Chapter 3, it was argued that a major change to the field since the 1980s has been the increasing focus on HE as an important driver of economic growth within the globalised knowledge economy, which altered the expectations of academics (Deer; 2003; Maton, 2005; Welch, 2021). In the traditional academy, the main goal was the creation of fundamental knowledge, but this has shifted in the modern academy to a focus on relevance and outcomes that benefit society and the economy (Kogan and Teichler, 2007). Boyer (1990) describes this shift as one of scholarship from 'discovery' to 'application'. The Jarrett Report (1985) was pivotal in effecting this shift by repositioning academics as deliverers of education within a government-inspired agenda, subject to audit, assessment, and performance indicators.

Some notion of relevance has always been expected from universities and academics. This has varied between countries, institutions, and disciplines and across time; however, relevance is increasingly defined by others rather than by academic expertise. Moreover, there is a difference between claiming some notion of relevance and evidencing *direct* relevance (Brennan, 2007). The UK's neoliberal policies have encouraged and enabled stakeholders to exert a greater influence over what is taught and researched. For example, academics must increasingly demonstrate relevance to access public research funding. Public funding is being increasingly augmented with private funding, for example, through tuition fees and private research funding. Slaughter and Leslie (2001) and Slaughter and Rhoades (2009) use the term 'academic capitalism', arguing that, under neoliberalism, universities are becoming capitalist enterprises and must increasingly engage in competitive environments with private providers, evidence their relevance, and deploy market-like behaviours to secure funding.

Scholars contend that the impact on the profession has been an erosion of academic autonomy (Brennan et al., 2007; Locke, 2007; Welch, 2021), resulting in deprofessionalisation, with agents disempowered from making decisions that relate to their sphere of expertise (Morrish, 2019). Kogan (2007) presents evidence that academics perceive a continuing decline in their ability to influence their organisational environment, coupled with increased pressure to consider societal expectations. There is some evidence that this has not been experienced equally across the

profession. Brennan (2007) asserts that academics in higher-ranked universities are in a stronger position to resist such pressures as they can argue that excellence is more important than relevance. By highlighting the unequal distribution of power and status across the field, Brennan (2007) argues that post-1992s are more dependent on attracting students through their claims of relevance, especially to graduate outcomes and careers. McCaig (2015) agrees, stating that post-1992 are more likely to offer vocational and professional qualifications to meet regional skills needs and therefore have closer ties to the labour market. This suggests that academics in post-1992s are more likely to feel their professional autonomy is under threat, which accords with research by UCU proposing that academics in post-1992s experience greater levels of stress over the lack of autonomy than academics in pre-1992s (Grove, 2013).

### *2.2.3 University management structures and practices*

The Jarrett Report (1985) conceptualised universities as businesses and its adoption led to significant changes in university management, with the influence of aspects of new managerialism coinciding with the expansion and marketisation of HE in a neoliberal, unregulated economy (Naidoo, 2003). This resulted in an increasing reliance on private sector management principles (such as monitoring, measuring, comparing, and judging performance), audit and regulation, and mechanisms such as quality assurance (Locke, 2007; Musselin, 2007). In response, the elevated status and increasing professionalisation of university management is increasingly regarded as essential to enable universities to succeed in a rapidly changing environment (Kogan, 2007; Kogan and Teichler, 2007; Locke, 2007), whilst neoliberal HE policy has created incentive systems for universities and academics that direct behaviour to counter “the over-autonomous scientists” (Musselin, 2007, p. 176).

Morrish (2019) and Welch (2021) assert that some academics feel they are no longer treated with respect and trust, whilst Walker (2007, p. 11) argues that new managerialism has led to the removal of “that deeply cherished autonomy and leaving [staff and students] with a feeling of being without control.” Just like the field, the profession is becoming increasingly stratified, with evidence that dominant universities use financial incentives to recruit or retain academics perceived to be of high market value, therefore accumulating greater intellectual capital (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2006). Tension is growing between academic activities (such as teaching and research) and those related to documenting and accounting for academic work. Moreover, it has been argued that new managerialism perpetuates gender inequality as it is based on masculine discourses of rationality, control, and hierarchy (Thomas and Davies,

2002). Hearn (2001, p. 74) argues that universities are “sites in which different forms of specific masculinities can be produced and reproduced.”

New managerialism has redistributed power, capital, and values within HE, and changed the division of labour. The growth in specialist professional and support roles has shifted power dynamics in favour of managers, challenging hierarchies, and professorial authority (Locke, 2007). Shattock (2017) provides evidence of the balance of power shifting from university senates/academic boards to executives since the 1980s, diminishing the involvement of academics. Kim (2006) and Shattock (2017) argue that UK universities have experienced a fundamental shift from professional oligarchies with collegiate structures to managerial oligarchies with managerial structures. The increase in ‘academic manager’ posts – which tend to be full-time, permanent roles – has significantly altered the relationship from the traditional model where the academic leader was *primus inter pares* among the academic community to one where the academic manager represents the employer, and the academics are the employees (Kim, 2006). Beck and Young (2005) argue that academic managers often feel alienated from the profession, with the roles representing an assault on academic identities, whilst Welch (2021) uses this as an example of the increasing stratification of the profession, with more power for managers and less autonomy and influence for academics. Drawing on workload allocation practices and changes to employment contracts as examples of the increasing control and intervention that university managers have over the responsibilities and duties of academics, Musselin (2007, p. 5-6) argues that institutional affiliation has gradually transformed into ‘work relationships’:

“the university is no longer a place welcoming and sheltering academic activities, it has more and more taken over the role of an employer”.

However, it is important to emphasise that academics are not powerless. Indeed, as argued in Chapter 2, habitus is reflexive and has creative and strategic capacities, meaning that agents can choose, at least to some extent, what actions to take. Therefore, whilst some academics may resist the changes, others are complicit in their leadership and implementation. As Strathern (2000, p. 290) notes:

“those who devise and administer monitoring schemes are likely to come from the same kind of professional background as those whose performance they scrutinize.”

Slaughter and Rhoades (2009) note that many academics are involved in remodelling HE to incorporate enterprise. Musselin (2007) emphasises how key decisions, such as the hiring and

promotion of academics, are predominantly made by academics. Beck and Young (2005) emphasise how academic management positions have been recruited from within the ranks of the profession, indicating that some academics have embraced these opportunities and taken responsibility for implementing neoliberalist policies. Naidoo (2003) and Musselin (2007) highlight how the REF relies on academic leadership of the assessment process, including ranking and benchmarking universities and academics (Section 2.1.3).

#### *2.2.4. Precarity and casualisation in the academic profession*

The Jarratt Report (1985) resulted in the end of academic tenure in UK universities and marked the start of increasing precarity within the academic profession. Precarity is defined by Butler (2009, p. ii) as:

“the politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support.”

Gill (2009, p. 232) argues that “precariousness is one of the defining experiences of contemporary academic life.” Black (2005) explains how the academic career structure has moved away from the traditional model, where most academics were employed on permanent lecturer contracts and there was a small number of (mostly male) professors, to a model whereby there are many professors and achieving professorial status is synonymous with success. She highlights the rise in the number of fixed-term academic posts, and the increased use of private sector management practices such as performance-related pay, appraisals, and targets. This, argues Taberner (2018), is shaping the academic labour process, resulting in marginalisation, casualisation of teaching, and job insecurity, as well as increased competition between academics and a culture in which bullying is prevalent.<sup>9</sup>

Towers (2019) applies Butler’s definition of precarity to academics from lower-class backgrounds in the USA, arguing they are being priced out of academic careers. Within the UK, UCU (2021) provides considerable evidence of increasing precarity in the profession, evidenced through the increasing reliance on casualised contracts. UCU demonstrate that while the percentage of academics on fixed-term contacts decreased slightly between 2007/08 and 2019/20, the rates of decline were different in each job family.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the number of

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<sup>9</sup> The UCU (2012) occupational stress survey found that workload stress levels for UCU members in HE had increased since 2008 and were considerably higher than among the rest of the British working population. They identified 37 UK universities where at least 10% of respondents reported being always or often subject to bullying at work.

<sup>10</sup> The job families are teaching and research; research only; teaching only.

academics employed on fixed-term contracts increased over the period by more than 12,000. Zheng (2018, p. 237) describes academics on fixed-term contracts as “cheap, flexible and disposable, hence their appeal to universities.”

There is evidence that this increasing precarity has impacted some groups of academics more than others. Zheng (2018) argues that the gendered dimension of academic precarity and casualisation has been overlooked, with women more vulnerable than men. She argues that this is a structural problem, caused by the implementation of neoliberalist policies, with permanent academic positions having been rebranded as a benefit awarded to meritorious individuals. Steinþórsdóttir et al. (2018) demonstrate how new managerialism has increased the precarity of early career academics in Iceland, particularly women and those in more feminised disciplines. In the UK, the HESA data demonstrate that women are more likely than men to be employed on casualised, insecure contracts and in lower-status academic positions (such as teaching-only contracts) (Tables 7 and 8). This latter point is important as Santos and Dang Van Phu (2019) demonstrate that, in Russell Group universities, there is a negative and statistically significant association between time spent on teaching/related activities and academic rank. Barry et al. (2012) stress the adverse impact of neoliberalist policies on gender equality in the academic profession, with women being increasingly disadvantaged in respect of the division of labour and finding themselves concentrated in teaching roles in lower- to mid-level positions, in which they outnumber men. They found that women tend to take more responsibility for student pastoral care, with many students (particularly in post-1992s) require significant support because they are the first in their family to attend university (due to the expansion of HE). Furthermore, casualisation is evidenced particularly to affect early-career and female academics in terms of their mental and physical wellbeing, economic stability, work-life balance, and future planning (i.e. maternity) (Gill, 2009; Bozzon et al., 2017; Barrow et al., 2020).

Table 7: HESA 2019/20 data for academics in UK universities disaggregated by academic employment function and gender (UCU, 2021)

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Teaching-only	53%	47%
Research-only	47%	53%
Teaching and research	42%	58%

Table 8: HESA 2019/20 data for academics in UK universities disaggregated by contract type and gender (UCU, 2021)

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
Established/open-ended	48%	54%
Fixed-term	35%	32%
Hourly rate	15%	13%
Zero hours	2%	1%

A study by van den Besselaar and Sandstrom (2017) provides evidence that such disadvantageous working conditions result in lower publication productivity and fewer high-profile citations, which leads to less research funding and reduced opportunities for promotion. Women are trapped in circles of gender bias, lower positions, and lower performance. The Advance HE (2021) data (Section 5.5, Chapter 3) demonstrate that senior academic positions are more likely to be held by men (for example, 72.1% of professors are male) and that women academics are paid less than men in equivalent positions (for example, the median gender pay gap for professors in England is 6.3%). Gender pay gaps are larger in elite universities (Amery et al., 2019) and the international U-Multirank Gender Monitor 2022 study found that women are particularly underrepresented among academics at research-intensive universities. Compared to men, women academics are less likely to be rewarded by universities with a financial bonus – Corden and Donaldson (2021) highlight a mean bonus gap of c.27%.

These studies indicate that women are more likely than men to be employed in lower status and lower paid academic positions, without management responsibilities, and on precarious and casualised contracts. Furthermore, women are more likely than men to have to sacrifice a higher personal cost to succeed in academia, such as delaying having children (Barrow et al. 2020). There is considerable evidence that the differentiation in the academic profession in the UK has not been borne equally by men and women, with women impacted more severely, having fewer opportunities to progress, and ultimately having less access to power and influence in the field.

As class background is not collected systematically for UK academics, it is not possible to analyse whether these changes have had a disproportionate effect on certain class groups. However, based on Bourdieu's (2001) analysis of the relational distribution of academics in France, which mirrored the structure of the dominant class (Wacquant, 1990), it is likely that the changes to the academic profession would more severely impact academics from lower-class backgrounds.

A study on precarious employment in Spain (Julia et al., 2017) demonstrates that the prevalence of precarity is consistently higher among those from lower-class backgrounds. Brown et al.'s (2010) study into academic casualisation in Australia identified an institutionally embedded and sharpening class divide between tenured academics and those on precarious contracts. Laurison and Friedman (2019) identified that UK HE is dominated by those from advantaged backgrounds (Section 5.4, Chapter 3). Whilst they did not find evidence of a class pay gap, the Social Mobility Foundation (2022) presents evidence of an annual class pay gap among UK academics of £5,807; the fifth widest gap out of 15 elite occupations. Laurison and Friedman's (2019) research did not explore the effect of some of the variables that have been demonstrated to be important in shaping power and capital in the field, such as the type of university; nor did it explore measures of precarity, such as type of employment contract. However, when adopting an intersectional approach and looking at all UK elite professions, Laurison and Friedman's (2019) identified multiplicative penalties associated with being a woman and from a lower-class background. Therefore, changes to the academic profession that have had a disproportionate effect on women might have had an even greater effect on lower-class women.

### ***2.3 Conclusion***

The field of power has exerted continual pressure on the HE field through the implementation of neoliberal policies to underpin and drive the expansion and marketisation of HE, which has reduced the autonomy of universities in England and increased their reputational diversity and hierarchical stratification. University rankings convey the impression that this stratification is valid, objective and the fair outcome of meritocracy, therefore galvanising the view that some universities are 'better than others.' However, it is claimed that these are symbolically violent practices that conceal the power relations endemic in the field. There is evidence that the stratification corresponds to the class background of students, with higher-class students more likely to be enrolled in higher-ranked universities and lower-class students more likely to be enrolled in lower-ranked universities (Reay, 2011a, 2011b; Garner, 2016). Furthermore, children from higher-class backgrounds are more likely to be educated at elite universities and to progress to elite occupations (Williams and Filippakou, 2009; Friedman and Laurison, 2020). The expansion of HE has enabled a greater and more diverse proportion of the population to earn a university degree, which means that HE is no longer the sole preserve of the dominant classes. However, it has also enabled those from a higher-class background to secure much greater benefits from HE through the strong connection between the dominant classes and a small number of elite universities.



The pressures from the field of power have also increased the diversity, differentiation, and stratification of the academic profession. Overall, the profession has experienced a decrease in autonomy, with practice being increasingly defined by private sector management principles. New managerialism has led to changes in power dynamics and relations between agents, which it is claimed have adversely impacted the profession, for example through increased precarity, casualisation, and bullying. There is considerable evidence that women are more likely than men to be negatively impacted by these changes; however, there is no evidence for how the changes have impacted academics from different class backgrounds.

### **3. Comparing the habitus of field agents**

The final stage of the field analysis presents an exploration of the habitus and experiences of agents and the relationships between agents, with the aim of identifying the most valuable forms of capital in the field and their alignment with field practices. Consideration is given to the role of hiring practices in perpetuating inequalities and how this practice might contribute to social reproduction and distinction.

#### ***3.1 Capital in the HE field***

Bourdieu (1984) argues that the dominant institutions and agents determine the capital that is valued in the field. This capital can appear “peculiar and perhaps even meaningless” to those outside the field, yet it is the currency that drives behaviour and bestows power (Crossley, 2001, p. 86). As capital is unequally distributed across the field, there is fierce competition between academics to obtain it. Lutter and Schröder (2016) examined the career and publication data of academics working in German sociology departments between 1980 and 2013 and present evidence that the capitals influencing the chances of getting a permanent professorship were scholarly output, network size, and individual reputation. Institutional status was not identified as a specific capital; however, the German HE system is not hierarchised or stratified like the UK system. In the UK, Parker (2008) identified a distinct and significant difference between the academic promotion criteria used, and capital valued, in post-1992s (more likely to recognise research and teaching equally) and pre-1992s (more likely to value research), which can be traced back to the binary divide (Section 1.1). Watson and Widin (2015) argue that academics in post-1992s are disadvantaged because they spend more time supporting a more diverse student body, which detracts from the time and resources available for research. They conclude that this an act of symbolic violence that reinforces and reproduces the power inequalities between elite and non-elite universities in the UK HE field.

As this stratification and hierarchisation is accepted as objective and legitimate, associated judgements can influence decisions about capital within and beyond the field. For example, the expansion of HE has reduced the scarcity value of a degree, which has replaced between-education-level differences with within-education-level inequalities – Lucas (2001) describes this as “effectively maintained inequality”. This has devalued a degree as a marker of symbolic capital and instead placed value on: subject; classification; and type and location of awarding university (Goldthorpe, 2013). As academics from lower-class backgrounds are less likely to have studied at higher-ranked universities, they may have lower amounts of capital and reduced opportunities to accumulate additional capital and may therefore be disadvantaged when applying for academic jobs. Furthermore, the binary divide between pre- and post-1992s may be a barrier, and potentially a class ceiling, for academics from lower-class backgrounds.

### ***3.2 The doctoral degree and entry to the academic profession***

Academia is unique compared to other professions as it is a self-governing and largely closed community with the power to control how new entrants to the profession will be classified and certified in future (Menand, 2010). A critical part of this machinery is the establishment of entry criteria to the profession. Gatekeeper academics select new staff based on an implicit social classification and reproduce the same staff according to an explicit academic classification (Section 2.1, Chapter 2). The doctoral degree is an example of symbolic capital that is recognised as a marker of suitability for entry to the profession. Once entry has been granted, it tends to lose its currency due to the abundance of doctorates; however, it is imbued with special currency and value at the point of entry.

UK universities increasingly require academics to have a doctorate (Gibney, 2013; Baker, 2018). The proportion of academics with a doctorate employed at English universities increased from 45% in 2010/11 to 54% in 2019/20 (Grove, 2012; HESA, 2021). In 2019/20, there were seven universities where this remained low (25% or less) – all are post-1992s.<sup>11</sup> On the contrary, all Russell Group universities have over 50% of academics with doctorates. Oxford and Cambridge have 78% and 73% respectively. The proportion of academics with a doctorate follows a similar pattern to the stratification of UK universities, with higher-ranked universities employing a higher proportion of academics with doctorates.

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<sup>11</sup> Birmingham City University, University College Birmingham, Buckinghamshire New University, Solent University, The University of Sunderland, The University of West London, University of Worcester. Specialist institutions were excluded.

This restricts access to the profession, and particularly to higher-ranked universities, as most people are not educated to doctoral level.<sup>12</sup> In the USA, Muzzatti and Samarco (2006) and Kniffin (2007) provide evidence that completing a doctorate is closely linked with class background, with Kniffin demonstrating that class background also influences an individual's chances of entering the academic profession. Similar data are not available in the UK; however, Dickson (2020) provides evidence of the link between class background and postgraduate study. Approximately one-in-five students from the most well-off 20% of households progress to postgraduate study, compared to only one-in-twenty among those from the least well-off 20% of households. Furthermore, one-in-four Russell Group graduates progress to postgraduate study, compared to one-in-twelve from post-1992s. In terms of race, Bhopal (2018) notes that whilst BAME graduates are more likely than white graduates to progress to postgraduate study, they are less likely to enter into postgraduate research (doctoral) study than white students, which reduces their opportunity to join the academic profession.

Lower volumes of economic capital make it more challenging for lower-class students (and those from BAME backgrounds – Bhopal, 2018) to pay for postgraduate tuition, whilst lower volumes of cultural capital make it more challenging for them to progress within the education system (Bourdieu, 1996). This creates an entry barrier to the academic profession for people from lower-class backgrounds (Van Bueren, 2005) and may contribute to Altbach's (2012) assumption and Laurison and Friedman's (2019) finding that UK academia is a socially exclusive profession with a high and disproportionate number of members from advantaged backgrounds (Section 5.4, Chapter 3). This entry requirement is a condition imposed by agents in positions of power in the HE field. Through a Bourdieusian lens, this could be viewed, particularly in more dominant universities, as a manifestation of the field adjusting to changes in social space by restricting access to those considered eligible and legitimate (Figure 15).

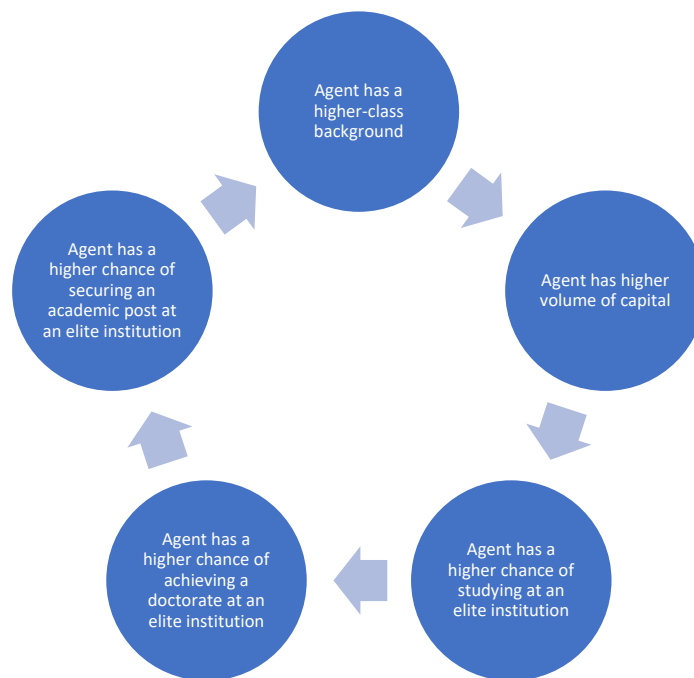
The within-education-level variations mean that not all doctorates are considered equal. In the USA, Baldi (1995) found that academic hiring managers valued academic origins over performance, with the two strongest determinants being the prestige of the doctorate-awarding department and the selectivity of the undergraduate institution. Burris (2004) presents evidence that a department's prestige is based on its position in networks of association and social exchange (framed using Bourdieu's concept of social capital), rather than scholarly productivity.

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<sup>12</sup> In the UK, the proportion of the adult population with a doctoral/equivalent degree is extremely low and is estimated to be 2% (OECD, 2021).

She argues that the social exchange of doctorates is the most important network of association and functions as an analogous mechanism of reinforcing and reproducing status divisions between universities. Clauset et al. (2015) explored the structure of faculty hiring networks in the USA and found evidence of a common and steeply hierarchical structure in which doctoral prestige is a strong predictor of faculty placement and ultimately a more influential academic position. A similar study was undertaken in Chile by Chiappa and Perez Mejias (2019), who demonstrated that academics from higher-class backgrounds are more readily able to access higher-ranked universities, and consequently earn higher salaries than academics from lower-class backgrounds.

Figure 15: Simple representation of the Bourdieusian relationship between higher-class background, university education, and a university academic job (diagram is the researcher’s own)



In the UK, the Sutton Trust (2019) present evidence that higher proportions of Russell Group graduates are employed in elite professions, compared to other university graduates. Macfarlane and Jefferson (2021) use the concept of the medieval guild to explain how doctorates from elite universities are imbued with prestige, arguing that ‘elite academics’ enter HE through the ‘guild route’ – defined as the completion of bachelor, master’s, and doctoral degrees on a full-time basis at elite universities. Such individuals have high volumes of capital and prestige that enable them to secure academic jobs in the most prestigious universities. Macfarlane and Jefferson assert that lower-ranked universities do not imbue the same privilege

and prestige, which disadvantages those studying and working at such universities. Academics following this educational route are usually from higher-class backgrounds (Manstead, 2018), which indicates that elite universities may have greater proportions of academics from higher-class backgrounds compared with lower-ranked institutions; thus, mirroring the pattern observed for students (Section 2.1.4).

### ***3.3 Experiences of academics from lower-class backgrounds***

As discussed in Section 2.5.2, Chapter 2, universities inculcate doxic social practices, based on higher-class distinction, in terms of knowledge, sophistication, and cultural taste, which are perceived as credentials for membership. This is described by Long et al. (2000, paragraph 2):

“the prescribed mold of the academe requires that one be (or become) upper class, white, and male... [whilst] members of the working class are considered to be stupid, uncouth and irrational”.

Ryan and Sackrey (1995) emphasise how this can be antagonistic and oppressive to the habitus of academics from lower-class backgrounds. Although habitus is adaptable and transposable, Bourdieu (1995) contends that in situations where the habitus does not match the social context or field rules, the agent will feel conflicted and his/her behaviour may seem odd to others – “a habitus divided against itself” (Bourdieu, 1999, p. 511). This will continue unless the agent accumulates new cultural capital and the habitus adapts to acquire the new dispositions, although this can be antagonistic to the agent’s original class habitus. During this time, the agent may feel inherently disadvantaged and uncomfortable, and may undertake class boundary marking, adjust their aspirations, or even turn to self-exclusion from the field (Yang, 2014). For example, Haney (2015) found that Canadian professors from lower-class backgrounds often experienced the process of mobility into white-collar adulthood as uncomfortable or traumatic.

Warnock (2016) reviewed collections of essays written by academics from lower-class backgrounds in US universities and identified key themes. Strong feelings of alienation appeared in every account, and the academics were conscious of the conflict between their class background and the HE field. This left them feeling: “culturally homeless” (Friedman, 2012, p. 467); “nowhere at home” (Ryan and Sackrey, 1995, p. 209); “out of place in both worlds” (Dews and Leste Law, 1995, p. 7); or “slightly an outsider” (Waterfield et al., 2019, p. 378). Bourdieu (1980; quoted in Wacquant, 1990, p. 679), who himself came from a lower-class background, describes his own feelings of exclusion from academia:

“Most of the questions that I address to intellectuals, who have so many answers and, at bottom, so few questions, are no doubt rooted in the feeling of being a

stranger in the intellectual universe. I question this world because it questions me, and in a very profound manner, which goes well beyond the mere sentiment of social exclusion: I never feel fully justified to be an intellectual. I do not feel 'at home'."

Another theme identified by Warnock (2016) was the awareness among academics from lower-class backgrounds of a mismatch between their behaviours and tastes and those dominant in academia, and pressure either to adjust or hide their identity; this aligns with Bourdieu's (1984) theory on distinction and class formation (Section 4.6, Chapter 2). For example, a participant in Ryan and Sackrey's (1995, p. 264) study described HE as:

"an invitation to interlopers to leave their true identities at the gates and assume the alien postures and personal styles of the professional archetype".

Professors who participated in Muzzatti and Samarco's (2006, p. 36; p. 49) research stated:

"Painfully and slowly I learned to be middle class, and I even became good at it, but the sediment was still there, still filtering in and contaminating my newfound middle-classness".

"One must take on a new and foreign identity that is not only challenging but leads to inner conflicts ... [as academic socialisation is] ... a force that constantly seeks to alienate the working-class academic's self from his/her identity".

An anecdotal account by Quarry (2018) describes the challenges he faced as a lower-class academic in a US Ivy League university, which led to internalised class conflict and him concealing his background. Heller (2011) found that displays of lower-class behaviours and tastes are perceived by higher-class academics as idiosyncratic character flaws, therefore devaluing and delegitimising lower-class habitus and identity. As Ryan and Sackrey (1995, p. xv-3) explain:

"the travellers [into HE] from down below...find themselves in alien territory. Some see themselves as interlopers, others as traitors or miscast members in someone else's play."

Warnock (2016) identified a third theme, encompassing hurtful stereotypes, indirect stigmas, and micro-aggressions (examples of symbolic violence). Haney's (2015) research found that 40% of Canadian professors from lower-class backgrounds reported encountering classist language in HE. Heller (2011) draws on Goffman's (1990 [1963]) work on stigma to situate the experiences of academics from lower-class backgrounds within the concept of class-blind stigma. She argues that the HE field does not acknowledge that class backgrounds lead to different socialisation practices, and therefore class-based differences in how practices are interpreted. She concludes that the field systematically recognises and devalues lower-class backgrounds, labelling these

academics as deviant but without giving them subordinate group status. Also in the USA, Lee (2017) found that academics from lower-class backgrounds explained how universities inculcate a normative narrative of middle-class homogeneity that heightens class-based stigma by minimising, concealing, or excluding lower-class experiences and concerns. She argues that lower-class academics must make strategic choices about whether to reveal their backgrounds and risk indirect stigma or conceal them and try to fit in.

Historically, there has been a dearth of research in the UK into the experiences of academics from lower-class backgrounds. However, recent research by Binns (2019) and Crew (2020; 2021), both of whom utilised Bourdieu, found that UK academics from lower-class backgrounds reported similar experiences to those in the USA. The academics in Crew's research stressed their feelings of alienation, highlighting examples of embodied cultural capital – such as accents, clothing, and sense of humour – as areas in which they did not fit in and felt marked as inferior. They reported experiencing micro-aggressions and class-based stigma. One participant noted:

“A colleague consistently described his research respondents as chavs. I looked shocked, but it seemed to trigger a ‘memory’ in him, and he said, oh I’m sorry, you come from that area too? I was shocked how easily he related me to the word chav” (Crew, 2021, p. 56).

Binns (2019) undertook qualitative research with academics from a lower-class background who worked in post-1992 universities, finding that 80% would prefer to remain in their current institution than work in a Russell Group university, mainly because they felt more comfortable there. Exploring the careers of three women academics from lower-class backgrounds in the UK, Hoskins (2010) found that they experienced internalised class conflict and imposterism. Despite having successful careers, they felt that being female and lower-class disadvantaged them. Johansson and Jones (2019) explored their own experiences of being working-class women academics in the UK, concluding that the concept of the interloper was important in understanding their experiences and identities.

There are several anecdotal accounts from UK-based academics from lower-class backgrounds that mirror the key themes identified by Warnock (2016). Edwards (2014) and Larcombe (2015) discuss the prejudice they experienced within the field due to their regional accents and class backgrounds, whilst McKenzie (2015, paragraph 2) describes about how other academics “judge”, “sneer” and “laugh” at lower-class women academics. Skeggs (1997, p. 134) explains her entry to the field as:

“the emotional politics of class: a politics of dis-identification, a result of classifying practices enacted on a daily basis by many of those who do not think class is an issue.”

Byrne’s (2015, paragraph 1) account states that his class background resulted in “...academia [being] one of the few places [he] has felt like a minority”. Reynolds (2018, paragraph 4) describes feeling “all at sea” when she joined academia, as well as experiencing imposterism throughout her career. Allen (2018, paragraph 7) reports his experiences of discrimination from colleagues, including:

“being described as more... 'car salesman' than... academic... [and]... being told... to consider having elocution lessons, and being told to leave academia entirely because that academic has never really seen me as 'an academic'.”

These accounts provide valuable information about the experiences of academics from lower-class backgrounds; however, there are relatively few of them and they are not generalizable. Participants tended to be self-selecting, so it is not possible to determine how well they represent academics from lower-class backgrounds. Their narratives are not presented alongside accounts from academics from higher-class backgrounds, and intersections with gender, race and other variables are largely ignored. Whilst the accounts provide evidence that some academics from lower-class backgrounds believe that they experience the profession in a different way to those from higher-class backgrounds, this has not been triangulated with research into how class background might influence practice via formal mechanisms in the field, such as decisions made by gatekeeper academics (i.e. hiring managers) or with research exploring structural mechanisms (i.e. recruitment). This remains an area that has received limited attention, with most studies focusing on the effect of class background on how students access and navigate HE, the role of gender (and to a lesser extent race/ethnicity) in shaping the experiences of academics, or how this influences their treatment within field structures and mechanisms.

### ***3.4 Recruitment as a mechanism of social reproduction***

There is a wealth of research that demonstrates that workplaces are not meritocratic. Many studies have focused on recruitment processes as a mechanism of discrimination and social reproduction. Building on Bourdieu’s theory, Savage et al. (2015) describe some professions, including academia, as having unique cultures and therefore tending to recruit from their own ranks to preserve their distinctiveness. As summarised in Chapter 1, previous research provides evidence that recruiters are inclined to make hiring decisions based on capital and habitus, largely recruiting in the group’s own image (Ashley and Empson, 2012; Rivera, 2012). Ashley et



al. (2015, p. 6) assert that the professions are recruiting in this manner through the increased use of 'talent' as a criterion for entry, which is defined according to several factors, including "drive, resilience, strong communication skills and above all confidence and 'polish'". This can be mapped onto private schooling, Russell Group university culture, and higher-class status and socialisation.

There is also substantial evidence that personal characteristics influence hiring decisions, often through unconscious biases. Bertrand and Mullainathan (2003) explored how markers of race influence the likelihood of being invited to interview, finding that white names received 50% more invitations than black names. Applicants living in affluent neighbourhoods received more invitations than those living in less affluent neighbourhoods, regardless of race, indicating that class overrides racial bias. Correll et al. (2007) identified a motherhood penalty that impacts recommended starting salary and perceived competence and commitment; however, fathers were not penalised and, in some cases, benefitted from their parental status. Lahey (2009) found that younger applicants were 40 times more likely than older applicants to receive an interview invitation for an entry-level job. Protsch and Solga (2017) found that applications from immigrants were substantially less preferred by hiring managers than applications from immigrant descendants.

Friedman and Laurison (2020) provide substantial evidence that people from lower-class backgrounds are underrepresented in elite occupations in the UK, even when the level of educational qualification is controlled. Agents from lower-class backgrounds have significantly lower earnings and career advancement than those from more privileged backgrounds. Jackson (2009) investigated recruitment to professional and managerial positions in the UK, finding that CVs containing three or more higher-class signals received more replies. She found that employers favour and penalise different combinations of class signals, concluding that class is important in the decision-making process. Chua and Mazmanian (2020) explored the recruitment process for elite internships at established technology companies, finding evidence of class biases, particularly in relation to assessments of fit.

There is a significant body of research on gender discrimination in hiring practices. For example, Reuben et al. (2014) present evidence that an applicant's appearance has a significant effect on hiring decisions. With no information other than a photograph of the applicant, men and women were twice as likely to hire a man than a woman. Furthermore, they found that women applicants were perceived as less competent. Jose Gonzalez et al. (2019) observed that

employers were more likely to invite men to interview than women, concluding that employers discriminate against women based on stereotypes of their perceived lower productivity. Looking at job advertisements, Gaucher et al. (2011) demonstrate that gendered wording can maintain inequality in traditionally male-dominated occupations. They identified words associated with male stereotypes (such as leader, competitive, dominant) and female stereotypes (such as support, understand, interpersonal). A study by Unity and Openreach (2021, p. 8-9) applied this to hypothetical job advertisements for an engineering post, finding that women were much less interested in pursuing job opportunities where the advertisement was worded conventionally (words associated with men) than when the same role was described with more gender-inclusive language.

Koch et al. (2015) undertook a meta-analysis of gender stereotypes and bias in employment decision-making and found evidence of gender-role incongruity bias. Men were preferred for male-dominated jobs, but there was no evidence for this bias in female-dominated or integrated jobs. They found that bias reduced when information signalled clearly high or low competence. Yavorsky (2019) explored whether employers in different occupational classes unevenly discriminate against women during early hiring practices. She presented evidence that uneven patterns of inequality are caused by hiring practices shaped by intersecting gendered and classed features of occupations. Discrimination against female applicants was identified in male-dominated and masculinised working-class jobs, as well as discrimination against male applicants in female-dominated and feminised jobs in both white-collar and working-class contexts.

These characteristics are often compounded, resulting in people with more than one disadvantaged identity experiencing greater penalties. Woodhams et al. (2015) found that people with more than one characteristic of disadvantage experience a greater pay penalty compared to those with a single disadvantage. Friedman and Laurison (2020) found that upwardly mobile women in elite occupations face a double disadvantage, earning less than men based on their class and gender. Furthermore, they provide evidence of a triple disadvantage once certain racial backgrounds are included. In the USA, Rivera and Tilcsik (2016) found that class and gender combine to give applicants advantages and penalties in the legal profession labour market. Higher-class male applicants received significantly more interview invitations than other applicants. Higher-class applicants were viewed as having a better fit with law firm culture and clientele. Higher-class women did not receive a boost in evaluations, with recruiters regarding them as less committed; thus, higher-class signals benefited men but not women. In

Brazil, Dias (2020) investigated skin colour discrimination and the intersection with class and gender, finding that skin colour was a weak predictor of an interview invitation in male applicants, whereas female applicants with dark skin received significantly fewer invitations. Among female applicants from lower-class backgrounds, Dias found that those with light skin were more likely to receive an invitation, providing evidence of triple disadvantage in hiring processes.

### ***3.5 Recruitment as a mechanism of social reproduction in the academic profession***

Laurison and Friedman (2019) provide evidence of the underrepresentation of those from lower-class backgrounds in academic posts in UK universities (Section 5.4, Chapter 3) but provide no evidence as to whether this is because lower-class agents choose not to enter the profession or are prevented from doing so. Macfarlane and Jefferson's (2021) synthesis of the literature on 'academic inbreeding', class and privilege in academia (Section 3.2) leads them to recommend that academic recruitment practices should be adjusted to make them fairer and less biased, especially in terms of class. A trial is underway to remove bias from academic hiring, led by the recruitment firm Diversity by Design in collaboration with the University of Nottingham (Morgan, 2019). The trial seeks to address biases around university background, as well as gender and race. The process involves removing the CV at the shortlisting stage and utilising an application form that invites job applicants to state the journals in which they have published and their role in each paper. Information is withheld as to the universities at which the applicants have studied or worked. Whilst the outcome of the trial is not yet known, it is positive that class bias featured in the design.

Whilst there is a paucity of research on how class background might influence hiring practices in UK HE, there is a greater volume of research on the relationship between inequality, gender and the academic profession. Despite progress with women's educational attainment, gender inequalities still exist in the profession, with the gap between men and women widening with seniority. Autobiographical works by authors such as Skeggs (1997; 2004; 2015) and hooks (2003) document the biases against women in HE (many of which are unconscious and unintentional) as well as emphasising how gender intersects with other characteristics to create disadvantage. A range of studies indicate that these accounts are representative and provide evidence that, despite attempts to strive for gender equality, biases against women endure at all stages of the academic hiring and promotion processes. However, there are some studies that suggest potential advantages to women in the academic labour market.

An early study to evidence gender bias in the academic hiring process was undertaken by Steinpreis et al. (1999). Among psychology academics in the USA, recruiters were more likely to hire a male than a female applicant, with an otherwise identical CV. This bias was more likely to affect early-career women. More recently, a study in the USA by Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) involved sending a fictitious CV for a laboratory manager position to over one hundred academic staff at various institutions. One group received a CV with the name 'John' and the other group received the same CV with the name 'Jennifer'. Despite the otherwise identical CV, the female applicant was regarded as less competent and was less likely to be hired, mentored, or paid as high a salary than the male applicant. The study identified gender bias in both male and female participants.

Rivera (2017) found that academic hiring committees in the USA consider women's – but not men's – relationship status when recruiting to junior academic posts. Committees routinely viewed women whose partners held academic or high-status jobs as 'unmoveable' and excluded such women from job offers when there were alternative male or single female candidates. In the UK, Manfredi et al. (2014) observed that women academics were less likely than men to be successful in applying for senior roles. They provide evidence of a disparity in the proportion of the Leadership Foundation for HE's Top Management Programme alumni who progressed into VC/Principal roles (5% for women, 12% for men). These studies indicate that female applicants may be evaluated negatively compared to equivalent male applicants, potentially resulting in women being disadvantaged in the HE field.

Conversely, a large-scale hiring experiment undertaken by Williams and Ceci (2015) found that women applicants were preferred 2:1 over identically qualified men with matching lifestyles, concluding that there are advantages for women in the US academic labour market. Carlsson et al. (2021) conducted a survey experiment in the Nordic region and found that women academics were evaluated as more competent and hireable than men and found no evidence that having children altered this. They conclude that the gender gap in academia in this region is not caused by bias in the recruitment process. However, the countries in this study (Iceland, Norway, Sweden) occupy three of the top five places in the Global Gender Gap Index 2022 rankings (World Economic Forum, 2022), indicating that these are some of the most gender-equal countries in the world. The results therefore may be less generalisable to other countries such as the UK, which ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> in the Index.

The results from these studies appear to dispute and undermine the substantial body of research that provides evidence of women's disadvantage in academic hiring processes. Leuschner and Fernandez Pinto (2020) emphasise how this implies a strong critical stance to previous research that evidences gender bias in academia, as well as the testimonies of women who have experienced gender discrimination. They argue that this stance is socially and empirically detrimental as it strengthens endemic social biases in society and stifles discussion about discrimination.

### ***3.6 Unconscious bias training (UBT)***

Awareness of stereotypes and biases and the impact on individual and group outcomes has driven a need for solutions. In response, unconscious bias training (UBT) has increased in popularity, with many employers perceiving it as a "quick and expedient 'silver bullet' to vanquish inequality and discrimination" (Williamson and Foley, 2018, p. 356). UBT informs people that biases are innate and widespread with the aim of raising awareness and reducing the impact of such biases on people's interaction with others (Behavioural Insights Team, 2020). UBT commonly features in organisational strategies for increasing equality and diversity. In the UK HE field, UBT has been promoted as a good practice initiative for staff recruitment (Advance HE, 2020b).

However, UBT has been criticised for its lack of efficacy, its overly agentic view of addressing workplace discrimination, and its ignorance of structural barriers (Noon, 2018; Williamson and Foley, 2018). Nielsen and Kepinski (2016) argue that awareness of bias does not prevent it and that it is unrealistic to assume that UBT by itself would reduce discrimination. For example, Bhopal (2022) states that attempting to tackle racism through a strategy of UBT suggests that racism can be dismissed as an unconscious process with an assumption that such inequalities will be eradicated upon completion of the training. Williamson and Foley (2018) assert that UBT is likely to be ineffectual unless it is accompanied by a sustained programme of similar training to reinforce learning. This is supported by Devine et al. (2012), who found that UBT can reduce stereotypes but only under limited conditions. They demonstrated a reduction in race bias but only when UBT was accompanied with targeted strategies to bolster learning over a long period of time. Efficacy was highest among participants who wanted to reduce their biases and who engaged with the strategies. Similarly, Bezrukova et al. (2016) undertook a meta-analysis of diversity training outcomes, finding that such training builds awareness of different groups but the effects are short-lived unless complemented with other diversity measures over a long period of time. A review of the effectiveness of UBT by the Behavioural Insights Team (2020)

concluded that UBT raises awareness of people's biases but found no evidence that it changes behaviour or improves workplace equality. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2019) advises that there is no conclusive evidence that UBT changes attitudes or stereotypes or results in sustained impact on behaviour.

Some studies provide evidence that raising awareness of biases backfires. Apfelbaum et al. (2008) present evidence that revealing biases and telling people to resist them has the opposite effect and further entrenches stereotypes, whilst Wilton et al. (2019) found that efforts to portray the value of cultural and ethnic differences reinforced race essentialism and stereotypes. A similar effect was identified by Duguid and Thomas-Hunt (2015) who discovered that informing people that biases are innate and widespread results in the normalisation of bias and leads to greater discrimination. Noon (2018) highlights the inadequate treatment of agency and responsibility in UBT, arguing that such training is likely to be least effective for those whose actions most need modification. Based on the lack of evidence of efficacy, some organisations that embraced UBT have since rejected it. For example, in 2016 the UK Civil Service announced that one quarter of all civil servants had undertaken UBT (Heywood, 2016). However, in 2020, the UK Government concluded that UBT does not achieve its intended aims, confirming that it would be phased out in the Civil Service and encouraging other public sector employers to do the same (Cabinet Office, 2020).

### **3.7 Conclusion**

The stratification of the HE field impacts how capital is valued and (mis)recognised, with a potential class ceiling operating between elite and non-elite universities, and symbolically violent practices concealing the field's endemic power relations. Agents from higher-class backgrounds remain over-represented in the HE field and there is evidence that the stratification of HE may attract and filter academics from different class backgrounds into different types of university, potentially mirroring the pattern for students. Class background influences access to postgraduate education, with a doctorate being increasingly required for an academic career. There is a prestige factor in terms of the university/department awarding the doctorate, which can affect an agent's ability to secure an academic position (particularly in a higher-ranked university), secure a higher salary, and ultimately achieve promotion and influence. Accounts by academics from lower-class backgrounds demonstrate how a mismatched habitus can result in uncomfortable feelings of alienation, identity crisis, discrimination, stigma, and bias.

There is a wealth of research that provides evidence of prejudice and bias in hiring practices, including to academic positions, with characteristics of disadvantage combining to result in multiplicative penalties. Evidence is presented of gender-role incongruity bias, as well as homophily, in recruitment to the professions, which demonstrates how hiring practices may contribute to social reproduction. There is limited research into the effect of class background on hiring practices, and none that explores this for academic roles in HE in England. The HE field outwardly promotes values of equality and diversity so it is crucial to understand whether there are practices of discrimination and bias occurring, particularly when this could result in applicants not being provided with equal opportunities to succeed. Several scholars emphasise the need for further research in this area. For example, Crew (2020; 2021) and Macfarlane and Jefferson (2021) argue that there needs to be a more holistic understanding of disadvantage in the academic profession in the UK, particularly in terms of how class intersects with other characteristics. This provides evidence of the gap in the literature to which this thesis aimed to contribute.

# Chapter 5: Research methods

## 1. Introduction

In this chapter, the research methods and approaches employed in the research project are discussed. The thesis was informed by pragmatic philosophy, with a theoretical framework aligned to Bourdieu's work, augmented with Dewey's notion of habit (Chapter 2). Consequently, a concurrent mixed methods research design was selected. An overview is provided of the methods adopted by other hiring studies and a justification provided for the decision to use a factorial survey experiment (FSE). The pretesting and pilot studies are explained, with information provided on how the FSE, vignettes, and survey instruments were constructed to ensure their reliability and validity. Each step of the execution of the research project is described. The research methods and sampling strategy are discussed, including the mechanisms used to identify participants. The data analysis methods and techniques are described. A summary is provided of the main ethical considerations for the research study, including the need for methodological deception and how this was managed for the project, in accordance with the British Sociological Association (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practice (2017) and the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Human Research Ethics (2021).

## 2. Research design

### 2.1 *The pragmatic research paradigm*

The paradigm selected for this study was pragmatism, and particularly the philosophy of Dewey whose pragmatism was aimed explicitly at social improvement. Pragmatic philosophy emerged in the USA in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and is described by Sleeper (1986, cited in Maxcy, 2003, p. 54) as:

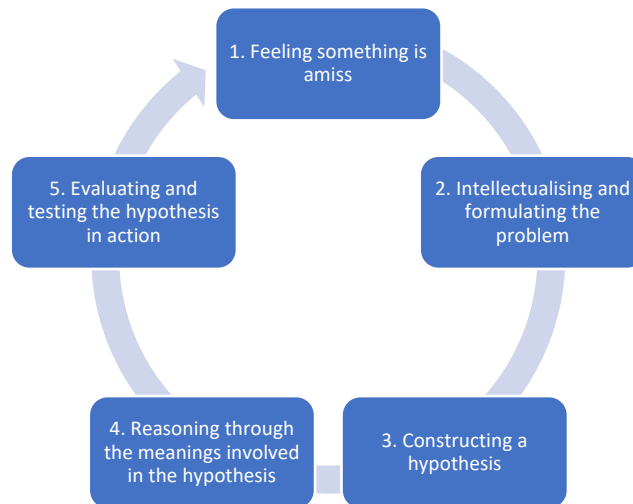
“rooted in common sense and dedicated to the transformation of culture, to the resolution of the conflicts that divide us.”

Pragmatism is concerned with action, intervention, and constructive knowledge (Goldkuhl, 2012). It is associated with the ethic of meliorism, with early pragmatists arguing that the world could be improved (or regressed) through human effort (Liszka, 2021). This belief added value to this study by providing a positive outlook that inequalities in HE can be reduced, space can be created for marginalised groups, and people can communicate across social divisions. Pragmatic studies start with a real-world situation, which researchers seek to understand and ultimately improve, often drawing creatively upon established habits (Gross, 2009; Wolfe, 2012). Dewey (1998 [1925], p. 11; p. 386) states, “the vine of pendant theory is attached at both ends to the



pillars of observed subject-matter”, arguing that terms and theories are historically and normatively situated and are “products of discrimination and classification”. As with Bourdieu, Dewey contends that theory is not the starting point for inquiry, but an intermediate stage and often an explanatory tool. Dewey (1933) argues for the reconstruction of epistemology as a theory of inquiry and he developed a model through which an indeterminate situation could be converted into a determinate one (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Dewey’s (1933) model of inquiry

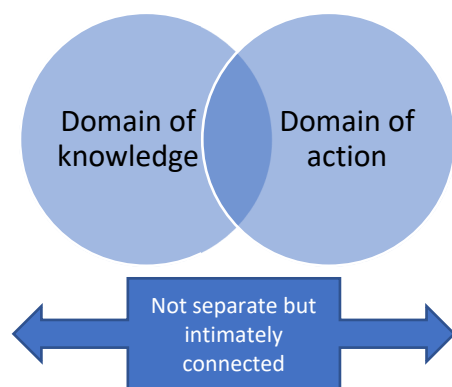


Epistemologically, pragmatism takes the worldview that reality is existential, and knowledge is constructed based on real-world experiences, defined as humans acting and learning from outcomes (Biesta, 2009; Morgan, 2017). Humans interact with the world from birth; therefore, interaction does not require prior knowledge. Instead, humans learn about the world through their interactions and encounters with it. This creates knowledge of the possible relationships between actions and consequences. Actions cannot be separated from experience or from the beliefs that have originated from those experiences; thoughts, perceptions, knowledge, and meaning are intrinsically linked to action (Figure 17). Therefore, knowledge emerges from action and informs future action. It is not restricted to explanations (positivism) or understanding (interpretivism) and instead is open to both, in addition to other forms of knowledge (such as prescriptive, normative, prospective, descriptive, explanatory). Knowledge is always *of* the world, rather than being an objective truth independent from human experience (Biesta, 2009).

The early pragmatists argue that there is worthwhile knowledge, but it must be recognised that knowledge is fallible and subject to change (Holmwood, 2011; Elder-Vass, 2022). Dewey (1938, p. 8) argues that truth and knowledge are adjectival, not nominative, in that they describe a process of experience – “there is no belief so settled as not to be exposed to further inquiry.”

Truth and knowledge are not absolute but are experience relations, usually socially shared and often changing over time, and they should always be considered tentative, fallible, and revisable (Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). As such, epistemological inquiry should focus on how humans can make fallible progress, rather than possessing absolute certainty (Biesta, 2009). Instead of philosophy pursuing absolute truth, Dewey argues that the focus should be on gaining understanding that is necessary to deal with problems and improve the world. His philosophy is an attempt to develop a more encompassing and humane conception of rationality (Biesta, 2009). Therefore, a strength of pragmatic research is its aim to ensure that knowledge will lead to action that will enable change. This worldview was crucial to this research study, which aimed to highlight inequalities and discrimination to effect positive change within HE.

Figure 17: Pragmatic philosophy and epistemology



Pragmatists claim that the experiential world is perspectival and has “different elements or layers, some objective, some subjective, and some a mixture of the two”, which results in different ways of viewing and experiencing reality (Feilzer, 2010, p. 8). Humans interact with the world through action and experience and impose upon the world systems of classification and organisation (Goldkuhl, 2012; Schwartz, 2021). Singular and multiple social realities exist and provide a sense of the world; these are open to empirical inquiry and can be explored using pragmatic philosophy, with the world hypothesised through perceived relationships between actions and their consequences (Biesta, 2009). Pragmatic philosophy therefore embraces a social ontology in which reality is understood as a function of human knowledge, or the relationship between actions and consequences. All experiences and encounters with the world are considered real, with actions perceived to be motivated by experience, social interaction, and change, rather than being deterministically caused (Biesta, 2015; Morgan, 2017).

A strength of pragmatism is the acceptance that different worldviews will be appropriate in different situations and will solve different problems (Biesta, 2009). Pragmatism therefore skirts the contentious and circular debates between the two traditional dichotomous research

paradigms – positivism and interpretivism – and bridges the gap between the older scientific and structuralist approaches on the one hand and the newer naturalistic approaches on the other (Maxcy, 2003; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). In doing so, pragmatists are not ignoring these philosophical arguments but have concluded that they cannot be solved because meaning is inseparable from human experience and is dependent upon context (Feilzer, 2010). A virtue of pragmatism is its rejection of the philosophy of ‘formalism’ and its perception of the process of acquiring knowledge as a continuum, therefore embracing the opposing poles to offer a more flexible and reflexive approach to research design (Goles and Hirschheim, 2000; Maxcy, 2003; Feilzer, 2010; Morgan, 2017). Rorty (1999, p. ix) describes pragmatists as “anti-dualists” who call for a convergence of the dichotomies that traditionally shape research philosophy and methodology, for example, positivism and interpretivism, objectivity and subjectivity, quantitative and qualitative, and mind and matter. Patton (2002) refers to pragmatism as a “paradigm of choices”.

## ***2.2 Combining Bourdieu and Dewey in the pragmatic paradigm***

Like the pragmatists, Bourdieu (1990, p. 25) is also an ‘anti-dualist’, aiming to transcend what he saw as the artificiality of the philosophical schism, stating:

“Of all the oppositions that artificially divide social science, the most fundamental, and the most ruinous, is the one that is set up between subjectivism and objectivism.”

Instead, Bourdieu contends that sociologists should move towards a relational approach to the study of social phenomena, therefore transcending the antagonism inherent in this philosophical divide. This, he argues, can be achieved by adopting a more holistic stance that preserves the strengths of each approach.

Bourdieu was not keen on labelling the paradigm(s) in which his work was situated, believing his theory transcended such theoretical structures. However, he describes his stance as “constructivist structuralism or ... structuralist constructivism” (Bourdieu, 1989, p. 14).<sup>13</sup> He uses structuralism in this context to refer to how objective structures exist in the world, independent from the agency and consciousness of individuals, yet can influence and constrain practice. He uses constructivism to refer to social genesis arising through the habitus and social structures, particularly of fields and groups (especially classes) (Bourdieu, 1989). He argues that a tendency towards homology exists between the objective positions and cognitive systems of dispositions,

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<sup>13</sup> Bourdieu was a critic of the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, regarding this as far too deterministic. Instead, Bourdieu emphasises how human agency and social practice change and shape cultural and social structures.

such as schemata of perception, appreciation and action that make up the habitus of social actors (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 16).

Bourdieu's worldview therefore is, at least to some extent, consistent with that of pragmatic philosophy, and particularly the work of Dewey. For example, they both: reject a dualist, reductionist, and purely metaphysical theory of knowledge; bestow a specific epistemological meaning to the importance of practice in understanding and explaining social phenomena; prefer empirical research over purely theoretical, idealistic or rationalistic approaches; and there is similarity in Dewey's concept of habit compared with Bourdieu's concept of habitus (Chapter 2) (Frega, 2011; Bogusz, 2012; Viola, 2012). When asked the extent to which his ideas coincided with pragmatism, Bourdieu answered:

“the affinities and convergences are quite striking [...]. [T]he theory of practical sense presents many similarities with theories, such as Dewey's, that grant a central role to the notion of habit, understood as an active and creative relation to the world, and reject all the conceptual dualisms upon which nearly all post-Cartesian philosophies are based” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 122).

There are also some subtle but important differences in how they conceived cognition and action. Dewey claims that automatic and deliberate cognition are intertwined, whilst Bourdieu perceives these are largely separate. Dewey argues that deliberation takes place regularly, whilst Bourdieu describes it as a rare occurrence. Finally, Dewey's notion of habit is capable of perceiving morality as motivating practice, whereas Bourdieu's theory saw practice, including ethics and morals, as motivated solely through power. These are discussed in Chapter 2 and a case was made for augmenting Bourdieu's concept of habitus with Dewey's notion of habit to enable a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between agency, structure, and environment within different fields and situations whilst maintaining a critique of mechanisms that lead to social reproduction.

Combining Bourdieu's and Dewey's work in this way also enables some of the criticisms and limitations of pragmatism to be addressed. The pragmatic focus on experience can be seen as individualistic, which has led to charges of solipsism (Schwartz, 2021). Elder-Vass (2022) argues against this, highlighting the plurality in approaches in pragmatism, while Gross (2009) argues that pragmatism should not exclude the influence of social structure. Combining Bourdieu's theory with the pragmatist paradigm facilitates the expansion of pragmatic ideas, such as Dewey's notion of habit, into this more structuralist realm by increasing the unit of analysis from the individual to the situation to the field to social space. Linking Bourdieu to pragmatism also strengthens Bourdieu's theory as there is a risk that explaining this expansion solely through a

Bourdieuian lens could result in a preference for causal explanation of statistical patterns at the expense of the experience and reflexivity of agents, which has led to the charges of determinism and reductionism against Bourdieu (Chapter 2). Therefore, combining Bourdieu's work with pragmatism rebuffs the charges of individualism and solipsism against pragmatism, whilst also strengthening Bourdieuian analysis by broadening and clarifying the conceptualisation of habitus and providing a more robust and credible account of the diversity of action and practice (Chapter 2).

In addition, and as argued by Colapietro (2004), the theoretical combination of Bourdieu and Dewey thickens and deepens the range of phenomena connected to Dewey's concept of habit by linking practice to different fields and variations of capital, and particularly to the complex sociological understanding of field-specific capital, that Bourdieu's theory provides. This creates a more detailed and substantial account of human behaviour and endeavour, and the interplay between agency and structure, than Dewey articulated in his work.

Pragmatism has been criticised for not accounting sufficiently for conflict and power in society. For example, Mills (cited in Wolfe, 2012) claims that Dewey's focus on consensus and progress ignores conflict and domination, whilst Diggins (1994) asserts that Dewey's lack of acknowledgement of power is an aberration. Several scholars have challenged these claims, including Hildreth (2009) who argues that an agency conception of power is included implicitly in key Deweyan concepts, and Wolfe (2012) who states that Dewey's pragmatism provides multiple concepts relating to power, centring on an indirect or transactional concept in Dewey's theory of praxis. Whilst Dewey considered power and conflict in his work, his notion of habit is largely monistic, and his account of social change fails to fully grasp and articulate the complexities of social structures, their historical genesis, and the perpetuation and strength of hierarchies of power and domination that flow through Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu's theory therefore addresses the weaknesses in pragmatism's inability to fully explain historicity, conflict, and power, thus enabling Dewey's ideas to be understood within a more complex historic and material context, with habitus grounded in the social group's specific conditions.

The main strength of situating this study within the pragmatic paradigm was plurality, which provided the flexibility and freedom to pursue a variety of methods and perspectives, as deemed most appropriate for the research questions. Another strength was pragmatism's focus on practice, actions, and consequences, and the role of deliberation in determining action, which were important for this topic. These overarching principles align closely with Bourdieu's theory and there are clear affinities and convergences between this and pragmatic philosophy,

particularly that of Dewey. Combining their theories anchors Bourdieu's sociological analysis to a philosophical underpinning, often missing from Bourdieu's work, and which provides greater depth to his concepts and their application. Furthermore, Deweyan pragmatism provides a means to augment Bourdieu's work and negate charges of determinism, fatalism, and reductionism, whilst pragmatism offers a corrective to Bourdieu's pessimism and cynicism by embracing the ethic of melioration and the desire for research to lead to social improvement. Conversely, Bourdieu's work addresses some of the weaknesses of pragmatism by providing a corrective to the charges of individualism and solipsism and by both thickening and deepening the range of phenomena connected to Deweyan concepts. This includes expanding the unit of analysis to group levels, thus bringing pragmatism into the sociological realm. This allows for a more complex understanding of different groups, social change, conflict, and power, situated within a multifaceted and detailed historic and material context.

### **3. Research approach**

#### ***3.1 Mixed methods***

Pragmatism embraces a plurality of methods, enabling the researcher to be "free of the mental and practical constraints" inflicted by the false dichotomy between postpositivism and constructivism (Feilzer, 2010, p. 8; Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). Instead, researchers should use the research design and methodological approach that is most appropriate to address the problem under investigation (Teddlie and Tashakkai, 2015; Kaushik and Walsh, 2019). This accords with Bourdieu's approach (2006, p. 101) of "methodological polytheism", by which he means that the researcher should select an array of methods that are most appropriate to the research question. Silva et al. (2009), inspired by Bourdieu, describe their mixed methods approach as "methodological eclecticism", a term that has subsequently been used by Morgan (2017) to explain mixed methods research in the pragmatic paradigm.

This study adopted a mixed methods approach. This enabled the "different elements or layers" of the relevant social phenomena to be observed, measured, and understood (Feilzer, 2010, p. 8). A deductive approach was implemented, with the hypotheses and research questions situated within Bourdieu's theoretical framework (Chapter 2). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed through a combination of measurement and interpretation. A data management plan, based on the Economic and Social Research Council's template, was created and updated throughout the study; the final version is in Appendix 2. The quantitative data were analysed to identify how the independent variables influenced the dependent variables, thus testing the hypotheses and identifying patterns in participants' actions. The qualitative data

were analysed to identify meanings to explain the actions. In line with the pragmatic paradigm, the findings were not considered to be unvarying causal links or truths but were instead used to interrogate and more fully comprehend what could influence hiring practices and the potential consequences of shortlisting decisions. Adopting a mixed methods approach was critical to addressing the research questions and providing a more holistic understanding of the social world by integrating the objectivity of statistics within a framework of subjectivity, as advocated in Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1995; Grenfell, 2012).

### **3.2 Research strategy**

#### *3.2.1 Factorial survey experiment (FSE)*

An epistemological principle of pragmatic research is that knowledge is constructed through actions and interventions that lead to consequences and change. Therefore, an experimental research study, which enables knowledge to be gained about the relationships and the consequences of actions and interventions, fits well within the pragmatic paradigm (Morgan, 2017). However, having a social ontology means that pragmatic research looks to understand why people act as they do and therefore also investigates intentions and reasons for actions. This study aimed to identify and explore how applicant class background and gender might influence inequality and discrimination in the academic recruitment process. Therefore, an experimental approach was chosen, and the research was designed to be a mixed methods concurrent nested quantitative and qualitative design, with the quantitative and qualitative strands implemented concomitantly. The quantitative part of the study formed the core, and the qualitative data were collected to enhance understanding of the relationships, hence the notation of the dominant status of the quantitative methods in the research design (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009; Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2015). The concurrent timing was chosen to provide a greater understanding of the factors influencing the decisions made by the participants by interpreting both datasets together.

Hiring studies are undertaken using two main approaches – FSEs and resume audit studies (RAS). FSEs are an increasingly common, low cost, and effective method for studying decision-making processes, such as identifying discrimination in hiring practices. The FSE method was designed by Rossi (1979; Rossi and Anderson, 1982) to “assess judgement principles underlying norms, attitudes, decisions and definitions” (Jann and Hinz, 2016; paragraph 32). In FSE hiring studies, participants consent to engage in the research and are tasked with reviewing hypothetical job applications (vignettes) in a controlled artificial environment or setting. The vignettes are usually identical or highly similar, other than certain variables (dimensions) that have been experimentally varied in their levels. This enables the researcher to identify relationships

between variables under controlled conditions. FSEs are often designed to collect qualitative data, which can be combined with the quantitative data to provide a deeper understanding of the decisions made. This is crucial to comprehending how inequalities arise during the hiring process (Bills et al., 2017). However, the method has been criticised for potentially measuring hiring intentions instead of real behaviour (Pager and Quillian, 2005).

An alternative method is the RAS, a type of field experiment. Real or hypothetical job applications are created with one or more characteristics altered and are submitted to genuine job advertisements. The frequency of interview invitations is monitored as a measure of the recruiters' assumptions about the suitability of the applicants. This allows researchers to test for behaviour that is difficult to detect, such as discrimination and bias, in a real-world situation, which could be impacted by social desirability bias in an artificial environment (such as FSEs) (Gaddis, 2017). However, Auspurg et al. (2015) provide evidence that FSEs are less prone to social desirability bias than other methods such as direct questioning. Correll et al. (2007) argue that RAS tend to provide more generalizable results and are therefore methodologically stronger, as participants are not aware of their behaviour and decisions being observed. However, whilst RAS are strong at documenting the existence of discrimination, they are limited in their ability to uncover mechanisms for discrimination or explain the rationale for hiring decisions. There are numerous ethical concerns with conducting RAS, particularly in terms of unnecessarily and dishonestly engaging recruiters and potentially jeopardising the recruitment chances of real applicants; these ethical issues are mitigated in FSEs (McDonald, 2019). Some larger studies have involved FSEs and RAS, with the findings complementing one another (Gaddis, 2017).

A further drawback to using a RAS for this research was that, in the HE field, social ties, networks and publications are highly important in recruitment (Section 3, Chapter 4). It is normal practice for a recruiting manager to consider this information when reviewing an application for an academic position, which could include searching for applicant's online profile to verify the credentials noted in the application.<sup>14</sup> An application from an unknown applicant with no online presence may arouse suspicion and could therefore compromise the validity of the research.

Pragmatism is based on the premise of deploying the most appropriate methods to investigate real-world issues. As such, a RAS was deemed inappropriate for this research project and an FSE

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<sup>14</sup> For example, via: networking websites such as Academia.edu (<https://www.academia.edu/>) and the Social Science Research Network (<https://www.ssrn.com/>); publication databases such as Scopus ([https://www.scopus.com](https://www.scopus.com/)); subscription services such as SciVal ([https://www.scival.com](https://www.scival.com/)).



was instead selected as the method. The main advantage of an FSE was that it would allow the researcher to investigate the social and cognitive processes involved in decision-making (Gaddis, 2019). This enables a more nuanced approach to understanding how and why decisions are made, especially when there are multiple factors involved (Gaddis, 2017, 2019; Protsch and Solga, 2017). FSEs also allow the researcher to capture the multidimensionality of hiring decisions by considering multiple applicant characteristics (McDonald, 2019). For this thesis, the FSE method was compatible with the pragmatic paradigm as it enabled inquiry to lead to the creation of knowledge of how the multiple factors involved in people's actions shaped outcomes and potential consequences. In addition, the FSE enabled the examination of the influence of participant characteristics on vignette evaluations, which would not have been possible with a RAS (McDonald, 2019; Gutfleisch et al., 2021); this was important for testing the hypotheses for this thesis. The FSE method allows for the testing of theoretical models and therefore enabled the researcher to follow a deductive reasoning process, thus aligning with this study's aim to test Bourdieu's theory in academic recruitment in England.

The research design needed to be capable of identifying and measuring the strength of influence, whilst accepting agentic choice in the interpretation of the findings. It can be argued that FSEs align to the positivist paradigm as the method can be used to test for cause and effect through scientific observation. However, the purpose of deploying the FSE in this thesis was not to identify mechanical cause and effect, but to seek a combination of objective and subjective findings that would help to understand the real-world issues and identify possible solutions. Deploying an FSE within the pragmatist paradigm, framed with the combination of Bourdieu's and Dewey's theories, facilitated the identification of the influence of the habitus in shaping hiring practices, whilst allowing for the belief that it is the agent who ultimately makes the decision.

### **3.3 Pretesting**

The first step for the FSE was to develop the survey instruments and vignettes, and then undertake pretesting to establish their validity prior to the pilot exercises. The pretesting and pilot study took place between September 2017 and April 2018 in a post-1992 university in the south of England. The participants were academics with a responsibility for academic recruitment. Participants in the pretesting were removed as potential participants from the pilot study.

### *3.3.1 Creating the vignettes for pretesting*

The vignettes developed for the pretesting were based on the study being a paired profiles conjoint design, under which each participant evaluates two vignettes side-by-side. This decision was based on Hainmueller et al.'s (2015) finding that this design has the highest external validity of different FSE designs when compared to RAS.<sup>15</sup> As such, the first step was to create the baseline CVs for the vignettes. The validity of the results would be dependent on the baseline CVs being of comparable quality so that any assumptions, judgements, and decisions made by the participants could be deemed to be caused by the manipulation of the independent variable(s) of class and gender (Correll et al., 2007). At the same time, the baselines CVs needed to be sufficiently different so as not to arouse suspicion. To ensure credibility, these were based on example CVs suggested for PhD graduates on the [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) and [www.vitae.ac.uk](http://www.vitae.ac.uk) websites, as well as some authentic CVs. The researcher produced two distinct but realistic-looking baseline CVs for hypothetical job applicants with similar personal profiles, qualification types/levels, research interests, experiences, responsibilities, and publications (Appendix 3).

To create the vignettes, the baseline CVs were given identities. Telephone numbers were fictitious, although the area code was matched to the address. Email addresses were fictitious and followed the same basic format of the applicant's name registered with a popular email provider. The choice of first names was crucial as this was the key signal of gender; those selected were gender-distinctive within a UK context. As race was a controlled variable, first names and surnames had to give a clear signal of one race; white/Caucasian was selected as the largest racial/ethnic group in the UK. The validity of these gender and race markers was confirmed through the pretesting; however, there remained a minor risk that a participant might not be familiar with the country's naming norms. This risk was tolerated for the pilot based on the result of the pretesting.

Finally, the identities were given markers of class background. These markers aligned with Bourdieu's concepts of capital and habitus and were designed to give signals of an individual's class background. For example, qualifications demonstrate institutionalised cultural capital (with subject, qualification level, and awarding body carrying different amounts of capital), whilst home address indicates objectified economic capital (with more affluent people living in more affluent neighbourhoods). Strong or neutral class signals were added to seven parts of the vignettes – first name, surname, address, universities attended, schooling, academic citizenship,

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<sup>15</sup> This is thought to be because participants in a study with a paired conjoint design must engage more thoroughly with the two sets of materials to answer the questions, therefore mitigating the risk of survey satisficing (Hainmueller et al., 2015).

and personal interests. Building on Rivera and Tilcsik's (2016, p. 1105) robust methodological practice, class background was indicated using a "constellation of higher, lower and neutral class signals". This made the vignettes more realistic and served as a control item in relation to a stronger class signal in the other condition. Each identity was assigned four or five either higher- or lower-class markers plus two or three neutral markers. This was based on previous research that demonstrated that CVs with at least four class signals created a clearer and more reliable manipulation of class background than those with fewer signals (Jackson, 2009; Rivera and Tilcsik, 2016). Control measures were taken for several attributes, including assumed age, time in education, race, and nationality.

Four identities were produced: higher-class male, higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female. When applied to the baseline CVs, the result was a set of eight vignettes that were substantively the same but with minor variances made to the dimensions of interest, i.e. class background and gender. In Appendix 4, Table A3 indicates how the level of each dimension was altered to signal gender or class and Table A4 presents the combinations of signals of class background in the identities used in the pretesting.

### *3.3.2 Results from the pretesting*

The two survey instruments used in the pretesting were reviewed by an expert on questionnaire construction; this helped establish their face validity (Collingridge, 2014). 7-point Likert scales were selected for the pretesting as there is evidence that they provide a more accurate measure of a participant's true evaluation as participants are less likely to interpolate than when presented with a 5-point scale as they have a wider scale of options (Allen and Seaman, 2007; Finstad, 2010).

**Pretest 1:** The aim was to ascertain whether the two baseline CVs were perceived to be equal in the absence of any manipulations of class and gender markers (Correll et al., 2007), using this hypothesis:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference in the perceived quality of the two baselines CVs.

H<sub>0</sub>: There is a significant difference in the perceived quality of the two baselines CVs.

A paired profiles conjoint design was adopted. Six participants were asked to rate the two baseline CVs using a 7-point Likert scale (ranging from 'not at all' to 'extremely') on nine factors: capable; efficient; skilled; intelligent; committed; independent; self-confident; warm; and sincere. Participants were asked which of the two applicants appeared more qualified for a role

as a lecturer. The responses were analysed to check for differences between the participants' ratings of the two baseline CVs and to test the hypotheses.

A non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-ranks test was calculated in SPSS (v19) to check the significance of the results. This was deemed the most appropriate test as the dependent variables were measured at the ordinal level, the independent variables were two related groups of participants (i.e. the same participants in each group), and the distribution of the differences between the two related groups was symmetrical in shape. The Wilcoxon signed-ranks test works by converting scores to ranks and comparing them between the two conditions, in this case between CV1 and CV2. As the sample size was small, the 'exact test' was used (Mehta and Patel, 1996). No evidence was found of a significant difference between participant scores for CV1 compared with CV2 for any of the nine individual factors or for the average scores overall (Appendix 5, Table A5 includes the statistics scores and median scores), thus suggesting that baseline CVs 1 and 2 could be considered of equivalent quality.

**Pretest 2:** Pretest 2 examined whether the markers of class background and gender sent the expected signals and were not inadvertently signalling other variables that might compromise the interpretation of the results. JISC Online Surveys was used for the data collection. Eight participants were each provided with one vignette and asked to indicate the likelihood, using a 7-point Likert scale, that the applicant was of a particular race, gender, parental status, sexual orientation, nationality, or class background.

During the pretesting, the vignettes for lower-class man (ID1) and lower-class woman (ID3) were found not to be clearly expressing signals of class background. The identities were given further signals and two more versions of each identity were created (ID1A and ID1B; ID3A and ID3B). Four new participants were recruited to assess these vignettes. Some evidence of survey satisficing was identified from two respondents, so their responses were removed; these CVs were sent to two new participants. In Appendix 5, Table A6 summarises the participants' interpretations of the signals in the vignettes and Table A7 summarises how the data were used to support or reject the hypotheses and therefore whether the identities were rejected or retained.

### **3.4 Pilot study**

Between January and April 2018, a pilot study was conducted at the same university used for the pretesting. The pilot tested the method, materials, and process for the FSE and took place in two phases.

### *3.4.1 Phase 1 of the pilot*

Twelve individuals were selected randomly from the population and invited to participate; six consented to take part (four men, two women). Five of the experiments were conducted as a paired profiles conjoint design and one was conducted as a single-profile vignette design. The researcher met with each participant individually to conduct the experiment. All participants were provided with a participant information sheet prior to, then again at, the meeting. They were not informed of the true aim of the research, but instead informed that the purpose was to understand the characteristics and qualities that academic recruiters seek in applicants for entry-level academic posts. At the start of each meeting, the participant completed a participant agreement form and the researcher provided an overview of the research, followed by an introduction to the experiment. The participant was provided with a shortlisting pack (containing a job description, advert, two vignettes, and two shortlisting forms<sup>16</sup>). The researcher left the room for fifteen minutes whilst the participant completed the exercise. Participants were required to evaluate each vignette using a shortlisting form. When the researcher returned, a discussion took place so that the participant could explain their experience of the exercise. The completed shortlisting forms were placed in a sealed envelope. All meetings took place in person, except for one which took place via video call.

After the first two meetings, it was apparent that the participants were focusing on the similarities between the vignettes rather than the differences. This was clear in their feedback and responses to the survey (the pairs of vignettes were scored identically). For the remaining exercises, the psychological realism of the FSE was reconsidered and a stronger scenario description was provided that included a provocation to force participants to decide between the applicants and therefore to focus on the differences (Ausperg et al., 2015). This was successful; however, the participants reported basing their decisions on factors such as how well written the 'research interests' section was or whether they felt these interests were more stimulating. One participant reported having taken an "elitist view" with their decision informed by the higher-ranked universities attended by the higher-class applicants. In addition, some participants reported being suspicious and spending time comparing both vignettes to see if they could work out the real aim of the study. Finally, the two vignettes were similar in content and formatted the same, which resulted in some participants describing the exercise as "weird" or "unrealistic".

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<sup>16</sup> For the single-profile vignette experiment, the participant received one vignette and one shortlisting form.

In response, several changes were made to the FSE design. The main change was to alter the design from a paired profiles conjoint design to a between-subjects design (with each participant evaluating one vignette). In this revised format, each condition of the independent variables is experienced by only one group of participants (Coolican, 2009). Therefore, only one baseline CV was required and the only differences between the vignettes were the manipulations of class background and gender, thus reducing the potential variables and arguably increasing the study's validity. Gaddis (2017) contends that, although a paired profiles conjoint design can have statistical advantages, a between-subjects design is sometimes necessary to reduce suspicion and avoid experiment discovery. The between-subjects design has been utilised by previous hiring experiments, for example, Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) who argue that it avoids social desirability bias because there is no contrast. In addition, Williams and Ceci (2015) note that using a paired profiles conjoint design and only changing markers of characteristics risks revealing the primary research question and compromising the results.

The delivery method was changed from an in-person exercise to an online exercise. The meetings in phase 1 of the pilot were useful; however, they were time-consuming to arrange and conduct. Some invited participants expressed an interest in taking part, but it was not possible to find a convenient time to meet, resulting in the loss of their participation. Furthermore, conducting the exercise online would provide the opportunity to reach a greater number of participants over a wider geographical area.

Several changes were made to the vignettes in response to the pilot:

1. Research interests: Some participants reported that the research interests gave an impression of the applicant's race; this could be misleading and invalidate the results. For example, one vignette stated a research interest in the sociology of migration with a focus on South Asian Muslims. Some participants interpreted this as a signal that the applicant might be Asian.
2. First name: One fictitious identity used the name Stacey. However, some participants reported that Stacey was a unisex name, indicating that it was therefore an ambiguous signal of gender. The name was changed to Donna – which was not unisex and had similar class signals to Stacey (Jackson, 2009).
3. Reduction in the breadth of class and gender signal, but an increase in their strength: A reduction in the breadth was made possible through the move to a single-profile vignette design, which aimed to strengthen the study's validity. For example, both higher-class vignettes were given the same surname (Bartle-Jones) rather than different surnames (Micklethwait and Trelawney). An increase in the depth and strength of some signals was

made in response to participant feedback that some signals were missed (for example, the hobbies/interests and the universities attended).

4. Making the CVs more ordinary: Foschi et al. (1994) and Moss-Racusin et al. (2012) argue that hiring experiments should use academic records that are ordinary, as status generalisation is more likely to occur when performance is not a clear indication of success or failure. The qualifications presented in the vignettes in phase 1 were arguably too strong. For example, all applicants had an A-level grade profile of 'A, A, A, A'. This was reduced to 'B, C, C, D' for phase 2.
5. Linking A-level subjects to class background: Rather than all applicants having A-levels in the same subjects, these were changed to link subjects to class backgrounds for phase 2, thereby amplifying the signals of class. Subjects were selected based on analysis by Vidal Rodeiro (2007) on A-level choices and class background.

For phase 2 of the pilot study, the job description and advert were removed from the shortlisting pack provided to participants. This was in response to feedback from participants that they spent a substantial amount of time reading these documents, which distracted them from reviewing the vignettes. Instead, a cover letter was included as participants reported that it was unusual to receive a CV without one. This could impact on the psychological realism of the experiment and therefore the external validity. One cover letter was produced and attached to all vignettes, but with minor changes made (based on signals of class and gender). Finally, the survey questions were refined and reduced, as some participants reported that there were questions that were impossible to answer and/or repetitive.

#### *3.4.2 Phase 2 of the pilot*

This phase was a trial of the design for the final study and enabled the testing of the changes from phase 1, as well as the suitability of the planned statistical analysis techniques. Invitations to participate were sent to 35 individuals, who were selected randomly from the population; 18 consented to take part (11 men, six women, one preferred not to say), a response rate of 51%. One response was deemed to be ineligible as an incorrect applicant name was entered. JISC Online Surveys was used to collect the data. Some participants provided additional comments on the vignette and/or cover letter, returning these to the researcher by email; these were used to make minor modifications for the full study.

Phase 2 provided evidence for the efficacy of the online survey method, the single-profile vignette design, and the between-subjects design. All participants reported that the survey design was easy to navigate and complete. The exercise demonstrated that the changes

informed by phase 1 resulted in clearer signals of class background and gender being given by the vignettes, as well as neutrality in the other characteristics. Sixteen of the respondents (94%) agreed that the applicants were plausible for an entry-level academic position and that the CV and covering letter were credible. The participant who disagreed did not provide an explanation.

The main change made after phase 2 was to strengthen the process at the end of the experiment for debriefing participants and inviting them to re-consent to their participation. The debriefing was more challenging with an online method; however, a page was added to the online survey to display immediately after the last question. This page thanked participants for their participation and ensured that they were fully informed as to the intent and purpose of the study. Having read the information, participants were given the option either to withdraw or submit their data.

Finally, a gender-neutral identity was created to serve as a control for the male and female identities. This used the same class background markers but with a gender-neutral first name. The pretesting and pilot study provided the feedback and reassurance required to amend and finalise the research design and progress to the full study, which described in the remainder of this chapter.

## **4. Final study**

### ***4.1 Design and instruments***

After the pretesting and pilot studies, the final vignettes were created. These were identical, other than the signals of class background and gender. Table 9 summarises the class and gender signals incorporated in the final vignettes and clarifies how constellations of signals were used to express class background.

The FSE was finalised and included six vignettes and an online survey in which respondents recorded their responses. JISC Online Surveys was used, and two identical versions of the survey were created, one for participants at elite institutions and one for participants at non-elite institutions. Each participant was invited to evaluate one vignette (assigned at random), evaluating it based on prompts in the online survey. Participants were asked to imagine a scenario in which a colleague was shortlisting applications for a vacant Lecturer in Sociology post and had asked for their help to review an application. Participants were asked to read the documents thoroughly and then answer the survey questions with their first, uncensored impressions. To avoid responses being influenced by questions of fit or participants feeling



unable to comment from outside their discipline, participants were asked to assume that the applicant's teaching and research interests fitted with the needs of the faculty/department.

Table 9: Class background and gender signals used in the identities for the final vignettes

	Lower-class male	Lower-class female	Lower-class gender-neutral	Higher-class male	Higher-class female	Higher-class gender-neutral
<b>Name</b>	Dr Gary <sup>b</sup> Clark <sup>c</sup>	Dr Donna <sup>b</sup> Clark <sup>c</sup>	Dr Robin Clark <sup>c</sup>	Dr David <sup>c</sup> Bartle- Jones <sup>a</sup>	Dr Emma <sup>c</sup> Bartle- Jones <sup>a</sup>	Dr Robin Bartle- Jones <sup>a</sup>
<b>Address</b>	Flat 6a Albion Street, Grimsby, Lincolnshire, DN32 7DY <sup>b</sup>			Badgers Brook, Green Lane, Appleton Thorn, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 5PF <sup>a</sup>		
<b>Email address</b>	Hotmail.com <sup>b</sup>			Gmail.com <sup>c</sup>		
<b>Universities attended</b>	Leeds Beckett University <sup>b</sup> Newman University <sup>b</sup>			University of Bristol <sup>a</sup> University of Durham <sup>a</sup>		
<b>Schooling</b>	Havelock Academy, Grimsby <sup>b</sup>			Altrincham Grammar School for Boys or Girls, Altrincham <sup>a</sup>		
<b>A-level subjects</b>	Film studies (C), Psychology (C), General Studies (D), Sociology (B) <sup>b</sup>			English language (C), French (C), Latin (D), Sociology (B) <sup>a</sup>		
<b>Administration experience</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mentor for widening participation students<sup>b</sup></li> <li>Member of the Target Schools Scheme and participated in widening access school visits<sup>b</sup></li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Graduate tutor for Year 12 students at local grammar school<sup>a</sup></li> <li>Mentor for students participating in the Faculty's public engagement event<sup>c</sup></li> </ul>		
<b>Part-time work</b>	Worked part-time at the Solihull Community Amateur Boxing Club <sup>b</sup>			None <sup>a</sup>		
<b>Personal interests</b>	Refereeing local football/netball matches, boxing, socializing, and playing guitar/singing in a band formed with friends <sup>b</sup>			Going to the theatre, playing tennis, sailing, listening to jazz music <sup>a</sup>		

<sup>a</sup>Higher-class and class-neutral items that, in combination, signify a higher-class background.

<sup>b</sup>Lower-class and class-neutral items that, in combination, signify a lower-class background.

<sup>c</sup>Largely class-neutral items that, rather than sending out a strong class signal by themselves, serve as control items in relation to a stronger class signal in the other conditions.

The survey comprised eight sections and included closed and open questions. Where Likert scales were used, these were 7-point scales as there is evidence that these provide a more

accurate measure of a participant's true evaluation (Allen and Seaman, 2007; Finstad, 2010). Open-ended questions were included for the key decision points in the FSE, such as the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview. This ensured that participants had the opportunity to explain their responses, which enabled the researcher to understand the participants' cognitive processes and justifications more fully.

Potential participants were sent an email explaining that the purpose of the research was to garner insights into how applications are shortlisted and what academic recruiters are seeking in applicants. The true aims of the study were not revealed to participants, thereby reducing the possibility of social desirability bias. The email included the online survey link, the vignettes (cover letter and CV) (Appendix 6 provides an example), and the participant information sheet (Appendix 7). Participants were asked to evaluate the vignette against several traits – competent, capable, efficient, intelligent, warm, trustworthy, well-intentioned, and sincere. They were asked to assess the applicant's work ethic and whether the applicant was likely to work long and/or non-standard hours. They were asked whether the applicant would fit in and get along with other staff. Participants were asked how likely they would be to invite the applicant to interview and the salary they would recommend (a scale was provided). Participants were then asked to provide their first impressions of the applicant in terms of perceived race, gender, sexuality, nationality, and class background. Finally, participants were asked to provide demographic information about themselves. The construction of the FSE was based on previous research. For example, the attributes were based on the SCM (Fiske et al., 2002) and adapted in accordance with subsequent studies (Cuddy et al., 2004; Correll et al., 2007; Rivera and Tilcsik, 2016).

Finally, the participants were presented with a debriefing statement and asked to re-consent to the use of their data. Participants were thanked for their time and input and reminded not to discuss the exercise with colleagues.

#### ***4.2 Management of deception***

Research into recruitment practices is often cited in the literature as an example of where the use of methodological deception is crucial to the identification of behavioural dispositions that have a negative impact on the individual, the individual's interaction, and on society (Bortolotti and Mamei, 2006). Participants aware of the true aim in advance of the experiment could modify any undesirable behaviour by purposefully limiting their biases and prejudices for the duration of the experiment. This would compromise the research design and invalidate the

results. As such, full disclosure to participants was not feasible in advance of the experiment. The withholding of this information constituted a form of deception by omission.

The BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2021) acknowledges that deception is sometimes necessary for methodological reasons. They advise that such projects should: i) be designed to protect the dignity and autonomy of the participants; ii) specify in the project protocol that it is subjected to ethical review; iii) have an appropriate risk management and harm alleviation strategy; iv) provide participants with an appropriate debrief; and v) ensure that participants re-consent after the debrief and can withdraw. The BSA Statement of Ethical Practice (2017) acknowledges that covert methods are sometimes justifiable, particularly in situations where participants may change their behaviour if they know they are being studied. The BSA advises that informed consent is obtained from participants after the research. The BPS and BSA guidelines were followed for this study.

Participants were informed that the aim of the research was to understand the characteristics and qualities recruiters seek in applicants applying for academic posts. This information was not a complete description of the study's purpose, as it did not mention that the research was exploring how markers of class background and gender might inform the evaluation of the applicants and the recruiter's decision-making; consequently, the participants were partially deceived.

Participants were provided with a debriefing statement that explained that the true purpose of the research was to explore how recruiters evaluate job applications and make shortlisting decisions where CVs were the same except for markers of class background and gender (Appendix 8). This included an explanation for: i) the true purpose of the experiment; ii) what deception occurred and why it was necessary; and, iii) how the study relates to the broader area of knowledge. During debriefing, participants were given the option to withdraw their data at that point or to consent to the use and submission of their data.

Ethical approval was provided by the BU Research Ethics Committee for the pilot study in September 2017 and for the full study in June 2018 (Ethics ID 21537). An amendment was approved in February 2019 to include the alternative method for identifying participants.

#### ***4.3 Sampling strategy***

The total population for the study was academic staff working at universities in England with a responsibility for recruiting other academics. There was no published list of these individuals

and no reliable and consistent way of identifying them. Therefore, it was not possible to construct a sampling frame to undertake probability sampling. As such, a non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted. All universities in England ( $n=101$ ) were divided into elite and non-elite groups based on Boliver's (2015) analysis (Section 3.4, Chapter 1).

Between July and September 2018, contact was made with each university's HR Director/equivalent (gatekeepers) to invite their institution to participate. Guidelines were provided to gatekeepers to ensure inclusion of only those academics who met the eligibility criteria. Hainmueller et al. (2015) stress the importance of this and demonstrate that FSEs are methodologically strengthened when a strategy is adopted that ensures participants have recruitment experience, are responsible for recruitment, are familiar with the occupation of interest (Van Belle et al., 2018), and are placed in a situation that is familiar to them (Baert and De Pauw, 2014). Institutions willing to participate were asked to confirm eligible staff with the researcher, who would invite them to participate. The aim was to sample the whole of the eligible population at each institution that agreed to participate.

Eight universities (7.9% of those contacted) agreed to participate. The gatekeepers shared with the researcher the names of either the eligible staff or the eligible job roles (such as Head of Department) plus a link to their contact details. Between September 2018 and February 2019, the researcher emailed each person and invited their participation in the research. Reminder emails were sent approximately one month after the initial invitation. These participants were recorded as Main Group participants (Table 10).

A further 14 universities agreed to participate (13.9% of those contacted) but requested to communicate directly with the potential participants because they were concerned about sharing details with the researcher<sup>17</sup> (Table 10). Eleven universities contacted eligible staff directly, whilst three universities communicated the opportunity more widely to academic staff (such as via newsletters or intranets) (Table 10). The researcher provided materials to the universities for these communications. One university inadvertently shared with potential participants the confidential information about the study's purpose, thus invalidating that university's participation as the results would have been compromised.

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<sup>17</sup> The main reason provided was data protection considerations and restrictions.

Table 10: Summary of engagement with universities invited to participate in the study

University group	Total number of institutions in the cluster	Number of institutions that agreed to participate		
		Main Group: University provided lists (staff or roles) to researcher	University circulated details to eligible staff	University circulated details more generally
Elite	32	3	4	3
Non-elite	69	5	7*	-

\* One university was invalidated as the gatekeeper shared confidential details about the study's purpose with potential participants.

The Main Group universities identified 359 eligible staff, with an average of 45 individuals per university (range between 5 and 84). Using HESA 2016/17 data, it was calculated that, on average, 2.7% of academic staff at each Main Group university were responsible for recruiting other academic staff (range from 0.9% to 5.7%). This was used to estimate the total population size. The HESA data indicated that there were 152,510 academic staff employed at universities in England in 2016/17, excluding Oxbridge<sup>18</sup>. The estimated total population size was therefore 4,117 academics (2.7% of 152,510). An alpha confidence level of .05 was selected, which represents a 5% chance of a Type I error (i.e. rejecting the null hypothesis when it is correct), and a confidence interval of 5%. A required sample size of 254 was calculated.

By mid-February 2019, 61 people had participated in the FSE but, despite reminders, the response rate was low (17%). The remaining universities had either confirmed that they did not wish to participate or were not responding to emails, so the opportunities with this approach to identifying participants were exhausted; therefore, a new approach was taken. The researcher reviewed academic job adverts posted on [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk). Adverts posted by universities in England were scanned to identify the hiring managers named in the advert text. These individuals were then sent an invitation to participate in the study. Gutfleish et al. (2021) note that conducting FSEs with recruiters who are recruiting actively for staff might increase the psychological realism and increase the external validity. Adverts were reviewed between February and December 2019, resulting in the identification of 941 potential participants. During

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<sup>18</sup> A decision was made at this stage to exclude the Boliver cluster 1 universities (Oxbridge) because of how different these are in comparison to the rest of the field (for example, their culture, elite status, structure, and practices), combined with their large numbers of academics, low participation in the study (no respondents), and complicated college structure, which made accessing potential participants challenging.

this time, a further 105 participants completed the exercise, therefore bringing the total to 166 responses.

From early 2020, it became difficult to identify new participants using the [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) platform. The adverts tended to repeat the names of academics who had already been contacted. Also, the vignettes were becoming out of date and there was a risk that this could impact how participants evaluated them. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, and academics were placed under pressure to implement new modes of educational delivery and provide additional pastoral support. There was a substantial reduction in academic posts advertised. The researcher considered it an inappropriate time to contact academics to ask for their participation. Therefore, it was decided to close the data collection exercise and accept the lower sample size (166 participants against the required sample size of 254).

Overall, invitations were sent to 1,347 potential participants, of whom 166 completed the experiment and submitted their data (12.32% response rate). Responses were received from staff at 57 universities; 80 were based at elite universities and 86 were based at non-elite universities. To accommodate the lower number of responses, the statistical analysis planned was simplified (for example, a reduced number of variables were used in the logistic regression analysis) and the analysis by university status was undertaken at a higher level (merging clusters 3 and 4 to create one group of post-1992s).

The mixed approach to participant identification may have resulted in a sample that was not representative of the population. This is common with non-probability sampling, which is prone to greater sampling bias, and could limit the generalisability of the results to the wider population. However, a comparison of the demographic characteristics of participants with the data for all UK academics indicates that the sample was similar to the general population in terms of gender/sex, ethnicity, and nationality (Table 11). The HESA data covered all UK academic staff and was not equivalent to the target population (academics in England); however, it provided a sound indication that the sample was similar to sector demographic norms, which provided sufficient reassurance.

Table 11: Demographic characteristics of participants compared to UK academic staff (Advance HE, 2020a; Research England, 2022)

Demographic characteristic	Number (percentage) of participants	HESA 2017-18 for UK academic staff
<b>Gender/Sex</b>		
Female	72 (43.4%)	46%
Male	89 (53.6%)	54%
Transgender	1 (0.6%)	-
Rather not say	3 (1.8%)	-
No response	1 (0.6%)	-
Total	166 (100%)	100%
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
White/Caucasian	144 (86.8%)	85.4%
Black/Black British	0 (0%)	14.6%
Asian/Asian British	6 (3.6%)	
Mixed/multiple ethnic background	7 (4.2%)	
Other ethnic group	6 (3.6%)	
Rather not say	2 (1.2%)	-
No response	1 (0.6%)	-
Total	166 (100%)	100%
<b>Age</b>		
18-29 years	0 (0%)	Data not available in these age categories
30-39 years	9 (5.4%)	
40-49 years	55 (33.1%)	
50-59 years	76 (45.8%)	
60 years and over	22 (13.3%)	
Rather not say	2 (1.2%)	
No response	2 (1.2%)	
Total	166 (100%)	
<b>Nationality</b>		
UK/British	128 (77.1%)	74.3%
EU	12 (7.2%)	25.7%
Outside of EU	20 (12.1%)	
Rather not say	2 (1.2%)	-
No response	4 (2.4%)	-
Total	166 (100%)	100%

Demographic characteristic	Number (percentage) of participants	HESA 2017-18 for UK academic staff
<b>Discipline (based on REF2021)<sup>19</sup></b>		
REF Main Panel A	60 (36.2%)	26.2%
REF Main Panel B	34 (20.5%)	24.2%
REF Main Panel C	56 (33.7%)	30.8%
REF Main Panel D	14 (8.4%)	18.8%
No response	2 (1.2%)	-
Total	166 (100%)	100%
<b>Background NS-SEC</b>		
Managerial, administrative, and professional occupations (higher and lower)	111 (66.9%)	Unknown
Intermediate occupations	8 (4.8%)	
Small employers and own account workers	11 (6.6%)	
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	17 (10.2%)	
Semi-routine and routine occupations	14 (8.4%)	
Never worked and long-term unemployed	3 (1.8%)	
Insufficient information provided to categorise	2 (1.2%)	
Total	166 (100%)	

## 5. Data analysis methods and techniques

In accord with the mixed methods approach, the quantitative data were used to test the hypotheses using descriptive and statistical analysis. The qualitative data were used to explore the cognitive processes and justifications for the decisions and to provide context and meaning for the quantitative patterns. The integration of the quantitative and qualitative data enabled inferences to be made about whether a job applicant's class background and gender influenced decisions made by hiring managers as part of the shortlisting process.

<sup>19</sup> The REF2021 data are based on academic staff FTE, whilst the participant data are based on headcount.



### **5.1 Variables**

The study used four independent variables: applicant class background; applicant gender; their intersection; and the status of the participants' universities (elite/non-elite). The analysis used the applicant gender as perceived by the participants, rather than the gender assigned to the vignettes by the researcher. This was because many of the participants who reviewed the gender-neutral vignette assigned it a gender; therefore, the perceived gender field provided a more accurate variable for the analysis.

There were three broad dependent variables considered in the study. The first was the likelihood that the applicant would be invited to interview. This was considered in terms of the Likert scale responses, as well as through an interview rate variable that was created based on whether an applicant was 'likely' or 'very likely' to be invited to interview. The second dependent variable was the recommended level of starting salary. A higher starting salary rate was created as a dependent variable, based on whether a participant recommended a starting salary of £33k or £34k (lower starting salary) or £35k and above (higher starting salary). Finally, four composite measures for the attributes were developed based on previous studies (Fiske et al, 2002; Cuddy et al., 2004; Correll et al., 2007; Rivera and Tilcsik, 2016). These were formed by calculating a weighted average of participants' ratings of the applicants on seven-point scales. These scales measured the participants' perception of the applicants (Cronbach's alpha):

- Competence (scales ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' for four items: competent, capable, efficient, intelligence; mean = 5.18, median = 5.25,  $\alpha = .821$ ).
- Warmth (scales ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' for four items: warm, trustworthy, well-intentioned, sincere; mean = 4.94, median = 5.0,  $\alpha = .88$ ).
- Hardworking (scales ranging from 'very unlikely' to 'very likely' for four items: work hard, work evenings and weekends, work long hours, sacrifice family and leisure time; mean = 4.84, median = 4.75,  $\alpha = .89$ ).
- Fit (scales ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' for three items: social fit, existing staff fit, culture fit; mean = 4.77, median = 4.67,  $\alpha = .892$ ).

A composite measure for the 'match' characteristics was developed but was found not to be reliable ( $\alpha = .698$ ) and was discarded from the analysis.

A codebook was created for the quantitative responses, prior to uploading the data into SPSS (v26). To test the hypotheses, descriptive analysis was used to explore the data, particularly the measures of central tendency. Odds ratios were calculated where relevant, including interview rates. Statistical tests (chi square, Kruskal Wallis, Mann-Witney U) were used as appropriate to

examine differences in the dependent variables between the groups. Simple logistic regression was performed to explore some of the relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables. Logit models were built, and odds ratios were calculated. Statistical analysis was conducted to determine whether the results were significant.

### ***5.2 Content analysis***

Once the quantitative data were analysed, content analysis was undertaken on the qualitative responses. Common strengths and weaknesses of the applicants were identified in the participants' responses and coded using a manifest analysis approach, similar to the process outlined by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017). The data were analysed to form categories and themes that reflected their interpreted, latent meaning. Table 12 provides examples of the progression from raw data of meaning units to condensed meaning units, coding, and categorisation. The frequency of the categories was quantified and considered in the experimental conditions of class background and/or perceived gender to demonstrate variances in how the applicants were perceived. A colleague with significant experience in qualitative research reviewed the content analysis and the interpretation, coding, and categorisation of the participant comments.

The resultant profiles for each of the independent variables were then integrated into the findings from the quantitative data to give a greater understanding of the results (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2015).

The combination of statistical techniques to analyse the quantitative data with an interpretative approach to analysing the qualitative data enabled the development of integrated study conclusions, which ensured that datasets provided evidence in response to the hypotheses and the research questions. This aligned with the mixed methods approach and the pragmatic research paradigm (Morgan, 2017). By capitalising on the strengths of the quantitative and qualitative approaches, the integrated data and analysis strengthened the credibility of the study and provided more comprehensive answers to the research questions (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2015; Plano Clark and Ivankova, 2016).

Table 12: Examples from the content analysis process to demonstrate the progression from raw data of meaning units through to categories

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Raw data of meaning units</b>	<b>Condensed meaning units</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Categorisation</b>
A	Just completed PhD.	Recent PhD.	Qualification.	Early / junior.
	No publications as yet.	No publications.	Limited experience.	Early / junior.
	Teaching limited.	Limited teaching.	Limited experience.	Early / junior.
	It is a very thin CV even for someone just out of their PhD.	Thin CV.	Mediocre application.	Mediocre.
B	A good applicant at an early career stage.	Good applicant.	Experienced.	Strong or good applicant / application.
		Early career stage.	Early career.	Early / junior.
	Likely appointable.	Likely appointable.	Appointable.	Suitable.
C	Good academic pedigree (Durham and Bristol).	Good academic pedigree.	Reputation of awarding institutions.	Good university background.
	Some teaching experience.	Teaching experience.	Limited experience.	Early / junior.
	Publications.	Publications.	Publications.	Publications.
D	Work experience/teaching experience is not so strong in the CV for a Lecturer post but may be	Limited work and teaching experience.  May be more appropriate for a more junior position.	Limited experience.  Unsuitable.	Early / junior.  More appropriate for lower level / temporary post.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Raw data of meaning units</b>	<b>Condensed meaning units</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Categorisation</b>
	appropriate for an Assistant Lecturer.			
	Would not recommend appointment at this grade.	Appointment not recommended at this grade.	Appointment not recommended.	Would not appoint at this grade.
	Recent PhD student with a limited teaching experience in HEI.	Recent PhD graduate. Limited teaching.	Qualification. Limited experience.	Early / junior.
E	Educational attainment.	Strong educational attainment.	Qualifications.	Strong or good applicant / application.
	Teaching experience.	Teaching experience.	Some teaching experience.	Suitable.
	Published and conference presentation experience.	Publications and presentations.	Publications.	Publications.
	Strong applicant with relevant knowledge and skills to undertake the role.	Strong applicant.	Relevant knowledge / skills.	Strong or good applicant / application.

## 6. Summary

This chapter explained the rationale for utilising pragmatic philosophy to inform this study, particularly the methodology. Bourdieu's theoretical framework was situated within the paradigm and an explanation was provided for how the concurrent mixed methods design aligned with pragmatism and Bourdieu's (2006, p. 101) view that research benefits from "methodological polytheism". Justification was provided for the chosen research strategy of an

FSE with a between-subjects design and its compatibility with pragmatism. A description was given of the development of the research instruments through pretesting and pilot studies; this was linked to the aims of pragmatic philosophy. The chapter explained how the research methods and analyses aligned to the hypotheses and research questions. The following chapter presents the analysis of the quantitative findings in relation to the influence of the independent variables on the dependent variables of being invited to interview and the recommended starting salary (hypotheses H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>5</sub>, H<sub>7</sub>, H<sub>8</sub>).

## **Chapter 6: How does applicant class background and/or gender influence the likelihood of being invited to interview and the recommended level of starting salary?**

### **1. Introduction**

The quantitative data was the core element of the concurrent mixed methods approach so was analysed first. In this chapter, the results from the factorial survey experiment (FSE) are presented in relation to the influence of the independent variables of applicant class background, perceived gender, and their intersection on the dependent variables of being invited to interview (Section 2) and the recommended starting salary (Section 3) and whether this was influenced by the elite or non-elite status of the universities at which the participants were based (hypotheses H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>5</sub>, H<sub>7</sub>, H<sub>8</sub>; Table 1, Chapter 1). Where significant associations were identified, simple logistic regression analysis was undertaken to examine further the interaction between the independent variables on the interview rate and the higher starting salary rate. Section 4 provides a summary of the key findings.

As a non-probability convenience sampling method was adopted for this study, then a note of caution is advised as the statistically significant findings in the data may not necessarily hold true for the broader population. The comparison of the demographic characteristics of participants with the data for all UK academics indicated that the sample was similar to the general population in terms of gender/sex, ethnicity, and nationality (Table 11, Chapter 5, Section 4.3). This provides some reassurance of the external validity of the results but does not eradicate the risk that the results may not be generalisable. As such, effect sizes are reported alongside the results from the statistical significance testing to help determine the real-world significance and impact of the observed associations and differences.

### **2. The likelihood of being invited to interview**

Based on the literature review, Bourdieu's theoretical framework and the SCM studies, the expectation was that participants would assess more favourably the applicants who had markers of a higher-class background and those they perceived to be male. Therefore, it was hypothesised that higher-class applicants and/or those perceived to be male would be more likely to be invited to interview, despite the vignettes being otherwise identical. Analysis was

undertaken on the distribution of responses, as well as the interview rate.<sup>20</sup> The Likert scale points for the data presented in this section are: 1 = very unlikely; 2 = unlikely; 3 = somewhat unlikely; 4 = neither likely nor unlikely; 5 = somewhat likely; 6 = likely; 7 = very likely.

### **2.1 Applicant class background and the likelihood of being invited to interview ( $H_1$ )**

The purpose of the data analysis presented in this section was to explore the null hypothesis for  $H_1$ , that higher-class applicants are no more likely to be invited to interview than other applicants. The data are presented in three subsections: i) data for all participants; ii) data restricted to participants based at elite universities; and iii) data restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. The measures of central tendency (median and mode) are presented for the participant responses as to the likelihood they would invite the applicant to interview, split by the class background of the applicants. The interview rate and odds of receiving an interview invitation are also presented in the tables.

#### **2.1.1 All participants**

The distribution of responses was left-skewed and was remarkably similar across both conditions. However, the data for the higher-class applicants had a more pronounced left-skewed distribution than the data for the lower-class applicants. The kurtosis was normal. The median likelihood of receiving an interview invitation was ‘somewhat likely’ (5.00) for both higher- and lower-class applicants, whilst the mode was ‘somewhat likely’ (5.00) for lower-class applicants and ‘likely’ (6.00) for higher-class applicants. A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of the likelihood of being invited to interview across the higher- and lower-class groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(1, n=165) = 3320.500, z=-.274, p=.784, r=-.021$ .

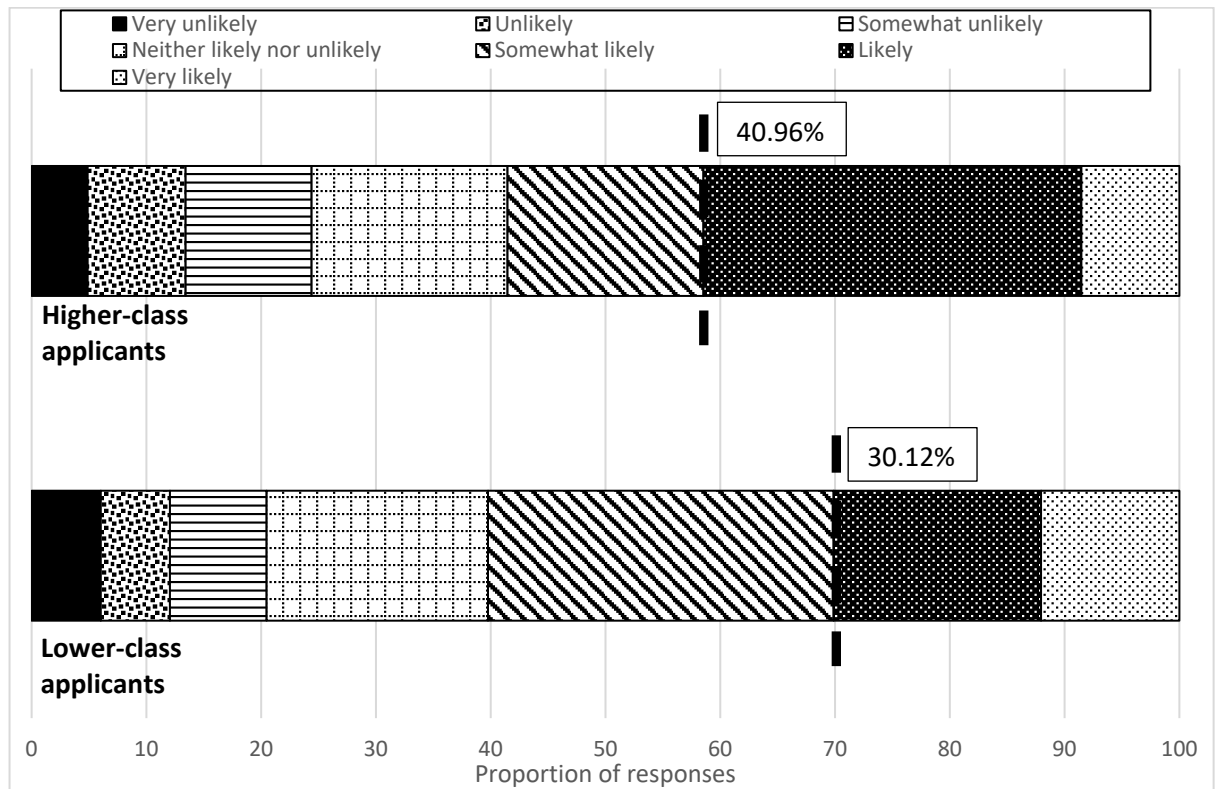
Table 13: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with data split by applicant class background (all participants)

Group	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an interview	Odds ratio for higher-class applicants to lower-class applicants
		Median	Mode			
Lower-class	83	5	5	30.12%	0.43	1.6:1
Higher-class	82	5	6	40.96%	0.69	
All applicants	165	5	6	35.75%	0.56	

<sup>20</sup> The interview rate is defined as the proportion of participant responses given as ‘likely’ or ‘very likely’, as a proportion of total participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview.

Figure 18 presents the participant responses as to the likelihood the applicants would be invited to interview, with the data disaggregated by applicant class background. The dashed line indicates the interview rate and presents evidence that the higher-class applicants were more likely than the lower-class applicants to receive an invitation. A greater proportion of higher-class applicants received an interview invitation than lower-class applicants (40.96%,  $n=82$ ; 30.12%,  $n=83$ , respectively). A chi square test (with Yates' Continuity Correction) found no evidence of a significant association between the interview rate and applicant class background,  $\chi^2(1, n=165) = 1.843, p=.175, phi=.118$  (small effect size).

Figure 18: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by applicant class background (all participants). Presented as percentages of all responses with the interview rate displayed as the label and dashed line.



### 2.1.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the dataset was restricted to participants based at elite universities, the median and mode likelihood of receiving an invite to interview was 'somewhat likely' (5.00) for lower-class applicants and 'neither likely nor unlikely' (4.00) for higher-class applicants (Table 14). A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of the data as to the likelihood that applicants would be invited to interview across the higher-class and lower-class applicant groups,  $X^2(1, n=80) = 866.500, z=.674, p=.501, r=.075$ .

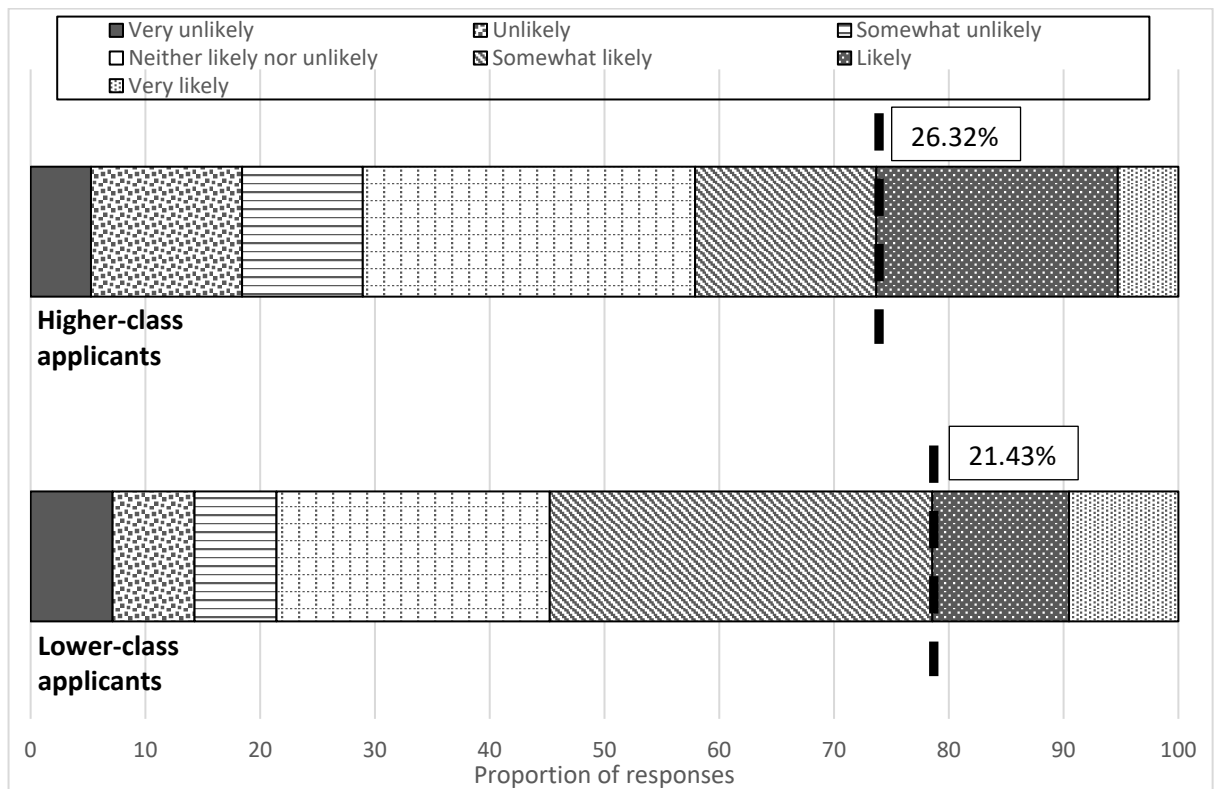


Figure 19 presents the responses as to the likelihood of applicants receiving an interview invitation, with the data disaggregated by applicant class background. The dashed line indicates the interview rate and demonstrates that, among participants based at elite universities, a slightly higher proportion of higher-class applicants received an interview invitation than lower-class applicants (26.32%, n=38; 21.43%, n=42, respectively). A chi square test (with Yates' Continuity Correction) found no evidence of a significant association between the interview rate and applicant class background,  $\chi^2(1, n=80) = .062, p=.803, \phi = -.057$  (small effect size).

Table 14: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities)

Group	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an Interview	Odds ratio for higher-class applicants to lower-class applicants
		Median	Mode			
Lower-class	42	5	5	21.43%	0.27	1.33:1
Higher-class	38	4	4	26.32%	0.36	
All applicants	80	4	4	23.75%	0.31	

Figure 19: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses with the invitation rate displayed as the label and dashed line.



### 2.1.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data was restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the median and mode likelihood of receiving an interview invitation was ‘somewhat likely’ (5.00) for lower-class applicants and ‘likely’ (6.00) for higher-class applicants (Table 15). However, a Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of the likelihood to invite an applicant to interview across the higher-class and lower-class applicant groups when the data was restricted to participants based at non-elite universities,  $\chi^2(1, n=85) = 817.000, z=-.769, p=.442, r=-.083$ .

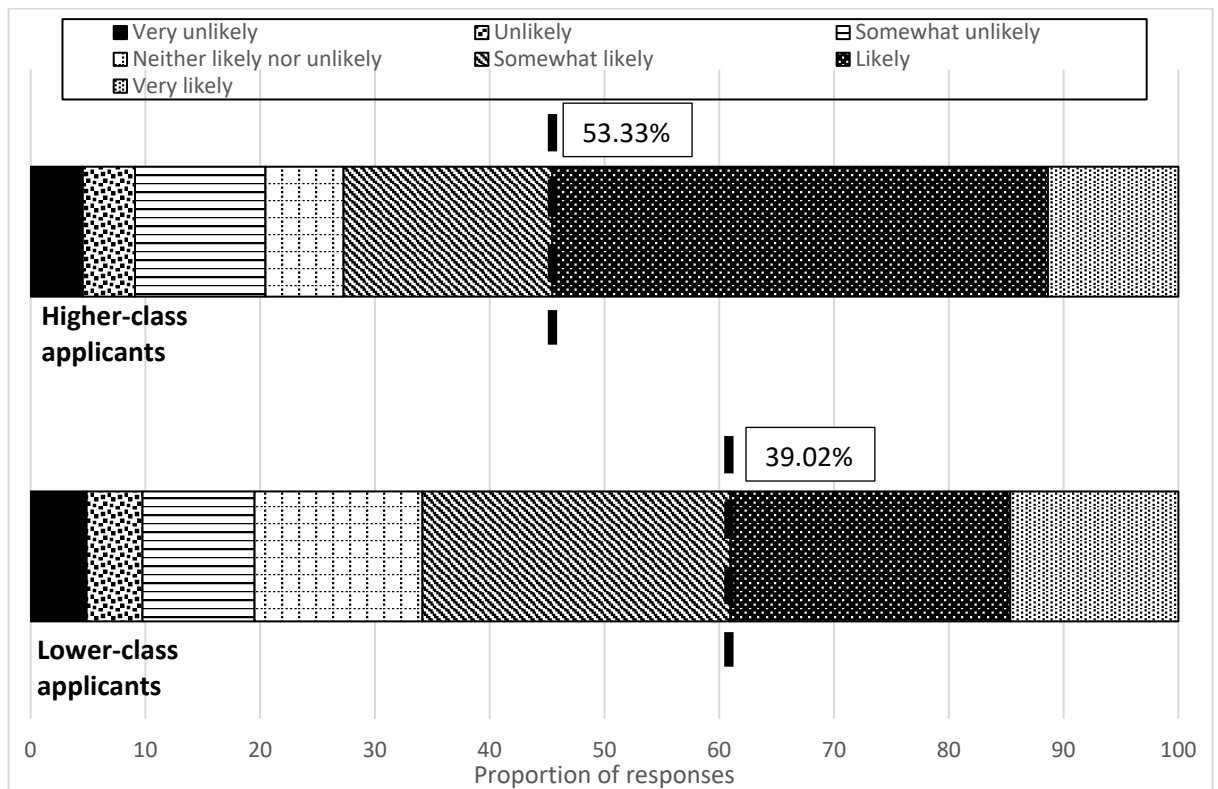
Table 15: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities)

Group	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an interview	Odds ratio for higher-class applicants to lower-class applicants
		Median	Mode			
Lower-class	41	5	5	39.02%	0.64	1.79:1
Higher-class	44	6	6	53.33%	1.14	
All applicants	85	5	6	47.06%	0.89	

Figure 20 presents the participant responses as to the likelihood of applicants being invited to interview, with the data disaggregated by applicant class background. The dashed line indicates the interview rate and demonstrates that, among participants based at non-elite universities, a greater proportion of higher-class applicants received an interview invitation than lower-class applicants (53.33%, n=44; 39.02%, n=41, respectively). A chi square test (with Yates' Continuity Correction) found no evidence of a significant association between the interview rate and applicant class background,  $\chi^2(1, n=85) = 1.477, p=.224, \phi=-.155$ . Despite the result not reaching statistical significance, there was a noticeable difference in the interview rates by class background between participants based at elite and non-elite universities. This indicated that class background had a greater effect on decisions about whether to invite an applicant to interview among participants based at non-elite universities.

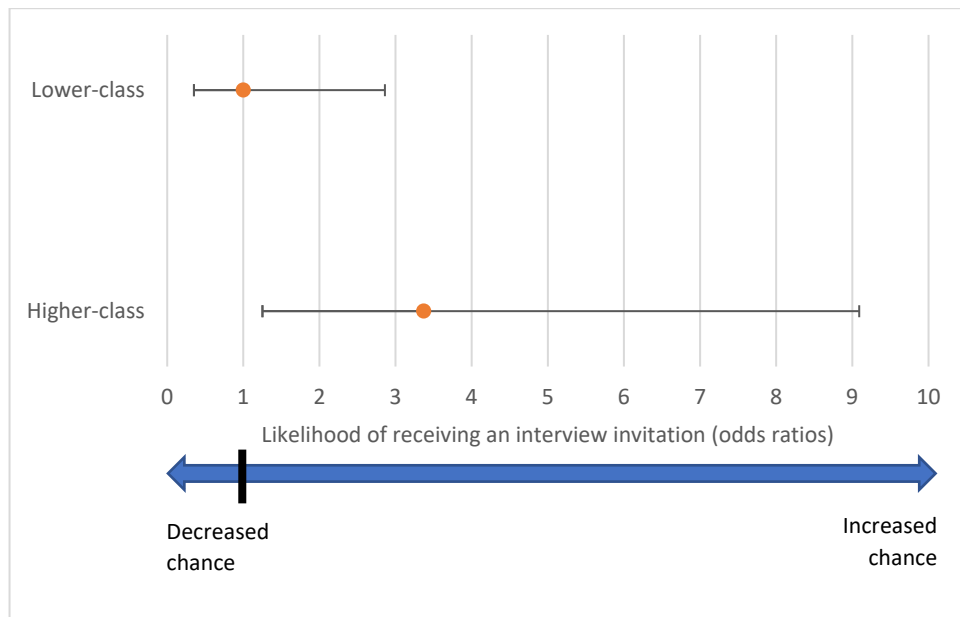
When the data was restricted to applicants perceived by participants to be male or female, a chi square test (with Yates' Continuity Correction) revealed a significant association between the likelihood of being invited to interview and applicant class background,  $\chi^2(1, n=70) = 4.858, p=.028, \phi=-.292$  (small to medium effect size). The adjusted residuals indicate that the two higher-class applicants (male and female) were more likely than expected to be invited to interview, whilst the two lower-class applicants (male and female) were less likely than expected to be invited to interview. This suggests a preference for higher-class applicants among participants based at non-elite universities.

Figure 20: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses with the interview rate displayed as the label and dashed line.



To examine the effect of class background further, simple logistic regression was performed on the dataset (restricted to participants based at non-elite universities and continuing to exclude the gender-unknown applicants). Model 3 (Table A10, Appendix 9) presents the estimated regression coefficients for the effect of being a higher-class applicant (male or female) on whether an interview was offered. The model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1, n=70) = 6.080$ ,  $p=.014$ . The coefficient on the higher-class applicants was positive and significant ( $p=.016$ ), indicating that the higher-class male and female applicants were significantly more likely to receive an interview invitation than the lower-class male and female applicants. Therefore, when participants were based at non-elite universities, higher-class male and female applicants were 3.373 times more likely than lower-class male and female applicants to receive an interview invitation. This can be generalised to state that, for the entire population of academic staff responsible for the recruitment of other academic staff at non-elite universities in England, higher-class applicants perceived to be male or female have odds of being invited to interview that are 1.252 to 9.087 better than those of lower-class applicants perceived to be male or female (with 95% confidence). Figure 21 presents the odds ratios (dots) and 95% confidence intervals (error bars).

Figure 21: Likelihood of higher-class applicants being invited to interview compared to lower-class applicants (participants based at non-elite universities). Presented as odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals, where 1 equals the same likelihood as the lower-class applicants (excluding gender-unknown applicants; and excluding non-responses).



## 2.2 Perceived applicant gender and the likelihood of being invited to interview ( $H_4$ )

The purpose of the data analysis presented in this section was to test the null hypothesis for  $H_4$ , that applicants perceived to be male are no more likely to be invited to interview than other applicants. The data are presented in three subsections: i) data for all participants; ii) data restricted to participants based at elite universities; and iii) data restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. The measures of central tendency (median and mode) are presented for the participant responses as to the likelihood they would invite the applicant to interview, split by the perceived gender of the applicants. The interview rate and odds of receiving an interview are also presented in the tables.

### 2.2.1 All participants

Table 16 presents the participant responses as to the likelihood the applicants would be invited to interview, split by the perceived gender of the applicants. The distribution of the participant responses was slightly left-skewed and the kurtosis was normal. The data for the male applicants had a more pronounced left-skewed distribution than that for the female applicants and the measures of central tendency (median and mode) indicate that the male applicants were more likely to be invited to interview than the female applicants. The median likelihood of being invited to interview was 4.00 ('neither likely nor unlikely') for female applicants and 5.00 ('somewhat likely') for male applicants. This difference was also evident in the mode, in which

the likelihood of being invited to interview remained as 4.00 ('neither likely nor unlikely') for female applicants but increased to 6.00 ('likely') for those perceived to be male.

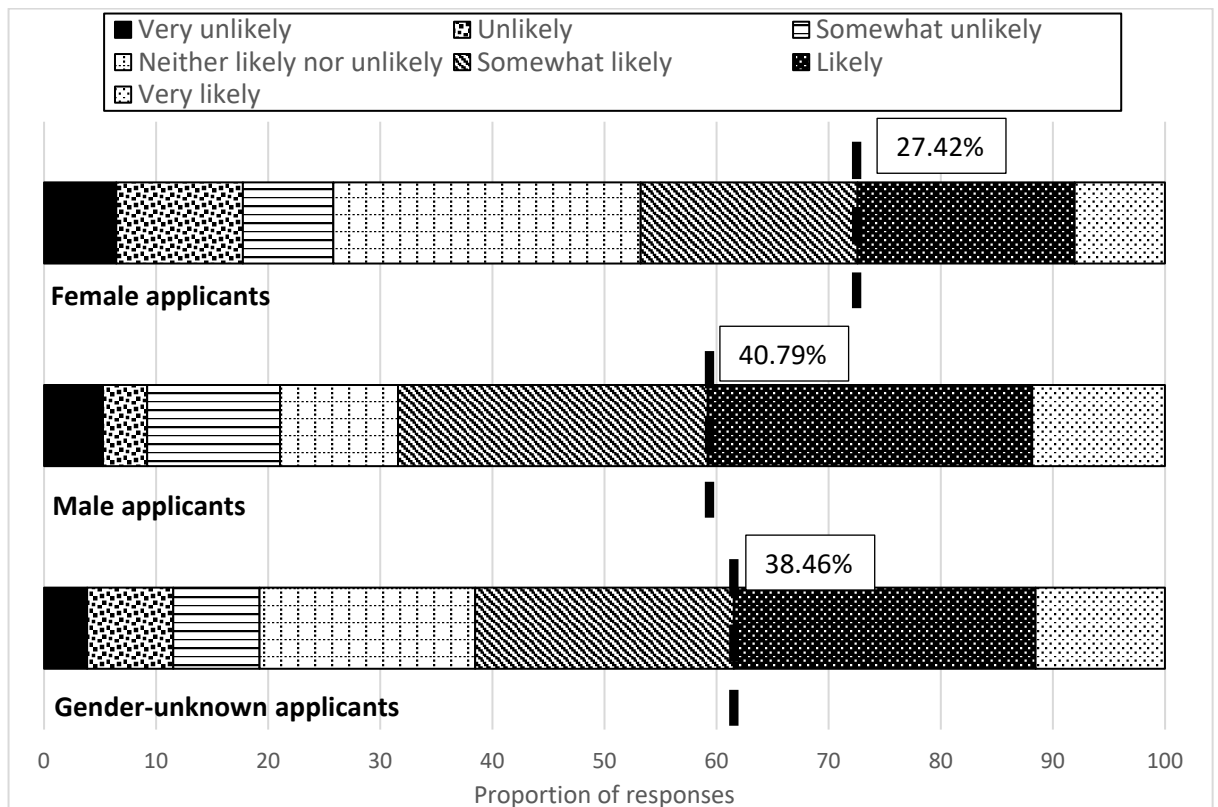
A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in distribution of the likelihood of being invited to an interview for female, male, or gender-unknown applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=164) = 4.370$ ,  $p=.112$ . When the data was restricted to the applicants perceived to be male or female, a Mann-Whitney U test confirmed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses for the likelihood of being invited to interview, with male applicants being more likely to be invited than female applicants,  $n=138$ ,  $U=2824.500$ ,  $z=2.044$ ,  $p=.041$ ,  $r=0.18$  (small effect size).

Table 16: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with data split by the perceived gender of the applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses) (\* $p<.05$ )

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an interview invitation	Odds ratio for male applicants to female applicants
		Median	Mode			
Female	62	4*	4	27.42%	0.38	1.82:1
Male	76	5*	6	40.79%	0.69	
Gender-unknown	26	5	6	38.46%	0.63	
All applicants	164	5	6	35.37%	0.55	

Figure 22 presents the responses as to the likelihood of applicants receiving an interview invitation, with the data disaggregated by applicant gender. The distribution of responses was remarkably similar for the male and gender-unknown applicants but was noticeably different for the applicants perceived to be female. The dashed line indicates the interview rate and presents evidence that the female applicants were less likely to receive an invitation. The interview rate for female applicants was 27.42% ( $n=62$ ), whilst the rate for male applicants was higher at 40.79% ( $n=76$ ) (odds ratio 1.82:1). A chi square test (with Yates' Continuity Correction) found no significant association between the interview rate and whether the applicant was male or female, ( $\chi^2(1, n=138) = 2.134$ ,  $p=.144$ ,  $\phi=.140$  (small effect size).

Figure 22: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by applicant class background (all participants). Presented as percentages of all responses with the interview rate displayed as the label and dashed line (excluding non-responses).



### 2.2.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the data was restricted to participants based at elite universities, a similar pattern was observed (Table 17). As with the complete dataset, the distribution was slightly left-skewed, with the data for the male applicants having a more pronounced left-skewed distribution than that for the female applicants. For female and gender-unknown applicants, the median and mode likelihood of being invited to interview was 4.00 ('neither likely nor unlikely'), whilst for male applicants the median and mode likelihood was 5.00 ('somewhat likely'). A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in distribution of the likelihood of being invited to an interview by gender,  $\chi^2(2, n=79) = 4.871, p=.088$ . However, as with the complete dataset, when the data was restricted to the applicants perceived to be male or female, then a Mann-Whitney U test confirmed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of responses for the likelihood of being invited to interview, with male applicants being more likely to be invited than female applicants,  $n=68, U=748.000, z=2.155, p=.031, r=.26$  (small to medium effect size).

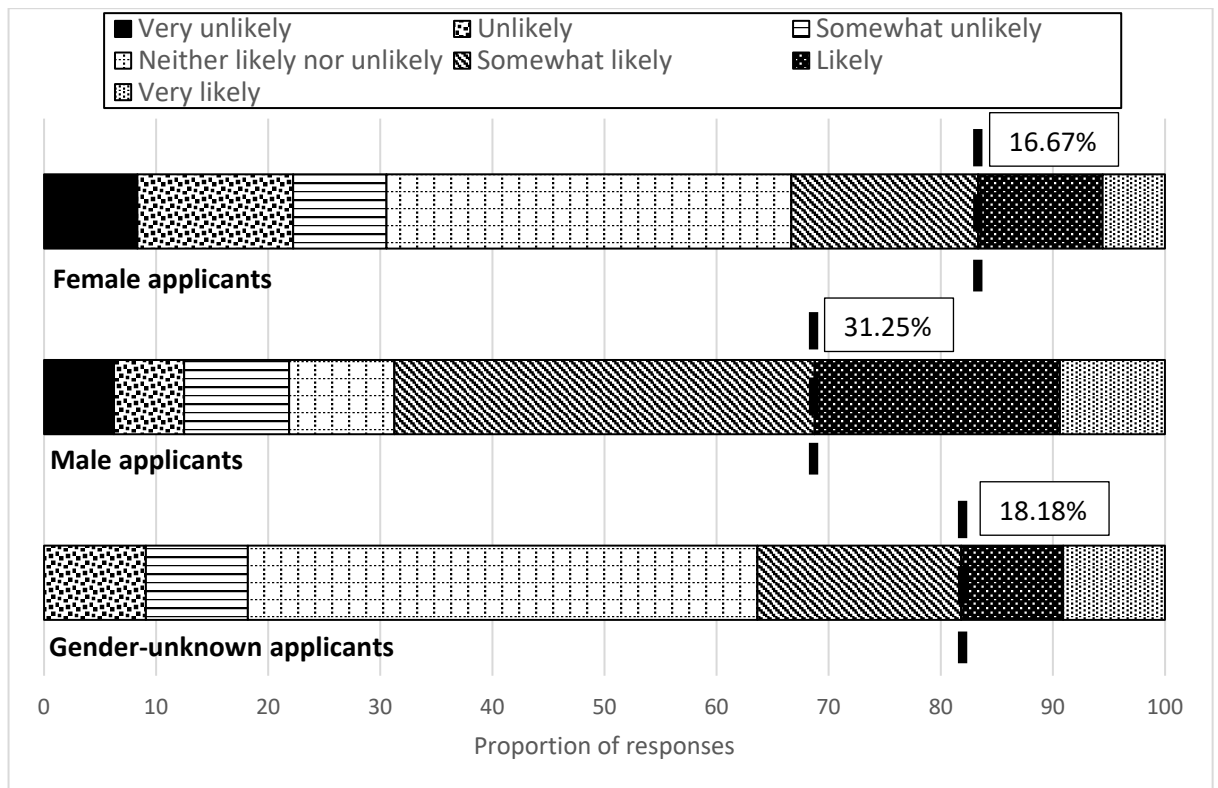
Table 17: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with data split by the perceived gender of the applicants (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses) (\* $p < .05$ )

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an interview invitation	Odds ratio for male applicants to female applicants
		Median	Mode			
Female	36	4*	4	16.67%	0.20	2.25:1
Male	32	5*	5	31.25%	0.45	
Gender-unknown	11	4	4	18.18%	0.22	
All applicants	79	4	4	22.78%	0.30	

Figure 23 presents the responses as to the likelihood of applicants receiving an interview, with the data disaggregated by applicant perceived gender and restricted to participants based at elite universities. The distribution of responses was similar for the female and gender-unknown applicants but was noticeably different for the applicants perceived to be male. The dashed line indicates the interview rate and presents evidence that the male applicants were more likely to receive an invitation. The interview rate for female applicants was 16.67% ( $n=36$ ), whilst the rate for male applicants was much higher at 31.25% ( $n=32$ ) (odds ratio 2.25:1), indicating that male applicants were more than twice as likely as female applicants to receive an interview invitation. A Fisher's test found no significant association between the interview rate and the perceived gender of the applicants, ( $\chi^2 (2, n=79) = 2.091, p=.378$ , Cramer's  $V=.167$  (small effect size).



Figure 23: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by the participant perceived gender of applicant (participants based at elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses with the interview rate displayed as the label and dashed line (excluding non-responses).



### 2.2.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

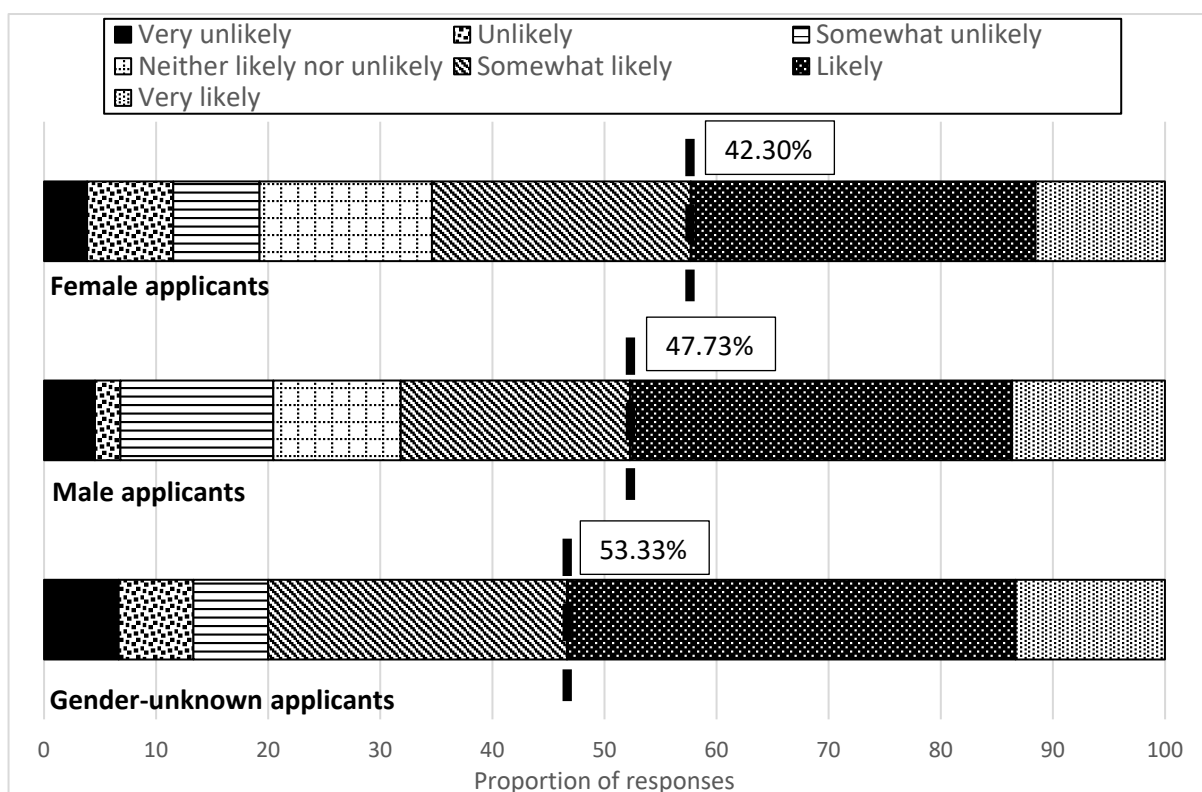
Restricting the data to participants from non-elite universities resulted in a different pattern to that observed in the complete dataset and when it was restricted to those based at elite universities (Table 18). The distribution had a normal kurtosis and was left-skewed, with little difference in skewness for male or female applicants. For female and male applicants, the median likelihood of being invited to interview was 5.00 ('somewhat likely') and the mode likelihood was 6.00 ('likely'). For gender-unknown applicants the median and mode likelihoods were both 6.00 ('likely'). A Kruskal-Wallis Test confirmed no significant difference in distribution of the likelihood of being invited to an interview by gender group,  $\chi^2(2, n=85) = .384, p=.825$ .

The interview rate for female applicants was 42.30% ( $n=26$ ), whilst the rate for male applicants was higher at 47.73% ( $n=44$ ) (odds ratio 1.25:1). The proportion of gender-unknown applicants receiving an interview invitation was higher at 53.33% ( $n=15$ ). A Fisher's exact test found no significant association between the interview rate and the perceived gender of the applicants, ( $\chi^2(2, n=79) = 2.091, p=.378$ , Cramer's  $V=.167$  (small effect size). The distribution of responses and the interview rate are presented in Figure 24.

Table 18: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with data split by the perceived gender of the applicants (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an interview invitation	Odds ratio for male applicants to female applicants
		Median	Mode			
Female	26	5	6	42.30%	0.73	1.25:1
Male	44	5	6	47.73%	0.91	
Gender-unknown	15	6	6	53.33%	1.14	
All applicants	85	5	6	47.05%	0.89	

Figure 24: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by applicant perceived gender (participants based at non-elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses with the interview rate displayed as the label and dashed line (excluding non-responses).



### 2.3 Intersection of applicant class background and perceived gender and the likelihood of being invited to interview ( $H_7$ )

The purpose of the data analysis presented in this section was to test the null hypothesis for  $H_7$ , that higher-class applicants perceived to be male are no more likely to be invited to interview

than other applicants. Bivariate analysis was undertaken to explore this and garner a greater understanding of the independent variables of class background and perceived gender, and how they might combine to influence decisions to invite an applicant to interview. The data are presented in three subsections: i) data for all participants; ii) data restricted to participants based at elite universities; and iii) data restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. The measures of central tendency (median and mode) are presented for the participant responses as to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by the class background and perceived gender of the applicants. The interview rate and odds of receiving an interview are also presented in the tables.

### *2.3.1 All participants*

Table 19 presents the measures of central tendency, interview rates and odds ratios for the applicants, split by the classed and gendered identities. As noted previously, the distribution of the Likert scale data response data as to the likelihood the applicants would be invited to interview was slightly left-skewed and the kurtosis was within the normal range. The data for each of the classed and gendered identities was also left-skewed. The data for the lower-class male and higher-class male applicants was the most strongly left-skewed, while the data for the higher-class female applicant was the least left-skewed. The kurtosis for the lower-class male was highly leptokurtic, indicating that there was greater variability in the data for this applicant. The kurtosis for the higher-class male was platykurtic, suggesting there were fewer extremely positive or negative responses in the data. The kurtosis for the other classed and gendered identities was within the normal range.

The median likelihood of receiving an interview invitation was highest for the higher-class male applicant (Md=6.00, 'likely') and lowest for the higher-class female and higher-class gender-unknown applicants (Md=4.50, 'neither likely nor unlikely' to 'somewhat likely'; Md=4.00, 'neither likely nor unlikely', respectively). The mode likelihood was highest for the higher-class male and the lower-class gender-unknown applicants (Mo=6.00, 'likely') and was lowest for the lower-class female, higher-class female, and higher-class gender-unknown applicants (Mo=4.00, 'neither likely nor unlikely'). A Kruskal-Wallis test found no statistically significant difference in the distribution of the data across the six groups,  $X^2(5, n=165) = 7.364, p=.195$ .

Table 19: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with data split by applicant class background and perceived gender (all participants, excluding non-responses) (\*p<.05)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an interview invitation	Odds ratio for higher-class male applicants: other applicants
		Median	Mode			
Lower-class male	42	5	5	28.57%*	0.40	3.02:1
Lower-class female	26	4	4	23.08%*	0.30	
Lower-class gender-unknown	15	5	6	46.67%	0.88	
Higher-class male	34	6	6	55.88%*	1.27	
Higher-class female	37	4 – 5	4	29.73%*	0.42	
Higher-class gender-unknown	11	4	4	27.27%	0.38	
All applicants	165	5	6	35.37%	0.55	

Figure 25 presents the participant responses as to the likelihood of applicants receiving an interview invitation, with the data disaggregated by the six classed and gendered identities. The dashed line indicates the interview rate and presents evidence that the higher-class male applicant was more likely to receive an invitation.

The higher-class male applicant’s interview rate was the highest of all the applicants (55.88%,  $n=34$ ) and the lower-class female applicant’s rate was the lowest (23.08%,  $n=26$ ). The higher-class male applicant’s interview rate was much higher than the average rate of the other five applicants (35.15%,  $n=131$ ) and he was three times more likely to receive an invitation than the other applicants (odd ratio 3.02:1). A Fisher’s exact test indicated no significant associations between the likelihood of being invited to interview and the six classed and gendered identities, ( $\chi^2 (5, n=165) = 9.900, p=.075$ , Cramer’s  $V=.251$  (large effect size)).

However, the adjusted residual for the higher-class male applicant was high, indicating that the number of cases in the positive interview rate response was larger than expected and therefore highlighting that the higher-class male applicant was different to the others. To explore this further, the data relating to the two gender-unknown identities were excluded (as these were of less interest to the study) and a chi square test was undertaken. This test revealed a significant

association between the likelihood of being invited to interview and the remaining four classed and gendered identities, ( $\chi^2(3, n=138) = 9.241, p=.026$ , Cramer's  $V=.259$  (medium to large effect size)). The adjusted residuals indicate that the higher-class male was more likely than expected to be invited to interview, whilst the higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female applicants were less likely than expected to be invited to interview. Figure 26 illustrates the flows from left to right of applicants from each classed and gendered identity who were invited, or not, to interview. The thickness of each line shows the proportion who was evaluated in each category. The thickest lines – the most common paths – indicate that most of applicants were not invited to interview, except for the higher-class male applicants.

Figure 25: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by the classed and gendered applicant identities (all participants). Presented as percentages of all responses with the interview rate displayed as the label and dashed line (excluding non-responses).

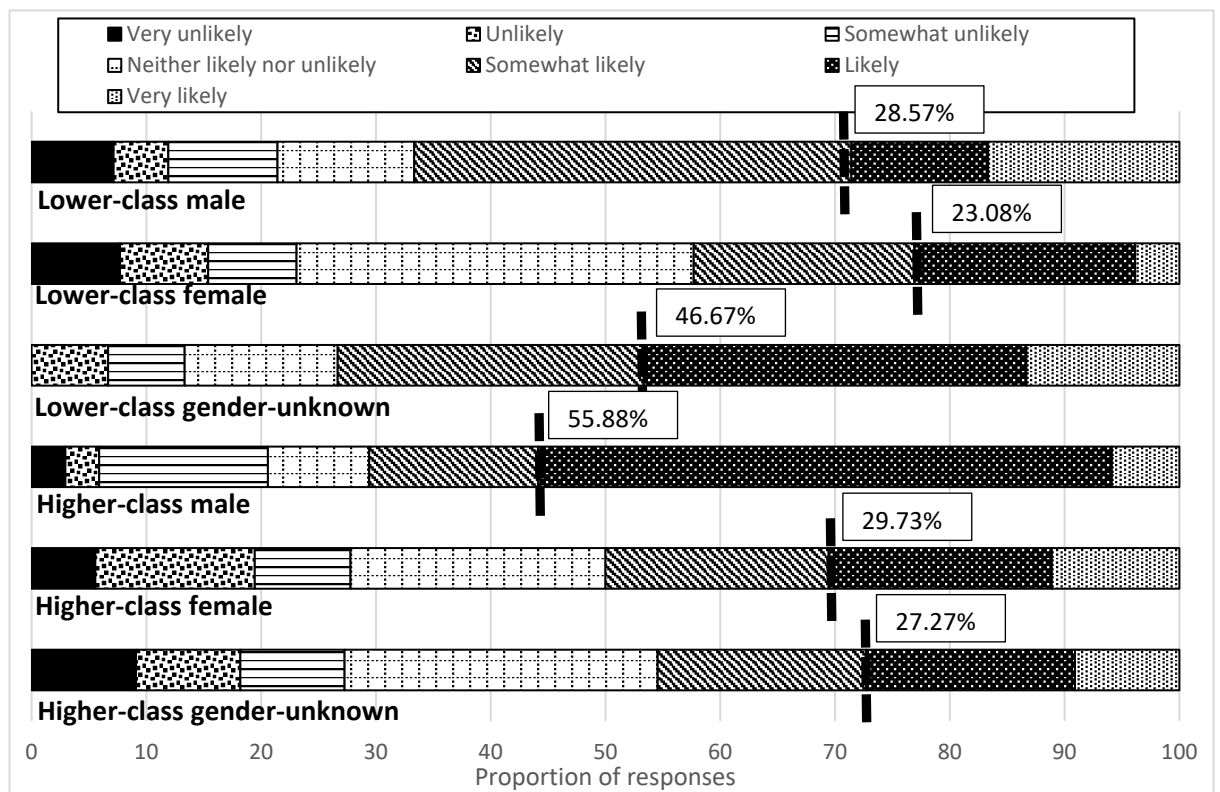
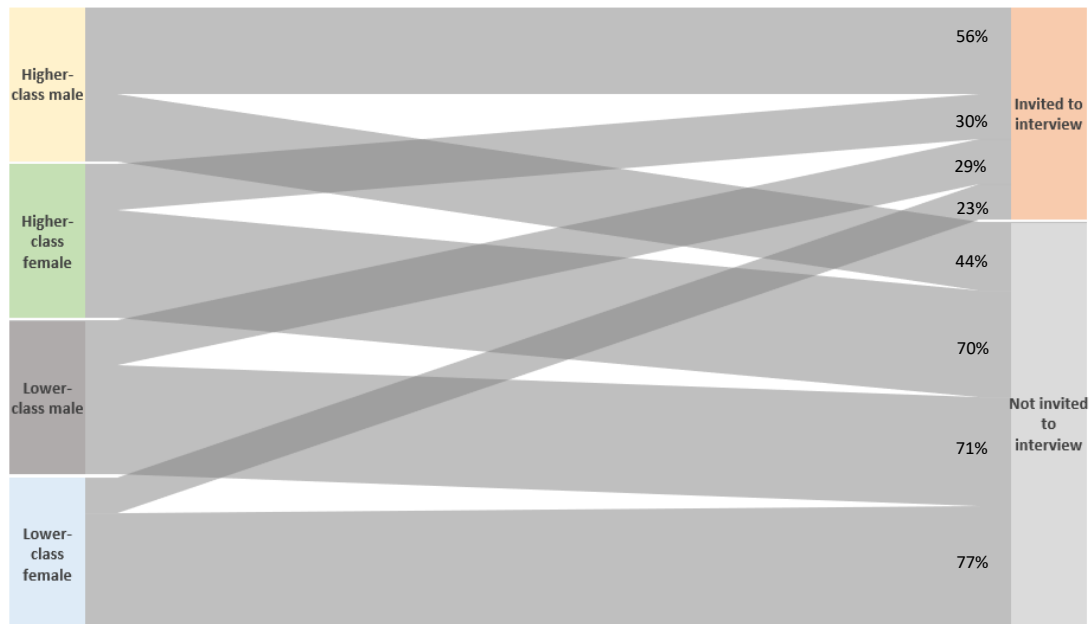


Figure 26: The flow of applicants who were invited, or not, to interview, split by the classed and gendered applicant identities (all participants). Presented as percentages of all responses with the flows from left to right indicating the proportions of applicants allocated to each outcome (excluding gender-unknown applicants; and excluding non-responses).

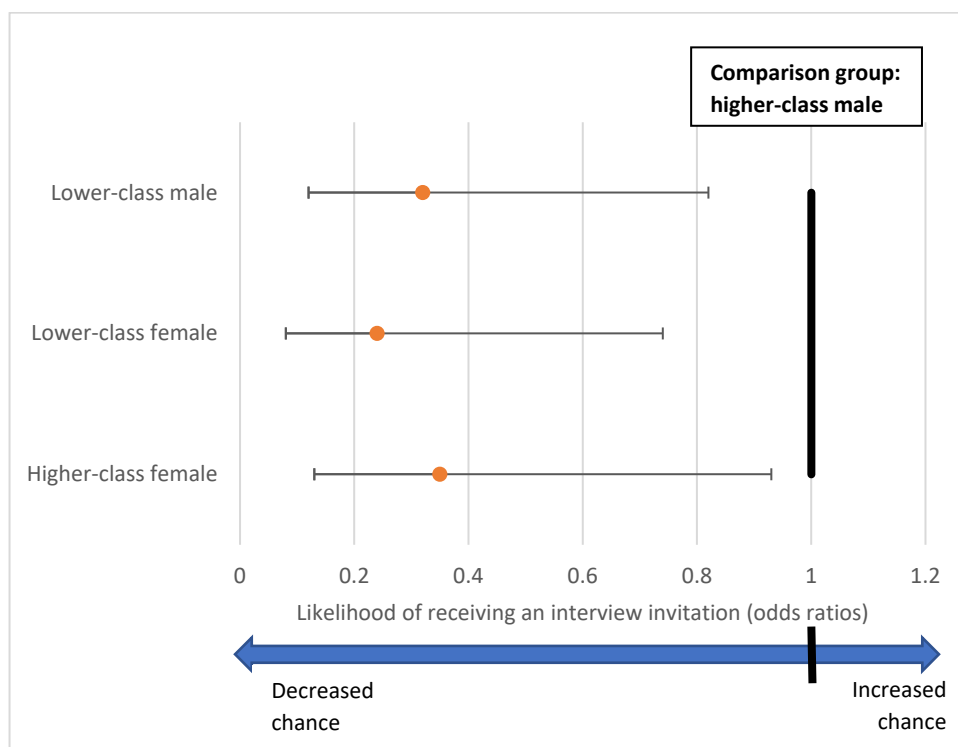


Simple logistic regression was performed to examine further the probability of the higher-class male applicant being invited to interview compared to the other applicants (continuing to exclude the gender-unknown applicants). Model 1 (Table A8, Appendix 9) presents the estimated regression coefficients for the effect of being a higher-class male on whether an interview invitation was offered. The model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1, n=165) = 8.535$ ,  $p=.003$ . The coefficient on the higher-class male applicant was positive and significant ( $p=.004$ ), indicating that this applicant was significantly more likely to receive an interview invitation than the higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female applicants. Higher-class male applicants were 3.111 times more likely than these other applicants to receive an interview invitation. This can be generalised to state, with 95% confidence, that for the entire population of academic staff responsible for the recruitment of other academic staff in universities in England, higher-class male applicants have odds of being invited to interview that are 1.444 to 6.720 better than those of other applicants. Figure 27 presents the odds ratios (dots) and 95% confidence intervals (error bars).

Given the research discussed in Section 3.4, Chapter 4 indicating that hiring managers tend to recruit staff in their own image (for example, Ashley and Empson, 2012; Rivera, 2012), the dataset was then restricted to enable consideration of how the interview rate might be impacted

by four further variables, under each of which it was assumed that there might be less discrimination. The dataset was restricted to: female participants (Model 1A); participants from lower-class backgrounds (defined as NS-SEC 2-7) (Model 1B); participants based at non-elite universities (Model 1C); and participants who had undertaken unconscious bias training (Model 1D) (Table A12, Appendix 9). The coefficient on the interaction term remained positive and significant in Models 1A ( $\chi^2(1, n=71) = 8.832, p=.003$ ) and 1D ( $\chi^2(1, n=136) = 12.475, p<.001$ ). This provided evidence that higher-class male applicants were more likely than other applicants to be invited to interview, even among groups of participants who possessed other characteristics. Among female participants, higher-class male applicants were 5.104 times more likely to receive an interview invitation than other applicants ( $p=.004$ ). Among participants who had undertaken unconscious bias training, higher-class male applicants were 4.680 times more likely to be invited to an interview than other applicants ( $p<.001$ ).

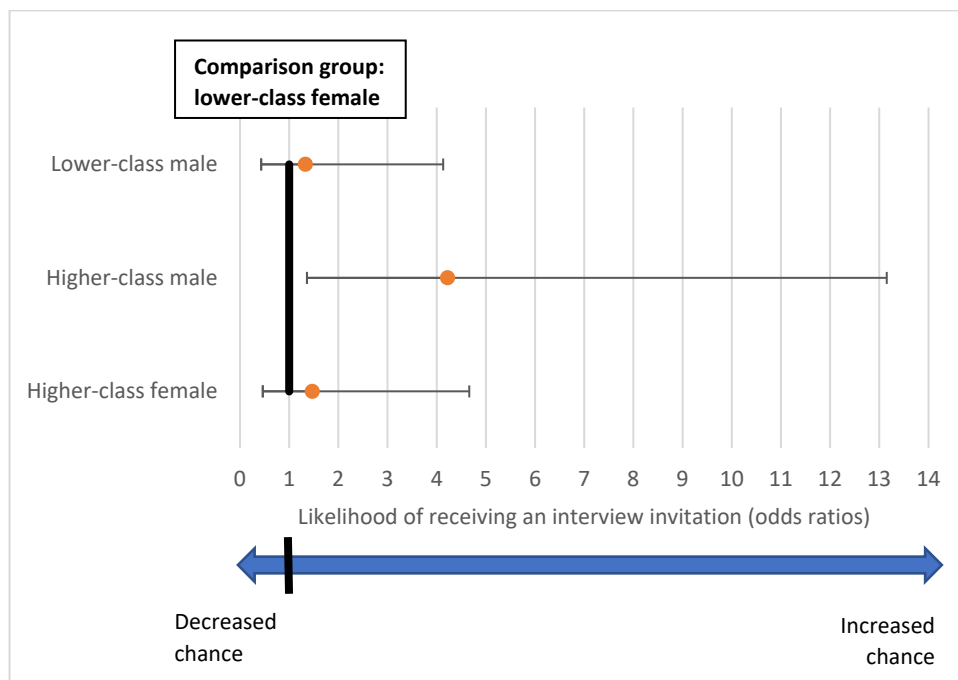
Figure 27: Likelihood of applicants being invited to interview compared to the higher-class male applicant (all participants). Presented as odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals, where 1 equals the same likelihood as the higher-class male applicant (excluding gender-unknown applicants; and excluding non-responses).



To examine the strength of the advantage of higher-class male applicants compared to other classed and gendered applicants, another simple logistic regression analysis was performed. Model 2 (Table A9, Appendix 9) presents the estimated regression coefficients for the effect of the classed and gendered applicant identities on whether an interview was offered (excluding

the gender-unknown applicants). As the applicant least likely to receive an interview invitation, the lower-class female applicant was used as the reference group to which the other three classed and gendered identities were compared. The model was statistically significant,  $\chi^2(3, n=138) = 8.998, p=.029$ , and the coefficients on the classed and gendered identities were positive. The coefficient on the higher-class male applicant was positive and significant ( $p=.013$ ), indicating that this applicant was significantly more likely to receive an interview invitation than the lower-class female applicant. The likelihood of receiving an interview invitation was 4.222 times greater for higher-class male applicants than for lower-class female applicants. This can be generalised to state that, with 95% confidence, for the entire population of academic staff responsible for the recruitment of other academic staff in universities in England, higher-class male applicants have odds of being invited to interview that are 1.356 to 13.150 better than those of lower-class female applicants. Figure 28 presents the odds ratios (dots) and 95% confidence intervals (error bars).

Figure 28: Likelihood of applicants being invited to interview compared to the lower-class female applicant (all participants). Presented as odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals, where 1 equals the same likelihood as the lower-class female applicant (excluding gender-unknown applicants; and excluding non-responses).



### 2.3.2 Participants based at elite universities

Table 20 presents the data restricted to the participants based at elite universities. The distribution of the data remained slightly left-skewed and the kurtosis was within the normal range. The data for the higher-class male applicant was highly left-skewed, whilst the data was



only slightly left-skewed for the lower-class male, lower-class female, and lower-class gender-unknown applicants. The data for the higher-class gender-unknown applicant was strongly right-skewed and the data for the higher-class female applicant was slightly right-skewed. This provides evidence that, among participants based at elite universities, the higher-class male applicant was more likely to be invited to interview and the higher-class female and higher-class gender-unknown applicants were much less likely to be invited to interview.

The data distribution was platykurtic for the higher-class male applicant and leptokurtic for the higher-class gender-unknown applicant, but within the normal range for other applicants. The median likelihood of receiving an interview invitation was highest for the lower-class male and higher-class male applicants (Md=5.00, 'somewhat likely'). The mode likelihood was highest for the higher-class male (Mo=6.00, 'likely'). A Kruskal-Wallis test found no statistically significant difference in the distribution of the data across the six groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=79) = 9.891, p=.078$ .

Table 20: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with data split by applicant class background and perceived gender (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

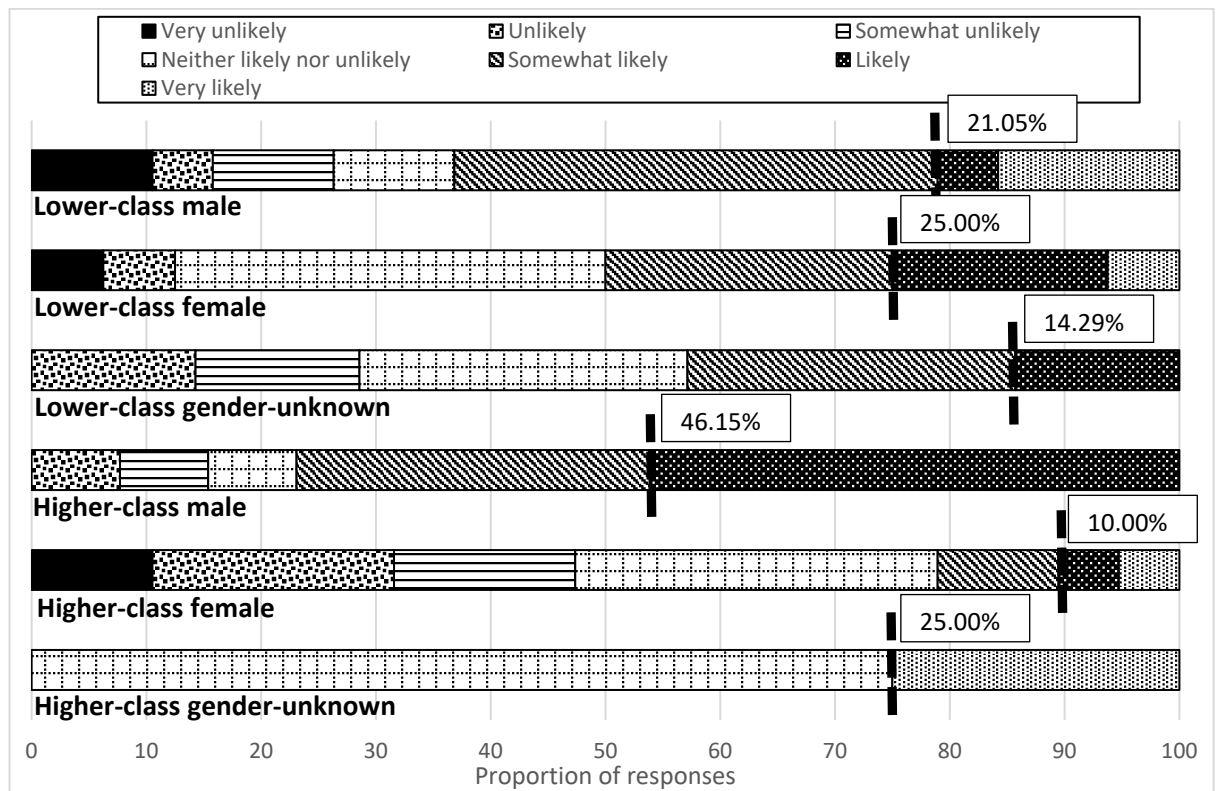
Group of applicants	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an interview invitation	Odds ratio for higher-class male applicants: other applicants
		Median	Mode			
Lower-class male	19	5	5	21.05%	0.27	3.91:1
Lower-class female	16	4 - 5	4	25.00%	0.33	
Lower-class gender-unknown	7	4	5	14.29%	0.17	
Higher-class male	13	5	6	46.15%	0.86	
Higher-class female	20	4	4	10.00%	0.11	
Higher-class gender-unknown	4	4	4	25.00%	0.33	
All applicants	79	4	4	22.78%	0.30	

Applying the interview rate to the data provides further evidence that participants based at elite universities were more likely to interview the higher-class male applicant (46.15%,  $n=13$ ) than the other applicants. The lower-class female (25%,  $n=16$ ) was slightly more likely to be invited than the lower-class male (21.05%,  $n=19$ ), and both had a higher interview rate than the higher-

class female, who was the applicant least likely to be invited to interview (10%,  $n=20$ ). The higher-class male applicant was almost four times more likely to receive an invitation than the other applicants (odd ratio 3.91:1). Compared to the lower-class female applicant, the higher-class male applicant was more than four times as likely to receive an interview invitation (4.23:1). A Fisher's exact test indicated no significant associations between the likelihood of being invited to interview and the six classed and gendered identities,  $\chi^2(5, n=79) = 5.979$ ,  $p=.280$ , *Cramer's V*=.282 (large effect size).

Figure 29 presents the responses as to the likelihood that applicants would receive an invitation, with the data disaggregated by the classed and gendered identities and restricted to participants based at elite universities. The distribution of responses is noticeably different for the higher-class male and higher-class female applicants. The dashed line indicates the interview rate and presents evidence that the higher-class male applicant was the most likely to receive an invitation, whilst the higher-class female was least likely to receive one (although this was not statistically significant).

Figure 29: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by the classed and gendered identities (participants based at elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses with the interview rate displayed as the label and dashed line (excluding non-responses).



### 2.3.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

The data was restricted to the participants based at non-elite universities (Table 21). The distribution of the data was more strongly left-skewed than when the data was restricted by participants at elite universities, indicating that applicants were more likely to be invited to interview in non-elite universities. The kurtosis was within the normal range. The data was left-skewed for all the classed and gendered identities, excepting the lower-class gender-unknown applicant for whom the data was not skewed in either direction. The data was strongly left-skewed for the higher-class male and higher-class female applicants, indicating a preference for these applicants among participants based at non-elite universities. The distribution of the data was platykurtic for the higher-class gender-unknown applicant and leptokurtic for the higher-class female applicant, but within the normal range for the other applicants.

The median and mode likelihoods of being invited to interview were highest for the higher-class male, higher-class female, and lower-class gender-unknown applicants (Md=6.00 and Mo=6.00, 'likely'). The median and mode likelihoods of being invited to interview were lowest for the lower-class female applicant (Md=4.00 and Mo=4.00, 'neither likely nor unlikely'). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of the data across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=85) = 12.558, p=.028$  (the median scores are presented in Table 21). This was interrogated further through Mann-Whitney U tests, which confirmed that there were statistically significant differences in the variances of responses between the lower-class female (Md=4.00, 'neither likely nor unlikely') and the higher-class female (Md=6.00, 'likely') ( $n=26, U=128.500, z=2.617, p=.009, r=.52$  (large effect size)) and the lower-class female (Md=4.00, 'neither likely nor unlikely') and the lower-class gender-unknown applicant (Md=5.00, 'somewhat likely') ( $n=18, U=71.000, z=2.821, p=.004, r=.67$  (large effect size)).

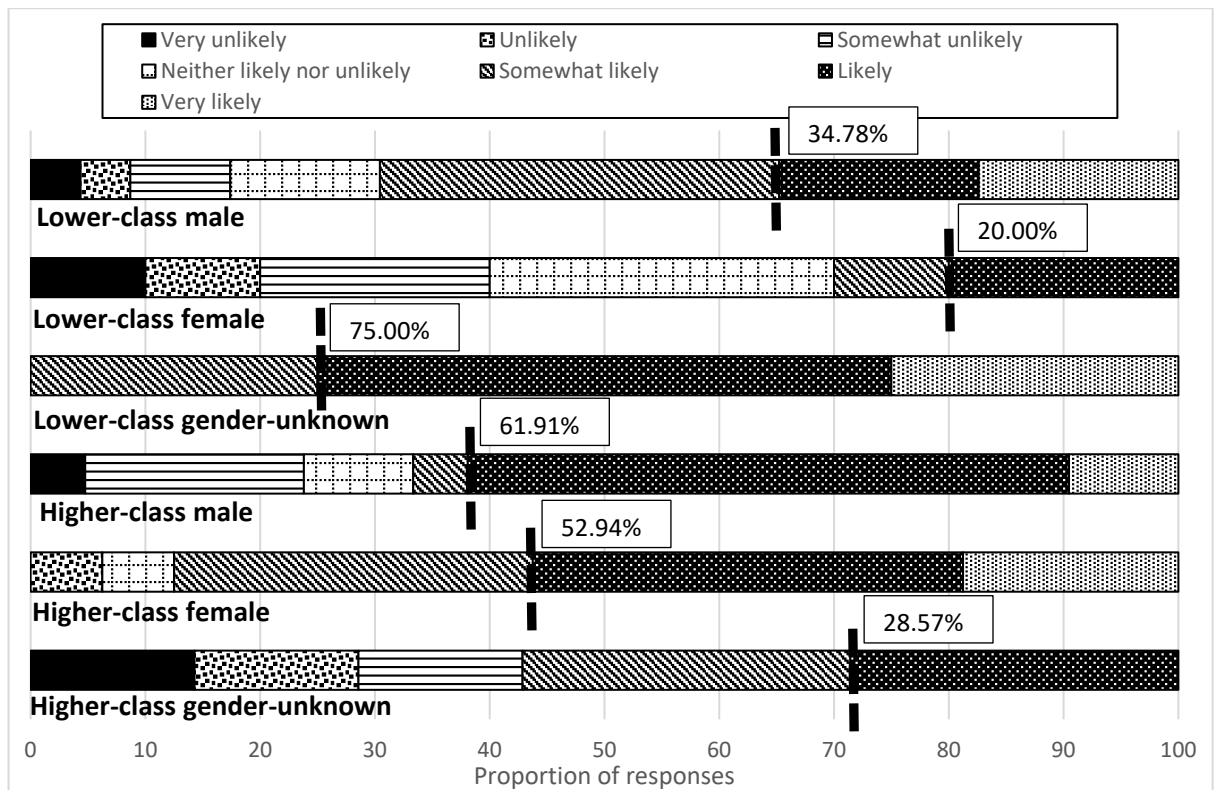
Applying the interview rate to the data provides further evidence that participants based at non-elite universities were more likely to interview the lower-class gender-unknown applicant (75.00%,  $n=8$ ), higher-class male applicant (61.91%,  $n=21$ ), and higher-class female applicant (52.94%,  $n=17$ ) than the other applicants. The lower-class female (20.00%,  $n=10$ ) was least likely to receive an interview invitation. A Fisher's exact test indicated no significant associations between the likelihood of being invited to interview and the six classed and gendered identities,  $\chi^2(5, n=79) = 9.857, p=.075, \text{Cramer's } V=.346$  (large effect size). Figure 30 presents the responses as to the likelihood of applicants receiving an interview invitation, with the data disaggregated by the classed and gendered identities and restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. The distribution of responses was different for the lower-class gender-unknown

and higher-class male and female applicants compared with the lower-class female applicant. The dashed line indicates the interview rate.

Table 21: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicants to interview, with the data split by applicant class background and perceived gender (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Likelihood of inviting applicant to interview		Interview rate	Odds of receiving an interview invitation	Odds ratio for higher-class male applicants compared to other applicants
		Median	Mode			
Lower-class male	23	5	5	34.78%	0.53	2.30:1
Lower-class female	10	4	4	20.00%	0.25	
Lower-class gender-unknown	8	6	6	75.00%	3.00	
Higher-class male	21	6	6	61.91%	1.63	
Higher-class female	17	6	6	52.94%	1.13	
Higher-class gender-unknown	7	5	5 - 6	28.57%	0.4	
All applicants	86	5	6	46.51%	0.87	

Figure 30: Participant responses to the likelihood of inviting the applicant to interview, split by applicant class background and perceived gender (participants based at non-elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses with the interview rate displayed as the label and dashed line (excluding non-responses).



### 3. The likelihood of being recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary

As noted in Section 2, the assumption, informed by the literature review, Bourdieu's theoretical framework and the SCM studies, was that participants would assess more favourably the applicants who had markers of a higher-class background and those perceived to be male. Therefore, it was hypothesised that, despite the vignettes being otherwise identical, the higher-class applicants and/or those perceived to be male would be more likely than the other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary. Analysis was undertaken on the distribution of responses as well as the proportion of applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> The higher starting salary rate is defined as the number of participant responses that recommended a starting salary of £35,000 or higher as a proportion of total participant responses to the starting salary they would be likely to recommend (excluding non-responses and 'not recommended for appointment' responses).

### 3.1 Applicant class background and the recommended starting salary rate (H<sub>2</sub>)

The purpose of the data analysis presented in this section was to test the null hypothesis for H<sub>2</sub>, that higher-class applicants are no more likely to be recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary than other applicants. As per the structure in the previous section, the data is presented in three subsections: i) data for all participants; ii) data restricted to participants based at elite universities; and iii) data restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. The measures of central tendency (median and mean) are presented for the participant responses as to the salary rate they would recommend, split by the class background of the applicants. The higher starting salary rate and odds of receiving a higher starting salary are also presented in the tables.

#### 3.1.1 All participants

The distribution of the recommended starting salary data was slightly right-skewed and heavily leptokurtic, indicating that, whilst the majority of participants offered a lower starting salary, there were some outliers in the data. A similar distribution was observed for both higher-class and lower-class applicants and the mean salaries were alike at £33,873 for lower-class applicants and £33,972 for higher-class applicants (Table 22). A Fisher's exact test indicated no significant associations between applicant class background and the starting salary categories,  $\chi^2(7, n=144) = 7.437, p=.359, phi = .234$ .

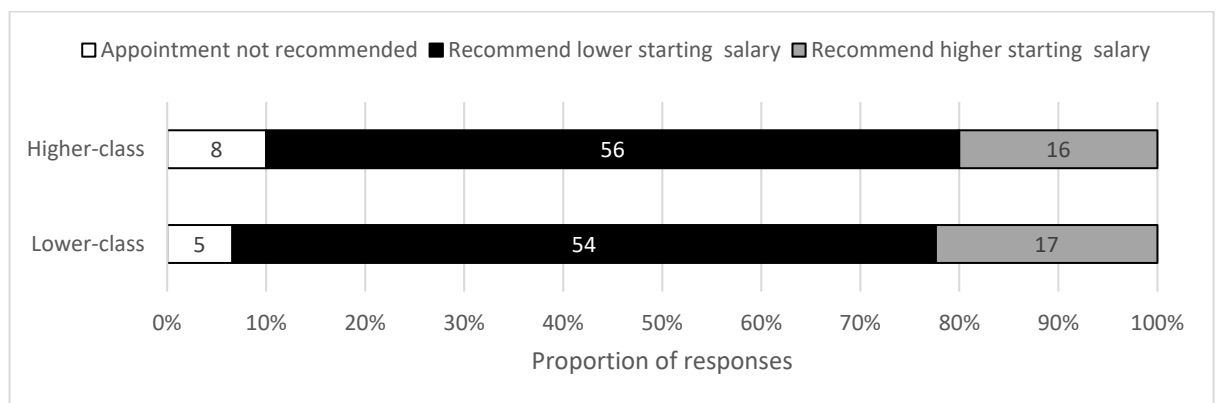
Table 22: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background (all participants, excluding non-responses and 'not recommended for appointment' responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for higher-class applicants being offered a higher starting salary compared to lower-class applicants
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Lower-class	71	£33,000	£33,873	23.94%	0.32	0.89:1
Higher-class	73	£33,000	£33,972	21.92%	0.28	
All applicants	144	£33,000	£33,924	22.92%	0.30	

When the higher starting salary rate was applied to the data, a marginally greater proportion of lower-class applicants than higher-class applicants were recommended to receive a higher starting salary (23.94%, n=71; 21.92%, n=73, respectively); however, a chi squared test indicated

no significant association ( $\chi^2 (1, n=144) = .000, p=.1.000, phi = .008$ ). Figure 31 presents the proportion of applicants recommended to receive higher and lower starting salaries, as well as the proportion of applicants not recommended for appointment, with the data disaggregated by applicant class background. This presents evidence of the overall similarity in the data for lower- and higher-class applicants.

Figure 31: Categorised participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background (all participants). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



### 3.1.2 Participants based at elite universities

Table 23 presents the key descriptive data when restricting the dataset to participants based at elite universities. The distribution of the recommended starting salary data remained right-skewed and heavily leptokurtic, indicating that the majority of participants offered a lower starting salary although there were some outliers. A similar distribution was observed for both higher-class and lower-class applicants, although both the skewness and kurtosis were less pronounced for the higher-class applicants, which indicated that there was a slight increase in the recommended salaries for higher-class applicants. This is reflected in the mean salaries (£34,059 for lower-class applicants and £34,750 for higher-class applicants). A Fisher's exact test indicated no significant associations between applicant class background and the recommended starting salaries, ( $\chi^2 (6, n=66) = 7.782, p=.225, phi = .352$ ).

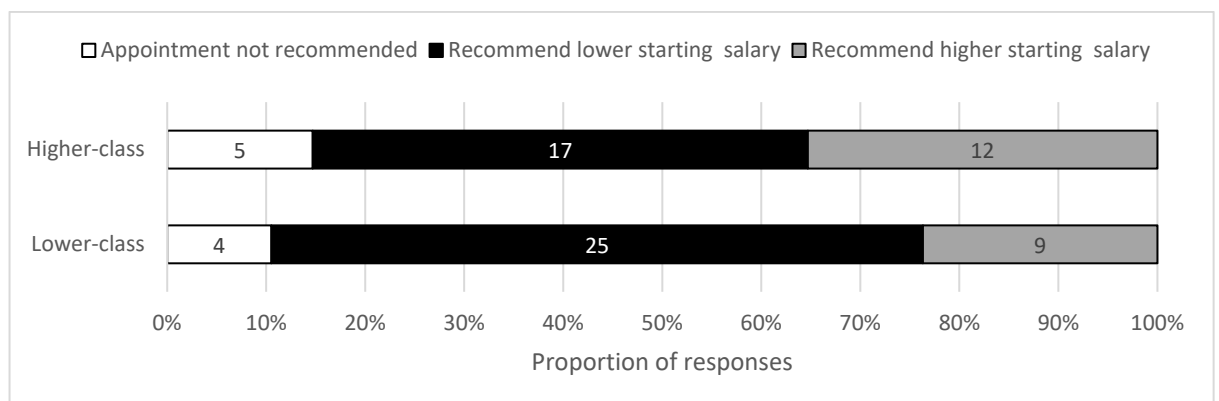
When the higher starting salary rate was applied to the data from participants based at elite universities, the higher-class applicants were nearly twice as likely than the lower-class applicants to be offered a higher starting salary (37.50%,  $n=32$  and 26.47%,  $n=34$ , respectively) (odds ratio 1.67:1). However, a chi square test (with Yates' Continuity Correction) indicated no significant associations between applicant class background and whether a higher or lower

starting salary was recommended, ( $\chi^2(1, n=66) = .486, p=.486, phi= -.118$ ). Figure 32 presents the proportion of applicants recommended to receive higher and lower starting salaries, as well as the proportion of applicants not recommended for appointment, with the data disaggregated by applicant class background and restricted to participants based at elite universities.

Table 23: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses and ‘not recommended for appointment’ responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for higher-class applicants being offered a higher starting salary compared to lower-class applicants
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Lower-class	34	£33,000	£34,059	26.47%	0.36	1.67:1
Higher-class	32	£34,000	£34,750	37.50%	0.60	
All applicants	66	£33,500	£34,394	31.82%	0.47	

Figure 32: Categorised participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



### 3.1.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

Table 24 presents the key descriptive data from restricting the dataset to participants based at non-elite universities. The distribution of the recommended starting salary data remained right-skewed and heavily leptokurtic, indicating that the majority of participants offered a lower starting salary although there remained some outliers. A similar distribution was observed for



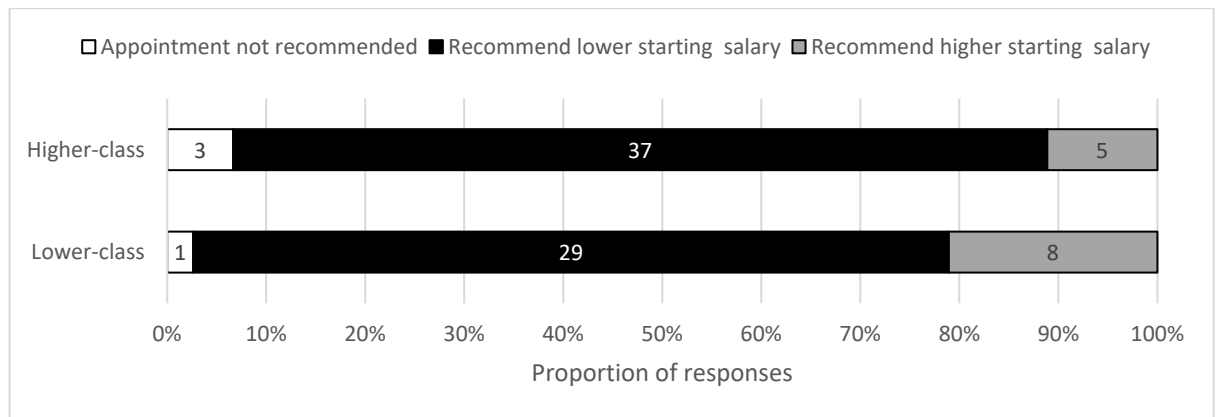
both higher-class and lower-class applicants. This was reflected in the mean salaries (£33,703 for lower-class applicants and £33,366 for higher-class applicants). A Fisher's exact test indicated no significant associations between applicant class background and the starting salary categories, ( $\chi^2(5, n=78) = 2.963, p=.825, \phi = .193$ ).

Table 24: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses and 'not recommended for appointment' responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for higher-class applicants being offered a higher starting salary compared to lower-class applicants
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Lower-class	37	£33,000	£33,703	21.62%	0.28	0.50:1
Higher-class	41	£33,000	£33,366	12.20%	0.14	
All applicants	78	£33,000	£33,526	16.67%	0.20	

When the higher starting salary rate was applied, the lower-class applicants were twice as likely as the higher-class applicants to be offered a higher starting salary (21.62%,  $n=37$  and 12.20%,  $n=41$ , respectively) (odds ratio 1.99:1). A chi square test (with Yates' Continuity Correction) indicated that this was not significant, ( $\chi^2(1, n=78) = 658, p=.417, \phi=.126$ ). Figure 33 presents the proportion of applicants recommended to receive higher and lower starting salaries, as well as the proportion of applicants not recommended for appointment, with the data disaggregated by applicant class background and restricted to participants based at non-elite universities.

Figure 33: Categorised participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



### 3.2 Perceived applicant gender and the recommended starting salary rate ( $H_5$ )

The purpose of the data analysis presented in this section was to test the null hypothesis for  $H_5$ , that applicants perceived to be male are no more likely than other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary. The data are presented in three subsections: i) data for all participants; ii) data restricted to participants based at elite universities; and iii) data restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. The measures of central tendency (median and mean) are presented for the participant responses as to the salary rate they would recommend, split by the perceived gender of the applicants. The higher starting salary rate and odds of receiving a higher level of starting salary are presented in the tables.

#### 3.2.1 All participants

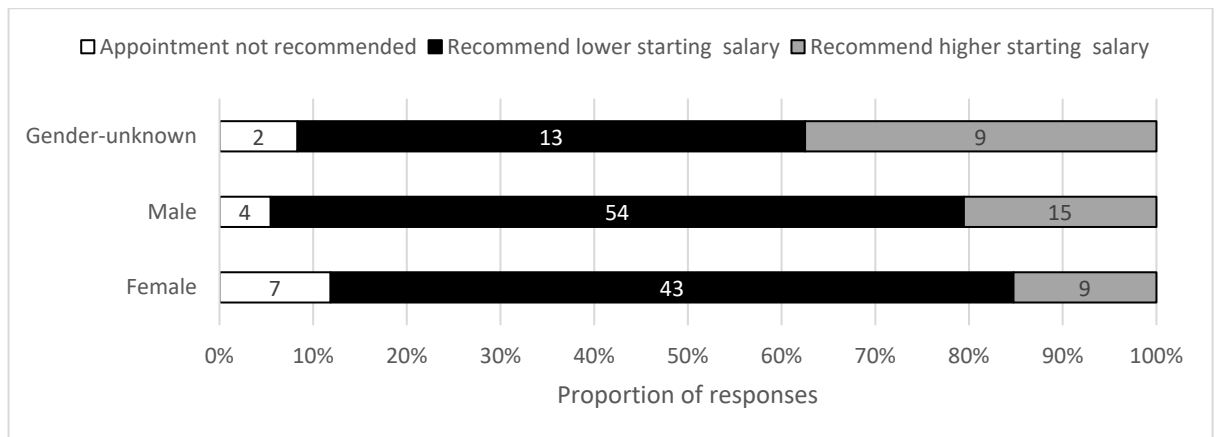
The distribution of the data was right-skewed overall and for each of the applicant gender groups; however, it was most prominently right-skewed for the male applicants. The kurtosis was leptokurtic, indicating that there were some outliers in the data. A higher proportion of female applicants than male applicants were considered not appointable (12% and 6%, respectively). The mean salaries were similar across the treatment conditions at £33,788 for females, £33,812 for males, and £34,318 for gender-unknown applicants (Table 25). A Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that the distribution of data across all salary categories by gender was not statistically significant ( $X^2(2) = 4.456, p=.108$ ), and a Fisher's test indicated no significant associations between the perceived gender of the applicants and the recommended starting salaries,  $X^2(12, n=143) = 10.446, p=.544, phi=.266$  (small to medium effect size).

Table 25: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant perceived gender (all participants, excluding non-responses and ‘not recommended for appointment’ responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for applicants perceived to be male being offered a higher starting salary compared to applicants perceived to be female
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Female	52	£33,000	£33,788	16.98%	0.21	1.33:1
Male	69	£33,000	£33,812	21.74%	0.28	
Gender-unknown	22	£34,000	£34,318	40.91%	0.69	
All applicants	143	£33,000	£33,881	23.08%	0.30	

When the higher starting salary rate was applied to the data, participants were more likely to recommend a higher starting salary when they reported being unable to discern applicant gender (40.91%,  $n=22$ ). When participants perceived applicant gender to be male or female, a slightly higher proportion of male applicants (21.74%,  $n=69$ ) were recommended to receive a higher starting salary than female applicants (16.98%,  $n=52$ ). A Fisher’s exact test found no significant association between the higher starting salary rate and the perceived gender of the applicants, ( $X^2(2, n=143) = 5.218, p=.072, Cramer’s V=.199$  (small to medium effect size)). Figure 34 presents the categorised recommended starting salaries for applicants with the data disaggregated by the perceived gender of the applicants.

Figure 34: Categorised participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant perceived gender (all participants). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



### 3.2.2 Participants based at elite universities

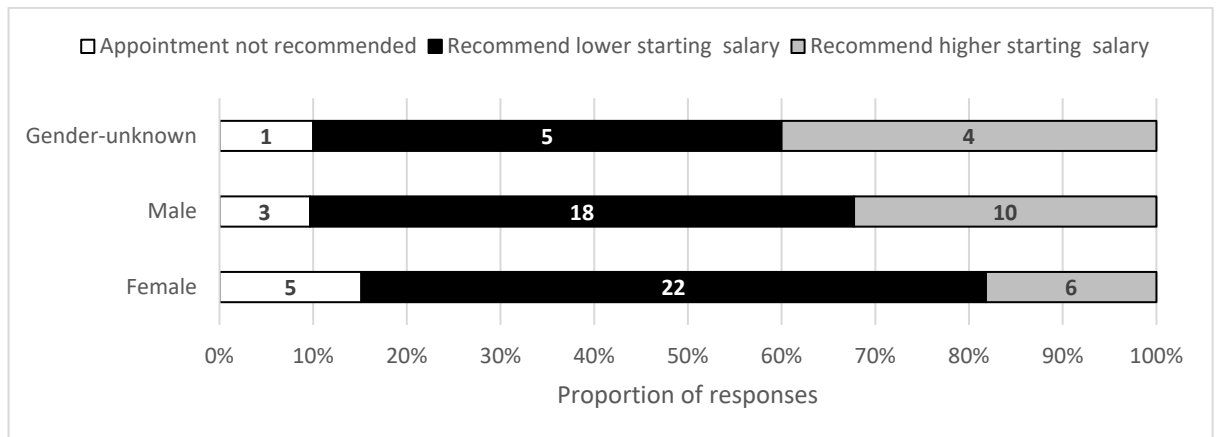
Table 26 presents the data restricted to participants based at elite universities. The distribution of the data was right-skewed overall and for each of the applicant gender groups. The kurtosis was normal overall but was heavily leptokurtic for the gender-unknown applicants, indicating that there were significant outliers in the data associated with these applicants. As with the overall dataset, a slightly higher proportion of female applicants compared to male applicants was considered not appointable (15% and 10%, respectively). The mean salaries were similar across the treatment conditions at £34,143 for females, £34,393 for males, and £34,556 for gender-unknown applicants. A Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that the distribution of the recommended salaries was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 1.712, p=.425$ ) and a Fisher's test indicated no significant associations between the perceived gender of the applicants and the recommended starting salaries,  $\chi^2(12, n=65) = 9.347, p=.693$ , Cramer's  $V=.344$  (large effect size).

Applying the higher starting salary rate to the data from participants based at elite universities provides evidence that participants were more likely to recommend a higher starting salary to gender-unknown applicants (44.44%,  $n=9$ ), followed by male applicants (35.71%,  $n=28$ ), and then female applicants (21.43%,  $n=28$ ). Male applicants were twice as likely to be offered a higher starting salary than female applicants (odds ratio 2.07:1). A Fisher's exact test found no significant association between the higher starting salary rate and the perceived gender of the applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=65) = 2.890, p=.264$ , Cramer's  $V=.210$  (medium effect size). Figure 35 presents the categorised recommended starting salaries for applicants with the data disaggregated by the perceived gender of the applicants (elite universities only).

Table 26: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses and ‘not recommended for appointment’ responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for applicants perceived to be male being offered a higher starting salary compared to applicants perceived to be female
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Female	28	£33,000	£34,143	21.43%	0.27	2.07:1
Male	28	£33,500	£34,393	35.71%	0.56	
Gender-unknown	9	£34,000	£34,556	44.44%	0.80	
All applicants	65	£33,000	£34,308	30.77%	0.45	

Figure 35: Categorised participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant perceived gender (participants based at elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



### 3.2.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

Table 27 presents the data restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. Unlike the data for participants based at elite universities, the distribution of the data was strongly left-skewed overall and for each of the applicant gender groups, indicating that participants were much more likely to recommend a lower than a higher starting salary. However, the kurtosis was heavily leptokurtic, which reflects variability in the participant responses. The left-skewed and leptokurtic distribution was particularly high for the male applicants. Female applicants were

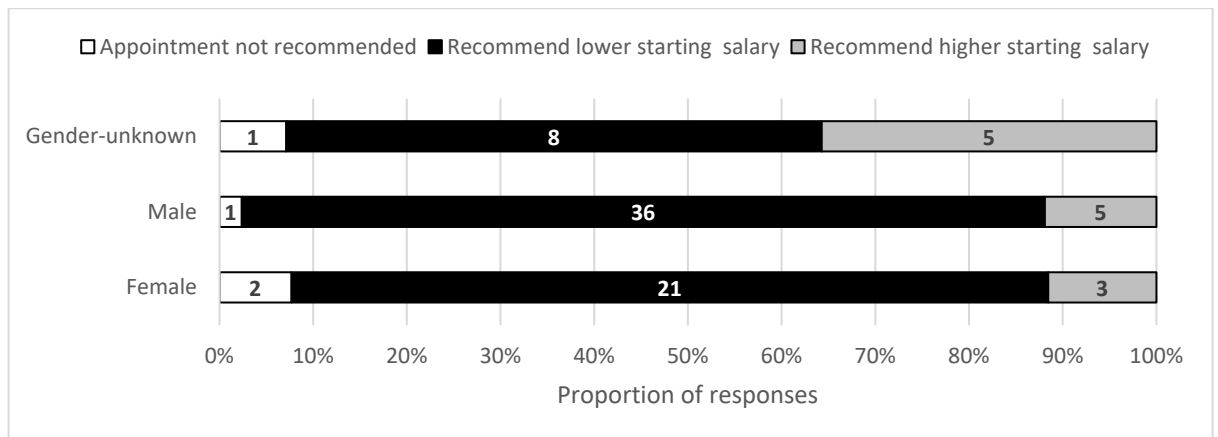
more likely than male applicants to be considered not appointable (7% and 2%, respectively). The mean salaries were similar across the treatment conditions at £33,375 for females, £33,415 for males, and £34,154 for gender-unknown applicants. A Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that the distribution across all categories for the gender variable was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(2) = 2.770, p=.250$ ) and a Fisher's exact test indicated no significant associations between the perceived gender of the applicants and the recommended starting salaries,  $\chi^2(8, n=77) = 8.054, p=.355$ , Cramer's  $V=.343$  (large effect size).

Table 27: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses and 'not recommended for appointment' responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for applicants perceived to be male being offered a higher starting salary compared to applicants perceived to be female
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Female	24	£33,000	£33,375	12.50%	0.13	1:1
Male	41	£33,000	£33,415	12.20%	0.13	
Gender-unknown	13	£33,000	£34,154	38.46%	0.54	
All applicants	78	£33,000	£33,526	16.67%	0.18	

Applying the higher starting salary rate to the data from participants based at non-elite universities provides evidence that participants were more likely to recommend a higher starting salary to gender-unknown applicants (38.46%,  $n=13$ ), followed by similar proportions of male and female applicants (12.20%,  $n=41$ ; 12.50%,  $n=24$ , respectively). A Fisher's exact test confirmed no significant association between the higher starting salary rate and the perceived gender of the applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=78) = 4.626, p=.087$ , Cramer's  $V=.262$  (medium effect size). Figure 36 presents the categorised recommended starting salaries for applicants with the data disaggregated by the perceived gender of the applicants (non-elite universities only).

Figure 36: Categorised participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant perceived gender (participants based at non-elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



### 3.3 Intersection of applicant class background and perceived gender and the recommended starting salary rate ( $H_8$ )

The purpose of the data analysis presented in this section was to test the null hypothesis for  $H_8$ , that higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are no more likely than other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary. As per the previous sections, the data are presented in three subsections: i) data for all participants; ii) data restricted to participants based at elite universities; and iii) data restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. The measures of central tendency (median and mean) are presented for the participant responses as to the salary rate they would recommend, split by the class background and perceived gender of the applicants. The higher starting salary rate and odds of receiving a higher starting salary are presented in the tables.

#### 3.3.1 All participants

As noted previously, the distribution of the data was right-skewed, indicating that participants were more likely to recommend a lower than a higher starting salary, and the kurtosis was leptokurtic, indicating some outliers in the data. This was the case for all the classed and gendered identities except for the lower-class gender-unknown applicant, and it was particularly the case for the lower-class male applicant. The mean and median starting salaries were broadly similar across all treatment conditions (Table 28) and a Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that the distribution of the recommended starting salary data across the classed and gendered applicants was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(5, n=143) = 10.946, p=.052$ ).

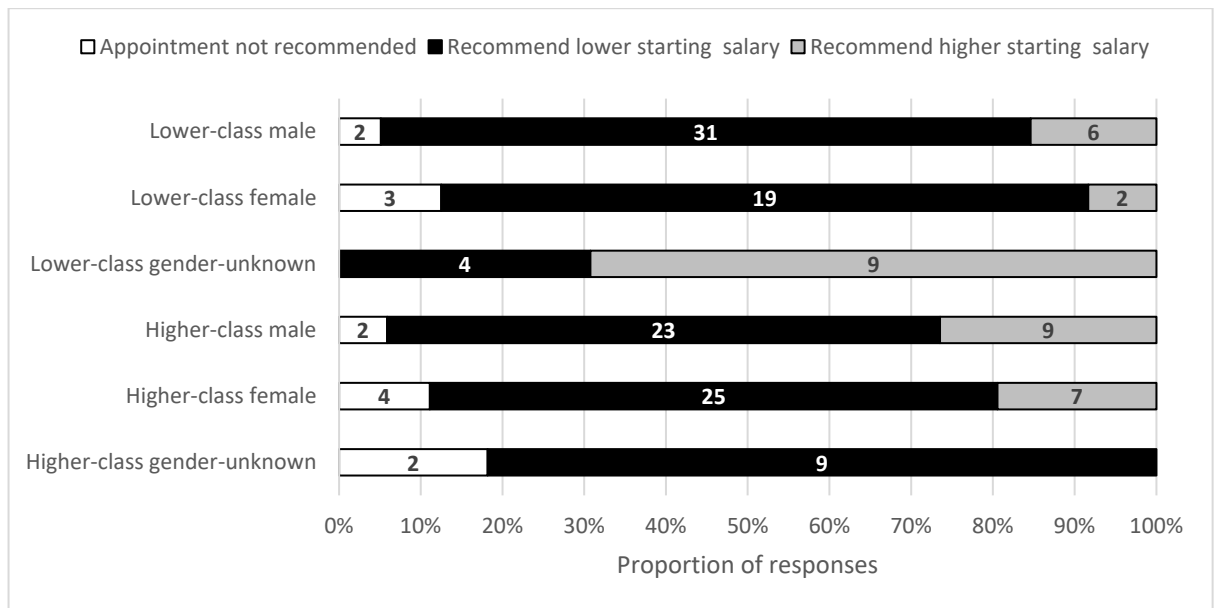
Table 28: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background and perceived gender (all participants, excluding non-responses and ‘not recommended for appointment’ responses)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for higher-class male applicants being offered a higher starting salary compared to all other applicants
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Lower-class male	37	£33,000	£33,541	16.21%	0.19	1.43:1
Lower-class female	21	£33,000	£33,762	9.52%	0.11	
Lower-class gender-unknown	13	£35,000	£35,000	69.23%	2.25	
Higher-class male	32	£33,000	£34,125	28.13%	0.39	
Higher-class female	31	£33,000	£33,802	22.58%	0.29	
Higher-class gender-unknown	9	£33,000	£33,333	0.00%	0.00	
Average for all applicants	143	£33,000	£33,881	23.08%	0.30	

Applying the higher starting salary rate to the data provided evidence that the lower-class gender-unknown applicant was more likely than the other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary (69.23%,  $n=13$ ), followed by the higher-class male applicant (28.13%,  $n=32$ ), and the higher-class female applicant (22.58%,  $n=31$ ). The applicant least likely to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary was the higher-class gender-unknown applicant (0.00%,  $n=9$ ), followed by the lower-class female applicant (9.52%,  $n=21$ ), and the lower-class male applicant (16.21%,  $n=37$ ). A Fisher’s exact test revealed a statistically significant association between the classed and gendered identities and the likelihood of being recommended to receive a higher starting salary ( $\chi^2(5, n=142) = 18.061, p=.002$ , Cramer’s  $V=.389$  (large effect size). However, the adjusted residuals demonstrated that this high significance level was caused by the variance in the data for the gender-unknown applicants, rather than the male and female applicants. Figure 37 presents the responses as to the likelihood the applicants would be offered a higher starting salary, with the data disaggregated by the six classed and gendered identities.



Figure 37: Categorised participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background and perceived gender (all participants). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



### 3.3.2 Participants based at elite universities

Restricting the data to participants based at elite universities resulted in a different pattern compared to the overall data (Table 29). Whilst the distribution of the overall data was right-skewed and the kurtosis was leptokurtic, restricting the data resulted in a distribution that was heavily right-skewed for the higher-class female and lower-class female but was slightly left-skewed for the others. In addition, the kurtosis of the data for the higher-class gender-unknown applicant was platykurtic and the data for the higher-class and lower-class females was leptokurtic. For all other applicants it was slightly leptokurtic but well within a normal range. The mean and median starting salaries were broadly similar across all treatment conditions, although slightly higher for the lower-class gender-unknown and higher-class male applicants. A Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that the distribution of the data across the classed and gendered applicants was not statistically significant ( $\chi^2(5, n=65) = 7.043, p=.217$ ).

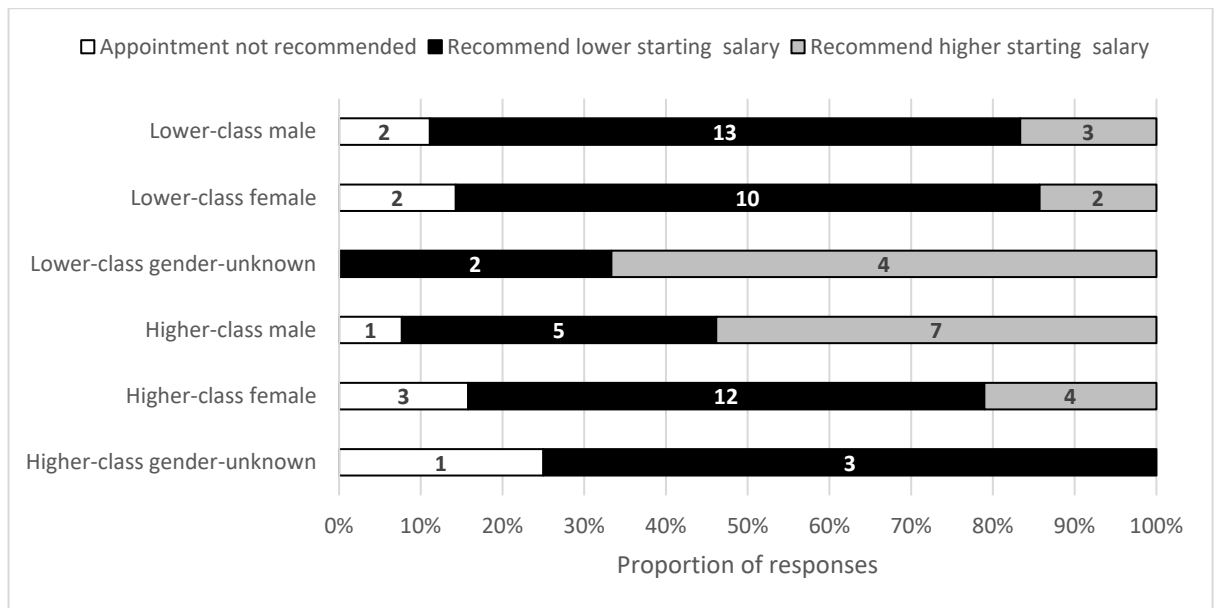
Applying the higher starting salary rate to the data provided further evidence that, amongst the participants based at elite universities, the lower-class gender-unknown applicant and higher-class male applicant were more likely than the other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary (66.67%,  $n=6$ ; 58.33%,  $n=12$ , respectively). The applicants least likely to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary were the higher-class gender-unknown applicant (0.00%,  $n=3$ ) and the lower-class female applicant (16.67%,  $n=12$ ). Despite this, a

Fisher's exact test found no evidence of a statistically significant association between the classed and gendered identities and the likelihood of being recommended to receive a higher starting salary ( $\chi^2(5, n=64) = 9.876, p=.059$ , Cramer's  $V=.417$  (large effect size). Figure 38 presents the categorised recommended starting salaries for applicants with the data disaggregated by the classed and gendered identities of the applicants (elite universities only).

Table 29: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background and perceived gender (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses and 'not recommended for appointment')

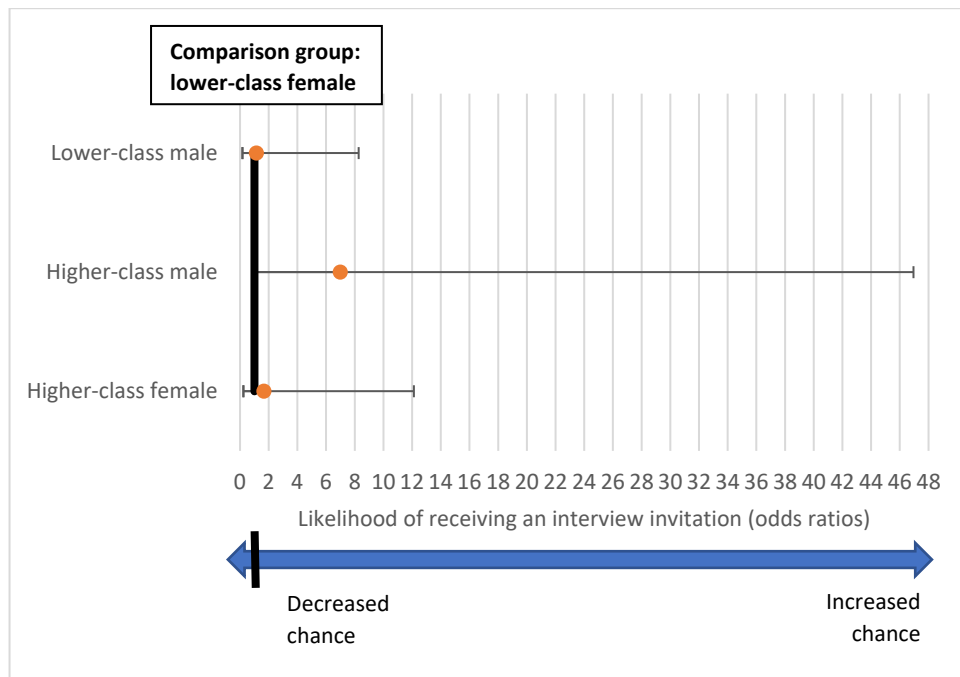
Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for higher-class male applicants being offered a higher starting salary compared to all other applicants
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Lower-class male	16	£33,000	£33,563	18.75%	0.23	4.3:1
Lower-class female	12	£33,500	£34,250	16.67%	0.20	
Lower-class gender-unknown	6	£35,000	£35,000	66.67%	2.00	
Higher-class male	12	£35,000	£35,500	58.33%	1.40	
Higher-class female	16	£33,000	£34,063	25.00%	0.33	
Higher-class gender-unknown	3	£34,000	£33,667	0.00%	0.00	
Average for all applicants	65	£33,000	£34,308	30.77%	0.44	

Figure 38: Categorised participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background and perceived gender (participants based at elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



The data from participants based at elite universities was restricted to exclude the gender-unknown applicants. Simple logistic regression was performed to examine the interaction between the predictor variable of the classed and gendered identities and on the higher starting salary rate. Model 4 (Table A11, Appendix 9) presents the estimated regression coefficients for the effect of the classed and gendered identities on whether a higher starting salary was recommended. As the applicant least likely to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary, the lower-class female applicant was used as the reference group to which the other three classed and gendered identities were compared. The model was not statistically significant,  $\chi^2(3, n=56) = 6.455, p=.091$ , but the coefficients on all the classed and gendered identities were positive. The coefficient on the higher-class male applicant was positive and significant ( $p=.045$ ), indicating that this applicant was significantly more likely to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary than the lower-class female applicant. Higher-class male applicants were 7.000 times more likely than lower-class female applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary. This can be generalised to state, with 95% confidence, that for the entire population of academic staff responsible for the recruitment of other academic staff at elite universities in England, higher-class male applicants have odds of being recommended to receive a higher starting salary that are 1.044 to 46.949 better than those of lower-class female applicants. Figure 39 presents the odds ratios (dots) and 95% confidence intervals (error bars).

Figure 39: Likelihood of applicants being recommended to receive a higher starting salary compared to lower-class female applicants (participants based at elite universities). Presented as odds ratios with 95% confidence intervals, where 1 equals the same likelihood as the lower-class female applicant (excluding gender-unknown applicants; and excluding non-responses).



### 3.3.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data was restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution of the data remained right-skewed with a leptokurtic kurtosis; however, the pattern within the data was different to that for participants at elite universities. The data for each applicant was heavily right-skewed, indicating that the majority of participants did not recommend a higher starting salary. The exception was the lower-class gender-unknown applicant, for whom the data was slightly left-skewed but within the normal range. The data for the lower-class male and lower-class female applicants had the strongest right-skew. In terms of kurtosis, the data for the lower-class male and lower-class female, the higher-class male, and the higher-class gender-unknown applicants was quite heavily leptokurtic, whilst it was platykurtic for the higher-class female and lower-class gender-unknown applicants.

The mean and median starting salaries were broadly similar across all treatment conditions, although they were slightly larger for the lower-class gender-unknown applicant (Table 30). A Kruskal-Wallis H test indicated that the distribution of data across the classed and gendered applicants was statistically significant ( $\chi^2(5, n=78) = 13.516, p=.019$ ). Pairwise comparisons, undertaken using Mann-Whitney U tests and the Bonferroni correction for multiple tests, indicated that there were statistically significant differences between two groups. The first was

between the lower-class female (Md=1.00, £33,000) and the lower-class gender-unknown (Md=3.00, £35,000) applicants,  $n=16$ ,  $U=53.000$ ,  $z=2.620$ ,  $p=.024$ ,  $r=.66$  (large effect size). The second was between the higher-class male (Md=1.00, £33,000) and the lower-class gender-unknown (Md=3.00, £35,000) applicants,  $n=27$ ,  $U=27.000$ ,  $z=-2.952$ ,  $p=.014$ ,  $r=-.57$  (large effect size).

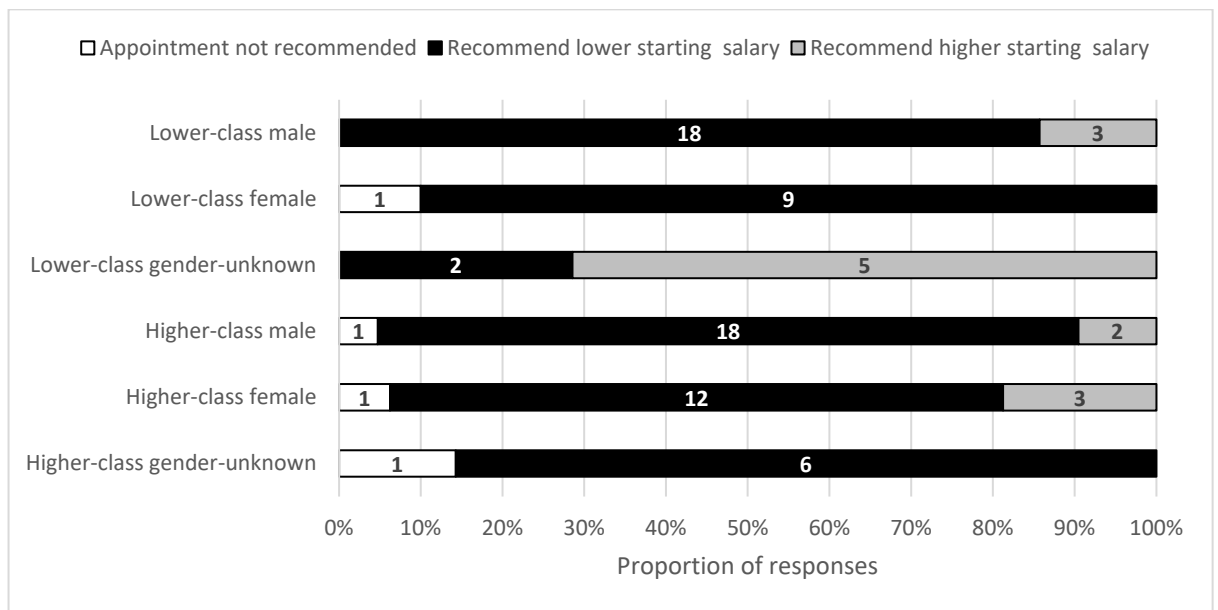
Table 30: Participant responses to the likely recommended starting salary for applicants, with data split by applicant class background and perceived gender (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses and ‘not recommended for appointment’)

Group of applicants	Number of participants	Recommended starting salary		Applicants recommended to receive a higher starting salary		Odds ratio for higher-class male applicants being offered a higher starting salary compared to all other applicants
		Median	Mean	Percentage	Odds	
Lower-class male	21	£33,000	£33,524	14.29%	0.17	0.49:1
Lower-class female	9	£33,000	£33,111	0.00%	0.00	
Lower-class gender-unknown	7	£35,000	£35,000	71.43%	2.50	
Higher-class male	20	£33,000	£33,300	10.00%	0.11	
Higher-class female	15	£33,000	£33,530	20.00%	0.25	
Higher-class gender-unknown	6	£33,000	£33,167	0.00%	0.00	
Average for all applicants	78	£33,000	£33,526	16.67%	0.20	

Applying the higher starting salary rate to the data provided further evidence that, amongst the participants based at non-elite universities, the lower-class gender-unknown applicant was more likely than the other applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary (71.43%,  $n=7$ ), followed by the higher-class female applicant (20.00%,  $n=15$ ). The applicants least likely to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary were the lower-class female and the higher-class gender-unknown applicants (0.00%,  $n=9$ ; 0.00%,  $n=6$ , respectively). A Fisher’s exact test revealed a statistically significant association between the classed and gendered identities and the likelihood of being recommended to receive a higher starting salary ( $\chi^2(5, n=78) = 13.199$ ,  $p=.008$ , Cramer’s  $V=.493$  (large effect size). The adjusted residuals indicate that this was associated only with the data for the lower-class gender-unknown applicant. Figure 40 presents the categorised recommended starting salaries for applicants with the data

disaggregated by the classed and gendered identities of the applicants (non-elite universities only).

Figure 40: Likely recommended starting salary for the applicants, split by the classed and gendered applicant identities (participants based at non-elite universities). Presented as percentages of all responses, with labels indicating the number of responses (excluding non-responses).



#### 4. Summary of significant findings

The most important finding in this chapter was that the higher-class male applicant was significantly more likely to be invited to interview than the higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female applicants. Participants based at elite universities were significantly more likely to invite male applicants to interview than female applicants, whilst participants at non-elite universities were significantly more likely to invite higher-class applicants to interview than lower-class applicants. Within elite universities, higher-class male applicants were seven times more likely than lower-class female applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary, which was significant. For some of the other hypotheses, the data indicated a preference for higher-class and/or male applicants; however, these results did not reach significance; possible reasons for this are discussed in Chapter 8.

In the next chapter, the results are presented in relation to the influence of applicant class background and/or perceived gender on the participant evaluations of the applicants' attributes and whether this was influenced by the elite or non-elite status of the universities at which the

participants were based (hypotheses H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>6</sub>, H<sub>9</sub>). Also presented are the findings from the content analysis, which was used to identify how the participants described the classed and gendered identities by exploring how frequently they cited their strengths and weaknesses.

## **Chapter 7: How does applicant class background and/or gender influence how applicants are perceived?**

### **1. Introduction**

Chapter 6 presented the results in relation to the hypotheses that sought to examine the effect of applicant class background, perceived gender, and their intersection on the likelihood that applicants would be invited to interview and be recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary. Most arresting was the finding that the higher-class male applicant was significantly more likely to be invited to interview than the higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female. When participants were based at elite universities, male applicants were significantly more likely than female applicants to be invited to interview; whereas, when participants were based in non-elite universities, higher-class applicants were more likely than lower-class applicants to be invited to interview.

This chapter presents the findings in relation to how the participants evaluated the attributes of the applicants and how the participants described the applicants. In Section 2, the participants' evaluations of the applicants' attributes (competence, warmth, fit, hardworking) are presented by the independent variables of applicant class background ( $H_3$ ) (Section 2.1), applicant perceived gender ( $H_6$ ) (Section 2.2), and their intersection ( $H_9$ ) (Section 2.3). In Section 2.3, the results for the competence and warmth evaluations are also presented through quadrant diagrams, based on the SCM dimensions of these attributes. Section 3 presents the findings from the content analysis, which was used to identify the frequently cited strengths and weaknesses of the classed and/or gendered identities. These findings are used to understand the research questions about how participants described applicants who differed in terms of their class background and/or perceived gender.

As noted in Chapter 6, Section 1, the study's non-probability convenience sampling method means that the statistically significant findings in the data may be limited in their generalisability to the broader population. The comparison of the demographic characteristics of participants with the data for all UK academics indicated that the sample was similar to the general population in terms of gender/sex, ethnicity, and nationality (Table 11, Chapter 5, Section 4.3). This provides some reassurance of the results' external validity but does not eradicate the risk that the results may not be generalisable. As such, effect sizes are reported alongside the results from the statistical significance testing to help determine the real-world significance and impact of the observed associations and differences.



## **2. Participants' evaluations of the applicants' attributes**

Prior studies present evidence of the existence of oversimplified class- and gender-based stereotypes that influence how people perceive others' personality traits, attributes, aspirations, and motivations (Section 3.1, Chapter 2). Based on the literature review, the expectation was that participants would assess more favourably the applicants who had markers of a higher-class background and those they perceived to be male (Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, 2012; Durante and Fiske, 2017; Durante et al., 2017). It was therefore hypothesised that higher-class applicants and/or those perceived to be male would be more likely to be evaluated highly in terms of their attributes, despite the vignettes being otherwise identical.

The data in Sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 are presented for all participants, participants based at elite universities, and participants based at non-elite universities. Participants were invited to evaluate the perceived attributes of the applicants, using a seven-point Likert scale.<sup>22</sup> The median and range of the response data are presented in this section in accord with this scale, and the skewness and kurtosis of the data distribution are described.

### ***2.1 Class background and perceived attributes (H<sub>3</sub>)***

This section presents the results of the participants' perceptions about the applicants, using the four composite scales and disaggregated by the class background of the applicants and the status of the universities at which the participants were based (Tables 31-42). The purpose of the data analysis in this section was to test the null hypothesis for H<sub>3</sub>, that higher-class applicants are no more likely than other candidates to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes.

#### ***2.1.1 Competence***

##### ***2.1.1.1 All participants***

The distribution of the composite competence scores was left-skewed, which indicated that a higher proportion of participants provided a positive evaluation of applicant competence than a negative one. The kurtosis was heavily leptokurtic, indicating some outliers in the data. The data for lower-class applicants followed the same pattern but was more heavily leptokurtic and with a stronger left-skew. The skewness and kurtosis for the data for higher-class applicants were both normal. Higher-class applicants recorded a higher median score (Md=5.25, 'somewhat agree' to 'agree') than lower-class applicants (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree') (Table 31). A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of competence

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<sup>22</sup> 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree.

evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class groups,  $\chi^2(1, n=164) = 2774.000, z=-1.523, p=.111, r=-.119$  (small effect size).

Table 31: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by applicant class background (all participants, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	82	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	82	5.25	3.50 – 7.00
All applicants	164	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

#### 2.1.1.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the data were restricted to participants based at elite universities, the distribution followed the same pattern as the complete dataset in that it was left-skewed with a heavily leptokurtic kurtosis. The data followed a similar distribution when limited to the lower-class applicants; however, for higher-class applicants, the data distribution was slightly right-skewed and the kurtosis was normal, indicating fewer outliers. A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant difference in the competence evaluations of applicants based on class background, and higher and lower-class applicants had the same median scores (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’),  $\chi^2(1, n=79) = 601.500, z = -1.792, p=.073, r=-.013$  (small effect size) (Table 32).

Table 32: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	41	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	38	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
All applicants	79	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

#### 2.1.1.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

Among the participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution of the composite competence scores remained left-skewed but was slightly platykurtic, indicating fewer outliers. A similar pattern remained when the data were restricted to higher-class applicants and then lower-class applicants. However, the data for higher-class applicants was more strongly left-skewed, indicating that participants were more likely to provide a positive evaluation of

competence for higher-class applicants than for lower-class applicants. Higher-class applicants recorded a higher median score (Md=5.5, ‘somewhat agree’ to ‘agree’) compared to lower-class applicants (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’) (Table 33). A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of competence evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(1, n=85) = 850.500, z=-.470, p=.638, r=-.051$  (very small effect size).

Table 33: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	41	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	44	5.50	3.50 – 6.50
All applicants	85	5.50	3.50 – 7.00

## 2.1.2 Warmth

### 2.1.2.1 All participants

The distribution of the composite warmth attribute scores from all participants was not skewed but was slightly leptokurtic, although within the normal range. When the dataset was restricted to higher-class applicants, the distribution was slightly right-skewed and platykurtic, but remained within the normal ranges. For lower-class applicants, the data were slightly left-skewed and heavily leptokurtic, indicating greater variability in the distribution. Both higher-class and lower-class applicants recorded the same median score (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’) (Table 34). A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of warmth evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(1, n=163) = 3556.500, z=.803, p=.422, r=.063$  (very small effect size).

Table 34: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by applicant class background (all participants, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	81	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	82	5.00	2.50 – 7.00
All applicants	163	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.1.2.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the composite warmth attribute data were restricted to participants based at elite universities, the data distribution differed from the complete dataset in that it was slightly left-skewed and quite heavily leptokurtic. Restricting the data further indicated that the data distribution for the lower-class applicants was strongly left-skewed and heavily leptokurtic, whilst for higher-class applicants it was slightly right-skewed and heavily platykurtic, thus indicating much greater variability in the data for lower-class applicants. However, both higher and lower-class applicants recorded the same median score ( $Md=5.00$ , 'somewhat agree') and a Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of warmth evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(1, n=79) = 818.500$ ,  $z=.398$ ,  $p=.691$ ,  $r=.045$  (very small effect size) (Table 35).

Table 35: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	41	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	38	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
All applicants	79	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.1.2.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the composite warmth attribute data were restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution of the scores differed from the complete dataset. The data were slightly right-skewed and the kurtosis was slightly platykurtic. The distribution of the data was controlled further by looking at the higher- and lower-class applicants separately. For the lower-class applicants, the distribution of the data was right-skewed and platykurtic. For the higher-class applicants, it was right-skewed with a normal kurtosis. Lower-class applicants recorded a slightly higher median score compared to higher-class applicants ( $Md=5.00$ , 'somewhat agree';  $Md=4.50$ , 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree', respectively) (Table 36). A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of warmth evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(1, n=84) = 951.000$ ,  $z=.654$ ,  $p=.513$ ,  $r=.071$  (very small effect size).

Table 36: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	40	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	44	4.50	2.50 – 7.00
All applicants	84	4.50	2.50 – 7.00

### 2.1.3 Fit

#### 2.1.3.1 All participants

The distribution of the composite fit scores from all participants was slightly right-skewed and platykurtic, although within the normal ranges. When restricting the data to higher-class applicants, the kurtosis was more heavily platykurtic and slightly more right-skewed than the data for all applicants, but still within the normal ranges. The skewness and kurtosis of the data for lower-class applicants was normal. The lower-class applicants recorded a higher median fit score than the higher-class applicants (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’; Md=4.00, ‘neither agree nor disagree’, respectively) (Table 37). A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of fit evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(1, n=158) = 3513.500, z=1.454, p=.146, r=.116$  (small effect size).

Table 37: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by applicant class background (all participants, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	80	5.00	2.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	78	4.00	3.00 – 7.00
All applicants	158	5.00	2.00 – 7.00

#### 2.1.3.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the composite fit attribute data were restricted to participants based at elite universities, the distribution of the scores was slightly right-skewed and leptokurtic, but within the normal ranges. The pattern remained similar when the data were restricted to the lower-class applicants. When restricted to the higher-class applicants, the distribution of the data was more strongly right-skewed and slightly platykurtic. This indicated greater variability in the data for lower-class applicants. The lower-class applicants recorded a higher median score than the

higher-class applicants (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree'; Md=4.50, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree', respectively) (Table 38). A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of fit evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class groups of applicants when the data were restricted to participants based at elite universities,  $\chi^2(1, n=76) = 712.500$ ,  $z=-.083$ ,  $p=.934$ ,  $r=-.01$  (very small effect size).

Table 38: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	40	5.00	2.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	36	4.50	4.00 – 7.00
All applicants	76	5.00	2.00 – 7.00

#### 2.1.3.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the composite fit attribute data were restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution of the scores was slightly right-skewed and heavily platykurtic. This pattern was similar for both higher-class and lower-class applicants. Lower-class applicants recorded a higher median score than higher-class applicants (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree'; Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree', respectively) (Table 39). A Mann-Whitney U test revealed a statistically significant variance in the distribution of fit evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class applicants, with lower-class applicants being more likely than higher-class applicants to be considered to fit,  $\chi^2(1, n=82) = 1050.000$ ,  $z=2.069$ ,  $p=.039$ ,  $r=.228$  (small effect size).

Table 39: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses) (\* $p=.05$ )

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	40	5.00*	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	42	4.00*	3.00 – 6.00
All applicants	82	5.00	3.00 – 7.00

## 2.1.4 Hardworking

### 2.1.4.1 All participants

The skewness for the distribution of the composite hardworking scores was normal and the kurtosis was slightly leptokurtic, although within the normal range. The data for the higher-class applicants followed a similar pattern. The data for lower-class applicants was slightly left-skewed and leptokurtic, indicating there were more outliers in the distribution of the data for lower-class applicants. Higher-class and lower-class applicants recorded the same median score (Md=4.5, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree') (Table 40). A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of hardworking evaluations across the higher-class and lower-class groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(1, n=163) = 3373.500, z = .041, p=.968, r=.0003$ .

Table 40: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by applicant class background (all participants, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class	81	4.50	1.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	82	4.50	2.00 – 7.00
All applicants	163	4.50	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.1.4.2 Participants based at elite universities

Restricting the composite hardworking data to participants based at elite universities demonstrated that the skewness and kurtosis of the distribution were normal. A similar pattern was observed when the data were limited to the higher-class applicants. However, when restricted to the lower-class applicants, the data distribution was left-skewed and leptokurtic, although within the normal ranges. This indicated less variability and fewer outliers in the data for higher-class applicants. A Mann-Whitney U test found no significant difference in the hardworking evaluations of applicants based on class background, and higher- and lower-class applicants both had the same median scores (Md=4.50, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree'),  $\chi^2(1, n=78) = 827.500, z=.701, p=.483, r=.079$  (very small effect size) (Table 41).

Table 41: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	Number of participants	Median	Range
Lower-class	40	4.50	2.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	38	4.50	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	78	4.50	2.00 – 7.00

#### 2.1.4.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the composite hardworking attribute data were restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution of the scores was slightly left-skewed and leptokurtic, but within the normal ranges. This pattern was evident when the data were restricted to the lower-class applicants; however, the kurtosis was more strongly leptokurtic. When restricted to the higher-class applicants, the skewness of the data was normal, whilst the kurtosis was slightly platykurtic. This indicated much greater variability in the data for lower-class applicants. The higher- and lower-class applicants recoded the same median scores (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’) and a Mann-Whitney U test found no significant variance in the distribution of hardworking evaluations across the higher- and lower-class groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(1, n=85) = 857.500, z=-.574, p=.566, r=-.062$  (small effect size) (Table 42).

Table 42: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by applicant class background (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	Number of participants	Median	Range
Lower-class	41	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Higher-class	44	5.00	2.00 – 7.00
All applicants	85	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

#### 2.1.5 Class background and perceived attributes: conclusion

In Section 2.1, the results were presented in terms of the influence of applicant class background on the evaluation of the applicant perceived attributes. Overall, the higher-class applicants were slightly more likely to be evaluated as competent, whilst the lower-class applicants were slightly more likely to be considered to fit; however, these findings were not significant. When the data was restricted to participants based at elite universities, lower-class applicants were more likely than higher-class applicants to be considered to fit, but this was not significant. Finally, when



the data was limited to participants based at non-elite institutions, higher-class applicants were slightly more likely to be evaluated as competent, whilst lower-class applicants were slightly more likely to be evaluated as warm and considered to fit. This was statistically significant in terms of the fit attribute ( $p=.039$ ). In conclusion, there was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_3$  for any of the conditions.

## **2.2 Perceived gender and perceived attributes ( $H_6$ )**

This section presents the results of the participants' perceptions about the applicants, using the four composite scales, disaggregated by the participants' perceptions of the gender of the applicants and by the elite or non-elite status of the participants' universities (Tables 43-54). The purpose of the data analysis was to test hypothesis  $H_6$ , that applicants perceived to be male are more likely than other candidates to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes.

### **2.2.1 Competence**

#### **2.2.1.1 All participants**

The distribution of the composite competence scores was slightly left-skewed, which indicated that participants were more likely to provide a positive evaluation of competence than a negative one. The kurtosis was leptokurtic, indicating outliers in the data. A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of competence evaluations across the female, male and gender-unknown groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=163) = 6.846, p=.033$ . Female applicants recorded a higher median score (Md=5.5, 'somewhat agree' to 'agree') than the other two gender groups (male; gender-unknown), which both recorded median scores of 5.00 ('somewhat agree') (Table 43). A Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that the statistically significant variance was between the competence evaluations of female and male applicants, with the female applicants being more likely to be evaluated as competent,  $U=1784.000, z=-2.553, p=.011, r=.21$  (small effect size).

Table 43: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses) (\* $p=.05$ )

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	63	5.50*	1.00 – 7.00
Male	75	5.00*	3.50 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	25	5.00	3.50 – 6.00
All applicants	163	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.2.1.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the data were limited to participants at elite universities, the distribution followed the same pattern as the complete dataset – left-skewed with a leptokurtic kurtosis. A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in the competence evaluations of female, male, or gender-unknown applicants, all of which had median scores of 5.00 ('somewhat agree') ( $\chi^2(1, n=78) = 2.429, p=.297$  (Table 44).

Table 44: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (participants at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	36	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Male	32	5.00	3.50 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	10	5.00	3.50 – 6.00
All applicants	78	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.2.1.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data were limited to participants at non-elite universities, the distribution was slightly left-skewed and the kurtosis was slightly platykurtic, although within the normal ranges. A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a significant difference in the distribution of competence evaluations across the female, male, and gender-unknown groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=85) = 8.060, p=.018$ . Female applicants recorded a higher median score (Md=6.00, 'agree') than the male applicants (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree') and the gender-unknown applicants (Md=5.50, 'somewhat agree' to 'agree') (Table 45). A Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that the statistically significant difference was between the competence evaluations of female and male applicants, with female applicants being more likely to be evaluated as competent than male applicants,  $n=70, U=365.000, z=-2.811, p=.005, r=.34$  (medium effect size).

Table 45: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (participants at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses) (\*\* $p=.005$ )

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	27	6.00**	4.50 – 7.00
Male	43	5.00**	3.50 – 6.00
Gender-unknown	15	5.50	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	85	5.50	3.50 – 7.00

## 2.2.2 Warmth

### 2.2.2.1 All participants

The distribution of the composite warmth attribute data was not skewed and the kurtosis was normal. A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in the distribution of the warmth evaluations of female (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’), male (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’), or gender-unknown (Md=4.50, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ to ‘somewhat agree’) groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=162) = 3.972, p=.137$  (Table 46).

Table 46: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	63	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Male	74	5.00	2.50 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	25	4.50	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	162	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.2.2.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the data were limited to participants at elite universities, the distribution of the composite warmth data was slightly left-skewed and the kurtosis was leptokurtic. A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in the warmth evaluations of male, female, or gender-unknown applicants, all of which had a median warmth score of 5.00 (‘somewhat agree’),  $\chi^2(2, n=78) = 2.033, p=.362$ . However, there was notably greater variability in the data for female applicants (Table 47).

Table 47: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	36	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Male	32	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	10	5.00	4.00 – 5.50
All applicants	78	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.2.2.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data were restricted to participants at non-elite universities, the distribution was slightly right-skewed and the kurtosis was within the normal range. As with the previous findings, a Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in the distribution of warmth evaluations of the female (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree'), male (Md=4.50, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree'), or gender-unknown (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree') groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=84) = 4.057, p=.132$  (Table 48).

Table 48: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	27	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Male	42	4.50	2.50 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	15	4.00	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	84	4.50	2.50 – 7.00

### 2.2.3 Fit

#### 2.2.3.1 All participants

In terms of the distribution of the participant evaluations of the perceived fit of the applicants, the skewness and kurtosis were within the normal ranges. A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in evaluations of fit across the male, female and gender-unknown groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=157) = 7.689, p=.021$ . Male and female applicants recorded a median score (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree'), which was higher than the gender-unknown applicants (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree') (Table 49). A Mann-Whitney U test confirmed a statistically significant difference between the fit evaluations of the male and

gender-unknown applicants, with male applicants being more likely than gender-unknown applicants to be considered to fit,  $U=637.500$ ,  $z=-2.621$ ,  $p=.009$ ,  $r=.26$  (small effect size).

Table 49: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses) (\* $p=.05$ )

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	58	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Male	73	5.00*	2.00 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	26	4.00*	3.00 – 6.00
All applicants	157	5.00	2.00 – 7.00

### 2.2.3.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the data were restricted to participants based at elite universities, a similar pattern was observed compared to the overall dataset. The distribution was slightly right-skewed with a slightly leptokurtic kurtosis; however, these were within the normal range. A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in the fit evaluations of the female (Md=4.50, ‘neither agree nor disagree’ to ‘somewhat agree’), male (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’), or gender-unknown (Md=4.00, ‘neither agree nor disagree’) groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=75) = 2.495$ ,  $p=.287$  (Table 50).

Table 50: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	32	4.50	4.00 – 7.00
Male	32	5.00	2.00 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	11	4.00	3.00 – 6.00
All applicants	75	5.00	2.00 – 7.00

### 2.2.3.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When participants were based at non-elite universities, the distribution remained within the normal range and the kurtosis was platykurtic. A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in the distribution of the fit evaluations of the female (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’),

male (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree'), or gender-unknown (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree') groups of applicants,  $\chi^2(2, n=82) = 5.707, p=.058$  (Table 51).

Table 51: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	26	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Male	41	5.00	3.00 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	15	4.00	3.00 – 6.00
All applicants	82	5.00	3.00 – 7.00

#### 2.2.4 Hardworking

##### 2.2.4.1 All participants

The distribution of the composite hardworking scores was not skewed and the kurtosis was normal. A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in the hardworking evaluation scores of applicants who were female (Md=4.75, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree'), male (Md=4.50, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree'), or gender-unknown (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree'),  $\chi^2(2, n=163) = 3.972, p=.137$  (Table 52).

Table 52: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	62	4.75	4.00 – 7.00
Male	76	4.50	1.00 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	25	4.00	3.00 – 6.00
All applicants	163	4.50	1.00 – 7.00

##### 2.2.4.2 Participants based at elite universities

The data were restricted to participants based at elite universities. The distribution remained the same as the complete dataset – not skewed and with a normal kurtosis. A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant variance in the distribution of the data for the composite hardworking attribute evaluations of applicants who were female (Md=4.50, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree'), male (Md=4.50, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree'), or

gender-unknown (Md=4.25, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree'),  $\chi^2(2, n=77) = 1.026, p=.599$  (Table 53).

Table 53: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (participants based at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	35	4.50	4.00 – 7.00
Male	32	4.50	2.00 – 6.50
Gender-unknown	10	4.25	4.00 – 5.50
All applicants	77	4.50	2.00 – 7.00

#### 2.2.4.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data were restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution remained within the normal ranges for skewness and kurtosis. There was notably greater variability in the data for male applicants. A Kruskal-Wallis Test found no significant difference in the distribution of hardworking evaluations of applicants who were female (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree'), male (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree'), or gender-unknown (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree'),  $\chi^2(2, n=86) = 5.112, p=.078$  (Table 54).

Table 54: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by perceived gender of applicants (participants based at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Female	27	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Male	44	5.00	1.00 – 7.00
Gender-unknown	15	4.00	3.00 – 6.00
All applicants	86	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

#### 2.2.5 Perceived gender and perceived attributes: conclusion

In Section 2.2, the results were presented in terms of the influence of perceived gender on the evaluation of applicant's perceived attributes. Overall, female applicants were significantly more likely than male applicants to be evaluated as competent ( $p=.011$ ). Female and male applicants were more likely than gender-unknown applicants to be evaluated as warm and hardworking;

however, this was not significant. Male applicants were significantly more likely to be considered to fit than gender-unknown applicants ( $p=.009$ ).

When the data was restricted to participants based at elite institutions, male and female applicants were more likely than gender-unknown applicants to be evaluated as hardworking and considered to fit; however, this was not significant. When the data was restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, female applicants were significantly more likely than male applicants to be evaluated as competent ( $p=.005$ ). Male and female applicants were more likely than gender-unknown applicants to be evaluated as warm, hardworking, and considered to fit, but this was not significant. In conclusion, there was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_6$  for any of the conditions.

### ***2.3 Intersection of applicant class-background and perceived gender and perceived attributes ( $H_9$ )***

This section presents the results of the participants' perceptions about the applicants, using the four composite scales and disaggregated by the six classed and gendered identities and the status of the universities at which the participants were based (Tables 55-66). The purpose of the data analysis presented in this section was to test the null hypothesis for  $H_9$ , that higher-class applicants perceived to be male are no more likely than other candidates to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes.

#### ***2.3.1 Competence***

##### ***2.3.1.1 All participants***

The distribution of the composite competence scores across the classed and gendered identities was left-skewed, indicating that participants were more likely to provide a positive evaluation of applicant competence than a negative one. The kurtosis was leptokurtic, indicating some outliers in the data. The median composite competence score was highest for the lower-class gender-unknown applicant ( $Md=5.75$ , 'somewhat agree' to 'agree') followed by the lower-class female and higher-class female applicants (both  $Md=5.50$ , 'somewhat agree' to 'agree'). The other three applicants (higher-class male, lower-class male, higher-class gender-unknown) had a median score of 5.00 ('somewhat agree').

A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of competence evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $X^2(5, n=163) = 12.671$ ,  $p=.027$ . Follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests, adjusted for the Bonferroni correction, confirmed that there was only one statistically significant pairwise difference in the distribution of the



composite competence evaluations between the groups. This was between the higher-class female (Md=5.50, 'somewhat agree' to 'agree') and the lower-class male (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree') applicants,  $n=40$ ,  $U=285.500$ ,  $z=2.561$ ,  $p=.013$ ,  $r=.41$  (medium effect size) (Table 55).

Table 55: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses) (\* $p=.05$ )

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	42	5.00*	3.50 – 7.00
Lower-class female	26	5.50	1.00 – 7.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	14	5.75	3.50 – 6.00
Higher-class male	33	5.00	3.50 – 6.50
Higher-class female	37	5.50*	4.50 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	11	5.00	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	163	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.3.1.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the data were limited to participants based at elite universities, the distribution of the composite competence scores remained left-skewed with a leptokurtic kurtosis. The applicants with the highest median score for the composite competence evaluations were the higher-class male and the lower-class gender-unknown applicants (Md=5.50, 'somewhat agree' to 'agree'). The applicant with the lowest median score was the higher-class gender-unknown applicant (Md=4.50, 'neither agree nor disagree') (Table 56). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed there was no statistically significant difference in the distribution of competence evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=78) = 8.926$ ,  $p=.112$ .

Table 56: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (participants at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	19	5.00	3.50 – 7.00
Lower-class female	16	5.25	1.00 – 6.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	6	5.50	3.50 – 6.00
Higher-class male	13	5.50	4.00 – 6.50
Higher-class female	20	5.00	5.00 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	4	4.50	4.00 – 5.00
All applicants	78	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.3.1.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data were restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution of the composite competence scores across the classed and gendered identities remained slightly left-skewed; however, the kurtosis was slightly platykurtic, albeit within the normal range. All applicants had a median composite competence score of at least 5.00 ('somewhat agree'). The applicant with the highest median score was the higher-class female applicant (Md=6.00, 'agree'), followed by the lower-class female and lower-class gender-unknown applicants (Md=5.75, 'somewhat agree' to 'agree'). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of competence evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=85) = 9.361, p=.096$  (the median scores are presented in Table 57).

Table 57: Participant evaluations of applicant competence, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (participants at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	23	5.00	4.00 – 6.00
Lower-class female	10	5.75	4.50 – 7.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	8	5.75	4.00 – 6.00
Higher-class male	20	5.00	3.50 – 6.00
Higher-class female	17	6.00	4.50 – 6.50
Higher-class gender-unknown	7	5.00	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	85	5.50	3.50 – 7.00

### 2.3.2 Warmth

#### 2.3.2.1 All participants

The distribution of the data for the composite warmth evaluations across the classed and gendered identities was not skewed and the kurtosis was normal. The applicant with the highest median score was the lower-class female (Md=5.25, ‘somewhat agree’ to ‘agree’), whilst the applicants with the lowest median score were the higher- and lower-class gender-unknown applicants (Md=4.50, ‘neither agree or disagree’ to ‘somewhat agree’) (Table 58). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of warmth evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $X^2(5, n=162) = 6.312, p=.277$ .

Table 58: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	41	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class female	26	5.25	1.00 – 6.50
Lower-class gender-unknown	14	4.50	4.00 – 5.50
Higher-class male	33	5.00	2.50 – 7.00
Higher-class female	37	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	11	4.50	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	162	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

#### 2.3.2.2 Participants based at elite universities

When the data were limited to participants based at elite universities, the distribution of the composite warmth evaluations across the classed and gendered identities was slightly left-skewed and the kurtosis was slightly leptokurtic but within the normal range. The applicants with the highest median score were the lower-class female and the higher-class male (Md=5.50, 'somewhat agree' to 'agree'), whilst those with the lowest median score were the higher-class gender-unknown applicants (Md=4.25, 'neither agree nor disagree' to 'somewhat agree') (Table 59). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of warmth evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=78) = 3.468, p=.628$ .

Table 59: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (participants at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	19	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class female	16	5.50	1.00 – 6.00
Lower-class gender -unknown	6	5.00	4.00 – 5.50
Higher-class male	13	5.50	4.00 – 6.00
Higher-class female	20	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	4	4.25	4.00 – 5.00
All applicants	78	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.3.2.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data were restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution of the composite warmth evaluations across the classed and gendered identities had a slight right-skew and the kurtosis was normal. All applicants had a median composite warmth score between 4.00 ('neither agree nor disagree') and 5.00 ('somewhat agree'). The applicants with the joint highest median score were the lower-class male, lower-class female, and higher-class female applicants (Md=5.00, 'somewhat agree'). The applicant with the lowest median score was the lower-class gender-unknown applicant (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree') (Table 60). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of warmth evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=84) = 8.374, p=.137$ .

Table 60: Participant evaluations of applicant warmth, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (participants at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	22	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class female	10	5.00	4.50 – 6.50
Lower-class gender-unknown	8	4.00	4.00 – 5.50
Higher-class male	20	4.25	2.50 – 7.00
Higher-class female	17	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	7	4.50	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	84	4.50	2.50 – 7.00

### 2.3.3 Fit

#### 2.3.3.1 All participants

The next attribute considered was composite fit. The distribution of the data across the classed and gendered identities was not skewed and the kurtosis was normal. The applicants with the highest median scores for the composite fit evaluations were the lower-class male, lower-class female, and higher-class female (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’). The median score for the other three applicants was 4.00 (‘neither agree nor disagree’) (Table 61). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of fit evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=157) = 12.672, p=.027$ . A Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that the only statistically significant difference between the groups was between the fit evaluations for the lower-class male (Md=5.00, ‘somewhat agree’) and lower-class gender-unknown applicants (Md=4.00, ‘neither agree nor disagree’),  $n=56, U=153.500, z=-2.988, p=.003, r=-.39$  (medium effect size).

Table 61: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses) (\* $p=.05$ )

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	41	5.00*	2.00 – 7.00
Lower-class female	24	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	15	4.00*	3.00 – 6.00
Higher-class male	32	4.00	3.00 – 6.00
Higher-class female	34	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	11	4.00	3.00 – 6.00
All applicants	157	5.00	2.00 – 7.00

#### 2.3.3.2 Participants based at elite universities

When restricted to participants based at elite universities, the distribution of the composite fit attribute data across the classed and gendered identities was slightly right-skewed and slightly leptokurtic, albeit within the normal ranges. The lower-class male and higher-class female applicants received the highest median score ( $Md=5.00$ , ‘somewhat agree’ to ‘agree’). The other five applicants received a median score of 4.00 (‘neither agree or disagree’) (Table 62). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of fit evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=75) = 2.764, p=.736$ .

Table 62: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (participants at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	19	5.00	2.00 – 7.00
Lower-class female	14	4.00	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	7	4.00	3.00 – 6.00
Higher-class male	13	4.00	4.00 – 6.00
Higher-class female	18	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	4	4.00	4.00 – 6.00
All applicants	75	5.00	2.00 – 7.00

### 2.3.3.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data were restricted to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution of the composite fit attribute data across the classed and gendered identities was not skewed and the kurtosis was platykurtic, indicating that there were few outliers. The lower-class female received the highest median fit score ( $Md=5.50$ , ‘somewhat agree’ to ‘agree’). Three applicants received the joint lowest median fit score ( $Md=4.00$ , ‘neither agree nor disagree’) – higher-class male, lower-class gender-unknown, and higher-class gender-unknown (Table 63). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in the distribution of fit evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=82) = 12.701, p=.026$ .

Follow-up Mann-Whitney U tests, adjusted for the Bonferroni correction, revealed three statistically significant pairwise differences in the distribution of the composite fit evaluations between the groups. The first was between the lower-class male applicant ( $Md=5.00$ , ‘somewhat agree’) and the lower-class gender-unknown applicant ( $Md=4.00$ , ‘neither agree nor disagree’),  $n=30, U=31.000, z=-2.821, p=.006, r=-.52$  (large effect size). The second was between the lower-class male ( $Md=5.00$ , ‘somewhat agree’) and the higher-class male ( $Md=4.00$ , ‘neither agree nor disagree’) applicants,  $n=29, U=128.500, z=-2.204, p=.028, r=-.34$  (medium effect size). The final significant difference was between the lower-class female ( $Md=5.50$ , ‘somewhat agree to ‘agree’) and the lower-class gender-unknown ( $Md=4.00$ , ‘neither agree nor disagree’) applicants,  $n=18, U=17.500, z=-2.224, p=.043, r=-.52$  (large effect size).



Table 63: Participant evaluations of applicant fit, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (participants at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses) (\* $p=.05$ )

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	22	5.00*	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class female	10	5.50*	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	8	4.00*	4.00 – 6.00
Higher-class male	19	4.00*	3.00 – 6.00
Higher-class female	16	4.50	4.00 – 6.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	7	4.00	3.00 – 6.00
All applicants	82	5.00	3.00 – 7.00

### 2.3.4 Hardworking

#### 2.3.4.1 All participants

The distribution of the composite hardworking scores across the classed and gendered identities was not skewed and the kurtosis was normal. The applicant with the highest median score was the lower-class female (Md=5.50, 'somewhat agree' to 'agree'). The applicant with the lowest median score was the higher-class gender-unknown applicant (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree') (Table 64). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of hardworking evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $X^2(5, n=163) = 10.505, p=.062$ .

Table 64: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (all participants, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	42	4.50	1.00 – 6.50
Lower-class female	25	5.50	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	14	4.25	3.00 – 6.00
Higher-class male	34	5.00	2.00 – 7.00
Higher-class female	37	4.50	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	11	4.00	3.50 – 6.00
All applicants	163	4.50	1.00 – 7.00

#### 2.3.4.2 Participants based at elite universities

The data was restricted to participants based at elite universities. As with the complete dataset, the distribution of the composite hardworking scores across the classed and gendered identities was not skewed and the kurtosis was normal. The applicant with the highest median score remained the lower-class female (Md=5.00, 'agree'), whilst the applicant with the lowest median score was the higher-class female applicant (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree') (Table 65). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of hardworking evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=77) = 5.710$ ,  $p=.335$ .

Table 65: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (participants at elite universities, excluding non-responses)

	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	19	4.50	2.00 – 6.50
Lower-class female	15	5.00	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	6	4.25	4.00 – 5.50
Higher-class male	13	4.50	4.00 – 6.00
Higher-class female	20	4.00	4.00 – 6.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	4	4.50	4.00 – 5.00
All applicants	77	4.50	2.00 – 7.00

#### 2.3.4.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the data were limited to participants based at non-elite universities, the distribution for the composite hardworking evaluation differed in that it was slightly left-skewed and the kurtosis was leptokurtic, although within the normal ranges. The applicant with the highest median score was the lower-class female (Md=6.00, 'agree'). The applicant with the lowest median score was the higher-class gender-unknown applicant (Md=4.00, 'neither agree nor disagree') (Table 66). A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no statistically significant difference in the distribution of hardworking evaluations across the six classed and gendered groups,  $\chi^2(5, n=86) = 8.379, p=.137$ .

Table 66: Participant evaluations of applicant being hardworking, with data split by the class background and perceived gender of applicants (participants at non-elite universities, excluding non-responses)

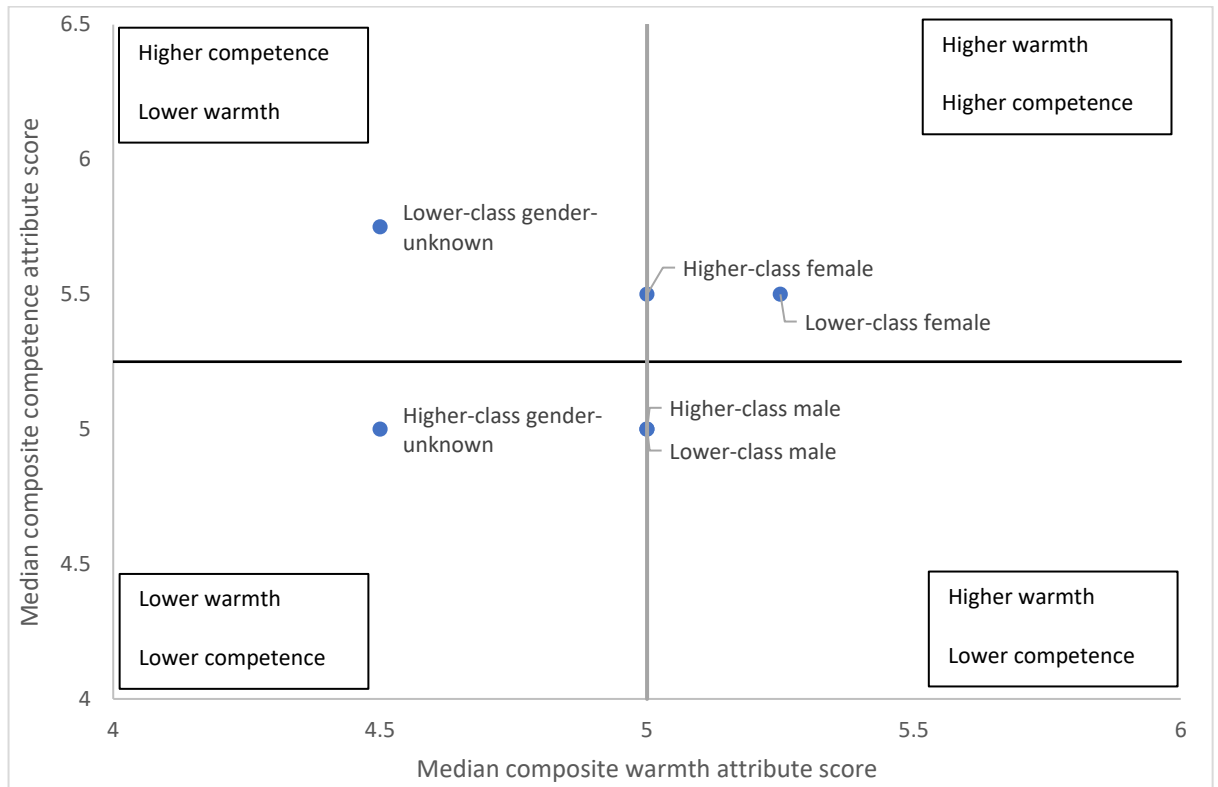
	<b>Number of participants</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Range</b>
Lower-class male	23	4.50	1.00 – 6.00
Lower-class female	10	6.00	4.00 – 7.00
Lower-class gender-unknown	8	4.25	3.00 – 6.00
Higher-class male	21	5.00	2.00 – 7.00
Higher-class female	17	4.50	4.00 – 7.00
Higher-class gender-unknown	7	4.00	3.50 – 6.00
All applicants	86	5.00	1.00 – 7.00

### 2.3.5 Quadrant diagrams for dimensions of competence and warmth

#### 2.3.5.1 All participants

Figure 41 presents the relational positions for the six classed and gendered identities when the median evaluation scores for competence and warmth were plotted on quadrant diagrams, based on the SCM. Using this conceptual tool, the applicant with the highest median competence and warmth scores was the lower-class female applicant. The higher-class female applicant was evaluated as having average warmth and higher competence, whilst the higher-class male and lower-class male applicants had average warmth but lower competence scores. The lower-class gender-unknown applicant had the highest competence score but the joint lowest warmth score with the higher-class gender-unknown applicant, who also had a lower competence score.

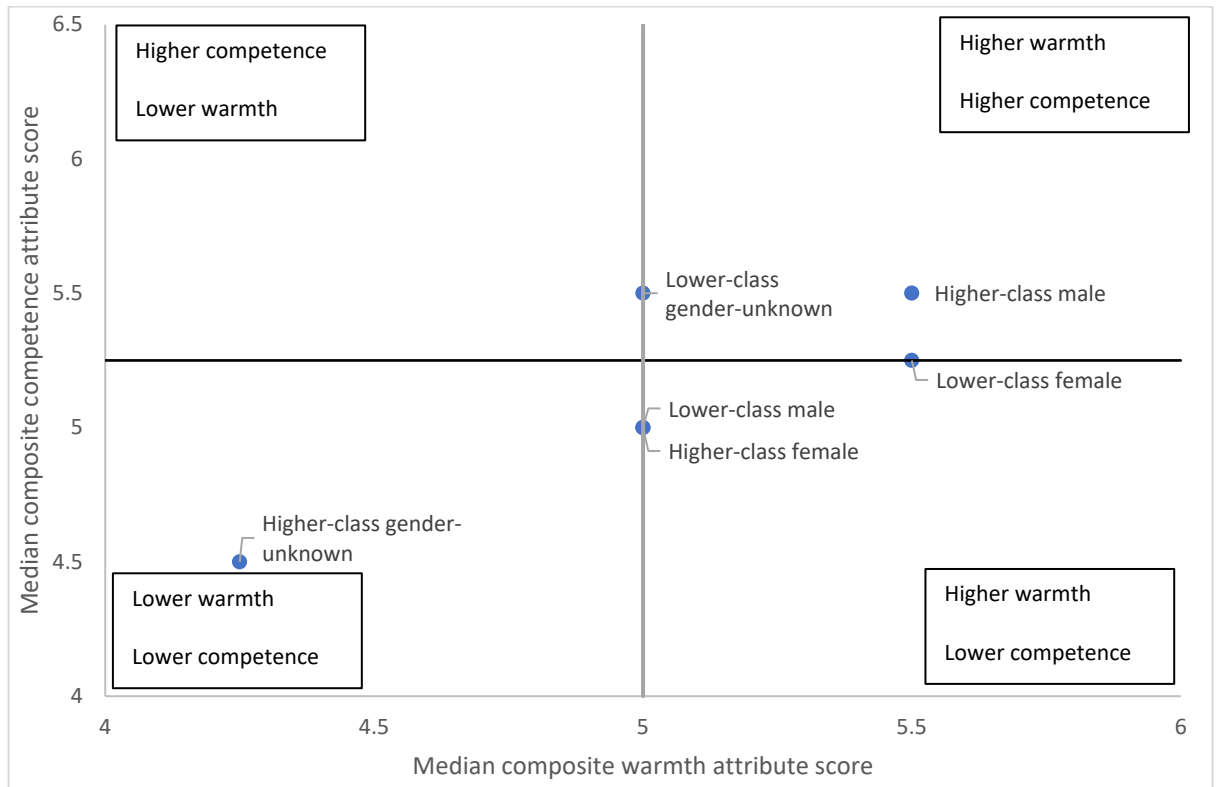
Figure 41: Quadrant diagram presenting the median composite scores for competence and warmth for each of the classed and gendered identities (all participants). Based on the SCM (excluding non-responses).



### 2.3.5.2 Participants based at elite universities

The relational positions of the classed and gendered identities differed when the data was restricted to participants based at elite universities (Figure 42). This view of the data positioned the higher-class male applicant as having the highest competence and warmth scores. Compared to the higher-class male, the lower-class female applicant had the same median warmth score but an average competence score, whilst the lower-class gender-unknown applicant had the same median competence score but an average warmth score. The higher-class female and lower-class male applicants were evaluated as having average warmth and lower competence, and the higher-class unknown-gender applicant had the lowest median scores for both warmth and competence.

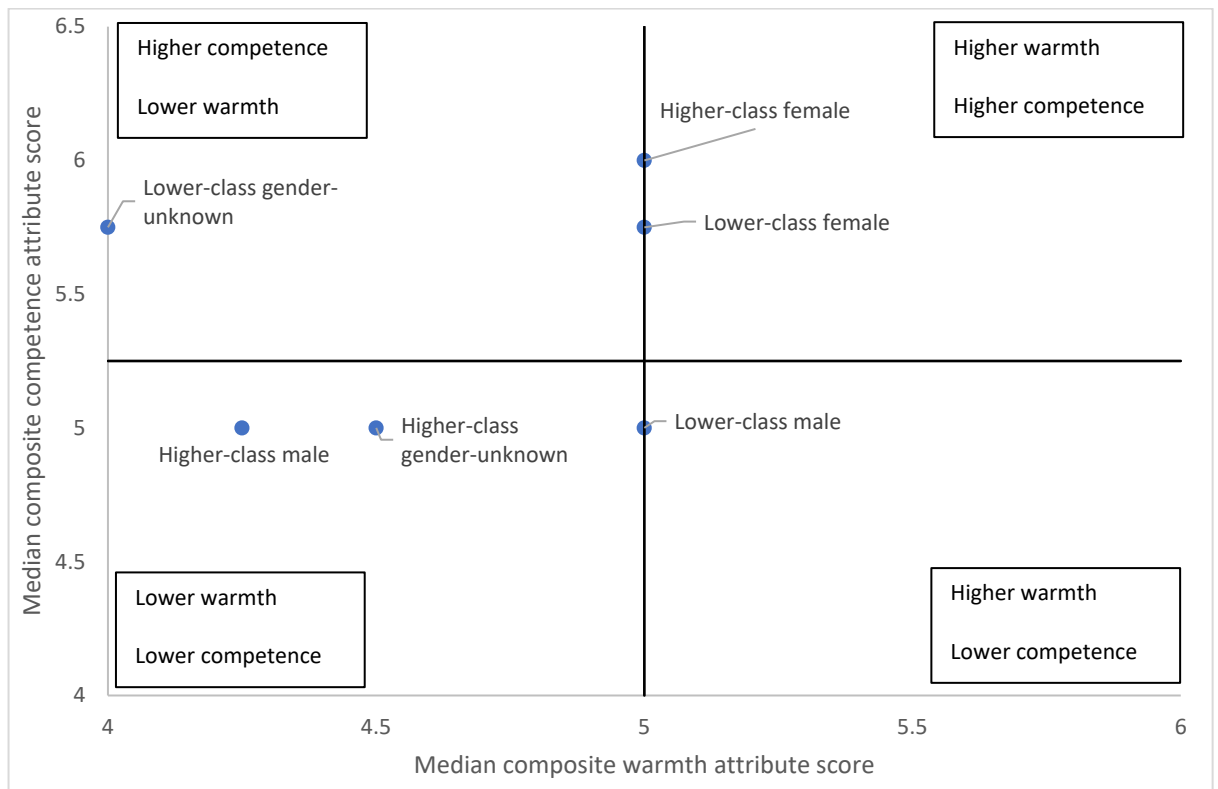
Figure 42: Quadrant diagram presenting the median composite scores for competence and warmth for each of the classed and gendered identities (participants based at elite universities). Based on the SCM (excluding non-responses).



### 2.3.5.3 Participants based at non-elite universities

When the dataset was restricted to participants based at non-elite universities (Figure 43), a different picture emerged. The applicant with the highest competence and warmth scores was the higher-class female applicant. In comparison, the lower-class female and lower-class male applicants were evaluated as having the same warmth but with lower competence, particularly the lower-class male. The lower-class gender-unknown applicant had a high median competence score but the lowest warmth score. Both the higher-class male and higher-class gender-unknown applicants were evaluated as having lower warmth and competence scores, particularly the higher-class male.

Figure 43: Quadrant diagram presenting the median composite scores for competence and warmth for each of the classed and gendered identities (participants based at non-elite universities). Based on the SCM (excluding non-responses).



2.3.6 Intersection of applicant class-background and perceived gender and perceived attributes:

Conclusion

Section 2.3 presented the results of the influence of applicant class background and perceived gender on the evaluation of their attributes. Overall, the lower-class female applicant had the highest or joint highest median score for evaluations of warmth, fit and being hardworking; however, none of these were significant. The lower-class gender-unknown applicant had the highest median score for the competence attribute but the lowest median score for warmth. This low warmth score was joint with the higher-class gender-unknown applicant, who also had the lowest or joint lowest median score for all four attributes. There were only two significant findings, both involving the lower-class male. The first was that the lower-class male was significantly more likely than the higher-class female to be evaluated as competent ( $p=.013$ ). He was also significantly more likely than the lower-class gender-unknown applicant to be considered to fit ( $p=.003$ ). When the median warmth and competence scores for all the classed and gendered identities were placed on the SCM quadrant diagram (Figure 41), the lower-class female applicant had high warmth and high competence, whereas the higher-class gender-unknown applicant had low warmth and competence.

When the data was restricted to participants based at elite universities, the higher-class male applicant received the joint highest median scores for competence and warmth. The high warmth score was joint with the lower-class female applicant, who also received the highest median score for being hardworking. The lower-class male and higher-class female applicants received the highest median scores for being considered to fit; however, the higher-class female was also the applicant least likely to be considered hardworking. Plotting the median warmth and competence median scores on the SCM diagram (Figure 42) indicated that the higher-class male applicant received the highest median warmth and competence scores, whereas the higher-class gender-unknown applicant received the lowest median warmth and competence evaluations. None of the results were statistically significant.

A different pattern emerged when the dataset was restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. The higher-class female applicant received the highest median score for competence and the joint highest for warmth (along with the lower-class male and lower-class female). The lower-class female applicant received the highest median scores for being evaluated as hardworking and considered to fit. None of these results were significant. When the scores were viewed on the SCM diagram (Figure 43), the higher-class female and lower-class female applicants received the highest median warmth and competence scores, whereas the higher-class male and higher-class gender-unknown applicants received the lowest median warmth and competence evaluations.

There was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_9$  for any of the conditions. Overall, there was little variation in how the participants evaluated the applicants, which provided a measure of consistency and validity of the baseline CV and covering letter. Moreover, there was little evidence found to connect the participant evaluations of the applicant attributes to the findings reported in Chapter 6, particularly regarding the applicants most likely to be invited to interview. This is discussed further in Chapter 8.

### **3. Content analysis: How did the participants describe the applicants?**

Content analysis was undertaken on the participants' qualitative comments to understand the results from the FSE further and to answer the research questions:

- How do participants describe applicants who are:
  - from higher-class or lower-class backgrounds?
  - perceived to be male or female?
  - from higher-class or lower-class backgrounds and who are perceived to be male or female?



As with the data presented in Section 2, there were many similarities in how the participants described the applicants, which was to be expected considering that the applications were identical other than markers of class and gender. However, there were subtle and important differences in some of the words or phrases used by participants to describe the applicants, as well as variations in the frequency with which some of these words and phrases were used. Patterns were identified that differed according to applicant class background and/or perceived gender. For example, the baseline CV and covering letter stated that the applicant did not have a formal teaching qualification (a form of institutionalised cultural capital) but was keen to pursue one. The participants responded to this in different ways, and the prevalence of certain words and phrases tended to differ depending on the classed and gendered identities. As explained in Chapter 5, the content analysis was undertaken using the approach advised by Erlingsson and Brysiewicz (2017). The categorised data is available in Tables A13 to A21, Appendix 10.

### ***3.1 How do participants describe applicants who are from higher-class or lower-class backgrounds?***

Higher-class applicants ( $n=83$ ) were more frequently described as strong ( $n=11$ , 13.25%) and suitable/employable ( $n=9$ , 10.84%) than lower-class applicants ( $n=83$ ) ( $n=7$ , 8.43% and  $n=5$ , 6.02%, respectively), whilst lower-class applicants were more frequently described as enthusiastic ( $n=12$ , 14.46%) than those from higher-class backgrounds ( $n=9$ , 10.84%). Lower-class applicants were also more frequently described as being more appropriate for a lower-status job ( $n=5$ , 11.36%), having poor academic performance ( $n=6$ , 13.64%), and requiring more support and development ( $n=5$ , 11.36%) than higher-class applicants ( $n=3$ , 6.25%;  $n=4$ , 8.33%;  $n=4$ , 8.33%, respectively). Nearly one quarter ( $n=39$ , 23.49%) of participants commented that the applicants did not have a teaching qualification. When this was noted for higher-class applicants, 60.00% ( $n=12$ ) of participant comments were positive and focused on the applicants' willingness to pursue a qualification. However, when the lack of qualification was noted for lower-class applicants, then only 36.84% ( $n=7$ ) of participant comments were positive, with more comments made about what the applicants were lacking.

When the data were restricted to participants based at elite and then non-elite universities, similar patterns were observed for most of the categories identified through the content analysis; however, there were some differences. Participants based at elite universities ( $n=80$ ) more frequently described lower-class applicants ( $n=42$ ) than higher-class applicants ( $n=38$ ) as having potential ( $n=5$ , 11.91%;  $n=2$ , 5.26%, respectively). They more frequently described lower-class applicants as being more appropriate for a lower-status job ( $n=4$ , 9.52%) and requiring

more support and development in the position ( $n=3$ , 7.14%) than those from higher-class backgrounds ( $n=2$ , 5.26%;  $n=0$ , 0.00%, respectively). Regarding the teaching qualification, only 8.75% ( $n=7$ ) of participants at elite universities noted that this was lacking, split almost evenly between higher-class ( $n=3$ , 7.90%) and lower-class ( $n=4$ , 9.52%) applicants.

Participants based at non-elite universities ( $n=86$ ) more frequently described higher-class applicants ( $n=45$ ) than lower-class applicants ( $n=41$ ) as being early in their career ( $n=30$ , 66.67%;  $n=23$ , 56.10%, respectively); however, this was often framed positively and did not appear to disadvantage higher-class applicants. Also framed more positively for higher-class applicants was the lack of a teaching qualification. Over one third ( $n=32$ , 37.21%) of participants based at non-elite universities commented on this. When this was noted for higher-class applicants, 58.82% ( $n=10$ ) of the comments were positive. However, when it was noted for lower-class applicants, only 26.67% ( $n=4$ ) were positive.

### ***3.2 How do participants describe applicants who are perceived to be male or female?***

There was little variance in the frequency of most of the categories used to describe applicants perceived to be male or female; however, there were some exceptions. Applicants perceived to be male ( $n=76$ ) were more frequently described as being enthusiastic ( $n=12$ , 15.79%) than those perceived to be female ( $n=63$ ) ( $n=6$ , 9.52%). Male applicants were more frequently described as having poor academic performance ( $n=7$ , 9.21%) than female applicants ( $n=2$ , 3.18%), but none of the male applicants were described as more appropriate for a lower-status position, despite this being noted for 9.52% ( $n=6$ ) of female applicants. Almost one quarter of participants ( $n=39$ , 23.49%) commented that the applicant did not have a teaching qualification. When this was noted for male applicants, 48.00% ( $n=12$ ) of the comments were positive. However, when it was noted for female applicants, this decreased to 37.50% ( $n=3$ ).

There was little variance in the frequencies by applicant gender when the data were restricted to participants at elite universities ( $n=80$ ); however, male applicants ( $n=32$ ) were more often described as suitable/employable ( $n=4$ , 12.50%) than female applicants ( $n=36$ ) ( $n=1$ , 2.78%). Male applicants were more frequently described as having poor academic performance ( $n=5$ , 15.63%) than female applicants ( $n=2$ , 5.56%), but none of the male applicants were described as more appropriate for a lower-status position, despite this being noted for 13.89% ( $n=5$ ) of female applicants. Only 8.75% ( $n=7$ ) of participants at elite universities noted that the applicant did not have a teaching qualification. There was a preference to framing this positively for applicants perceived to be male; however, the numbers were too small to be meaningful (male  $n=2$ , 100%; female  $n=2$ , 66.67%).

When the data were limited to participants based at non-elite universities ( $n=86$ ), there was more variation in the frequencies. Female applicants ( $n=27$ ) were more often described as strong ( $n=5$ , 18.52%) and suitable/employable ( $n=3$ , 11.11%) than male applicants ( $n=44$ ) ( $n=5$ , 11.36% and  $n=2$ , 4.55%, respectively). Male applicants were more often described as enthusiastic ( $n=9$ , 20.46%) than female applicants ( $n=4$ , 14.82%). However, male applicants were more frequently described as having poor academic performance ( $n=2$ , 4.55%) than female applicants ( $n=0$ , 0%). None of the male applicants were described as more appropriate for a lower-status position, despite this being noted for one female applicant ( $n=1$ , 3.70%). Over one third of participants based at non-elite universities ( $n=32$ , 37.21%) commented that the applicant did not have a teaching qualification. This was far more frequently recorded for male applicants ( $n=23$ , 52.27%) than female applicants ( $n=5$ , 18.52%). When noted for male applicants, 43.48% ( $n=10$ ) of the comments were positive, compared to only 20.00% ( $n=1$ ) for female applicants.

### ***3.3 How do participants describe applicants who are from higher-class or lower-class backgrounds and who are perceived to be male or female?***

To explore how participants described the applicants, the frequencies were mapped to the main identities to create a pen portrait for the higher-class male, higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female (Table 67). This enabled the exploration of the differences in the descriptions of the applicants based on the independent variables of class background and perceived gender. Table 68 presents evidence of the differences in participant descriptions of, and responses to, the applicants' lack of a teaching qualification.

#### ***3.3.1 Higher-class male***

Consistent with the findings relating to the likelihood of being invited to interview and the recommended starting salary, participants tended to have a positive perception of the higher-class male applicant ( $n=34$ ). Compared to the other applicants, he was more frequently described as a strong applicant, whose application made a good first impression (17.65% compared to 9.09% for the other applicants). For example, one participant described him as a "strong candidate with [the] relevant knowledge and skills to undertake the role", whilst another commented on his "strong academic profile". His institutionalised cultural capital and social capital were noted, with his qualifications and Russell Group background described by participants as being a strength and an indicator of his "good academic pedigree". When participants commented on his inexperience or that he was applying for his first academic post, this was often framed positively within the context of his cultural capital. For example, one participant said, "Although David is weak on experience, he demonstrates the right values and

attributes that could be developed into a lecturer joining the team”, whilst another participant noted, “[This] salary would reflect the fact that their existing experience is still relatively shallow, while recognising that we have been impressed by the good start they have made to their career, and that we are willing to back their potential.”

The higher-class male applicant’s lack of a teaching qualification was often framed positively, as participants tended to focus on his commitment and willingness to pursue a qualification (20.59% compared to 9.09% for the other applicants). One participant described him as “CPD engaged and keen to progress (HEA)”, whilst another said, “[he] demonstrates commitment to [obtaining a] teaching qualification”. From these descriptions, it appears that his existing capital appeared to be sufficient to override any negativity, such as that associated with his inexperience or the lack of a teaching qualification.

### *3.3.2 Lower-class male*

Compared to the other applicants, the lower-class male applicant’s ( $n=42$ ) behaviour (a form of cultural capital) was more frequently described as enthusiastic and motivated, and he was considered to have a positive attitude (19.05% compared to 10.05% for the other applicants). He was described as “friendly and sociable...and keen” by one participant, whilst another said, “[he] shows an enthusiasm for additional activities” and another noted, “[he is] keen to get involved”. Another participant stated, “He is fresh from his PhD with enthusiasm and a good collegial spirit”. However, other aspects of his existing capital tended to be perceived as weaknesses. For example, some participants commented negatively on his prior academic performance (11.91% compared to 4.03% for the other applicants), such as “[he does] not [have] very good A level results”, “[he has] poor academic performance at UG and A-level”, and “[he] studied at two weak universities”. He was described more frequently than the other applicants as requiring support and development in the role (9.52% compared to 4.03% for the other applicants); for example, several participants said he would require mentoring.

When his lack of a teaching qualification was mentioned by participants, this tended to be seen as a negative (19.05% compared to 9.68% for the other applicants). For example, one participant said, “Very enthusiastic, however cannot yet demonstrate HEA fellowship”. Overall, the value of his existing cultural capital (predominantly his perceived behaviours and attitudes) seemed to be insufficient to override perceptions about where he was deficient in capital, which disadvantaged him in the recruitment process.

### 3.3.3 Higher-class female

Compared to the other applicants, the higher-class female applicant ( $n=37$ ) was often described by participants as suitable for the position, with words such as “solid”, “appropriate”, “appointable”, and “employable” (10.81% compared to 7.75% for the other applicants). The participants’ comments tended to lack the confidence and exuberance observed in those about the higher-class male applicant, and to a lesser extent the lower-class male applicant, and comments were more functional and prosaic in tone; for example, she was described as “a safe pair of hands”. When describing her cultural capital, one participant noted that she had “attributes, experience, qualifications and interests that are necessary to fulfil the role,” whilst another said, “her skills and experience match the job description for lecturer” and another noted, “[she] appears to fit with... the requirements of the post”.

When described negatively by the participants, she was often described as “inexperienced” (59.56% compared to 54.26% for the other applicants). Her CV was described as “thin”, “bland”, “too brief”, “lacking in detail”, and “not very well written”. One participant described it as “inadequate and [it] would simply not stand out”. Another participant said, “... she has either under-sold herself OR needs a little more experience/ maturity before she would be competitive for an academic post”. Only two participants commented on her lack of a teaching qualification (5.41% compared to 28.68% for the other applicants), which signified that this was either not noticed or not considered worthy of comment. Overall, participants tended to acknowledge that she had some existing capital, but this was perceived as “bland” and average, rather than being imbued with value.

### 3.3.4 Lower-class female

Consistent with the findings relating to the likelihood of being invited to interview and the recommended starting salary, the lower-class female applicant ( $n=26$ ) often tended to be described more negatively than the other applicants. However, as with the lower-class male applicant, her cultural capital in the form of attitudes and behaviours was acknowledged by the participants and she was more likely than the other applicants to be described as having potential (11.54% compared to 6.43% for the other applicants). For example, she was portrayed as having a “promising trajectory”, “show[ing] promise”, and having a “publishing record [that] looks promising”. As with the higher-class female applicant, the lower-class female was frequently described as “inexperienced” (57.69% compared to 55% for the other applicants); one participant described her as “naïve”. She was more likely than the other applicants to be considered appropriate for a lower status position (15.39% compared to 2.86% for the other

applicants). One participant said, “[she] may be appropriate for an Assistant Lecturer”, whilst another said she was “not yet experienced enough to act as a lecturer”. One participant advised that the application was not “competitive for a permanent lectureship... but it might be more so for a temporary post”.

When participants commented on the lack of a teaching qualification, this tended to be viewed as a negative (15.39% compared to 11.43% for the other applicants). For example, one participant said, “I would expect more experience before appointing as lecturer... evidence of good feedback from students and AHEA.” The value of her existing cultural capital (in terms of perceived behaviours and attitudes) appeared to be insufficient to override perceptions about where she was deficient in other forms of capital. In addition, there is evidence that the perceived lack of cultural capital would be more likely to result in lower economic capital in future, with participants suggesting that she would be more suitable for lower status or temporary positions.

Table 67: Frequently cited strengths and weaknesses of applicants by class background and perceived gender

		Class backgrounds signals	
		Higher-class	Lower-class
Perceived gender of applicant	Male	<p><b>n=34</b></p> <p><b>Positive:</b> Most likely to be described as strong and/or a good applicant, with a strong academic profile. Application considered to make a good first impression. Applicant considered to be suitable for the post, described as employable, solid, post appropriate for career stage.</p> <p><i>“On paper this looks like a strong applicant so I would encourage the decision maker to invite them to interview.”</i></p> <p><i>“Strong applicant based on paper application... Limited experience but ok in terms of where he is in his career.”</i></p> <p><i>“Strong academic profile, and demonstrates commitment to teaching qualification.”</i></p>	<p><b>n=42</b></p> <p><b>Positive:</b> Most likely to be described as enthusiastic, keen, eager and motivated, and to display a positive attitude.</p> <p><i>“Very enthusiastic, however cannot yet demonstrate: HEA fellowship.”</i></p> <p><i>“Varied HEI experience - keen to get involved with wider activity of the HEI.”</i></p> <p><i>“Enthusiastic and focussed in research.”</i></p> <p><i>“Enthusiastic and driven... the applicant is clearly suitable and manages to come across as driven, which, for me, is a major advantage.”</i></p> <p><i>“attitude positive.”</i></p>

		Class backgrounds signals	
		Higher-class	Lower-class
		<p><i>"A good applicant at an early career stage; likely appointable."</i></p> <p><b>Negative:</b> Whilst there were some negative comments made about this applicant, these could not be categorised into a common theme as per the other applicants.</p>	<p><b>Negative:</b> Most likely to be described as having achieved poor academic grades and to need support and development (such as mentorship).</p> <p><i>"A levels could be stronger."</i></p> <p><i>"not very good A level results."</i></p> <p><i>"poor academic performance at UG and A-level."</i></p> <p><i>"[weaknesses include] studied at two weak Universities... A-levels."</i></p> <p><i>"A levels are quite weak."</i></p> <p><i>"he needs mentorship in relation to teaching, marking and managing expectations."</i></p> <p><i>"first employment and requiring mentoring."</i></p> <p><i>"ECR Needs development."</i></p> <p><i>"He is fresh from his PhD with enthusiasm and a good collegial spirit but he needs support and mentoring to get his research career started."</i></p>
	<b>Female</b>	<p><b>n=37</b></p> <p><b>Positive:</b> Likely to be described as suitable for the post, employable, solid, post appropriate for career stage.</p> <p><i>"She'd probably be a safe pair of hands in terms of teaching and academic support."</i></p> <p><i>"She looks appointable."</i></p> <p><i>"The applicant has a lot of attributes, experience, qualifications and interests that are necessary to fulfil the role."</i></p>	<p><b>n=26</b></p> <p><b>Positive:</b> Most likely to be considered promising and to show potential.</p> <p><i>"It would seem they have the potential and interest to develop this area."</i></p> <p><i>"Promising trajectory."</i></p> <p><i>"The applicant shows promise."</i></p> <p><b>Negative:</b> Most likely to be described as more appropriate for a lower-level academic post and/or a temporary position.</p>

		Class backgrounds signals	
		Higher-class	Lower-class
		<p><b>Negative:</b> Most likely to be described as weak and inexperienced applicant, with a bland CV.</p> <p><i>“The applicant has not had a job before. She is very inexperienced.”</i></p> <p><i>“While the applicant comes across as committed, she has either under-sold herself OR needs a little more experience/ maturity before she would be competitive for an academic post.”</i></p> <p><i>“This applicant does not have the experience to be appointed at anything other than the bottom of the advertised [pay] scale.”</i></p> <p><i>“To appoint someone inexperienced on the gift of promise would require strong evidence of exceptional intellectual capability. I don't see this.”</i></p> <p><i>“Relatively little teaching experience; cv lacking in detail for an academic post (too thin).”</i></p> <p><i>“too inexperienced. little evidence of sustained excellence.”</i></p>	<p><i>“Work experience/teaching experience is not so strong in the CV for a Lecturer post but may be appropriate for an Assistant Lecturer.”</i></p> <p><i>“The applicant is too junior for us to consider... I would recommend carrying out postdoctoral research to develop a more mature research profile.”</i></p> <p><i>“maybe not yet experienced enough to act as a lecturer.”</i></p> <p><i>“It doesn't seem like it provides enough information to be competitive for a permanent lectureship (or that the applicant is advanced enough in their career, at least in comparison with the applications we receive at my institution), but it might be more so for a temporary post.”</i></p>

Table 68: Frequently cited perceptions of the applicants' lack of a teaching qualification, by class background and perceived gender

		Class backgrounds signals	
		Higher-class	Lower-class
Perceived gender of applicant	Male	<p><b>n=34</b></p> <p>When mentioned, this was predominantly as a strength as participants noted the applicant's willingness to pursue a qualification.</p> <p><i>“Experience of teaching willing to gain teaching qualification and recognition of HEA.”</i></p> <p><i>“No formal teaching qualification (but willing to pursue FHEA).”</i></p>	<p><b>n=32</b></p> <p>When mentioned, this was predominantly as a weakness.</p> <p><i>“most applicants would have at least Associate Fellow HEA by now.”</i></p> <p><i>“No information on teaching quality or feedback, and no HEA accreditation.”</i></p>



		Class backgrounds signals	
		Higher-class	Lower-class
		<p><i>"CPD engaged and keen to progress (HEA)."</i></p> <p><i>"Strong academic profile, and demonstrates commitment to teaching qualification."</i></p>	<p><i>"Very enthusiastic, however can not yet demonstrate: HEA fellowship..."</i></p>
	<b>Female</b>	<p><b>n=37</b></p> <p>Hardly mentioned by participants, perhaps indicating that it was not noticed.</p> <p><i>"No reference to HEA fellowship/working towards it."</i></p>	<p><b>n=26</b></p> <p>When mentioned, this was predominantly as a weakness.</p> <p><i>"Teaching experience is limited. Not yet HEA fellow."</i></p> <p><i>"[weakness] No formal teaching qualification."</i></p> <p><i>"I would expect more experience before appointing as lecturer... evidence of good feedback from students and AHEA."</i></p>

### **3.4 Variances observed when controlling for the participants' type of university**

The descriptions of the applicants were mostly stable when the data were restricted to participants based at elite or non-elite universities; however, there were some variances. The higher-class female applicant was most frequently described as suitable for the position by participants overall ( $n=4$ , 10.81%) and by those in non-elite universities ( $n=3$ , 17.65%). However, only 5.00% ( $n=1$ ) of participants based at elite universities described her as suitable compared to 6.67% ( $n=4$ ) for the other applicants. In elite universities, the higher-class male applicant was most frequently described as being suitable for the position ( $n=3$ , 23.08%; and  $n=2$ , 3.00% for the other applicants). Furthermore, participants in elite universities often described the higher-class female applicant as weak ( $n=4$ , 20.00%; and  $n=7$ , 11.67% for the other applicants), whilst none of the higher-class male applicants were described as such ( $n=0$ , 0.00%; and  $n=11$ , 16.42% for the other applicants).

A further variance was observed in the evaluation of the lower-class female applicant, who was most frequently described as having the most potential by participants overall and by those in elite universities. However, none of the participants based at non-elite universities described the lower-class female applicant as having potential ( $n=0$ , 0.00%; and  $n=5$ , 6.58% for the other

applicants). Instead, it was the higher-class female and gender-unknown applicants who were most frequently described as having potential ( $n=2$ , 11.77%;  $n=1$ , 14.29%, respectively; and  $n=2$ , 1.06% for the other applicants).

### ***3.5 Conclusion on qualitative data analysis***

Section 3 presented the findings from the content analysis, which identified the most frequently perceived strengths and weaknesses of the applicants and used these to develop generalised descriptions of the higher-class male, higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female applicants. These descriptions are used in Chapter 8 to understand further the quantitative findings from the FSE. The qualitative data were considered against Bourdieu's forms of capital to identify how assumptions were made about the applicants based on the recognition and valuation of their existing capital. Consistent with the findings on the likelihoods of being invited to interview and being recommended to receive a higher starting salary, the higher-class male applicant was described most favourably by the participants, whilst the lower-class female applicant was most frequently found to be lacking in capital by the participants, despite the CVs and covering letters being otherwise identical.

# Chapter 8: Discussion

## 1. Introduction

This study sought to examine how the class background and/or perceived gender of applicants influenced shortlisting decisions for entry-level academic posts in HE in England. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this was the first mixed methods study to examine this topic, as well as the first hiring study within universities in England to take an intersectional approach that included class background. The findings from this study are important, as shortlisting decisions affect entry into the academic profession and therefore impact the demographic of the UK academic workforce. Understanding this is vital in recognising how practices in hiring processes may contribute to a wider regime of inequality in universities and the HE field. This matters from a fairness and equality perspective for those working in, or wishing to join, the academic profession as well as those studying, or wishing to study, at universities. Universities are increasingly regarded as being important in enabling social mobility, so must be cognisant of, and willing to tackle, barriers to social mobility within the academic workforce.

In this chapter, the findings from the study are discussed and interpreted in relation to the hypotheses and research questions and are integrated within the body of literature that was reviewed in Chapters 2-4. Based on the results (Chapters 6-7), the chapter is structured by the dependent variables, with the most significant findings discussed first. For consistency, the ordering of the independent variables is the same in each of these sections, i.e. class background and perceived gender; class background; perceived gender. Therefore, the likelihood of applicants being invited to interview is examined in Section 2 (H<sub>7</sub>, H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>), the recommended level of starting salary is deliberated in Section 3 (H<sub>8</sub>, H<sub>2</sub>, H<sub>5</sub>), and the evaluations of the applicants' attributes are discussed in Section 4 (H<sub>9</sub>, H<sub>3</sub>, H<sub>6</sub>). The data from the content analysis is discussed alongside the quantitative data and is used to enhance understanding of the findings where appropriate. The findings are presented for the complete dataset, participants based at elite universities, and participants based at non-elite universities, using Boliver's (2015) cluster analysis to categorise universities. In each of these sections, the hypotheses are restated, and the key findings are summarised, considered and compared to the existing body of literature. In Section 5, the limitations of the research are discussed, and recommendations are made for future research. In Section 6, the implications of the research are considered in terms of their practical applications. Finally, Section 7 provides the conclusion to the discussion.

As noted in Section 1 of both Chapters 6 and 7, the use of a non-probability convenience sampling method for this study means that the statistically significant findings in the data may

be limited in their generalisability to the broader population; therefore, a note of caution is advised. The comparison of the demographic characteristics of participants with the data for all UK academics indicated that the sample was similar to the general UK academic population in terms of gender/sex, ethnicity, and nationality (Table 11, Chapter 5, Section 4.3), which provides some reassurance of the results' external validity but does not eradicate the risk that the results may not be generalisable.

## **2. The likelihood of being invited to interview**

### ***2.1 Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are more likely than other applicants to be invited to interview (H<sub>7</sub>)***

The study found that the higher-class male applicant was most likely to receive an interview invitation (55.88%), whilst the lower-class female applicant was least likely to receive an invitation (23.08%), although this was not significant. However, when the data was restricted to male and female applicants, the higher-class male applicant was significantly more likely to be invited to interview than the other applicants. Simple logistic regression revealed that the higher-class male was over three times more likely than the higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female applicants to receive an interview invitation, which was significant. When compared to the lower-class female applicant, the higher-class male applicant was over four times more likely to be invited to interview, which was also significant. Conversely, the combination of being lower-class and female disadvantaged applicants and the lower-class female applicant was significantly less likely to be invited to interview than the higher-class male, higher-class female, and lower-class male applicants. These findings are consistent with Rivera and Tilcsik's (2016) study that found that higher-class male applicants were significantly more likely to be invited to interview than other applicants, despite their study being undertaken in a different country (USA) and sector (legal profession). The consistency in the findings of advantages being afforded to job applicants who are from a higher-class background and who are perceived to be male, despite applications being otherwise identical, provides evidence of entrenched discrimination and equality in elite professions in two capitalist countries that pride themselves on being meritocratic.

When the data were restricted to female participants, the logistic regression analysis revealed that the higher-class male was significantly more likely to receive an interview invitation, suggesting that biases against women applying for academic jobs exist in both male and female hiring managers. This chimes with Nosek et al.'s (2007) finding that gender biases and stereotyping are present in men and women and are stronger among women, particularly in the

UK. The findings challenge the belief and practice adopted in many universities (and other organisations) that involving women in the hiring process will reduce bias against female applicants. Instead, gender bias may be more effectively mitigated by anonymising job applications so that applicant gender cannot influence decisions.

Furthermore, logistic regression revealed that the higher-class male was significantly more likely to receive an interview invitation when the data was restricted to participants who had undertaken unconscious bias training (UBT). One participant who had undertaken UBT noted, "The unconscious bias stuff was interesting (despite training, I did have a clear image [of the applicant] so sought to reflect that)." Another participant stated, "I have had over 20 years of training to not do first impressions... I accept this is probably impossible to remove entirely." The findings suggest that undertaking UBT does not reduce class- and gender-based prejudice when shortlisting job applications for interview.

Previous research has either found no evidence of UBT changing behaviour or improving workplace equality, unless the UBT is supplemented with targeted strategies to reinforce learning over a long period of time (Devine et al., 2012; Bezrukova et al., 2016; Williamson and Foley, 2018) (Section 3.6, Chapter 4). Indeed, some research studies present evidence that UBT can backfire and further embed stereotypes (Apfelbaum et al., 2008; Duguid and Thomas-Hunt, 2015). Although not the primary aim of this thesis, the research found that bias was exacerbated among participants who had undertaken UBT, with higher-class male applicants being significantly more likely than other applicants to be invited to interview. This provides evidence that UBT may be ineffective, which is concerning, considering how ubiquitous UBT has become in universities in England and indicates that alternative strategies and approaches should be deployed instead, ideally those which tackle institutional and structural biases, rather than focusing on individuals.

The findings from the content analysis suggest that the capital held by the higher-class male applicant was (mis)recognised and valued by the participants and was sufficient to overcome any negativity or concerns they had about his lack of experience. On the other hand, the capital held by the higher-class female applicant (which was identical to that held by the higher-class male applicant) was partly recognised by the participants but crucially was not valued in the same way, resulting in the participants feeling ambivalent towards her in their evaluations. This finding broadly supports the work and theory of Bourdieu (2001b) regarding the superior status, power and advantage held in society by higher-class men and the inferior status, weakness and disadvantage associated with women, which can lead to their exclusion. In particular, the

findings support Bourdieu's (2001b) theory that the accumulation of cultural capital is unlikely to be sufficient to equalise the power dynamic between men and women. In practice, this indicates that higher-class men are likely to be unfairly advantaged in hiring practices, certainly at the shortlisting stage, for entry-level academic jobs in HE in England.

When participants were based at elite universities, the higher-class male remained the most likely applicant to receive an interview invitation, whilst the higher-class female applicant was the least likely, although this was not significant. However, when examined through a gender lens, the study found that applicants perceived to be male were significantly more likely than those perceived to be female to be invited to interview. Interpreting these findings suggests that markers of higher-class were valued by participants in elite universities, but only for applicants perceived to be male. For applicants perceived to be female, markers of higher-class did not appear to increase the likelihood of receiving an invitation to interview. Moreover, the findings suggest the existence of gender-based discrimination (favouring of male applicants) within elite universities, which was not identified within non-elite universities.

The findings from the content analysis indicate that participants based at elite universities were more likely to consider the higher-class male applicant as suitable for the post. However, they tended to describe the higher-class female applicant as weak, average, or bland compared to the other applicants, which suggests that her capital was misrecognised and she was judged on something other than her capital. This could be evidence of gender-based discrimination. The results from the quantitative analysis accord with Rivera and Tilcsik's (2016) finding that higher-class signals benefit men but not women in the hiring process in the elite labour market. Whilst their research found that higher-class women are perceived as less committed to full-time careers, with this commitment penalty offsetting any class-based advantages, the findings from this study indicate that higher-class women were perceived as bland in comparison to the higher-class male applicants. This finding also provides support for Bourdieu's (2001b) theory that the possession of high levels of cultural capital is not sufficient by itself for women to overcome the feminine disadvantages and masculine domination they face in society, at least within elite universities.

The content analysis indicated that several participants based at elite universities reported that the female applicants, both higher- and lower-class, would be more appropriate for a lower-level and/or temporary job, rather than the lecturer position to which they had applied. In other words, these participants recommended the female applicants for a casualised or more precarious employment position. No such similar comments were made about the male

applicants. Although numbers were too small to draw a concrete conclusion, this aligns with previous findings from van der Besselaar and Sandstrom (2017), Steinþórsdóttir et al. (2018), and Zheng (2018) about the gendered dimensions of increasing casualisation and precarity in the academic profession. Anonymising job applications may help to remove bias from shortlisting practices that could disadvantage women in terms of casualisation and precarious employment.

Among participants based at non-elite universities, the higher-class male and higher-class female applicants were significantly more likely to receive an interview invitation than lower-class male and lower-class female applicants. Logistic regression provided evidence that higher-class male and higher-class female applicants were 3.373 times more likely than lower-class male and lower-class female applicants to receive an interview invitation, which was significant. The higher-class female was significantly more likely to be invited to interview than the lower-class female. When the data were examined for the impact of perceived gender, there was little difference in the likelihood of male or female applicants being invited to interview. Whilst a larger proportion of male applicants received an interview invitation compared to female applicants, this did not reach statistical significance. This suggests that, compared to gender, class background is a more powerful determinant of whether an applicant receives an interview invitation for academic jobs in non-elite universities. Taking the Bourdieusian perspective of the HE field being a game in which institutions and agents compete for capital, it is possible that non-elite universities may seek to accumulate capital by recruiting applicants with a higher-class background, thus providing these universities with additional capital to advance and exert greater influence in the HE field. Again, anonymising parts of the job application may mitigate class-based bias, for example, removing or anonymising possible markers of class background.

The findings present evidence that there are potentially discriminative practices occurring within academic hiring processes, which suggests the existence of classism and sexism that could be part of broader inequality regimes within universities (Acker, 2009). The autoethnographic accounts from lower-class academics discussed in Section 3.3, Chapter 4 highlight personal experiences of such cultures in HE, including those from North America (for example, Ryan and Sackrey, 1995; Long et al., 2000; Muzzatti and Samarco, 2006) and the UK (Binns, 2019; Crew, 2020; 2021). This study provides evidence to corroborate their experiences, potentially demonstrating evidence of class- and gender-based discrimination in university cultures that alienates and excludes academics from lower-class backgrounds and/or who are female. Crew's (2020; 2021) research, for example, found that academics from lower-class backgrounds felt that their embodied cultural capital marked them as not fitting in. This study has demonstrated

that markers of capital are (mis)recognised by academic gatekeepers and are used to make decisions about who is worthy of entry to the profession, with markers of a lower-class background more likely to lead to a negative outcome.

In conclusion, there was sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_7$  overall and for non-elite universities, but not for elite universities. This study presents evidence of the existence of class-based discrimination (favouring of higher-class applicants) within non-elite universities and suggests that markers of higher-class background were valued by participants in non-elite universities for both male and female applicants, with the most advantage given to applicants perceived to be male. This suggests that non-elite universities may deploy recruitment strategies that favour applicants with a higher-class background as a means to accumulate additional capital to advance and exert greater influence in the HE field.

### ***2.2 Applicants from a higher-class background are more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be invited to interview ( $H_1$ )***

The findings indicated that a greater proportion of the higher-class than the lower-class applicants received an interview invitation, although this was not significant. The gap narrowed when participants were based at elite universities and widened when participants were based at non-elite universities. Within non-elite universities, this finding was significant (excluding gender-unknown applicants), which is important as it provides further evidence to suggest the existence of greater class-based discrimination (favouring of higher-class applicants) within non-elite universities.

The pattern in the findings indicates that higher-class applicants are more likely to be invited to interview than lower-class applicants, which, when perceived through a Bourdieusian lens, supports the theory that entry to the academic profession is a class barrier or a sorting mechanism of social reproduction. Although only significant in non-elite universities, the overall preference for higher-class applicants indicates that markers of class background, which are indicators of economic, social, and cultural capital and therefore habitus, may be influential in the decision-making practices when hiring academic staff and could lead to discrimination against applicants from lower-class backgrounds.

This thesis presents novel findings against the backdrop of a dearth of studies that explore the effect of class background on the hiring process, particularly in academia, which is curious considering the political rhetoric about universities being engines of social mobility. Whilst this stresses the importance of this thesis, it means that there is little with which to compare the



results. At a more general level, the findings support the results of Jackson's (2009) research, which found that applicants from a higher-class background were favoured over lower-class applicants in the hiring process for professional and managerial positions in the UK. In line with Jackson's research, the vignettes used in this study were embedded with a constellation of markers of class background, based of varying types and amounts of capital, which were adjusted to signify a higher- or lower-class background. One of the class markers was the universities at which the applicant had studied, with the higher-class vignettes listing elite universities and the lower-class vignettes listing non-elite universities (qualification levels and disciplines were kept constant). This acted as a marker of economic and cultural capital, as previous research has demonstrated that individuals from higher-class backgrounds are more readily able to access prestigious HE (Bourdieu, 1996a; Muzzatti and Samarco, 2006; Kniffin, 2007; Goldthorpe, 2013; Dickson, 2020).

The findings from the content analysis provide evidence that the university education marker was identified and commented upon by participants, who more frequently described the lower-class applicants as having poor academic performance (for example, "studied at two weak Universities"), whilst perceiving the higher-class applicants' university education positively (for example, "good academic pedigree"). This supports previous research by Baldi (1995), Burriss (2004), and Clauzet et al. (2015) that qualifications from higher-ranked universities hold more capital than those from lower-ranked universities. Furthermore, it supports Macfarlane and Jefferson's (2021) theory of the guild-route in academia, i.e. that individuals with qualifications from elite universities (symbolic capital) are more likely to secure academic jobs in the most prestigious universities, which disadvantages individuals studying or working at non-elite universities. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that individuals with qualifications from elite universities are more likely to secure academic jobs in non-elite universities (Section 2.1.3, Chapter 6), thus creating class barriers to the academic profession in both elite and non-elite universities for applicants with qualifications from non-elite universities.

This finding, and the related findings from the wider body of literature, imply that the university status marker is influential in the decision-making process. Indeed, Jackson's (2009) research identified university status as a dominant signal in determining whether to invite an applicant to interview. However, one possible interpretation of this is that shortlisting decisions are driven by perceived educational attainment rather than class background. Whilst it can be argued within Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction that attending an elite university tends to be an outcome of a higher-class background, this is not always the case (Section 2.4, Chapter 1). Understanding this is an important issue and further research on this will be needed. This could

be achieved, for example, by conducting another FSE and varying the university status levels within each class background group to determine the effect.

Other findings from the content analysis indicate further differences in how the applicants were perceived. Compared to the lower-class applicants, the higher-class applicants were more frequently referred to using positive language describing their cultural capital, including adjectives such as 'strong', 'suitable' and 'employable'. In comparison, the language used to describe the lower-class applicants was more variable. On the one hand, the lower-class applicants were more frequently described as 'enthusiastic' and 'keen'; on the other hand, they were described as though they were lacking the status, credentials or polish required for the lecturer post. For example, several participants suggested that the lower-class applicants would be better suited to a lower status and/or temporary job, thus providing some evidence that the perceived lack of cultural capital would be more likely to result in lower economic capital in future. These types of comments were not made about the higher-class applicants. A note of caution is due here because of the relatively small sample size and low frequency of comments; however, this finding indicates a potential variance in how applicant class background may influence the working conditions offered to new academic staff. This aligns with Towers' (2019) finding that academics from lower-class backgrounds in the USA are being increasingly employed in vulnerable and precarious academic positions.

In conclusion, there was sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_1$  but only for non-elite universities. This suggests that higher-class background, and therefore higher-class capital, is highly valued and sought after in non-elite universities. One possible explanation for this is Bourdieu's (1996; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992) conceptualisation of the HE field in which universities jostle for power by obtaining relatively scarce cultural and symbolic capital. Less dominant universities need to accumulate capital to compete with other universities and advance their position in the field, ultimately vying for power, greater influence, and status. As Lundy and Ladd (2020) contend, weaker (non-elite) universities have less capital and struggle to accumulate further capital as this is held by more dominant (elite) universities with which weaker universities struggle to partner. Therefore, it is proposed that non-elite universities may prefer to recruit higher-class applicants as a strategy to access and exploit the intellectual, cultural, and social capital they bring with them, which is prized in the field and will benefit the non-elite university. This could include benefitting from the new recruit's status, network, and contacts in elite universities. The findings suggest that elite universities also value and seek applicants from a higher-class background, which aligns with Bourdieu's theory about dominant institutions seeking to maintain their power and position. However, gender played a critical role

in elite universities that amplified the advantages of a higher-class background for higher-class men, whilst creating disadvantages for higher-class women. This is explored in the next section.

### ***2.3 Applicants perceived to be male are more likely to be invited to interview than other applicants (H<sub>4</sub>)***

Bourdieu (2001b, p. 93) argues that women are detached from men “...by a negative symbolic coefficient which... negatively affects everything that they are and do.” Consistent with Bourdieu’s theory, this study found that male applicants were significantly more likely than female applicants to be invited to interview. The preference for male applicants over female applicants was present and remained significant when participants were based at elite universities, and it remained but reduced and was not significant when participants were based at non-elite universities. As noted previously, this suggests that male applicants are advantaged in the hiring process for entry-level HE positions in England, and consequently that female applicants are disadvantaged, particularly when applying to elite universities. This preference for male over female applicants (despite them having otherwise identical CVs) supports, at least at a broad level, Bourdieu’s theory of masculine domination in practice.

There have been an increasing number of studies over the past 25 years on the effect of gender in the hiring process, most of which indicate that women face some level of discrimination. However, as discussed in Section 3.5, Chapter 4, the findings of a handful of studies provide inconclusive and, in certain cases, contradictory results, some of which report that women are advantaged over men in the hiring process. These studies cover a broad spectrum of sectors, disciplines, methodologies, and countries, and they also focus on differing stages of the hiring process; such factors are likely to explain at least some of the discrepancies in the findings. This study supports those that found evidence that men are more likely than women to be invited to interview, including research by Steinpreis et al. (1999), Moss-Racusin et al. (2012), Reuben et al. (2014), and Jose Gonzalez et al. (2019).

In contrast to the findings from most of the other studies, Williams and Ceci (2015) and Carlsson et al. (2021) report finding that female applicants were preferred over male applicants for academic positions, therefore concluding that gender gaps in academia are not caused by discrimination in the hiring process. This does not appear to be the case in the findings from this research study. There are several possible interpretations for the difference in findings, one of which is that these studies took place outside the UK (in the USA and the Nordic states, respectively) and the results may not be applicable in England. This is particularly relevant in the case of Carlsson et al. (2021) whose research took place in three of the five most gender-neutral

countries in the world (World Economic Forum, 2022). Therefore, the results may be less generalisable to other countries where there is a higher level of gender disparity, such as the UK which ranks 22<sup>nd</sup> in the same list.

In the case of Williams and Ceci (2015), there are several methodological differences between this study and theirs, which may, at least partially, explain the difference in the results. The participants in the main experiment in Williams and Ceci's (2015) study reviewed narrative statements (rather than full academic CVs, as in this study) for three fictitious applicants, which included one male, one female, and one foil applicant. As noted by Williams and Ceci (2015), this paired profiles conjoint design coupled with the artificiality of the experiment may have increased the risk of social desirability bias affecting the participant evaluations, thus potentially undermining the findings. To address this, Williams and Ceci (2015) conducted another, smaller experiment; a between-subjects design, similar to the one used for this study. The findings from both of Williams and Ceci's (2015) experiments found that women were advantaged over men in the recruitment process.

One major drawback of Williams and Ceci's (2015) approach is that the narrative summaries were written as though the male and female applicants were "highly accomplished" and "excellent", which may have influenced the participant evaluations and resulted in any potential status discrimination being overridden or masked. As argued by Foschi et al. (1994), Foschi et al. (1995), and Moss-Racusin et al. (2012), hiring experiments should use ordinary academic records because status generalisation is more likely to occur when performance is not a clear indication of success or failure. A useful example of this is provided by Koch et al. (2015), who found that gender-role congruity bias was reduced when information signalled clearly high or low competence. This is a critical point, which may explain the difference in results between Williams and Ceci's (2015) research and this study, in which more average academic records and profiles were deployed.

The content analysis undertaken for this research project provides insights that may contribute to an understanding of the finding that male applicants were significantly more likely than female applicants to be invited to interview. Compared to the female applicants, the male applicants were more frequently described as 'enthusiastic', a positive description indicating that they were perceived to be keen, motivated, and willing to learn. However, the male applicants were also more frequently described as having poor academic performance, although this only appeared to negatively impact the lower-class male applicant, which provides further evidence that the higher-class signals in the higher-class male's CV were sufficient to counteract

any negativity that may have been associated with his academic performance or lack of experience.

Several participants described the female applicants as being more suitable for a lower-status and/or temporary position, a comment that was not made of the male applicants. This indicates that some participants constrained the female applicants' career prospects, but not those of the male applicants. This broadly supports the work of other studies in this area, such as van der Besselaar and Sandstrom (2017) and Zheng (2018), that have identified a gender dimension to the increasing casualisation and precarity of academic careers, with women more vulnerable than men. It also supports Fiske's (2012) work on gender stereotypes and how people respond differently to intellectuals depending on their perceived gender, reacting to intellectual men with admiration whilst responding to intellectual women with contempt. Consistent with Bourdieu's (2001b, p. 68) theory on masculine domination, the findings indicate that women in employment who have access to cultural capital and power face a "double bind" of either being viewed as unfeminine and treated with disdain or appearing as feminine and therefore being perceived as "...incapable and unfit for the job." Again, anonymised job applications may help alleviate these biases at shortlisting stage.

In conclusion, there was sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_4$  for the complete dataset and for elite universities, but not for non-elite universities. This gender disparity in the hiring process implies that there may be greater gender discrimination for academics in elite universities than in non-elite universities. This accords with the international U-Multirank Gender Monitor 2022, which found that women are particularly underrepresented among academic staff at research-intensive (elite) universities. As discussed in the historical review of the HE field in England (Section 3, Chapter 3), most elite universities were founded by men and men still hold most of the senior academic positions. As such, men have formed and shaped the academic culture and working practices within most elite universities over many years and it still tends to be men who are in dominant positions and who shape and determine the current culture. Taking such a historicized approach, as recommended by Bourdieu, implies that a possible explanation for these findings lies in the historical formation of elite universities, with inequality regimes potentially embedded in organisational cultures, which continue to create barriers to women's entry to, and success within, the academic profession. Non-elite universities tend to be newer and therefore likely to have less of a male-dominated history. This may explain the findings from this study, which identified a narrower gender gap (although still in favour of men) in non-elite universities compared to elite universities.

### **3. The likelihood of being recommended to receive a higher starting salary**

A note of caution is due with the results discussed in this section as salary scales differ by job roles across universities and tend to be higher in elite universities. Although participants were asked to use the salary scale provided, there is a chance that they could have based their answer on the norms in their university or discipline.

#### ***3.1 Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are more likely to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary than other applicants (H<sub>8</sub>)***

The study found little difference in the recommended starting salaries for the applicants. However, within elite universities, the higher-class male applicant was seven times more likely than the lower-class female applicant to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary, which was significant. Within non-elite universities, the higher-class female applicant was the most likely to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary, whilst the lower-class female was least likely; this was not significant.

The study found sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for H<sub>8</sub> for elite universities. This broadly supports the work of other studies in this area that link one or more disadvantaged characteristics with a lower salary, including Woodhams et al. (2015) who identified the negative and combined effect of multiple disadvantages on pay (the snowballing penalty effect). This thesis presents evidence to support their assertion that a single-axis approach to identifying and addressing pay discrimination is inadequate and potentially masks issues. Most notably, the result supports Friedman and Laurison's (2020) finding that the combination of being female and from a lower-class background is associated with a lower salary in elite occupations in the UK. The identification of a significant result in elite universities is consistent with research that demonstrates that elite universities have larger mean gender pay gaps and a smaller proportion of women in the top quartile of pay (Amery et al., 2019).

The strengthens the argument introduced in Section 2.3 that gender discrimination is stronger in elite universities, possibly because of their formation and domination by men over many years. Again, it is possible that the findings indicate the existence of inequality regimes embedded in organisational cultures (Acker, 2009). The findings provide broad support for the recommendations by Woodhams et al. (2015) and the Sutton Trust (2019) that class pay gaps should be monitored and addressed and considered on multiple (intersectional) axes. Failing to do this could result in disadvantages being masked and therefore reinforcing and perpetuating inequalities.

### ***3.2 Applicants from a higher-class background are more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary (H<sub>2</sub>)***

Contrary to initial expectations, this research found no significant association between an applicant having a higher-class background and the likelihood of them being recommended to receive a higher starting salary. Within elite universities, recommended mean starting salaries were greater for higher-class than lower-class applicants, and the proportion of applicants recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary was larger for higher-class than lower-class applicants. Within non-elite universities, the findings were reversed with lower-class applicants being more likely than higher-class applicants to be recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary. There was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for H<sub>2</sub> in any of the conditions.

The lack of a consistent and significant finding that class background influences the recommended starting salary is reminiscent of Friedman and Laurison's (2020) research that did not detect a class pay gap in academia in the UK but contradicts the Social Mobility Foundation's (2022) identification of a class pay gap in academia of £5,807 per year. One possible explanation for this is that a confounding variable is interfering with the pay gap data, which may not be linked to class. A second explanation is that different class pay gaps exist in elite and non-elite universities, with these variances mitigating or obscuring one another when viewed at a macro level. A third explanation is that pay gaps operate at the intersection of multiple characteristics, exacerbating or reducing gaps, with class background by itself being too blunt a variable to reliably detect a gap. This third explanation aligns with the research findings from Woodhams et al. (2015) and fits within Acker's (2009) inequality regimes theory. It is considered likely that a combination of the second and third explanations is appropriate, and it is recommended that further studies, which take these variables into consideration, should be undertaken to garner a greater understanding of potential class and intersectional pay gaps in academia.

### ***3.3 Applicants perceived to be male are more likely to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary than other applicants (H<sub>5</sub>)***

This study found that male applicants were more likely than female applicants to be recommended to receive a higher starting salary, both overall (odds ratio of 1.33:1) and in elite universities (odds ratio 2.07:1), but this was not significant for either condition. Within non-elite universities, there was gender parity in both the mean recommended starting salaries and the proportion of male and female applicants offered a higher starting salary. Therefore, there was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for H<sub>5</sub> for any of the conditions.

The finding of gender parity in starting salaries in non-elite universities adds further support to the overarching conclusion of this thesis that applicant gender appears less influential in non-elite universities, possibly due to the difference in how and when these universities were established. Whilst not reaching statistical significance, the pattern overall and in elite universities is consistent with Moss-Racusin et al.'s (2012) finding that, despite an otherwise identical CV, a female applicant was less likely to be recommended to receive as high a salary than a male applicant. As discussed in Section 2.2.3, Chapter 4, the influence of new managerialism in HE since the 1980s has arguably further embedded masculine discourses and cemented men's organisational power and culture within universities (Hearn, 2001; Thomas and Davies, 2002). If women are less likely than men to be recommended to receive a higher level of starting salary, this not only disadvantages their current and future earning potential (economic capital) but also their sense of worth and future career opportunities. Such practices could be argued to contribute to an inequality regime within elite universities (Acker, 2009). This study's findings mirror the gender pay gap that endures within UK HE, which is greater in elite universities, and provide evidence that this could be partially caused by differences in practices in the hiring process, based on applicant gender. The results provide further evidence to support the argument made in Section 2.3 that there is potentially a culture of gender discrimination in elite universities, with a pattern of academic gatekeepers bestowing greater advantages on male applicants over female applicants, such as being recommended to receive a higher starting salary.

#### **4. Participant evaluations on the perceived attributes of applicants**

##### ***4.1 Higher-class applicants who are perceived to be male are more likely than other applicants to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes (H<sub>9</sub>)***

The study found that the higher-class male was slightly more likely to be evaluated as warm than the higher-class female, lower-class male, and lower-class female applicants. Surprisingly, the lower-class female applicant was more likely than the higher-class male, higher-class female, and lower-class male applicants to be evaluated as competent, hardworking, and considered to fit. None of these findings were significant. When the median warmth and competence scores for all the classed and gendered identities were placed on the SCM quadrant diagram (Figure 41, Chapter 7), the lower-class female applicant had high warmth and high competence, whereas the higher-class gender-unknown applicant had low warmth and low competence. Considering that the lower-class female applicant was less likely than the other applicants to be invited to interview, the study found little evidence to support the SCM theory within universities in England. This finding is consistent with Rivera and Tilcsik's (2016) study, which



also found no significant associations between the classed and gendered identities of job applicants and evaluations of their competence, warmth or fit. This suggests that decisions on who to invite to interview tend to be driven by something other than evaluations of competence, warmth and/or fit.

Rivera and Tilcsik (2016) measured commitment as the fourth attribute, which was similar to the hardworking attribute used in this study. Their research found a significant association between the classed and gendered identities and the commitment attribute, and they concluded that higher-class women are perceived as less committed to full-time careers, with this commitment penalty offsetting any class-based advantages. Whilst this thesis was unable to demonstrate a significant association between the classed and gendered identities and the hardworking attribute, the ordering of the applicants perceived to be most to least committed in Rivera and Tilcsik's (2016) study was the same as the ordering of the applicants perceived to be most to least hardworking in this study. Both studies demonstrated that the lower-class female was the applicant most likely to be evaluated as committed/hardworking, followed by the higher-class male, and then the lower-class male, with the higher-class female being the least likely to be evaluated as committed/hardworking. Therefore, the data from this study broadly supports Rivera and Tilcsik's (2016) finding that higher-class female applicants tend to be perceived as less committed than applicants with other classed and gendered identities. The content analysis found no evidence that the participants perceived the higher-class female applicants as less committed; however, this is unlikely to be a comment that participants would provide. Further research is recommended to explore whether higher-class women are perceived to be less committed/hardworking than other classed and gendered identities in HE in England.

Whilst this study found no significant associations overall between the classed and gendered applicant identities and the attribute evaluations, the high evaluations for the lower-class female applicant compared to the other applicants are interesting, especially as the lower-class female was the least likely to be invited to interview, a finding that was significant. This implies that the positive evaluations of attributes of competence, hardworking, and fit were insufficient to offset the class- and gender-based discrimination that lower-class female applicants may be subjected to in the hiring process.

In elite universities, the higher-class male applicant was evaluated to have the joint highest median scores for competence and warmth. The high warmth score was joint with the lower-class female applicant, who also received the highest median score for being hardworking. The

lower-class male and higher-class female applicants received the highest median scores for being considered to fit; however, the higher-class female was also the least likely to be considered hardworking. When the classed and gendered identities were placed on the SCM quadrant diagram (Figure 42, Chapter 7), the higher-class male applicant received the highest median warmth and competence scores. Although not significant, this result supports the assumption that higher-class males would be assessed more favourably than the other applicants, and the SCM theory that the applicant with the highest warmth and competence scores would be most likely to be invited to interview (Section 2.1) and be recommended to receive a higher starting salary (Section 3.1).

In conclusion, there was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_9$  for any of the conditions. Although the patterns in the data analysed for this study did not find evidence to support the previous SCM findings, this does not necessarily mean that stereotypes did not influence hiring decisions. The combination of class and gender-based stereotypes may well have impacted hiring decisions (particularly decisions as to which applicants to invite to interview); however, these decisions are not congruent with the perceived competence and warmth of the applicants, as predicted by the SCM.

#### ***4.2 Applicants from a higher-class background are more likely than applicants from a lower-class background to be evaluated highly in terms of their attributes ( $H_3$ )***

Overall, this study found little evidence that class background influenced the attribute evaluations and there was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_3$  for any of the conditions. The higher-class applicants were slightly more likely to be evaluated as competent, whilst the lower-class applicants were slightly more likely to be considered to fit, although these findings were not significant. When participants were based at elite universities, a greater proportion of lower-class applicants were considered to fit, but this was not significant. The findings were of most interest when the data was restricted to participants based at non-elite universities. Within these universities, the higher-class applicants were slightly more likely to be evaluated as competent, whilst the lower-class applicants were more likely to be evaluated as warm and considered to fit. This was statistically significant for the fit attribute, implying that, in non-elite universities, lower-class applicants are more likely to be regarded as socially and culturally compatible with the existing members of the group. However, they were not considered to be as competent as the higher-class applicants. One interpretation is that participants in non-elite universities recognised and valued markers of a higher-class background and perceived this capital as evidence that higher-class applicants were more intelligent and capable, whilst perceiving the capital of the lower-class applicants to be more

aligned to the existing staff community in non-elite universities. Therefore, they may have perceived lower-class background applicants as being more likely to fit in, whilst evaluating the higher-class applicants as having more desirable and scarce capital, therefore making them appear more appointable.

These findings were largely inconsistent with previous research on class-based stereotypes and the SCM, particularly in terms of competence and warmth evaluations. The inconsistency in the competence finding may be because all the applicants were highly educated with a doctorate, making it hard to evaluate any of them as incompetent, which may, at least partially, explain the variance in the competence findings between this study and the SCM. In terms of warmth, the inconsistency of the findings with previous SCM studies may be partly explained by the design of this study, which required participants to evaluate applicants based on a CV and covering letter. It is difficult to evaluate a person's attributes, particularly their warmth, without meeting or conversing with them. Some of the participants shared this insight in their qualitative responses or with the researcher after completing the experiment, with a couple of participants commenting that, in real-life, evaluations on applicant attributes such as warmth are made at interview stage (for example, one participant noted, "...judgements about warmth, teamwork etc I would make at interview"; whilst another participant stated, "The factors you ask me to rank would be relevant after an interview when there has been opportunity to judge the person their character and abilities"; and another noted, "[I] genuinely can't answer the questions... about warmth, trustworthiness etc from a covering letter or CV").

Future studies using a similar design could potentially include a link to a hypothetical academic profile webpage with a photograph, which could increase the psychological realism of the hypothetical applicants and encourage the establishment of a rudimentary human connection between the participant and the applicant. However, the research would need to be designed in such a way as to require the participant to view the applicant profile, otherwise there would be a risk of inconsistency in the research process and participant engagement with the materials, which could undermine or invalidate the results. Furthermore, the inclusion of this additional material would require careful pretesting to ensure that signals of class and gender were interpreted as desired and that other characteristics were not signalled. For example, Rooth (2009) found evidence that using photographs in job applications influenced the likelihood of being invited to interview depending on the perceived attractiveness of the applicants.

### ***4.3 Applicants perceived to be male are more likely to be evaluated highly in terms of their perceived attributes than other applicants (H<sub>6</sub>)***

The research found that female applicants were more likely to be evaluated as competent than male applicants. This was the case overall and in both elite and non-elite universities, and it was significant overall and in non-elite universities. In elite universities, male applicants were more likely than female applicants to be perceived as warm and considered to fit. These findings were not significant, but they do partially align to Fiske's (2012) assertion that intellectual men are more likely than intellectual women to be perceived as cooperative and warm.

None of the results for the other attributes were significant, except for the unexpected finding that the gender-unknown applicants received noticeably lower warmth evaluations than the male and female applicants. This suggests that clear signals of gender are more important than signals of class background when evaluating an applicant's warmth and, in their absence, participants are unlikely to provide a favourable evaluation. This could have implications for anonymous or blind shortlisting and warrants further research. In conclusion, there was insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis for H<sub>6</sub> for any of the conditions.

## **5. Limitations of this study and recommendations for future research**

Methodologically, the sample size was relatively small (166 participants compared to a desired sample size of 255), although this should be considered against the challenges of robustly identifying the size of the total population (Section 4.3, Chapter 5). The small sample size was caused initially by the challenges of the approach to identifying and recruiting participants, which was mitigated by changing the sampling strategy. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 on the target population and the wider HE environment resulted in the decision to end the data collection, primarily on the grounds of it being inappropriate and unfair to ask academic staff to participate in the study at that time, but also because of the substantial reduction in the number of academic posts being advertised. A limitation of the small sample size is that it may have resulted in the study having insufficient statistical power to determine whether the outcomes were true findings. This may have resulted in type II errors where the difference or effect was too small to be detected against the variability in the dataset. To adjust for the small sample size, the statistical analyses planned were simplified (for example, if the study had had greater statistical power, more could have been done with the regression analysis such as the inclusion of more variables).

As noted previously, a further limitation is the potentially limited generalisability of the study's statistically significant findings because of the non-probability convenience sampling method adopted. The comparison of the demographic characteristics of participants with the data for all UK academics indicated that the sample was similar to the general population in terms of gender/sex, ethnicity, and nationality (Table 11, Chapter 5, Section 4.3). This provides some reassurance of the results' external validity but does not eradicate the risk that the results may not be generalisable. To mitigate this limitation, in Chapters 6 and 7, effect sizes were reported alongside the statistical significance testing to help determine the real-world significance and impact of the observed associations and differences.

In terms of variables, the findings of this study present evidence for the value of studying multiple characteristics and understanding the effects of their intersection on the object under investigation. For example, had this study focused only on class background as was initially intended, then important findings and differences would have been undetected, and the effect of class background may have been masked. It was only through the inclusion of perceived gender that the effects of class background were revealed. Whilst the broadening of this study to include two characteristics was beneficial, arguably a limitation was the exclusion of other characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, disability, marital status, and/or sexual orientation. However, the inclusion of more independent variables would have resulted in more dimensions experimentally and would have required a much larger sample size (Cole, 2009; O'Connor et al., 2019).

This study's focus on two characteristics, and particularly the inclusion of class background, has provided new insights about the potential existence of class and/or gender-based discrimination in HE in England; however, the intersectionality of disadvantage is likely to be greater in this field than these two characteristics, as evidenced by scholars including Acker (2009), Bhopal (2018), and Friedman and Laurison (2020). Given the importance of Bhopal (2018; 2019; 2020) and Bhopal and Henderson's (2021) findings in relation to the reproduction of white privilege in UK HE and its intersection with gender, it is strongly recommended that future research into hiring practices in the sector explores the influence of applicant race alongside class background and gender. Therefore, to understand this more comprehensively, a similar study with a broader approach and a larger sample size, and including a greater variety of characteristics, would certainly be of benefit and is recommended. As argued by O'Connor et al. (2019), one way this could be achieved, without the requirement of a large sample size would be through deploying simulation research methods. In addition, it is recommended that further research is undertaken to understand class pay gaps in academia, differences in how these might be operating within

elite and non-elite universities, and how pay gaps are shaped by the intersection of class background with other characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and disability.

Whilst the study found evidence that applicant gender and class background influence the likelihood of an applicant receiving an invitation to interview and being recommended to receive a higher starting salary, the findings do not indicate which of the class markers had the greatest or least effect. As discussed in Section 2.2, it is possible that the dominant marker could have been the status of the universities attended by the applicants, which would align with the findings from other research studies such as Jackson (2009). However, if the dominant marker was the universities attended, it could be argued that participant decisions may have been primarily influenced by the educational attainment rather than markers of applicant class background. In addition, the status of a university attended could be regarded as a credential in itself, especially in the UK's highly competitive and marketised system. Through this lens, the participants' decisions may have been influenced by the status of the universities attended by the applicants, rather than the class background of the applicants, for example, university league table positions and performance in the REF. However, neither educational attainment nor university credentials this would not explain the variance in evaluations of higher-class male and higher-class female applicants

Whilst many studies have demonstrated that class background and educational attainment are strongly related (for example, Reay, 2001a, 2011b; Reay et al., 2005; Vasager, 2010; Laureau, 2015; Raffe and Croxford, 2015; Garner, 2016; Macfarlane and Jefferson, 2021) and enable social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1997), this is not a binary relationship, and they are not interchangeable. Furthermore, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) argue that perceived university credentials (such as league table positions) are an act of symbolic violence, which obscures the power relations endemic in the HE field that allow the imposition of systems of meaning and value upon agents, groups, and institutions in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate. Therefore, permitting decisions (such as those made during the hiring process) to appear objective, fair and legitimate and hiding the class-based social reproduction. To understand more about the dominant determinant, it is recommended that a similar experiment is conducted but that greater emphasis is given in the FSE design to varying the university status levels within each class background group. This design would facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the strength of influence of each of the variables and enable the exploration, for example, of whether the higher-class male applicant would still be favoured over the other applicants if a non-elite university was included on the vignette.

One of the strengths of this study was the comprehensive pretesting, which enabled the research design to be shaped and honed by academic staff, thus contributing to the rigour and realism of the study and the reliability and validity of the data. For example, the pretesting resulted in the change from a paired profiles conjoint design to a between-subjects design, which reduced the likelihood of social desirability bias. However, on reflection, one of the changes made because of the pretesting may not be included if the researcher were to run a similar experiment in future, i.e. the inclusion of the two gender-neutral vignettes as a control group for assessing the influence of applicant class-background with neutral gender signals. As indicated by the pretesting, the final research design was constructed on the assumption that participants would respond to the gender signals in the CV and covering letter, therefore identifying the male and female vignettes as intended. It was also presumed in the final research design that the participants would be unable to determine the gender of the gender-neutral vignettes, as the signals gave no clear indication of the applicant being either male or female. However, the results from the experiment indicate that eight of the participants (6.45%) evaluating the male or female vignettes reported these as 'unknown gender' or left the response blank, whilst over half of the participants (23 participants, 54.76%) evaluating the gender-neutral vignettes assigned them a gender that was either 'male' or 'female'. As the participant-reported genders did not map neatly to the intended gender signals of the vignettes, the participant responses were used as the gender categories for the analysis. Whilst this ensured the robustness of the research design and integrity of the data, it also resulted in a relatively small number of applicants (26) in the 'gender-unknown' category, which reduced even further when the data were disaggregated by applicant class background (11 higher-class, 15 lower-class). Coupled with the relatively small sample size overall, this may have reduced the possibility of identifying statistically significant findings in the 'gender-unknown' group of applicants. As such, and in alignment with the hypotheses, greater emphasis was placed in the analysis on the applicants reported by the participants as being male or female.

The inclusion of the gender-neutral vignettes in the study reduced the number of applicants reported by participants as male or female, compared to whether these vignettes were omitted and all vignettes either gave strong male or female signals instead. Therefore, their inclusion may have reduced the power of the statistical analysis on the variances between male and female applicants and may have resulted in a type II error where one or more of the null hypotheses were not rejected when they were false. On reflection, the inclusion of the gender-neutral vignettes did not strengthen the study as anticipated and may have limited the findings. Therefore, it is recommended that future hiring studies adopting a similar methodological approach omit such neutral vignettes but include an option for participants to report the

applicant gender (or other characteristic) as 'unknown'. To ensure strong gender signals, it may also be worthwhile for future studies based within Bourdieu's theoretical framework to consider how to incorporate and explore the effect of gendered capital and a gendered habitus, for example, by exploring gendered differences in qualification subjects, hobbies and interests, and even gendered language and behaviours.

Another limitation of this study was the decision to plan it as an FSE with a between-subjects design, rather than a resume audit study. The rationale for this decision is discussed in Section 3.2.1, Chapter 3. The FSE approach meant that the normal shortlisting process could not be replicated, arguably resulting in a lack of psychological realism that could have adversely impacted the external validity. To mitigate this, a between-subjects design was adopted to reduce the possibility of social desirability bias, and a fictitious scenario was presented to the participants. However, this resulted in each participant evaluating one vignette, which would be an unlikely scenario in a real-life situation. Some of the participants commented on this, for example, one participant stated, "I would [normally] assess the CV/application for eligibility/strength against other candidates", and another participant noted, "it's really difficult to imagine shortlisting in a vacuum."

In addition to having a pool of applications to consider, a real-life shortlisting process would be undertaken using a job description, person specification, and advert. These were omitted from this study in response to feedback from participants during the pretesting phase, who reported that these were a distraction from reviewing the vignettes. In the full study, the documents were instead replaced with a covering letter to mitigate the potential decrease in the psychological realism from their removal; however, feedback from some of the participants in the full study indicated that the inclusion of these documents would have been helpful. For example, one participant noted:

"This feels incomplete without the job ad with the person specs one as a potential recruiter wants. For shortlisting purposes those job specs are what shapes the selection and guarantees an equal opps based decision".

Furthermore, the psychological realism could have been increased by aligning the research design more closely to the hiring processes in place in universities. However, it would not have been possible to achieve a design that was realistic for all universities as there are many different hiring processes in use across the field. For example, one participant explained that "Applications are processed through at online system, where each candidate responds to a series of pre-set sections which relate to a job description", whilst another participant described the process at their university as "...we always provide a list of questions for candidates to



answer in an application, and then the shortlisting panel score these independently before coming together to discuss candidates for interview. This gives a standardised question set with which to fairly judge all candidates for shortlisting [before application forms are viewed].”

In considering the potential limitations of the study regarding the psychological realism and replication of the shortlisting process, it is important to reiterate that the aim of the research was to explore how the participants’ first impressions of the applicants influenced the initial shortlisting decisions and to identify general trends from the responses. Therefore, the study was designed with this aim in mind, rather than to mimic and explore the recruitment process *per se*. There was a compromise between designing a study with high psychological realism versus designing a study that was efficient for participants to complete and directed their attention to the vignettes and therefore to the variables of interest. On reflection, the inclusion of a job advert that summarised the role and the required skills and experience may have struck a more effective balance between psychological realism, efficiency, and focus.

One final limitation of this study is that there have been no research outputs published to date. This will be addressed upon submission of the thesis and the researcher plans to prepare publications to submit to peer reviewed journals in sociology and higher education. Online journals such as PLOS ONE will also be considered. Abstracts for conference presentations will be submitted, for example, the British Sociological Association conference. Additionally, the researcher plans to produce a briefing document that summarises the main findings and policy recommendations, and disseminate this to university HR departments in England as well as to groups such as Advance HE, the Social Mobility Commission, the Social Mobility Foundation, and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

## **6. Recommendations for implementation**

The UK State of the Nation 2021 report (Social Mobility Commission, 2021) notes that whilst universities continue to focus on widening participation for the student body, not much has been done to consider social mobility within their staff base. This research study contributes to this by presenting evidence that indicates that applicant class background and perceived gender play a significant role in determining entry into the academic profession, which suggests there are barriers to social mobility within the staff base of universities in England that should be addressed. This study contributes to an under-researched area on the effect of class background on hiring decisions more broadly, as well as having value to research on stereotypes of intersecting classed and gendered identities. The findings provide new knowledge about the influence of the intersection of class and gender on hiring decisions at the shortlisting stage,

highlighting potential discrimination and inequality regimes in the HE field in England. One of the underpinning beliefs of pragmatism is the ethic of meliorism and that research can lead to social improvements. As such, pragmatic research should lead to actions to address issues, with practice informing theory and theory informing practice. As such, this section provides action-based recommendations for key stakeholders in the HE field in England.

Bourdieu (1995) argues that the purpose of social research is to raise awareness of hidden issues and to effect change. The findings from this study present evidence of the existence of class and gender biases and discrimination in the academic recruitment process in universities in England. Not only does this have the potential to create and maintain unfair working conditions for academic staff, but it is also likely that these biases are an embedded (and arguably hidden in the case of class background) part of the wider HE field and may therefore be present and influential in other interactions and practices, for example, impacting student entry to and progression within HE, as well as academic promotion particularly to leadership positions. This is important considering the power associated with these positions for reinforcing and maintaining social reproduction and inequality. As such, it is anticipated that the results from this study will be of interest to those working in HE in England, particularly those in leadership positions and with a remit for equality, diversity, inclusion and widening participation, as well as those with a responsibility for influencing this agenda such as Advance HE, UKRI and the OfS. Whilst there has been a significant focus on the advantages and disadvantages associated with gender for academic staff in HE (and, to a lesser but growing extent, those associated with race/ethnicity), this study presents evidence of the influence of class background and the importance of including class background as a characteristic of advantage/disadvantage, ideally alongside those characteristics listed in the UK Equality Act (2010). The study provides evidence to support the implementation of the socio-economic duty, an element of the Equality Act (2010) that has not yet come into force in England. It is recommended that universities should enter the Social Mobility Foundation's annual Social Mobility Employer Index.

Tackling class and gender-based discrimination is challenging, particularly in the HE field in which many universities were, until fairly recently, the exclusive preserve of higher-class males and which, at least according to Bourdieu, form part of the machine of social reproduction. However, there are actions that individuals and universities can take. An initial intervention is to raise awareness among staff of the potential impact of class-based discrimination and its intersection with other characteristics such as gender and race. Rather than simply providing a normative statement, universities should include precise information and evidence of how class-based discrimination has occurred previously. Universities should consider how to incorporate class-

based and intersectional discrimination into their awareness and development programmes aimed at staff, as well as the curriculum for students.

Another intervention universities should explore is a change to their hiring practices and processes, such as removing criteria that limit the applicant pool. An example of an organisation pursuing a more inclusive recruitment strategy to increase the socioeconomic diversity of its workforce is PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC). PwC removed UCAS entry points as an entry criterion and the 2:1 degree classification requirement for all its undergraduate and graduate roles, internships, and placements (PwC, 2022). PwC also participates in the annual UK Social Mobility Employer Index. Other changes open to universities include implementing blind hiring processes, which anonymise job applications and remove all irrelevant information (such as home address, degree awarding university, name, etcetera), leaving only the essential information. Instead of being so heavily reliant on application forms at the shortlisting stage, universities could use different methods of assessment, for example, skills-based assessments or reviewing work samples such as research outputs or teaching materials. As noted in Section 5, one of the participants in this study provided feedback that their university had brought some of the interview questions forward to the shortlisting stage, with shortlisting decisions based on the applicants' answers to the questions rather than the application forms.

Finally, universities must track and monitor data on class background for their staff. This will help to identify issues and barriers, as well as enabling universities to track success. The lack of visibility of class background, coupled with the lack of an agreed definition, means that class background is not as easy to track as other forms of equality monitoring data such as gender and race. Universities, and ideally the sector, will need to agree on a definition of class background and use this within the hiring process. In universities, this should also be applied to other mechanisms that could fit within a broader inequality regime such as pay progression and promotion processes, as well as in equality-based reporting such as pay gaps. Definitions that have been used previously in equality monitoring systems for class background include parental class (based on the NS-SEC classification), parental educational background, the type of secondary school the person attended, or whether they received free school meals. Given the high proportion of international academics within HE in England, the challenge will be in agreeing a definition that is applicable across countries and cultures or in providing a clear explanation as to why this monitoring does not apply to international staff. Class equality monitoring must be undertaken within an intersectional equality monitoring framework to enable a deeper and richer understanding of inequalities and the barriers to a fairer and more equal workplace. This should be a statutory requirement of universities.

This research and these recommendations are also relevant to other organisations within the HE field in England such as Advance HE, UKRI and the OfS. These organisations should consider how to incorporate class-based, and intersectional, discrimination into their strategies and programmes of work to raise awareness of its importance and to effect positive change for all stakeholders in the HE field. This study will also be relevant beyond academia, as class-based and intersectional discrimination is likely to be a hidden but pervasive part of the culture in other sectors and environments (as evidenced, for example, by Friedman and Laurison, 2020). The findings support the need for changes to be made to hiring practices and processes to mitigate the barriers faced by those with disadvantaged characteristics and to ensure fairer recruitment practices that achieve far more representative and diverse workforces and contribute to a much fairer and more equal society.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

For entry-level academic posts in universities in England, this thesis found evidence that the likelihood of an applicant being invited to interview was significantly influenced by markers of their class background and perceived gender. These patterns existed, despite the applications being identical other than markers of class and gender, thus indicating they are not explainable by conventional indicators of 'merit' such as levels of qualifications and experience.

In Chapter 1, the concept of meritocracy was introduced as a commonly identified characteristic of democratic capitalist states in which power and success are achieved by the most able and industrious. It was argued that meritocracy is a powerful doxa through which the class structure and gender inequality are naturalised as fair, inevitable, and legitimate, therefore remaining hidden and unquestioned. This enables the conditions for hidden discriminatory practices to exist in hiring processes and to remain unchallenged. The meritocratic doxa assumes that people are judged fairly and are successful based on their skills, experience, and effort; however, this research study has demonstrated that this is not the case in universities in England. In terms of morals, universities and hiring managers may wish to seem open, fair, and tolerant; yet this study found evidence that expressions of judgement can be concealed behind explanations of merit, with class background and gender often misrecognised as markers of talent and employability (Chapter 8).

The first stage of field analysis (Chapter 3) explored HE in England in relation to the field of power and examined changes over time, beginning the process of historicizing the objects of study. The second and third stages of field analysis (Chapter 4) explored the structural topography of the HE field, the habitus of agents, and what types of capital are valued in the field. Since the 1960s, the expansion in the number of universities and students has coincided with the field of power exerting increasing pressure and control over HE and the academic profession through the implementation of neoliberal policies and practices. This has reduced autonomy and increased hierarchical stratification. Despite this expansion, access to and participation in HE remains unequal and unfair. The dominant classes remain overrepresented in HE and men remain overrepresented in more senior academic positions; this is magnified in higher-ranked universities. Class background influences access to postgraduate education, with a doctorate being increasingly required for an academic career. There is a prestige factor in terms of the university/department awarding the doctorate, which can affect an agent's ability to secure an

academic position (particularly in a higher-ranked university), secure a higher salary, and ultimately achieve promotion and influence.

Previous research studies provide evidence of prejudice and bias in hiring practices, including to academic positions, with characteristics of disadvantage combining to result in multiplicative penalties (Chapter 4). There is limited research into the effect of class background on hiring practices, and none that explores this for academic roles in HE in England. This study found evidence that higher-class male applicants were significantly more likely than others to be invited to interview, despite applications being otherwise identical. In terms of gender, the research found that markers of a higher-class background (including symbolic capital from elite universities) do not reduce the gender gap in the likelihood of applicants being invited to interview, particularly for academic jobs in elite universities. In terms of class, this research found that markers of a lower-class background reduce the likelihood of an invitation to interview, particularly for jobs in non-elite universities. These findings suggest that inequalities, discrimination, and bias exist within university hiring practices, mirroring those of wider society, with meritocracy forming part of the capitalist doxa. Within this, class functions as a concealed axis of inequality, intersecting with gender, so that HE reproduces class and gender inequalities. These power relations are masked by political discourse and the promotion of socially desirable policies and symbolically violent practices such as university league tables.

This study contributed to theory by demonstrating that class background (indicated through capital and habitus) and perceived gender can have a significant influence on an agent's life trajectory and how they are judged by others, including occupational possibilities. Class and gender do not exist in a vacuum; instead, they intersect with each other (and most likely other characteristics) to create advantages and disadvantages for job applicants in hiring processes. The findings contribute to a growing body of research on the importance of considering class background as an axis of inequality in both a theoretical and practical sense. The thesis provides support for the theories of Bourdieu and Dewey, demonstrating how Bourdieu's concepts, augmented with Dewey's concept of habits, are powerful tools for considering class and gender (Chapters 2 and 5). The findings also provide evidence of the similarities and differences in practices between elite and non-elite universities, caused by the complex interactions between agency, structure and environment (Chapter 4). Institutions and the academic profession are not uniform across the HE field. Therefore, the results demonstrate the importance of considering individual and groups of institutions and agents within a field and the influence this can have on the recognition and evaluation of capital and habitus.

This was a well-timed research study that contributed to gaps in knowledge, including those highlighted by scholars such as Crew (2020; 2021) and Macfarlane and Jefferson (2021). To the best of the researcher's knowledge, it was the first mixed methods study to examine this topic, as well as the first study within universities in England to take an intersectional approach that included class background. Whilst the identification of class- and gender-based bias and discrimination in hiring practices for entry-level academic jobs in universities in England is disappointing, the researcher believes that change is possible. The findings provide evidence to advocate for the implementation of fairer recruitment practices and recommendations for this are included in Chapter 8. The implementation of fairer practices would reduce inequalities in HE, create legitimate space for marginalised groups, and ensure people can communicate across social divisions. This would achieve a more representative and diverse academic workforce and student demographic, which would ultimately contribute to a fairer and more equal society.

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## Appendix 1 – Boliver’s cluster analysis (2015)

Table A1: Cluster analysis of UK universities (Boliver, 2015, p. 619)

<p><b>Cluster 1 (2 cases)</b> University of Cambridge <sup>a</sup> University of Oxford <sup>a</sup></p> <p><b>Cluster 2 (39 cases)</b> University of Aberdeen <sup>c</sup> University of Bath <sup>b</sup> University of Birmingham <sup>a</sup> University of Bristol <sup>a</sup> Cardiff University <sup>a</sup> University College London <sup>a</sup> University of Dundee <sup>c</sup> University of Durham <sup>ab</sup> University of East Anglia <sup>b</sup> University of Edinburgh <sup>a</sup> University of Exeter <sup>ab</sup> University of Glasgow <sup>a</sup> Goldsmiths College <sup>b</sup> Heriot-Watt University <sup>c</sup> Imperial College <sup>a</sup> University of Kent <sup>c</sup> King’s College London <sup>a</sup> University of Lancaster <sup>b</sup> University of Leeds <sup>a</sup> University of Leicester <sup>b</sup> University of Liverpool <sup>a</sup> London School of Economics <sup>ab</sup> Loughborough University <sup>b</sup> University of Manchester <sup>a</sup> University of Newcastle <sup>a</sup> University of Nottingham <sup>a</sup> Queen Mary &amp; Westfield <sup>ab</sup> Queen’s University of Belfast <sup>a</sup> University of Reading <sup>b</sup> Royal Holloway <sup>b</sup> University of St Andrews <sup>b</sup> SOAS <sup>b</sup> University of Sheffield <sup>a</sup> University of Southampton <sup>a</sup> University of Strathclyde <sup>c</sup> University of Surrey <sup>b</sup> University of Sussex <sup>b</sup> University of Warwick <sup>ab</sup> University of York <sup>ab</sup></p>	<p><b>Cluster 3 (67 cases)</b> University of Abertay Dundee <sup>d</sup> Aberystwyth University <sup>c</sup> Arts University Boumemouth <sup>a</sup> University of the Arts, London <sup>g</sup> Aston University <sup>c</sup> Bangor University <sup>c</sup> Bath Spa University <sup>d</sup> University of Bedfordshire <sup>d</sup> Birmingham City University <sup>d</sup> Bournemouth University <sup>f</sup> University of Bradford <sup>f</sup> University of Brighton <sup>g</sup> Brunel University <sup>c</sup> Cardiff Metropolitan University <sup>f</sup> University of Central Lancashire <sup>d</sup> University of Chester <sup>g</sup> City University <sup>c</sup> Canterbury Christ Church <sup>d</sup> University of Chichester <sup>a</sup> Coventry University <sup>f</sup> University for the Creative Arts <sup>a</sup> De Montfort University <sup>g</sup> University of Derby <sup>g</sup> Edinburgh Napier University <sup>d</sup> University of Essex <sup>b</sup> Falmouth University <sup>a</sup> University of Glamorgan <sup>f</sup> Glasgow Caledonian University <sup>f</sup> University of Gloucestershire <sup>g</sup> University of Greenwich <sup>f</sup> Harper Adams University <sup>a</sup> University of Hertfordshire <sup>f</sup> Univ. of the Highlands &amp; Islands <sup>g</sup> University of Huddersfield <sup>f</sup> University of Hull <sup>c</sup> University of Keele <sup>c</sup> Kingston University <sup>f</sup> Leeds Metropolitan University <sup>d</sup> University of Lincoln <sup>f</sup> Liverpool John Moores University <sup>f</sup> London South Bank University <sup>g</sup> Manchester Metropolitan <sup>f</sup> Middlesex University <sup>d</sup> Newman University College <sup>a</sup></p>	<p><b>Cluster 3 continued</b> University of Northampton <sup>d</sup> Nottingham Trent University <sup>f</sup> University of Northumbria <sup>f</sup> Oxford Brookes University <sup>f</sup> University of Plymouth <sup>f</sup> University of Portsmouth <sup>f</sup> Queen Margaret University <sup>g</sup> Robert Gordon University <sup>g</sup> Roehampton University <sup>g</sup> University of Salford <sup>f</sup> Sheffield Hallam University <sup>f</sup> Staffordshire University <sup>d</sup> University of Stirling <sup>c</sup> University of Sunderland <sup>d</sup> Swansea University <sup>c</sup> Teesside University <sup>f</sup> University of Ulster <sup>c</sup> University of West London <sup>d</sup> University of the West of England <sup>f</sup> University of the West of Scotland <sup>d</sup> University of Westminster <sup>g</sup> University of Winchester <sup>a</sup> University of Worcester <sup>a</sup></p> <p><b>Cluster 4 (19 cases)</b> Anglia Ruskin University <sup>d</sup> Bishop Grosseteste University <sup>a</sup> University College Birmingham <sup>a</sup> University of Bolton <sup>d</sup> Buckinghamshire New University <sup>a</sup> University of Cumbria <sup>d</sup> University of East London <sup>d</sup> Edge Hill University <sup>g</sup> Glyndwr University <sup>a</sup> Leeds Trinity University <sup>a</sup> Liverpool Hope University <sup>g</sup> London Metropolitan University <sup>d</sup> University of Wales, Newport <sup>f</sup> University of St Mark and St John <sup>g</sup> Southampton Solent University <sup>a</sup> University Campus Suffolk <sup>g</sup> University of Wales Trinity Saint David <sup>c</sup> University of Wolverhampton <sup>d</sup> York St John University <sup>a</sup></p>
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<sup>a</sup> Russell Group; <sup>b</sup> 1994 Group; <sup>c</sup> Unaffiliated Old (pre-1992) universities; <sup>d</sup> Million+; <sup>e</sup> GuildHE; <sup>f</sup> University Alliance; <sup>g</sup> Unaffiliated New (post-1992) universities.

## Appendix 2 – Research data management plan

Table A2: Research data management plan

<b>1</b>	<p><b>Assessment of existing data</b></p> <p><b>Existing data:</b> HESA collect and present data on the academic workforce employed in universities in the UK, which can be restricted to universities in England. This dataset includes data of interest to this study, including sex/gender, academic job roles, and salary data. However, HESA do not collect data on the class background of academic staff. The UK Labour Force Survey collects information on class background and was used by Laurison and Friedman (2015a; 2015b; 2016) and Friedman and Laurison (2020) in their analysis of class ceilings in elite professions in the UK. The project draws upon these data sources as part of the literature review; however, none of these datasets require storage.</p> <p><b>Gaps:</b> There is no systematic data collection for the class background of all academic staff employed at universities in the UK or England. Furthermore, no research has been undertaken to explore the effect of class background and its intersection with gender for entry-level academic jobs in higher education in England. Secondary sources of data have been considered and evaluated. The UK Data Service data catalogue, UKRI Gateway to Research, and HESA datasets were consulted. There are no suitable data available for re-use for answering the research hypotheses and questions. Therefore, new data must be created as part of this study.</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Information on new data</b></p> <p><b>Data volume and type:</b> Prior to the full study, two pretesting exercises (pretest 1: <math>n=6</math>; pretest 2: <math>n=8</math>) and two pilot studies (pilot 1: <math>n=12</math>; pilot 2: <math>n=18</math>) were undertaken. Quantitative data were collected via the JISC Online Survey platform for pretest 1, pretest 2 and pilot study 2. Quantitative and qualitative data collected from pilot study 1 were collected in hard-copy form and stored in sealed envelopes for a short period of time before being anonymised and stored electronically, at which point the hard-copy documents were destroyed. For the full study, a factorial survey experiment was conducted with participants via an online survey (using the JISC Online Surveys platform). This survey collected quantitative and qualitative data from 166 participants. Participants were not required to enter any direct identifiers, such as names. Participants were asked to enter some indirect identifiers, including the participant's gender, race/ethnicity, natal class, level of job, discipline, employing university, etc. Where possible this data was anonymised, for example, by using aggregate variables for employing universities. This information was essential for analysing the data and understanding and interpreting trends. Data collected through the online surveys was anonymised at the time of completion as the software automatically provided each completed questionnaire with a unique code. It was not possible for any completed questionnaires to be linked back to individuals other than potentially through combinations of relational data; however, data was not analysed or shared in such a way that individual indirect identifiers were made available.</p> <p><b>Data quality, formats, standards documentation, and metadata:</b> The data collected via the JISC Online Survey platform was downloaded and stored in Microsoft Excel. A code book was created for the data and all data were coded in</p>

	<p>accordance with this. The data were uploaded to SPSS for data processing and analysis. Data files were clearly named, well organised, and version-controlled throughout the study. Within three months of the completion of the project, the anonymised dataset for the full study will be saved as an SPSS (.sav) file as well as a comma-separated values (CVS) file (.csv), as recommended by the UK Data Service.</p> <p><b>Methodologies for data collection:</b> The JISC Online Survey platform was used to collect the data for the full study. The data were uploaded to SPSS. A consistent system of file naming and an organised folder structure were used to ensure easy retrieval.</p>
<b>3</b>	<b>Quality assurance of data</b>
	<p>Chapter 5 of the thesis provides information on the pretesting and pilot studies that were used to design, test, and calibrate the research instruments, as well as the creation of the scales for the composite attributes. The two survey instruments used in the pretesting were reviewed by an expert on questionnaire construction; this helped establish their face validity (Collingridge, 2014). A colleague with significant experience in qualitative research reviewed the content analysis and the interpretation, coding, and categorisation of the participant comments.</p>
<b>4</b>	<b>Security and backup of data</b>
	<p>Electronic data was stored securely in password protected files on a Bournemouth University password protected secure network; the password to which was only known by the researcher. The Bournemouth University secure network is backed up every night. The participant information sheet highlighted that it was possible for password protected secure networks to be hacked, however, the probability of this is extremely unlikely. Off-campus access to the data on the Bournemouth University server was via VPN.</p> <p>The JISC Online Survey software is hosted on a secure server provided by Amazon Web Services, which is managed in conformance with the requirements of ISO 27001. All survey data is collected over encrypted SSL (TSL) connections, which ensures that sensitive information can be transmitted securely. When at rest, the data is stored in a password protected part of the JISC website.</p>
<b>5</b>	<b>Management and curation of data</b>
	<p>Open science is an important part of the research ecosystem. Therefore, the researcher plans to explore with the Bournemouth University Library Team whether it will be desirable to deposit some of the study's anonymised quantitative data for archiving and re-use in the Bournemouth Online Research Data Repository (BORDaR) for the purposes of sharing with the wider research community and potential secondary analysis. The expected difficulties with this are summarised and considered in Section 6. If it is desirable to deposit the dataset, then it will be converted to suitable open formats for long-term preservation (as described in Section 2) and deposited within three months of the completion of the thesis.</p>
<b>6</b>	<b>Expected difficulties in data sharing</b>
	<p>Explicit consent for data sharing was not obtained from participants when they consented to participate in the study and submit their data. However, the UK Data Service advise that data sharing is possible without explicit consent, providing special consideration is given to relevant factors. These are discussed below.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>How disclosive is the material?</i> People and organisations are not named in the dataset that would be shared and the data will be curated in such a way as to ensure that their identities could be inferred.</li> <li>- <i>Is it personal or sensitive data under current data protection laws?</i> Based on the guidance from the Information Commissioner’s Office, the only data that meets the criteria for special category data is personal data revealing the racial or ethnic origin of the participants. The dataset also includes some non-sensitive personal data, including the gender of the participants. For the curated dataset, these data will be omitted, or the options will be collapsed so that individuals cannot be identified.</li> <li>- <i>What harm, and to whom, could result from any disclosure?</i> The curated dataset will be produced in such a way as to ensure that the identification of individuals or organisations is not possible. However, in the unlikely event that an individual’s identity was disclosed through inference, there is a risk that an individual might be perceived as biased or prejudiced. This is deemed to be minimal risk, considering the steps taken to de-identify the data.</li> <li>- <i>Could the data be de-identified?</i> All data is anonymised and the data in the curated dataset will be further de-identified by collapsing or omitting some of the personal and/or identifying data. For example, the data on the specific universities at which the participants were based will be omitted from the curated dataset.</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	<b>Consent, anonymisation and strategies to enable further re-use of data</b>
	<p>Those wishing to participate logged into the survey via JISC Online Surveys, where they were asked to confirm that they: had read and understood the participant information sheet; understood that their participation was voluntary; understood that they were free to withdraw at any point prior to the submission their data at the end of the survey; that they gave consent to their data being used in the research; and that they understood they would not be identifiable in the outputs from the research.</p> <p>At the end of the questionnaire, and prior to their data being submitted, they survey took participants to a debriefing page. This page thanked them for their participation and provided more information as to the purpose of the study. Participants were given the option to withdraw their data at that point (now that they had been fully informed as to the intent and purpose of the study) or to re-consent to their participation. Those who agreed to re-consent to participate in the study were invited to click an “I Agree” button to submit their data online. Those who did not agree to re-consent were directed to click an “I Do Not Agree” button so that their data was not submitted or collected online.</p> <p>Upon submission, JISC Online Surveys automatically provided each completed questionnaire with a unique code. It is not possible for any completed questionnaires to be linked back to individuals other than potentially through combinations of relational data. Participants were not asked to enter any direct identifiers, such as names, when completing the survey. Participants were asked (but not mandated) to enter some indirect identifiers, including their gender, race/ethnicity, natal class, level of job, discipline, employing university, etcetera. These data were essential for analysing the data and understanding and interpreting trends. Where possible this data will be anonymised, for example, by using aggregate variables for employing university. This will ensure that the curated dataset will be shared in a format that ensures that these indirect identifiers cannot be used in such a way.</p>

	<p>All the information collected is kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018). Participants will not be identifiable in any reports or publications. Direct quotes may be taken from the material but will remain completely anonymous. In accordance with Bournemouth University policy, all data relating to this study will be kept for five years after the completion of the thesis on a Bournemouth University password protected secure network.</p>
<b>8</b>	<b>Copyright and intellectual property ownership</b>
	<p>The intellectual property (IP) of the data generated is owned by the researcher as Bournemouth University does not automatically take ownership of IP that postgraduate research students create as part of their research. However, the Bournemouth University Research Data Policy requires data arising from research projects to be deposited and made openly available where possible.</p> <p>This study did not use any data which is covered by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 or any other similar legislation.</p>
<b>9</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
	<p>The researcher (PGR student) has overall responsibility for implementing this research data management plan. Advice and guidance are provided by the researcher's PhD supervisors. Advice on whether to deposit the data in BORDaR will be provided by experienced colleagues in Bournemouth University's Library Team, who will also check it prior to deposit (if required). Bournemouth University's IT Services department are responsible for providing data storage, security and backup storage. The data management plan was updated throughout the duration of research project.</p>
<b>10</b>	<b>Preparation of data for sharing and archiving</b>
	<p>At the end of the study, the dataset for the full study was saved as an SPSS (.sav) file as well as a comma-separated values (CSV) file (.csv), as recommended by the UK Data Service.</p>



## Appendix 3 – Baseline CVs for pretesting

### Baseline CV1

NAME  
ADDRESS  
Tel: NUMBER Email: NAME@gmail.com

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#### PERSONAL PROFILE

Proactive and creative researcher  
Experienced in working independently  
Ability to meet deadlines and accurate recording and analysis  
Teaching experience with students and some PhD informal supervision

#### EDUCATION

2014 – 2017 UNIVERSITY NAME, DEPT  
PhD Sociology  
Supervisor: Professor R W Smithson

2013 – 2014 UNIVERSITY NAME, DEPT  
MSc Social Research Methods  
Distinction

2010 – 2013 UNIVERSITY NAME, DEPT  
BA (Hons) Sociology (2.1)

2008 – 2010 SCHOOL NAME, TOWN  
A levels – English (A), History (A), Sociology (A), Psychology (A)

#### RESEARCH INTERESTS

My research interests are in the sociology of migration and citizenship with particular focus on race, ethnicity and inequality. My work pays particular attention to spatial formations of political exclusion, histories of displacement and the formation of diaspora, and the negotiation of local and global political space. I am currently investigating the historical legacy of conflict in the formation of identities and relations among South Asian Muslims in the UK and the US. My work uses a mixed methods approach.

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Taught the second year Sociology module “Cultures of race and racism” and marked coursework
- Led weekly seminars with first year Sociology students
- Organised field trip for students to the British Sociological Association conference in May 2016

#### ADMINISTRATION

- Assisted in examining, talking to students and parents at open days and invigilating examinations
- Organised seminar sign-up at enrolment

#### POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- PGR representative on the Staff/Student Liaison Committee
- Undertook administrative tasks relating to student induction programme

#### CONFERENCES ATTENDED

2016 Race, Gender, Class and Political Exclusion – Oxford Brookes University  
2015 The Challenge of Big Data – The British Library  
2015 Citizenship and Political Identity – University of Kent

#### PUBLICATIONS

One sole-authored article in *Sociological Methodology* and one co-authored article in *Social Movement Studies*.

#### INTERESTS

N/A

#### REFERENCES

Available on request

## Baseline CV2

**NAME**  
**ADDRESS**  
Tel: NUMBER Email: NAME@hotmail.com

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### PERSONAL PROFILE

Innovative and effective researcher  
Diligent worker with a keen eye for detail  
Able to multitask, prioritise and work autonomously  
Experience of teaching students and academic citizenship

### EDUCATION

2014 – 2017	UNIVERSITY NAME, DEPT PhD Sociology Supervisor: Professor J T Andrews
2013 – 2014	UNIVERSITY NAME, DEPT MA in Sociology Distinction
2010 – 2013	UNIVERSITY NAME, DEPT BSc (Hons) Sociology (2.1)
2008 – 2010	SCHOOL, TOWN A levels – Sociology (A), Geography (A), History (A), Law (A)

### RESEARCH INTERESTS

I am a historian of the medical and social sciences with a particular interest in gendered histories. Trained as a social psychologist, I adopt a particular critical perspective in analysis of objects of psychological and sociological interest. I am engaged with questions surrounding the influences and loops on and from the social sciences, as well as those surrounding 'truth' within the philosophy of science. I have additional research interests in sexuality, gender and essentialist beliefs and use quantitative, qualitative and historical methods.

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Taught on the first year Sociology module Families and Society and assessed coursework
- Tutorials and supervisions on Sociological Theory II
- Assisted with revision tutorials for second year Sociology students

### ADMINISTRATION

- Supported open days and enrolment
- Organised student sign-ups to the research seminar series

### POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- Assisted with admissions interviews
- PGR representative on the Research Concordat Group

### CONFERENCES ATTENDED

2016	Psychology of Women Conference – University of Bristol
2015	Digital Humanities Conference – University of Surrey
2015	British Psychological Society Annual Conference – University of Manchester

### PUBLICATIONS

Two papers published to date; one (sole-authored) in *Health and Human Rights* and the other (co-authored) in *International Sociology*.

### INTERESTS

N/A

### REFERENCES

Available on request

## Appendix 4 – Pretesting table

Table A3: Description of the attributes, levels and treatment conditions used in the pretesting

Attribute	Levels	Examples of how levels will be signalled
Gender	Male Female	First name will be identifiably male or female
First name	First name will be identifiably lower class or neutral: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lower class – first names with a lower-class connection*</li> <li>- Neutral – first names with no such class connections</li> </ul> <p>*These were determined using Jackson’s (2009) study</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lower class – Gary, Stacey</li> <li>- Neutral – David, Emma</li> </ul>
Surname	Surname will be identifiably higher class or neutral: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – surnames with a higher-class connection*</li> <li>- Neutral – surnames with no such class connections</li> </ul> <p>*These were determined using Clark and Cummins’ (2013) list</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – Micklethwait, Trelawny</li> <li>- Neutral – Clark, West</li> </ul>
Address	Address will be identifiably higher class, lower class or neutral: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – address based in area with the highest weekly income (excluding London / SE)</li> <li>- Lower class – address based in area with lowest weekly income</li> </ul> <p>These were determined by data from the Office for National Statistics (2020) on the average weekly income for different locales</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – address in Warrington, WA4 5PF</li> <li>- Lower class – address in Grimsby, DN32 7DY</li> <li>- Neutral – Norwich, NR1 4BA</li> </ul>
University(ies) attended	Universities attended will be identifiably higher class, lower class or neutral: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – Russell Group universities which appear in the higher ranks of the sociology subject league table</li> <li>- Neutral – Non-Russell Group, mid-ranking university</li> <li>- Lower class – universities with high proportions of widening participation students and which appear in the lower ranks of the sociology subject league table</li> </ul> <p>Source of league table – Complete University Guide (Mayfield University Consultants, 2017)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – University of Bristol, University of Southampton, University of Warwick, University of Durham</li> <li>- Lower class – Plymouth Marjon University, University of Northampton</li> <li>- Neutral – Bournemouth University, University of Hull, University of Lincoln</li> </ul>

Attribute	Levels	Examples of how levels will be signalled
Schooling	<p>Schools attended will be identifiably higher class or neutral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – grammar or private school</li> <li>- Neutral – comprehensive school</li> </ul> <p>Schools were identified based on the applicant’s address.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – Altrincham Grammar School for Girls (Altrincham), Norwich Independent School (Norwich)</li> <li>- Neutral – Havelock Academy (Grimsby), Egguckland Community College (Plymouth)</li> </ul>
Academic citizenship	<p>Academic citizenship duties and responsibilities will be identifiably higher class or neutral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lower class – activities that suggest a personal experience of being a first generation HE student</li> <li>- Neutral – generic academic activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lower class – mentor for widening participation students / mentor for first generation HE students / member of the target schools scheme and participation in widening access school visits / member of the student outreach working group / member of the university fair access committee</li> <li>- Neutral – mentor for student participating in the faculty’s public engagement festival / member of the faculty IT and resources committee / graduate tutor for year 12 students / member of the faculty Athena Swan group</li> </ul>
Personal interests	<p>Personal interests will be identifiably higher class or neutral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interests associated with high cultural capital</li> <li>- Those associated with low cultural capital</li> </ul> <p>These are informed from: Bourdieu (1984), Jackson (2009), Rivera and Tilcsik (2016), and Savage et al. (2013)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Higher class – playing tennis, sailing, theatre, classical music concerts, art galleries, listening to experimental jazz.</li> <li>- Lower class – playing and watching football, playing in a netball team, socialising at home with friends, playing guitar, cinema, listening to popular music, boxing.</li> </ul>

Table A4: Combinations of CV items that signal class background in identities used in pretesting

	<b>ID1<sup>b</sup>, ID1A<sup>d</sup>/B<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>ID2<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>ID3<sup>b</sup>, ID3A<sup>d</sup>/B<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>ID4<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Male	Female	Female
<b>First name</b>	Gary <sup>b</sup>	David <sup>c</sup>	Stacey <sup>b</sup>	Emma <sup>c</sup>
<b>Surname</b>	Clark <sup>c</sup>	Micklethwait <sup>a</sup>	West <sup>c</sup>	Trelawney <sup>a</sup>
<b>Address</b>	6a Albion Street, Grimsby, Lincolnshire, DN32 7DY <sup>b</sup>	10 Malvern Road, Norwich, Norfolk, NR1 4BA <sup>c</sup>	15 Cross Park Way, Plymouth, Devon, PL6 5AP <sup>c</sup>	Badgers Brook, Green Lane, Appleton Thorn, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 5PF <sup>a</sup>
<b>Universities attended</b>	University of Lincoln and University of Hull <sup>c</sup>	University of Southampton and University of Warwick <sup>a</sup>	Plymouth Marjon University and University of Northampton <sup>b</sup>	University of Bristol and University of Durham <sup>a</sup>
<b>Schooling</b>	Havelock Academy, Grimsby <sup>c</sup>	Norwich Independent School, Norwich <sup>a</sup>	Eggbuckland Community College, Plymouth <sup>c</sup>	Altrincham Grammar School for Girls, Altrincham <sup>a</sup>
<b>Administration experience</b>	Member of the Target Schools Scheme and participated in widening access school visits <sup>b</sup>	Member of the Faculty IT and Resources Committee <sup>c</sup>	Member of the University's Fair Access Committee <sup>b</sup>	Member of the Faculty Athena Swan Group <sup>c</sup>
<b>Positions of responsibility</b>	Mentor for widening participation students <sup>b</sup> <b>ID1A</b> – Also included: worked part-time as a supermarket cashier <sup>d</sup> <b>ID1B</b> - Also included: worked part-time at the Hull Boxing Club <sup>d</sup>	Graduate tutor for Year 12 students <sup>c</sup>	Mentor for first generation HE students <sup>b</sup> <b>ID3<sup>d</sup></b> - Also included: worked part-time as a supermarket cashier <sup>d</sup> <b>ID3B</b> - Also included: worked part-time at the Northampton Bingo Club <sup>d</sup>	Mentor for students participating in the Faculty's public engagement festival <sup>c</sup>
<b>Personal interests</b>	Playing and watching football, socialising at home with friends, playing guitar <sup>b</sup> <b>ID1A/B</b> – Used these instead: boxing, going to the pub, watching TV <sup>d</sup>	Classical music concerts, art galleries, sailing <sup>a</sup>	Netball, going to the cinema, socialising, listening to popular music <sup>b</sup> <b>ID3A/B</b> – Used these instead: netball, playing bingo, socialising, listening to popular music <sup>d</sup>	Going to the theatre, playing tennis, listening to jazz music <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Higher-class and class neutral items that, in combination, signify a higher-class background.

<sup>b</sup>Lower-class and class neutral items that, in combination, signify a lower-class background.

<sup>c</sup>Largely class neutral items that, rather than sending out a strong class signal by itself, serves as a control item in relation to a stronger class signal in the other conditions.

<sup>d</sup>Stronger lower-class items that, in combination, magnify signals of a lower-class background.

## Appendix 5 – Statistical analysis for pretesting of baseline CVs

Table A5: Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, calculated using SPSS (V19), for pretesting of baseline CVs (pretest 1)

Factor	Baseline CV1		Baseline CV2		Difference between CV1 and CV2 median	Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
	Median	Range	Median	Range		Exact test sig. (2-tailed)	Decision regarding null hypothesis
Capable	5.5	5-6	6	4-6	-0.5	1	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Efficient	5	4-6	5.5	3-7	-0.5	0.875	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Skilled	5	5-7	5.5	5-6	-0.5	1	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Intelligent	6	5-7	6	5-7	0	1	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Committed	5	4-5	5.5	5-6	-0.5	0.25	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Independent	5	4-6	5	3-7	0	1	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Self-confident	5	4-6	5.5	3-7	-0.5	1	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Warm	4	4-6	4	3-5	0	0.75	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Sincere	4	4-7	4.5	3-6	-0.5	1	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>
Average of all factors	5	4.56-6.00	5.11	4.22-6.33	-0.11	0.875	Retain H <sub>1</sub> , reject H <sub>0</sub>

Table A6: Outcomes of pretesting exercise 2

Participant number	CV ref	Description	Participant responses						Conclusion
			Race	Gender	Parental status	Sexual orientation	Nationality	Background	
<b>Gary Clark: lower-class male</b>									
1	CV1	ID1, baseline CV #1	Neither	Male	Neither	Neither	Neither	Neither	Reject ID1
2	CV6	ID1, baseline CV #2	White	Male	Neither	Neither	UK	Neither	Reject ID1
3	CV9	ID1A, baseline CV #1 (stronger class signals)	Neither	Male	Non-parent	Neither	UK	More poor than wealthy	Reject ID1A
4	CV11	ID1B, baseline CV #2 (stronger class signals)	White	Male	Non-parent	Heterosexual	UK	Poor	<b>Retain ID1B – use on baseline CVs 1 and 2</b>
<b>David Micklethwait: higher-class male</b>									
5	CV2	ID2, baseline CV #1	White	Male	Non-parent	Neither	UK	Wealthy	<b>Retain ID2, baseline CV 1</b>
6	CV5	ID2, baseline CV #2	White	Male	Neither	Neither	UK	Wealthy	<b>Retain ID2, baseline CV 2</b>
<b>Stacey West: lower-class female</b>									
7	CV3	ID3, baseline CV #1	White, Black, Asian	Female	Neither	Neither	UK	Neither	Reject
8	CV7	ID3, baseline CV #2	Neither	Female	Neither	Neither	UK	More poor than wealthy	Reject
9	CV10	ID3A, baseline CV #1 (stronger class signals)	White	Female	Neither	Neither	UK	Poor	<b>Retain ID3A – use on baseline CVs 1 and 2</b>
10	CV12	ID3B, baseline CV #2 (stronger class signals)	Neither	Female	Neither	Neither	Neither	Neither	Reject
<b>Emma Trelawney: higher-class female</b>									
11	CV4	ID4, baseline CV #1	Neither	Female	Non-parent	Neither	UK	Wealthy	<b>Retain ID4, baseline CV 1</b>
12	CV8	ID4, baseline CV #2	White	Female	Parent / non-parent likely	Likely to all	UK	Wealthy	<b>Retain ID4, baseline CV 2</b>

Table A 7: The results of the pretesting used to retain or reject the hypotheses for the vignettes

Hypotheses		Results
A	H <sub>1</sub> : The vignettes express the expected signals of class. H <sub>0</sub> : The vignettes do not express the expected signals of class.	<b>H<sub>1</sub>:</b> ID1A, ID1B, ID2, ID3(#2), ID3A, ID4: signalled expected class. <b>H<sub>0</sub>:</b> ID1, ID3(#1), ID3B: no signals of class.
B	H <sub>1</sub> : The vignettes express the expected signals of gender. H <sub>0</sub> : The vignettes do not express the expected signals of gender.	<b>H<sub>1</sub>:</b> All vignettes signalled the expected gender. <b>H<sub>0</sub>:</b> Reject for all vignettes.
C	H <sub>1</sub> : The vignettes express the expected signals of white/Caucasian race or do not signal any race. H <sub>0</sub> : The vignettes express signals of any race other than white/Caucasian race.	<b>H<sub>1</sub>:</b> ID1(#2), ID1B, ID2, ID3A, ID4(#2): signalled white/Caucasian race. ID1(#1), ID1A, ID3(#2), ID3B, ID4(#1): no signals of any race. <b>H<sub>0</sub>:</b> ID3(#1): confused signals of race.
D	H <sub>1</sub> : The vignettes express signals of non-parent status or do not express signals of parental status. H <sub>0</sub> : The vignettes express signals of being a parent.	<b>H<sub>1</sub>:</b> ID1A, ID2(#1), ID4: signalled non-parent status. ID1, ID2(#2), ID3, ID3A, ID3B: signalled no parental status. <b>H<sub>0</sub>:</b> ID4(#2): signalled likely to both parent and non-parent status ( <i>ignored – assumed error in participant’s response</i> ).
E	H <sub>1</sub> : The vignettes express signals of heterosexual orientation or do not express signals of sexual orientation. H <sub>0</sub> : The vignettes express signals of gay/lesbian or bisexual sexual orientation.	<b>H<sub>1</sub>:</b> ID1, ID1A, ID2, ID3, ID3A, ID3B, ID4(#1): signalled no sexual orientation. ID1B: signalled heterosexual orientation. <b>H<sub>0</sub>:</b> ID4(#2): signalled likely to all sexual orientation options ( <i>ignored – assumed error in participant’s response</i> ).
F	H <sub>1</sub> : The vignettes express signals of UK nationality or no nationality. H <sub>0</sub> : The vignettes express signals of do not express signals of being an immigrant to the UK.	<b>H<sub>1</sub>:</b> ID1(#1), ID3B: signalled no nationality. ID1(#2), ID1A, ID1B, ID2, ID3, ID3A, ID4: signalled UK nationality. <b>H<sub>0</sub>:</b> Reject for all vignettes.
<b>Conclusions:</b>		Retain vignettes: - ID1B (lower class male) - ID2 (higher class male) - ID3A (lower class female) - ID4 (higher class female)

# Notes where there was a difference between the expression of the signal on baseline 1 compared with baseline 2



## Appendix 6 – Example hypothetical CV and covering letter

### DR EMMA BARTLE-JONES

Badgers Brook, Green Lane, Appleton Thorn, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 5PF  
Tel: 01925 896445 Email: ebartlejones@gmail.com

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#### PERSONAL PROFILE

Proactive and creative researcher  
Experienced in working independently  
Ability to meet deadlines and accurate recording and analysis  
Teaching experience with students and some PhD informal supervision

#### EDUCATION

- 2014 – 2018 University of Bristol, Faculty of Social Sciences and Law  
PhD Sociology  
Supervisor: Professor R W Smithson  
Title: Sex and relationship education (SRE) and young people's lived experiences
- 2011 – 2014 University of Durham, Faculty of Social Sciences and Health  
BA (Hons) Sociology (2.1)
- 2009 – 2011 Altrincham Grammar School for Girls, Altrincham  
A levels – Sociology (B), English Language (C), French (C), Latin (D)

#### RESEARCH INTERESTS

My research interests are in the sociology of children and young people and, in particular, their intimate and personal relationships, transitions to adulthood, and educational/employment (dis)engagement. My doctoral research explored the gap in sex and relationship education knowledge, provision and practice. I am interested in how characteristics such as gender and race interact to shape everyday experiences for children and young people. My work uses action and participatory research methods and qualitative longitudinal research methods.

#### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Taught the second year Sociology module “Contemporary children, young people and families” and marked coursework
- Led weekly seminars with first year Sociology students
- Organised field trip for students to the British Sociological Association conference in May 2017
- Informal MPhil and PhD supervision

#### ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP

- Assisted in examining, talking to students and parents at open days and invigilating examinations
- Organised seminar sign-up at enrolment
- Mentor for students participating in the Faculty's public engagement event
- Graduate tutor for Year 12 students at local grammar school
- Undertook administrative tasks relating to student induction programme

#### CONFERENCES ATTENDED

- 2018 Children and young people: Identities over time – Oxford Brookes University
- 2017 The Challenge of Big Data – The British Library
- 2017 Marginalized voices – University of Kent

#### PUBLICATIONS

- Bartle-Jones, E. 2018. Young people and sex education. *Sociology*, 40 (3), pp. 192-198.
- Smithson, R. W. and Bartle-Jones, E. 2017. Understanding sex and relationship education: Youth and gender. *The Sociological Review*, 12 (2), pp. 27-42.

#### INTERESTS

Going to the theatre, playing tennis, sailing, listening to jazz music.

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3 May 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Application for the position of Lecturer in Sociology**

I would like to be considered for the above position and hope to demonstrate how much I could bring to it. My research and teaching interests fit extremely well with the requirements of this post and with existing members of staff. I have teaching experience in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law at the University of Bristol, most of it focussed on teaching undergraduate students about the sociology of children and young people. My work provides a useful link between the sociology of education and youth studies, encouraging research and teaching collaborations in the faculty.

I was awarded my PhD by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law at the University of Bristol in 2018. My thesis was entitled: *Sex and relationship education (SRE) and young people's lived experiences*. I explored the gap in sex and relationship education knowledge, provision and practice. Key to this was developing an understanding of how young people's everyday experiences and interactions are shaped by the intersections of their personal characteristics such as race and gender. I have published two articles already and plan to publish two further articles from my thesis this year.

My research interests are in the sociology of childhood, youth studies and transitions to adulthood, with a particular focus on social identity and personal relationships. My work pays particular attention to how personal characteristics intersect to shape experiences, opportunities and (dis)advantages across the life-course. I am currently extending the geographical scope of my doctoral research to explore the gap in sex and relationship education knowledge, provision and practice in Ireland. I plan to seek external funding to continue this work.

I have two years' teaching experience on 'Contemporary children, young people and families' and have led weekly seminars with BA (Hons) Sociology students. I have undertaken informal supervision of two MPhil and one PhD students. As required I would be happy to contribute to undergraduate and postgraduate modules of both a research-led and a methodological nature. I would like to offer undergraduate units on 'contemporary debates in childhood and youth studies' and 'young people's social identities and personal relationships'. I would be able to contribute to postgraduate units on approaches to using action and participatory research methods and researching biographies. I am keen to undertake a teaching qualification and become a HEA Fellow

I am also aware of the importance of the pastoral care of students and take the role of tutor very seriously. I am experienced in liaising with colleagues to help students with a variety of problems. I have been a mentor to undergraduate students participating in the Faculty's annual public engagement event, as well as being a graduate tutor to year 12 students at a grammar school. I provided authentic support from my personal experience. I found this particularly rewarding and would like to continue this in future.

I would be grateful for the opportunity to demonstrate my capabilities further at interview. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Dr Emma Bartle-Jones

## Appendix 7 – Participant information sheet



### Participant information sheet

#### **Bournemouth University**

#### **What do academic recruiters look for in PhD graduates who are applying for their first academic post?**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

#### **Research team**

Researcher: Julie Northam, PhD student, Bournemouth University  
jnortham@bournemouth.ac.uk / 01202 961208

Supervisors: Dr Sara White, Associate Dean, Bournemouth University  
swhite@bournemouth.ac.uk / 01202 967292

Prof Samuel Porter, Head of Department – Social Work and Social Sciences,  
Bournemouth University

porters@bournemouth.ac.uk / 01202 964107

#### **Who is sponsoring the research?**

The research is sponsored by Bournemouth University (BU).

#### **Overview of the study**

This study is for my doctoral research which aims to understand the characteristics and qualities that academic recruiters look for in candidates applying for posts in academia. This exercise is based on the short-listing stage of recruitment and will explore how academic recruiters evaluate job applications and make decisions about their suitability for an academic post.

### **Why have I been invited?**

Your university has agreed for me to invite you, as a senior academic with a responsibility for recruiting other academic staff, to take part in the study. This is a national study and other universities are also taking part in the research.

### **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. This document describes the study and explains its purpose and what will happen to the data collected. If you do decide to take part, you should keep this sheet. You will be asked to give your consent to take part in the research before you complete the exercise online. You can withdraw at any time during the online exercise, without giving a reason and without prejudice, before submitting your data. After submission the data are processed and become anonymous so your identity cannot be determined. Deciding to take part or not will not adversely affect you.

### **What will taking part involve?**

If you decide to take part, you should read the documents attached to the email invitation (CV and covering letter from a fictitious applicant). You will then need to access the online survey using the details provided in the email invitation. You should read the documents from the fictitious applicant and then assess the candidate's suitability, entering your answers into the online survey. The time spent to undertake the exercise is up to you, however, it is anticipated the exercise will take approximately 10-15 minutes. If there are any questions you do not wish to answer, then just leave these blank. When you have finished the exercise, you will be prompted to submit your data. If you have any questions about the exercise, then you can contact me on [jnortham@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:jnortham@bournemouth.ac.uk).

### **What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?**

You will be asked to summarise the pros and cons of the fictitious applicant, based on the CV and covering letter. You will then evaluate the applicant on a number of factors such as competency, commitment and institutional fit. You will be asked the extent to which you would recommend the applicant to be interviewed for the post and to give a recommended salary for the applicant, should they be recruited. The aim of the exercise is to gain an understanding of how academic recruiters make selection decisions during the recruitment process and, in particular, what characteristics and qualities they seek in applicants applying for posts in academia.

### **What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?**

Whilst no immediate benefits to the participants are predicted, it is hoped the information we get from the study will help to increase the understanding of what academic recruiters are looking for in applicants, how CVs are evaluated and how short-listing decisions are made. The findings could potentially be beneficial for future applicants to academia as well as to academic recruiters. There are no foreseen disadvantages or risks of taking part.

### **How will my information be kept?**

All the information collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications without your specific consent. The online survey will not ask you for any direct personal data, however, you will be asked for some indirect identifying data (such as your gender, job title, race/ethnicity, etc.). This will be kept confidential and will be anonymised wherever possible. Upon submission the software will automatically provide each completed questionnaire with a unique code. It will not be possible for any completed questionnaires to be linked back to individuals other than potentially through combinations of relational data, however, data will not be shared in such a way that individual indirect identifiers will be made available. Data relating to this study will be kept for five years after the completion of my degree on a BU password protected secure network. The password will be known only by me. You should be aware that it is possible for password protected secure networks to be hacked, however, the probability of this is extremely unlikely.

The information collected about you may be used in an anonymous form to support other research projects in the future and access to it in this form will not be restricted. It will not be possible for you to be identified from this data.

The results will form part of my PhD thesis which is likely to be published by 2021.

### **Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

The project has been reviewed in line with Bournemouth University's Research Ethics Code of Practice (Ethics ID 21537).

### **Contact for further information**

If you would like further information about the research, please contact me or one of my supervisors, using the contact details at the start of this information sheet.

### **In case of complaints**

If you have any concerns regarding this study, please contact Professor Vanora Hundley, Deputy Dean (Research and Professional Practice) for the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, by email at [researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:researchgovernance@bournemouth.ac.uk).

### **Next steps**

If you decide to take part in the research, please follow the instructions in the email invitation to access the online survey.

### **Thank you**

Thank you for taking the time to read this participant information sheet and for your interest in this research. If you choose to take part, your responses will be enormously valuable to me.

## Appendix 8 – Debriefing statement and re-consent to submit data

Thank you very much for taking part in my research study. Your input has been extremely valuable.

During the exercise, you were asked to evaluate a hypothetical CV from a candidate applying for an academic post. You were told that the purpose of the study was to gain an understanding of the characteristics and qualities that recruiters value in candidates applying for posts in academia and make decisions about their suitability for an academic post. You were not told that the full purpose of the study was to explore how recruiters evaluate job applications and make recruitment decisions where CVs are substantively the same except for variables of gender and class. The omission of this information was crucial to uncovering and understanding of how signals of gender and class might influence recruitment practices in academia.

If participants were made fully aware of the purpose of the study in advance of their participation, then this might have influenced how they responded to the tasks, and this would have invalidated the results. It is hoped that the results of this study will help prevent unfair discrimination recruitment practices in future. Because you were not provided with the full information about the purpose of the study in advance of your participation, you have the right to withdraw from the study at this point, without penalty or prejudice. Please be assured that all responses will be treated anonymously and in confidence.

Please confirm your agreement to submit your data, on the understanding that:

1. You understand why it was necessary for the researcher to disguise the real purpose of this study.
2. You understand that having full information about the actual purpose of the study might have influenced the way in which you responded to the tasks, and this would have invalidated the results. Thus, to ensure that this did not happen, some of the details about the purpose of the study initially were not provided (or were provided in a manner that slightly misrepresented the real purpose of the study).
3. You have now received a written explanation as to the actual purpose of the study.
4. You have been asked to give permission for the researcher to use your data (or information you provided) in their study and agree to this request. You are aware that you may withdraw this consent by not agreeing to this consent form.

I consent to my data being used in this study.

- I agree
- I do not agree (my data will not be saved)

## Appendix 9 – Output from logistic regression models

Table A8: Model 1: The effect of being a higher-class male applicant on whether an interview invitation was offered (\*p < .05, \*\*p < .005)

Group of applicants	Model 1 – all participants (n=138)				
	Logit model Beta coefficients	Wald	Significance	Odds ratio (Exp (B))	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower to upper
Higher-class male	1.135	8.403	.004**	3.111	1.444 to 6.702
Constant	-.847	19.599	<.001**	.429	
Statistical significance of full model	$\chi^2(1, n=165) = 8.535, p=.003**$				
R squared (variance)	Cox and Snell: 5.00% Nagelkerke: 6.90%				
Cases classified correctly	67.30%				

Table A9: Model 2: The effect of the classed and gendered applicant identities on whether an interview invitation was offered (excluding gender-unknown applicants) (\*p < .05)

Group of applicants	Model 2 – all participants (n=138)				
	Logit model Beta coefficients	Wald	Significance	Odds ratio (Exp (B))	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower to upper
Lower-class female		8.777	.032*		
Higher-class male	1.440	6.175	.013*	4.222	1.356 to 13.150
Higher-class female	.383	.422	.516	1.467	.462 to 4.658
Lower-class male	.288	.248	.618	.430	4.134
Constant	-1.204	6.690	.010*	.300	
Statistical significance of full model	$\chi^2(3, n=138) = 8.998, p=.029*$				
R squared (variance)	Cox and Snell: 6.30% Nagelkerke: 8.70%				
Cases classified correctly	68.10%				

Table A10: Model 3: The effect of applicant class background on whether an interview was offered (excluding gender-unknown applicants) – data restricted to participants at non-elite universities (\*p < .05)

Group of applicants	Model 3 – participants based at non-elite universities (excluding gender-unknown applicants) (n=70)				
	Logit model Beta coefficients	Wald	Significance	Odds ratio (Exp (B))	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower to upper
Higher-class applicant	1.216	5.784	.016*	3.373	1.252 to 9.087
Constant	-.833	4.835	.028*	.435	
Statistical significance of full model	$\chi^2 (1, n=70) = 6.080, p=.014^*$				
R squared (variance)	Cox and Snell: 8.30% Nagelkerke: 11.10%				
Cases classified correctly	64.30%				

Table A11: Model 4: The effect of the classed and gendered applicant identities on whether a higher starting salary was recommended (excluding gender-unknown applicants) (\*p < .05)

Group of applicants	Model 4 – participants based at elite universities (excluding gender-unknown applicants) (n=56)				
	Logit model Beta coefficients	Wald	Significance	Odds ratio (Exp (B))	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower to upper
Lower-class female		6.178	.103		
Higher-class male	1.946	4.016	.045*	7.000	1.044 to 46.949
Higher-class female	.511	.280	.597	1.667	.251 to 11.071
Lower-class male	.143	.020	.887	1.154	.161 to 8.274
Constant	-1.609	.775	.038*	.200	
Statistical significance of full model	$\chi^2 (3, n=56) = 6.455, p=.091$				
R squared (variance)	Cox and Snell: 10.90% Nagelkerke: 15.60%				
Cases classified correctly	75.00%				



Table A12: Models 1A-1D: The effect of being a higher-class male applicant on whether an interview invitation was offered – restricted to different groups of participants (excluding gender-unknown applicants) (\* p < .05, \*\*p < .005)

Group of applicants	Model 1A – female participants only (n=71)					Model 1B – NS-SEC 2-7-background participants only (n=54)				
	Logit model Beta coefficients	Wald	Significance	Odds ratio (Exp (B))	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower to upper	Logit model Beta coefficients	Wald	Significance	Odds ratio (Exp (B))	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower to upper
Higher-class male	1.630	8.072	.004*	5.104	1.658 to 15.714	.722	1.181	.277	2.059	.560 to 7.574
Constant	-.783	6.728	.009*	.457		-.386	1.505	.220	.680	
Statistical significance of full model	$\chi^2 (1, n=71) = 8.832, p = .003^{**}$					$\chi^2 (1, n=54) = 1.200, p = .273$				
R squared (variance)	Cox and Snell: 11.70% Nagelkerke: 15.70%					Cox and Snell: 2.20% Nagelkerke: 2.90%				
Cases classified correctly	69.00%					59.30%				

Group of applicants	Model 1C – participants at non-elite universities only (n=85)					Model 1D – participants who had undertaken unconscious bias training (n=136)				
	Logit model Beta coefficients	Wald	Significance	Odds ratio (Exp (B))	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower to upper	Logit model Beta coefficients	Wald	Significance	Odds ratio (Exp (B))	95% CI for Exp (B) Lower to upper
Higher-class male	.801	2.410	.121	2.227	.810 to 6.119	1.543	11.808	<.001**	4.680	1.941 to 11.286
Constant	-.315	1.550	.213	.730		-.956	19.782	<.001**	.385	
Statistical significance of full model	$\chi^2 (1, n=85) = 2.477, p = .116$					$\chi^2 (1, n=136) = 12.977, p = <.001^{**}$				
R squared (variance)	Cox and Snell: 2.90% Nagelkerke: 3.80%					Cox and Snell: 8.80% Nagelkerke: 12.10%				
Cases classified correctly	58.80%					70.60%				

## Appendix 10 – Summary of content analysis

Table A13: Frequency of main categories (positive comments) identified through content analysis, split by class background of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Strong or good [applicant / applicant / application / CV / academic profile] / highflyer / good applicant / first impression		Potential / promising / shows promise		Enthusiastic / enthusiasm / keen / motivated / eager / positive attitude [about the applicant]		Suitable / would score well / employable / ok for career stage / appointable / solid enough / safe pair of hands	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<i>All participants</i>									
Lower-class	83	7	8.43	7	8.43	12	14.46	5	6.02
Higher-class	83	11	13.25	6	7.23	9	10.84	9	10.84
All CVs	166	18	10.47	13	7.83	21	12.65	14	8.43
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>									
Lower-class	42	3	7.14	5	11.91	4	9.52	1	2.38
Higher-class	38	4	10.53	2	5.26	2	5.26	4	10.53
All CVs	80	7	8.75	7	8.75	6	7.5	5	6.25
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>									
Lower-class	41	4	9.76	2	4.88	8	19.51	4	9.76
Higher-class	45	7	15.56	4	8.89	7	15.56	5	11.11
All CVs	86	11	12.79	6	6.98	15	17.44	9	10.47

Table A14: Frequency of main categories (positive comments) identified through content analysis, split by perceived gender of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Strong or good [applicant / applicant / application / CV / academic profile] / highflyer / good applicant / first impression		Potential / promising / shows promise		Enthusiastic / enthusiasm / keen / motivated / eager / positive attitude [about the applicant]		Suitable / would score well / employable / ok for career stage / appointable / solid enough / safe pair of hands	
		No	%	No	No	No	%	No	%
<i>All participants</i>									
Female	63	7	11.11	6	9.52	6	9.52	4	6.35
Male	76	8	10.53	5	6.58	12	15.79	6	7.90
Not known	26	2	7.69	1	3.85	3	11.54	4	15.39
No response	1	1	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
All CVs	166	18	10.84	12	7.23	21	12.65	14	8.43
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>									
Female	36	2	5.56	4	11.11	2	5.56	1	2.78
Male	32	3	9.38	3	9.38	3	9.38	4	12.50
Not known	11	1	9.09	0	0.00	1	9.09	0	0.00
No response	1	1	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
All CVs	80	7	8.75	7	8.75	6	7.50	5	6.25
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>									
Female	27	5	18.52	2	7.41	4	14.82	3	11.11
Male	44	5	11.36	2	4.55	9	20.46	2	4.55
Not known	23	1	4.35	1	4.35	2	8.70	4	17.39
No response	0	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
All CVs	86	11	12.79	5	5.81	15	17.44	9	10.47

Table A15: Frequency of main categories (positive comments) identified through content analysis, split by class background and perceived gender of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Strong or good [applicant / applicant / application / CV / academic profile] / highflyer / good applicant / first impression		Potential / promising / shows promise		Enthusiastic / enthusiasm / keen / motivated / eager / positive attitude [about the applicant]		Suitable / would score well / employable / ok for career stage / appointable / solid enough / safe pair of hands	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<i>All participants</i>									
Lower-class male	42	2	4.76	3	7.14	8	19.05	2	4.76
Lower-class female	26	3	11.54	3	11.54	3	11.54	0	0.00
Lower-class unknown gender	15	2	13.33	0	0.00	1	6.67	3	20.00
Higher-class male	34	6	17.65	2	5.88	4	11.77	4	11.77
Higher-class female	37	4	10.81	3	8.11	3	8.10	4	10.81
Higher-class unknown gender	11	0	0.00	1	9.09	2	18.18	1	9.09
Unknown	1	1	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
All CVs	166	18	10.84	12	7.23	21	12.65	14	8.43
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>									
Lower-class male	19	1	5.26	2	10.53	2	10.53	1	5.26
Lower-class female	16	1	6.25	3	18.75	1	6.25	0	0.00
Lower-class unknown gender	7	1	14.29	0	0.00	1	14.29	0	0.00

Group	Number of participants	Strong or good [applicant / applicant / application / CV / academic profile] / highflyer / good applicant / first impression		Potential / promising / shows promise		Enthusiastic / enthusiasm / keen / motivated / eager / positive attitude [about the applicant]		Suitable / would score well / employable / ok for career stage / appointable / solid enough / safe pair of hands	
Higher-class male	13	2	15.39	1	7.69	1	7.69	3	23.08
Higher-class female	20	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00	1	5.00
Higher-class unknown gender	4	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
Unknown	1	1	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00
All CVs	80	7	8.75	7	8.75	6	7.5	5	6.25
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>									
Lower-class male	23	1	4.35	1	4.35	6	26.09	1	4.35
Lower-class female	10	2	20	0	0	2	20	0	0
Lower-class unknown gender	8	1	12.5	0	0	0	0	3	37.5
Higher-class male	21	4	19.05	1	4.76	3	14.29	1	4.76
Higher-class female	17	3	17.65	2	11.77	2	11.77	3	17.65
Higher-class unknown gender	7	0	0	1	14.29	2	28.57	1	14.29
Unknown	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0
All CVs	86	11	12.79	5	5.81	15	17.44	9	10.47

Table A16: Frequency of main categories (negative comments) identified through content analysis, split by class background of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Early / junior / ECR / green / inexperienced / young / naïve / not advanced enough / lack of experience / limited experience / first job / first post / entry level / new to role		Weak [applicant / applicant / application / CV] / premature / immature / not strong / not stand out / mediocre / not a highflyer / thin CV / not distinctive / not sufficient		Poor A level grades / academic performance / degree classification / university		No postdoctoral experience		More appropriate for lower-level job / temporary job		Needs development / support / mentor	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<i>All participants</i>													
Lower-class CVs	83	44	53.01	9	10.84	6	13.64	5	11.36	5	11.36	5	11.36
Higher-class CVs	83	48	57.83	11	13.25	4	8.33	7	14.58	3	6.25	4	8.33
All CVs	166	92	55.42	20	12.05	10	10.87	12	13.04	8	8.7	9	9.78
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>													
Lower-class	42	21	50.00	6	14.29	4	9.52	2	4.76	4	9.52	3	7.14
Higher-class	38	18	47.37	5	13.16	4	10.53	4	10.53	2	5.26	0	0
All CVs	80	39	48.75	11	13.75	8	10	6	7.5	6	7.5	3	3.75
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>													
Lower-class	41	23	56.10	3	7.32	2	4.88	3	7.32	1	2.44	2	4.88
Higher-class	45	30	66.67	6	13.33	0	0	3	6.67	1	2.22	4	8.89
All CVs	86	53	61.63	9	10.47	2	2.33	6	6.98	2	2.33	6	6.98

Table A17: Frequency of main categories (negative comments) identified through content analysis, split by perceived gender of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Early / junior / ECR / green / inexperienced / young / naïve / not advanced enough		Weak [applicant / applicant / application / CV] / premature / immature / not strong / not stand out / mediocre / not a highflyer / thin CV / not distinctive		Poor A level grades / academic performance / degree classification / university		No postdoctoral experience		More appropriate for lower-level job / temporary job		Needs development / support / mentor	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<i>All participants</i>													
Female	63	37	58.73	8	12.7	2	3.18	5	7.94	6	9.52	3	4.76
Male	76	45	59.21	8	10.53	7	9.21	5	6.58	0	0	6	7.89
Not known	26	9	34.62	4	15.39	1	3.85	2	7.69	2	7.69	0	0
No response	1	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All CVs	166	92	55.42	20	12.05	10	6.02	12	7.23	8	4.82	9	5.42
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>													
Female	36	17	47.22	6	16.67	2	5.56	3	8.33	5	13.89	1	2.78
Male	32	17	53.13	3	9.38	5	15.63	3	9.38	0	0	2	6.25
Not known	11	4	36.36	2	18.18	1	9.09	0	0	0	0	0	0
No response	1	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	100	0	0
All CVs	80	39	48.75	11	13.75	8	10	6	7.5	6	7.5	3	3.75
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>													
Female	27	20	74.07	2	7.41	0	0	2	7.41	1	3.7	2	7.41
Male	44	28	63.64	5	11.36	2	4.55	2	4.55	0	0	4	9.09
Not known	23	5	21.74	2	8.7	0	0	2	8.7	1	4.35	0	0
No response	0	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All CVs	86	53	61.63	9	10.47	2	2.33	6	6.98	2	2.33	6	6.98

Table A18: Frequency of main categories (negative comments) identified through content analysis, split by class background and perceived gender of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Early / junior / ECR / green / inexperienced / young / naïve / not advanced enough		Weak [applicant / applicant / application / CV] / premature / immature / not strong / not stand out / mediocre / not a highflyer / thin CV / not distinctive		Poor A level grades / academic performance / degree classification / university		No postdoctoral experience		More appropriate for lower-level job / temporary job		Needs development / support / mentor	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
<i>All participants</i>													
Lower-class male	42	24	57.14	5	11.91	5	11.91	3	7.14	0	0	4	9.52
Lower-class female	26	15	57.69	3	11.54	0	0	2	7.69	4	15.39	1	3.85
Lower-class unknown gender	15	5	33.33	1	6.67	1	6.67	0	0	1	6.67	0	0
Higher-class male	34	21	61.77	3	8.82	2	5.88	2	5.88	0	0	2	5.88
Higher-class female	37	22	59.56	5	13.51	2	5.41	3	8.11	2	5.41	2	5.41
Higher-class unknown gender	11	4	36.36	3	27.27	0	0	2	18.18	1	9.09	0	0
Unknown	1	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



Group	Number of participants	Early / junior / ECR / green / inexperienced / young / naïve / not advanced enough		Weak [applicant / applicant / application / CV] / premature / immature / not strong / not stand out / mediocre / not a highflyer / thin CV / not distinctive		Poor A level grades / academic performance / degree classification / university		No postdoctoral experience		More appropriate for lower-level job / temporary job		Needs development / support / mentor	
All CVs	166	92	55.42	20	12.05	10	6.02	12	7.23	8	4.82	9	5.42
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>													
Lower-class male	19	10	52.63	3	15.79	3	15.79	2	10.53	0	0	2	10.53
Lower-class female	16	8	50.00	2	12.5	0	0	0	0	3	18.75	1	6.25
Lower-class unknown gender	7	3	42.86	1	14.29	1	14.29	0	0	1	14.29	0	0.00
Higher-class male	13	7	53.85	0	0.00	2	15.39	1	7.69	0	0.00	0	0.00
Higher-class female	20	9	45.00	4	20.00	2	10.00	3	15	2	10.00	0	0.00
Higher-class unknown gender	4	1	25.00	1	25.00	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
Unknown	1	1	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0	0	0.00	0	0.00
All CVs	80	39	48.75	11	13.75	8	10.00	6	7.50	6	7.50	3	3.75
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>													

Group	Number of participants	Early / junior / ECR / green / inexperienced / young / naïve / not advanced enough		Weak [applicant / applicant / application / CV] / premature / immature / not strong / not stand out / mediocre / not a highflyer / thin CV / not distinctive		Poor A level grades / academic performance / degree classification / university		No postdoctoral experience		More appropriate for lower-level job / temporary job		Needs development / support / mentor	
Lower-class male	23	14	60.87	2	8.70	2	8.70	1	4.35	0	0.00	2	8.70
Lower-class female	10	7	70.00	1	10.00	0	0.00	2	20.00	1	10.00	0	0.00
Lower-class unknown gender	8	2	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Higher-class male	21	14	66.67	3	14.29	0	0	1	4.76	0	0	2	9.53
Higher-class female	17	13	76.47	1	5.88	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	11.77
Higher-class unknown gender	7	3	42.86	2	28.57	0	0	2	28.57	1	14.29	0	0
Unknown	0	-	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
All CVs	86	53	61.63	9	10.47	2	2.33	6	6.98	2	2.33	6	6.98

Table A19: Frequency of categories (teaching qualification) identified through content analysis, split by class background of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Participant noted the applicant does not have a teaching qualification		Participant noted the applicant is keen to pursue a teaching qualification		Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification as a negative		Where participants noted there was no teaching qualification, the proportion which were positive
		No	%	No	%	No	%	
<i>All participants</i>								
Lower-class CVs	83	19	22.89	7	8.43	12	14.46	36.84
Higher-class CVs	83	20	24.10	12	14.48	8	9.64	60.00
All CVs	166	39	23.49	19	11.45	20	12.05	48.72
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>								
Lower-class	42	4	9.52	3	7.14	1	2.38	75.00
Higher-class	38	3	7.90	2	5.26	1	2.63	66.67
All CVs	80	7	8.75	5	6.25	2	2.50	71.43
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>								
Lower-class	41	15	36.59	4	9.76	11	26.83	26.67
Higher-class	45	17	37.78	10	22.22	7	15.56	58.82
All CVs	86	32	37.21	14	16.28	18	20.93	43.75

Table A20: Frequency of categories (teaching qualification) identified through content analysis, split by perceived gender of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification		Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification as a positive, i.e. is keen to pursue a qualification		Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification as a negative		Where participants noted there was no teaching qualification, the proportion which were positive
		No	%	No	No	No	%	%
<i>All participants</i>								
Female	63	8	12.70	3	4.76	5	7.94	37.50
Male	76	25	32.90	12	15.79	13	17.10	48.00
Not known	26	5	19.23	3	11.54	2	7.69	60.00
No response	1	1	100.00	1	100	0	0.00	100.00
All CVs	166	39	23.49	19	11.45	20	12.05	48.72
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>								
Female	36	3	8.33	2	5.56	1	2.78	66.67
Male	32	2	6.25	2	6.25	0	0.00	100.00
Not known	11	1	9.09	0	0.00	1	9.09	0.00
No response	1	1	100.00	1	100	0	0.00	100.00
All CVs	80	7	8.75	5	6.25	2	2.50	71.83
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>								
Female	27	5	18.52	1	3.70	4	14.82	20.00
Male	44	23	52.27	10	22.73	13	29.55	43.48
Not known	23	4	17.39	3	13.04	1	4.35	75.00
No response	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
All CVs	86	32	37.21	14	16.28	18	20.93	14.29

Table A21: Frequency of categories (teaching qualification) identified through content analysis, split by class background and perceived gender of applicants

Group	Number of participants	Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification		Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification as a positive, i.e. is keen to pursue a qualification		Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification as a negative		Where participants noted there was no teaching qualification, the proportion which were positive
		No	%	No	No	No	%	%
<i>All participants</i>								
Lower-class male	42	13	30.95	5	11.91	8	19.05	38.46
Lower-class female	26	6	23.08	2	7.69	4	15.39	33.33
Lower-class unknown gender	15	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0
Higher-class male	34	12	35.29	7	20.59	5	14.71	58.33
Higher-class female	37	2	5.41	1	2.70	1	2.70	50.00
Higher-class unknown gender	11	5	45.45	3	27.27	2	18.18	60.00
Unknown	1	1	100.00	1	100.00	0	0.00	100.00
All CVs	166	39	23.49	19	11.45	20	12.05	48.72
<i>Data restricted to participants from elite universities</i>								
Lower-class male	19	2	10.53	2	10.53	0	0.00	100.00
Lower-class female	16	2	12.50	1	6.25	1	6.25	50.00
Lower-class unknown gender	7	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00

Group	Number of participants	Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification		Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification as a positive, i.e. is keen to pursue a qualification		Participant noted the applicant did not have a teaching qualification as a negative		Where participants noted there was no teaching qualification, the proportion which were positive
Higher-class male	13	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Higher-class female	20	1	5.00	1	5.00	0	0.00	100.00
Higher-class unknown gender	4	1	25.00	0	0.00	1	25.00	0.00
Unknown	1	1	100.00	1	100.00	0	0.00	100.00
All CVs	80	7	8.75	5	6.25	2	2.50	71.43
<i>Data restricted to participants from non-elite universities</i>								
Lower-class male	23	11	47.83	3	13.04	8	34.78	27.27
Lower-class female	10	4	40.00	1	10.00	3	30.00	25.00
Lower-class unknown gender	8	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00
Higher-class male	21	12	57.14	7	33.33	5	23.81	58.33
Higher-class female	17	1	5.88	0	0.00	1	5.88	0.00
Higher-class unknown gender	7	4	57.14	3	42.86	1	14.29	75.00
Unknown	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
All CVs	86	32	37.21	14	16.28	18	20.93	43.75

## Abbreviations

AHEA	Associate Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BPS	British Psychological Society
BSA	British Sociological Association
CPD	Continuing professional development
CV	Curriculum vitae
DfE	Department for Education
ECR	Early career researcher
FHEA	Fellow of the Higher Education Academy
FSE	Factorial survey experiment
FSM	Free Schools Meals
H <sub>#</sub>	Hypothesis
HE	Higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEI	Higher education institution
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HRM	Human resource management
Md	Median
Mo	Mode
NS-SEC	National Statistics Socio-economic Classification
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OfS	Office for Students
Oxbridge	Universities of Oxford and Cambridge
POLAR	Participation of Local Areas
PwC	PricewaterhouseCoopers
RAS	Resume audit study/ies
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SCM	Stereotype Content Model
STEMM	Science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
THE	Times Higher Education
UBT	Unconscious bias training
UCU	University & College Union
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VC	Vice-Chancellor

## Glossary

Ableism	Discrimination and social prejudice against disabled people or people who are perceived to have disabilities, which generates a collective understanding of disability as a diminished state of being human.
Academic inbreeding	Academic inbreeding: “a recruitment practice in which universities hire their own graduates as faculty directly after doctoral graduation” (Horta et al., 2011, p. 36).
Athena Swan	<p>The Athena Swan Charter is a framework which is used across the world to support and transform gender equality within HE and research. Further details are available from the Advance HE website: <a href="https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan-charter">https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan-charter</a>.</p> <p>A list of member institutions is available from: <a href="https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/athena-swan-members/">https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/athena-swan/athena-swan-members/</a>.</p>
Chav	A pejorative term used in England for somebody, usually a young person, who is thought to behave, dress and/or speak in a way that shows their low social class. Although less common in modern parlance, it can also be used as a term of endearment, meaning ‘boy’, ‘boyfriend’ or ‘friend’.
Doxa	Doxa refers to the learned, fundamental, deep-founded, unconscious beliefs, and values, taken as self-evident universals, that inform an agent’s actions and thoughts. It is the primary experience that agents have of the social world, which is perceived as natural, taken-for-granted and even commonsensical. Doxa is accepted as a taken-for-granted reality, which results in adherence to the social order (Bourdieu, 1984; 1990). Doxa is described by Bourdieu (1998, p. 57) as “the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view”.
Formalism	The notion that there is one scientific method.
Free School Meals	Pupils eligible for FSM are considered disadvantaged because eligibility is linked to parents being in receipt of certain benefits (Department for Education, 2023, p. 5). The criteria were changed in 2018 for new claimants of Universal Credit with the introduction of an income threshold. FSM eligibility is a measure used by the UK government as part of the <a href="#">Social Mobility Index</a> to classify pupils by advantage/disadvantage and track social mobility. This data is only available for students who were enrolled in UK state-funded secondary education.
Grammar schools	Grammar schools are selective state secondary schools. Places are allocated based on the results of the eleven-plus examination, which identifies children suitable for a grammar education. There are 163 remaining grammar schools in England (out of c.3,000 state secondaries).
Managerial, administrative, and professional occupations	Higher-grade managerial, administrative and professional occupations are defined as those regulated through a full-service relationship, for example, lawyers, scientists, and HE teaching professionals. Lower grade managerial, administrative, and professional occupations are defined as those regulated through a modified form of a service relationship with skills that are more



	readily transferable and less organisationally specific, for example, teachers, nurses, and journalists (European Socio-Economic Classification, 2006).
Intersectionality	A popular contemporary paradigm through which actors are understood to experience the world based on their “multiple identities and experiences of subordination” (Davis, 2008).
Ivy League	The Ivy League is a group of eight old universities situated in the east of the United States of America. The eight institutions are: Brown University, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, Princeton University and Yale University. These institutions are considered to be academically excellent. The term Ivy League has connotations of selectivity in admissions and social elitism.
Median pay gap	If all salaries were ordered in a list, the median salary would be the middle salary. The median pay gaps are calculated as: gender – male median salary minus female median salary, divided by the male median salary; race identity – white median salary minus BME median salary, divided by the white median salary; and disability status – non-disabled median salary minus disabled median salary, divided by the non-disabled median salary. The median pay gap is preferred to the mean pay gap as it is less susceptible to outliers and therefore more representative.
National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC)	The NS-SEC is the UK’s official socio-economic classification. It is based on the work of John Goldthorpe. Further details are available here: <a href="https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassification/nssecbasedonsoc2010">https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/otherclassifications/thenationalstatistics socioeconomicclassification/nssecbasedonsoc2010</a> .
Neoliberalism	A political and economic philosophy that emphasises liberal rights, the free-market, deregulation, globalisation, and a reduction in government spending, with the aim of protecting freedom and promoting economic prosperity. It sees competition as the defining characteristic of human relations. As a policy model, it seeks to transfer the control of economic factors from the public sector to the private sector.
New managerialism	The adoption of by public sector organisations of organisational forms, technologies, management practices and values more commonly found in the private business sector.
Odds ratio	An odds ratio is a measure of the relative risk of an outcome in one population compared with a different population, where odds ratios greater than one indicate the outcome is more while less than one is less likely.
Participation of Local Areas (POLAR)	A measure of social mobility used in the UK that quantifies how likely young people are to participate in HE according to where they live. POLAR classifies local areas into quintiles based on the proportion of young people who enter higher education aged 18 or 19 years old. Quintile one shows the lowest rate of participation. Quintile five shows the highest rate of participation. Further information is available from the OfS website: <a href="https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/">https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/about-polar-and-adult-he/</a> .
Post-1992 universities	In the UK, post-1992 universities are former polytechnics or central institutions that were given university status through the Further

	and Higher Education Act 1992, or institutions that have been granted university status since 1992 without receiving a royal charter. These institutions are sometimes referred to as new or modern universities.
Pre-1992 universities	In the UK, post-1992 universities were granted university status before 1992. This is a diverse group of institutions and includes the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the federal University of London, the civic universities founded in the late 19 <sup>th</sup> and early 20 <sup>th</sup> Centuries, the former university colleges which awarded degrees of the University of London, the universities founded in the 1960s, and the Colleges of Advanced Technology which achieved university status following the Robbins Report (1963).
Race Equality Charter	The Race Equality Charter provides a framework through which HE institutions work to identify and self-reflect on institutional and cultural barriers standing in the way of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic staff and students. Further details are available from the Advance HE website: <a href="https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter">https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter</a> . A list of member institutions is available from: <a href="https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter/members-award-holders/">https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter/members-award-holders/</a> .
Research Excellence Framework	The Research Excellence Framework (REF) is the UK's system for assessing the excellence of research in UK higher education providers. The REF outcomes are used to inform the allocation of c.£2bn per year of public funding for universities' research. Universities compete in the REF for prestige, reputation, and funding. Further details are available from: <a href="https://www.ref.ac.uk/">https://www.ref.ac.uk/</a> .
Russell Group	A self-selecting association that describes itself as representing the "24 leading UK universities" (Russell Group, 2023).
Symbolic violence	A term coined by Bourdieu to describe a form of non-physical violence manifested in the power differential between social groups. It operates as a two-way process – "the violence... is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 167).
Tripartite System	The Tripartite System was the arrangement of state-funded secondary education in England between 1945 and the 1970s. Education was arranged into three types of school – grammar, secondary technical, and secondary modern.
Vignettes	Hypothetical descriptions of objects that are used in survey experiments to explore preferences, and which vary along different attributes that are presumed to be important determinants of the choice or rating (Hainmueller et al. 2015). For this study, the hypothetical job applicants were the vignettes.
White privilege	The implicit and inherent advantages afforded to white people on the basis of their race in a society characterised by racial inequality and injustice.