

# How Do Age and Gender Affect University Students' Experience and Outcomes?

## Traditional female

### 'Ideal type'

- Generally high in confidence with occasional fluctuations.
- Reported low attendance rates with personal relationships being detrimental to their ability to study.
- Placed little emphasis on the social side of university life.
- Participated in paid work but did not report high levels of debt.

### Case study – Ella

A quote from a traditional female representing a high level of confidence about exams.

*“not at all worried really as it doesn't feel like too much work.”*

Gender	Number	%
Male	3,306	45%
Female	4,094	55%
Total	7,400	

A longitudinal study of university students' experiences throughout their undergraduate degree. The main aim of this study was to understand the differences of experience between traditional students (aged eighteen to twenty) and mature students (aged over twenty) and between genders.

## Methods/participants

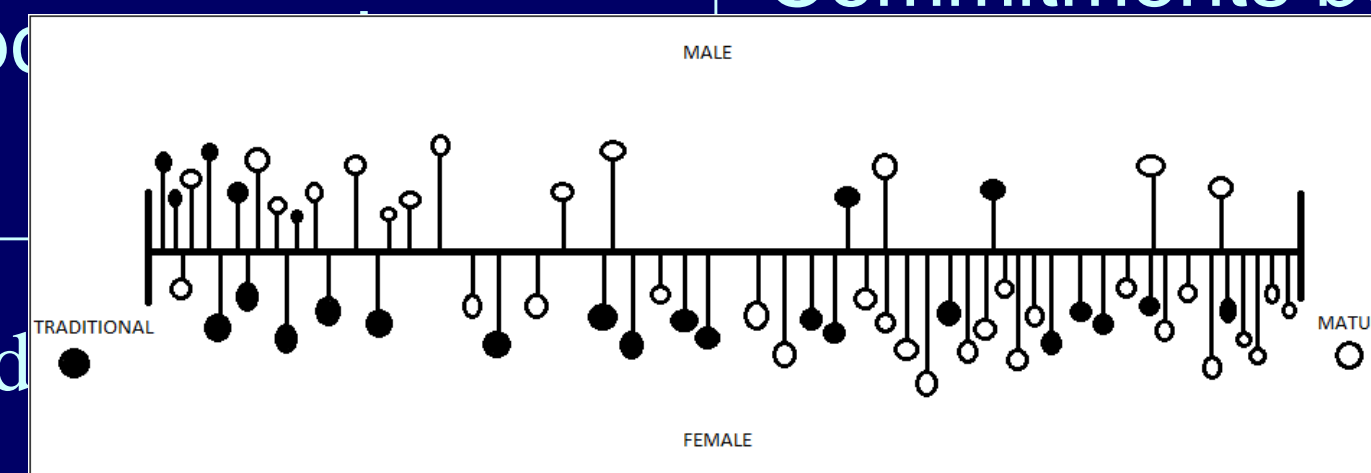
An email was sent to first year undergraduates inviting them to partake in an online study. They were to respond to prompts send via e-mail. By the end of the third year, sixty-one students had provided sufficient responses to form the sample.

## Findings

- Students cluster more closely by gender than age.
- Confidence is not a good predictor of grades.
- Commitments beyond the classroom

## Discussion

Debt, paid work, confidence, social life, attendance, romantic relationships, external commitments and career goals all participated to the outcomes of the students degree. Regardless of age, females were more affected by confidence and career goals, while males were affected by dept and social life.



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## Continuum

This continuum represents each student's experience by the use of a 'lollipop'. The further left the representative 'lollipop', the more aligned the experience is to a commonly depicted 'traditional' student, with the 'mature' students experience being on the right.

## Traditional male

### 'Ideal types'

- Heavily focused on the social side of university life, with high levels of dept and paid work.
- Generally reported high confidence and low anxiety levels, with weak work ethics.

### Case study – Mike

A quote from a traditional male explaining his absence from a number of lectures and seminars.

*“I FORGOT WHICH I THINK IS VERY JUSTIFIABLE... I WANTED TO GO I JUST FORGOT.”*

## University of West London Students

Age	Number	%
16-18	652	8%
19-20	1,666	23%
21-24	2,463	33%
25 plus	2,169	35%
Total	7,400	

## Mature female

### 'Ideal type'

- Had little interest in the social aspects of university life.
- Were anxious about assessments and reported fluctuating confidence levels.
- Had high attendance and good work ethics.
- External commitments, notably partners and children.

### Case study – Sophie

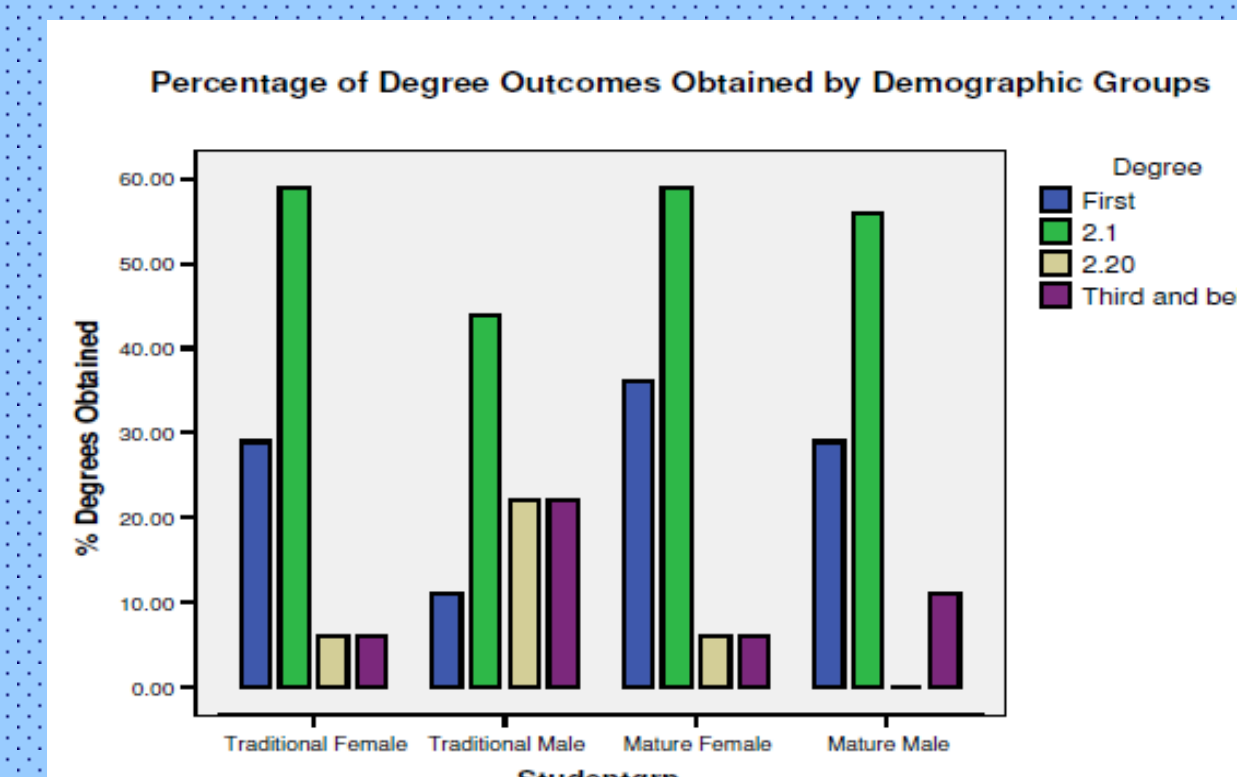
A quote from a mature female representing the difficulties between balancing work and family.

*“Advice to new students – be prepared to fight with family and be tired – very tired.”*

Student group	Degree outcome				Total
	First	2.1	2.2	Third below or	
Traditional Male	1	3	3	2	9
Mature Male	4	5	0	1	10
<b>Male total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>19</b>
Traditional Female	4	10	1	1	16
Mature Female	5	10	1	1	17
<b>Female total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>52</b>
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Degree outcomes (excluding withdrawals) for the student groups

Poster by Kayleigh Maker, Adam Pullen and Rebecca Harlow original thesis By Dr Lucy Solomon



According to HESA (2010), 2003/4 (the year that this sample graduated)

## Mature male

### 'Ideal type'

- Very social and reported high dept and paid work, with limited interest in work.
- High levels of external commitments which led to some internal struggles.
- Generally reported high confidence and low anxiety levels

### Case study – Charlie

A quote from a mature male depicting their low anxiety and limited interest in work.

*“not very confident that i have passed my exams but hey there are re takes!”*