The Hidden Factor Fuelling Female Success

A new study has confirmed what has long been suspected - girls are outperforming boys at university.

Research conducted by Dr Ruth Woodfield and Professor Peter Saunders, both based in SOC, shows that by the time students sit their second year exams there is a discrepancy of nearly 10% between the average scores attained by women and those obtained by certain groups of men.

The research, which was conducted at Sussex using a sample of 265 students across the range of social science subjects, revealed something which is perhaps more surprising than this male shortfall. Whereas there is only a tiny margin between the different groups of successful females - with factors such as age and class having very little bearing on the results - the different groups of men are very much affected by these factors. The average female score is around 60%. Against this, men under 21, and older men from middle class backgrounds, attain an average of only around 55%. Older men from working class backgrounds do even worse than this, scoring an average of just 51.9%.

Ruth and Pete set out to try to explain these patterns. They considered three sets of possible influences on degree performance - behavioural factors such as how hard people work and how good their attendance is; individual factors such as personality differences - e.g. 'openness' and 'agreeableness' - and cognitive ability; and sociological factors such as class background and educational history.

Behavioural factors are crucial. Attendance at classes and completion of work assignments are key predictors of later exam performance, and on average, women score higher on these factors than men do. According to Pete, "in a sense the gender difference can be explained largely by the fact that women, on average, work harder."

"Women are better equipped for the demands that universities make now"

Yet women's success goes beyond how hard they work - there is also a 'hidden factor'. Although in the first year, personality factors assume little importance, by the second year they have become increasingly significant. Women tend to score more highly than men on things like 'openness' and 'agreeableness', and these factors start to influence degree performance as students move through their second year.

Crucially the system is changing to favour the skills that women are more likely to offer, especially in subjects like the social sciences. According to Ruth Woodfield, "Women are better equipped for the demands that universities make now. As the trend leans towards continuous assessment, seminars and teamwork, people who are co-operative, flexible and less defensive are more likely to succeed - and these attributes are usually seen as feminine. What has previously placed women in the margins is now putting them firmly at the centre."

The first stage of the study, from which these results are collated, involved tracking 265 students who entered the university in 1996. Further stages of the research are currently in operation, involving 1000 students from 1997 and 1000 students from 1998. The study is being funded by the Teaching & Learning Development Fund and the School of Social Sciences.

Christmas Card

This year's University card is a detail from the painting Hausa Procession by Nigerian artist Jimoh Isale. Hausa Procession, which is currently hanging in AFRAS, is one of three paintings by the artist owned by the University.

The card which is a full colour reproduction is priced at £3.75 for 10 or 40p per single card. Individual cards can be purchased through the Bookshop and the Students' Union shop. Bulk orders should be placed through Chrissie Anthony in the Information Office on ext 3766 or email your order to information@sussex.ac.uk with a recharge code. Order early to avoid disappointment.
Ex-VC hosts Rockefeller Revelry

Earlier this month, former Vice Chancellor Gordon Conway, kept his promise to host an alumni event in his new position as the first non-American President of the Rockefeller Foundation. Joining him on the night were current Vice Chancellor, Alasdair Smith, and members of the newly formed US Friends of Sussex University. The Friends have been established by three Sussex alumni groups: Washington, Chicago and New York. Taking advantage of favourable US tax laws, £10,000 has been raised through membership which will go into a scholarship fund to aid recruitment of US postgraduate students.

The Alumni Society is empowered to award fellowships in recognition of service to the Society and the University, achievement of alumni in personal or professional life, or to those making a significant contribution to the local community. Awards were presented to: John Sedlins, President of the Friends and Chair of the Washington group; Rebecca Janowitz, Vice-President of the Friends and Chair of the Chicago Group; Laurie Schlagel, Vice-President of the Friends and Chair of the New York Group and (Ken) Tatsuo Fujimura, founder and first President of the highly influential Japanese alumni group. The awards were given out by John Spiers, who also received a 'surprise' fellowship for his fifteen years as Chair of the Alumni Society. The evening wound up with a speech from Alasdair Smith who outlined his vision for the future of the University and suggested new roles for the growing number of alumni, focusing in particular on student recruitment.

Gordon Conway (right) and John Spiers

Miscellaneous

• Poetry apology - Please note that the extension number for would-be-entrants for the Robin Lee Poetry competition should be 7303 rather than 2154. Sorry for any confusion caused.

• Carols and Readings by Candlelight on Sunday 6 December at 6.00 pm in The Meeting House. 'The Earth Exalted' arranged by Stephen Medcalf, Charles MacDonald and Andrew Robinson with The Meeting House Choir. The Retiring collection and all proceeds from the sale of mulled wine and mince pies after the service will be for Kosova.

• To all teaching staff - The bookshop would be grateful to receive all course recommendations for the spring term '99, as soon as possible, to enable them to place orders with publishers, before they close down for the xmas period. Queries and requests for blank forms should be addressed to Mrs Sue Green-Innes.

• World AIDS Day Concert "The Garden Of Love" on Tuesday 1 December in The Meeting House at 7.30pm. FREE ADMISSION. All donations raised during the concert will be equally shared between six local HIV/AIDS benefit and awareness groups. For further information please contact: Norman Jacobs Tel: (01273) 734681 or e-mail N.G.Jacobs@central.susx.ac.uk

• Free Tickets at the Gardner Arts Centre for the Richard Alston Dance Company, Tue 1 & Wed 2 December - "a brand new triple bill of delicious and atmospheric dance." The first five readers to present their Bulletin at the Box office can get in for free.

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[Refreshments will be provided throughout the day with a buffet lunch between 12.30 and 1.30pm.]
Reporting of Accidents

Please report near-miss events as well as accidents which cause injury.

During the vacation a student slipped on a wet pathway on East Slope. One of her feet slid into a hole in the surface of the pathway and she suffered a broken ankle. At the subsequent investigation, it was found that several students had slipped and fallen at the same place but nobody had reported these incidents. Had reports of these earlier falls been received the ankle injury might have been prevented.

It is hoped that this example will remind all members of the University of the importance or reporting ‘near-miss’ accidents, where persons have not been injured. Incident report forms are available from the Porters Lodge in each building.

Traffic Watching

Dear Bulletin

Maybe I’m missing something, but I don’t understand the new traffic experiment. It’s great for Lewesians, such as me, but it does little for the 80% (Estates figures) of campus commuters who travel in the Brighton direction. The critical point in their homeward journey is still getting onto the roundabout. Their problems are only alleviated slightly by those few individuals who prefer to drive to Brighton via the Kingston roundabout rather than wait in traffic; it’s a decision I sympathise with.

If we cannot beat the problem, maybe we should avoid it. Much of my information about the optimum time to get home is anecdotal. Is it really easier on a Wednesday evening for example? Why not put up a web camera at the junction of the Eastern and Southern ring roads? Pictures taken every 5 seconds (maybe only at one minute intervals would suffice) could be beamed onto a special University web page. We could then check the traffic situation before venturing home. A web-savvy friend tells me this solution would be relatively cheap - I guess the biggest cost would be the pole for mounting the camera.

Those colleagues lucky enough to be on sabbatical in sunnier climes might enjoy a certain tingle of Schadenfreude to see traffic building up in the drizzle back home.

Jonathan Bacon - BIOLS

- The Building and Services Division have recently sent a short questionnaire to all staff and students to quantify the opinion of the campus population on the current pilot traffic scheme. They will also be seeking the views of other interested parties, such as the bus company and emergency services.

It will take some time to analyse the returns. To avoid the confusion of constant changes in the meantime, the present arrangement will be kept in place at least until Christmas. Please return questionnaires to Rob French, Buildings & Services Division, through the internal mail. You don’t even need to use an envelope.

Research Funding Opportunities

This is a selection of Research Opportunities. More details of these and other opportunities are available from the Research Grants and Contracts Office, contact Debbie, ext 3812 or email: D.Foy-Everett@sussex.ac.uk. For an extensive listing of funding opportunities see REFUND on the Research Web site: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/research or USIS Home Page, under Research.

The ESRC invites proposals under the heading of “Devolution and Institutional Change in the U.K.” Projects will track institutional changes arising from the setting up of the Scottish parliament and Welsh Assembly. Deadline: 7 Dec 1998.

The ESRC invites applications under a new £3.5 million research programme on democracy and participation. Proposals are invited under five main headings: is there a crisis of democratic legitimacy in Britain? Why do only some people participate? Effects of constitutional political/technological changes on participation; links between governance, participation & accountability; what participation is taking place? Deadline: 15 Jan 1999.

The ESRC invites applications under the new £5 million research programme on Understanding the Evolving Macroeconomy. The two themes of the programme are: economic growth and fluctuation, economic policy, design, governance and practice. Deadline: 21 Dec 1998.

The Arts and Humanities Research Board invites applications for advanced research projects in all areas of the arts and humanities. Awards range from £5,000 - £500,00; the maximum length of a grant will be five years. Deadline: 31 Dec 1998.

Alexander S. Onassis Public Benefit Foundation invites application for research grants in the following fields: Arts & Humanities, Political Science, and Law & Economics. Grants are available for faculty wishing to conduct research in Greece for a period of 1-6 months. Deadline: 30 Jan 1999.

NATO is inviting applications from individuals and institutes for Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Fellowships. Awards for both types are approx. 240,000 Belgian Francs. For a list of research areas contact RGCO. Deadline: 31 Dec 1998.

The Royal Commission for the Exhibition of 1851 offers Industrial Fellowships to post-graduate scientists and engineers carrying out research and development in British industry. Value of award is £60,000 over 3 years. Deadline: 29 Jan 1999.
Lectures, Seminars, Colloquia

Monday 30 November

12.30 pm Sussex Continuing Education Research Forum: John Holford & Linda Merricks (Surrey), Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives on the History of Lifelong Learning, D310.

1.00 pm Experimental Psychology Seminar: Ted Ruffman, Implicit and explicit theory of mind: Links to general cognitive ability and real world behaviour. BLR.

2.00 pm International Relations and Politics Seminar: Graeme Pollock, The nation as diversity, civil society as repression. D310.


4.30 pm Neuroscience Seminar: Jonathan Bacon, Synapses, Evolution and a Feroicous Tropical Ant. BLR.

5.00 pm Women's Studies Research-in-Progress Seminar: Maureen Pagaud (University of the Philippines), The Impact of Globalisation on Women Garment Workers in the Philippines: Strategies for Empowerment Arts D610.

Tuesday 1 December

2.15 pm Sussex European Research Institute Research-in-Progress Seminar: Utz McKnight (Malmoe, Sweden), Liberalism in Europe. A71, SEI.

4.00 pm COGS Seminar: Stuart Gold (Digital Space Corporation), The Architecture of Cyberspace. COGS 5C11.

4.15 pm Biochemistry and Genetics & Development Seminar: Jeff Sampson (Animal Health Trust), The Canine Genome Project. BLT.

4.30 pm Social and Political Thought: Darrow Schecter, Arendt's Critique of Habermas. D630.

5.00 pm Social Anthropology Graduate/Faculty Seminar: Nadia Lovell (Kent), The Secrets of Strangers: Issues of Power and Medical Knowledge in Ghana. D722.

5.00 pm Media Studies Seminar: Martin Barker, Loving and Hating Crash - what does a controversial film do for its audiences? D710.

5.15 pm German Research Colloquium: Gabriel Josipovici, The Right Words in the Right Order. A155.

Wednesday 2 December

3.00 pm Physics and Astronomy Colloquium: Allister Ferguson (Strathclyde), Ultrafast Lasers for Multiphoton Imaging. PEV 2A2.

5.00 pm English Graduate Colloquium: James Knowles (Newcastle), Toys and Boys: The (Homo)Erotics of the Jacobean Masque. D640.

5.00 pm Sussex Centre for Research in the History of Art Seminar: Sandy Nairnes (Tate Gallery), The Turner Prize and Cultural Management. C219.

Thursday 3 December

4.00 pm CPES School Colloquium: Carlton Wood, Cloning. Chichester Lecture Theatre.

4.00 pm Geography Research Seminar: Nigel Thrift (Bristol), TBA. D340.

5.00 pm French Thought Seminar: Jeremy Lane, Here is an Unclarity. A71.


5.00 pm History Work-in-Progress Seminar: Peter Burke (Cambridge), Knowledge and control in early modern Europe. A155.

5.00 pm Centre for Statistics and Stochastic Modelling Seminar: Carole Proctor, Spatial models of bird vigilance: selfish or co-operative behaviour? PEV2A2.

Friday 4 December

2.00 pm SPRU Seminar: Colin Hines (Associate, International Forum on Globalisation), It's Time for the New Protectionism. EDB Lecture Theatre.

4.00 pm Astronomy Centre Seminar: Iain Steele (Liverpool John Moores), The Liverpool robotic telescope. Arundel 401.

4.00 pm Chemical Physics and Materials Seminar: Roger Smith (Loughborough), Atomistic simulations of carbon: application of genetic algorithms and neural nets. CHI-3R241 (MS3).

4.00 pm Applied Mathematics and Numerical Analysis Seminar: Sebastien Reich (Surrey), Backward Error Analysis for Numerical Integrators. PEV-2B13, PEV1.

4.30 pm The Philosophy Society: Barry Smith (Birkbeck), The Naturalness of Norms. A155.

CDU Info Please sign up beforehand.

BUNAC - 1 Dec 12pm, CDU. Opportunities for overseas work placements - particularly North America.

Social Research Work - 1 Dec 5.30 pm, CDU. What it is, how to get in and get on; typical employers.

International House - Teaching English as a Foreign Language - 2 Dec 5.30 pm, CDU. The qualification and the work/employers.

Baker Tilly - 3 Dec 5.30 pm, CDU. Chartered accountants.

Orchestre - 3 Dec 5.30 pm, CDU. Computer software company.

Miscellaneous

SUSSSEX Language Institute & the Open University offer a Day School on Saturday, 5 Dec., 10.00-4.30. French, German and Spanish - level beyond intermediate. A chance to practise oral skills. Cost £25. Deadline 27 Nov. More details Michele ext. 2016/8006/M.O.Saliman@sussex.ac.uk

REDUCED RATE massage therapist/ reflexologist (3 Dec., £12.50/hr), and homeopath (7 Dec, £20/hr), at Student Advice Centre. Appts made at SU Reception. Tel. 678152. Please pay at time of booking.

Bulletin

The Bulletin appears every Friday during term time with copy deadlines the preceding Friday lunchtime.

Please contact the Information Office in Sussex House on Ext. 8209 or Email Bulletin@sussex.ac.uk.

Small Ads

COMPUTER: Dell 386 (includes Word / Excel etc) £60 ono. Telephone John on 3007 (day) 01273 772051 (evening)

TO LET: Large attractive attic room avail for quiet female student in Queens Park, Brighton. £55/wk. Tel. 605042.

WANTED: Accommodation in Lewes for new faculty and partner. From Jan 1999. Contact Alex on ext. 2281 or A.Colas@sussex.ac.uk.

REFLEXOLOGY: Tel Ella on 700432.

FOR SALE: Citroen Saxo VTR 1.6l, R-reg, silver, lots of extras, excellent condition, offers in the region of £7500 because the owner is broke and must sell. Tel 478108 or 476813.

FOR SALE: piano Allison, upright, iron framed, excellent sound quality, good condition, only £55 o.n.o. Call Kostas, 2859, or 670426 (eve).

WANTED: Au Pair/Mother's Help to Switzerland asap. Details from e-mail: ale27@iol.com or tel/fax 01273 474738 (eve).


FOR SALE: Black Mini in good condition, B Reg, 2 months MOT/TAX, £400 ONO. Call 678480 or email a.c.eyre-walker@sussex.ac.uk.

AVAILABLE: Painting and decorating (interior and exterior) Professional work, Tel 698719.

WANTED: Huddersfield University lecturer seeks house for four from March 27th to April 11th 1999, preferably in Lewes but surrounding area or Brighton also a possibility. Please reply to SBUSUSGMC@pegasus.hud.ac.uk.

WANTED: New lecturer, single male, looking for 1 bed flat in Brighton from January. £350-400 per week. Please contact (in Netherlands) tel: Adrian +31.30.230 2699 email: a.favell@fsw.ru.nl