'University opened up so many doors for me': the personal and professional development of graduates from non-traditional backgrounds

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Abstract

There is a substantial body of quantitative evidence about the benefits of higher education. However there is little qualitative evidence about the extent to which these benefits accrue to graduates from non-traditional backgrounds. This paper contributes to this gap in knowledge by exploring the experiences of a group of 15 graduates ten years after they had started at university. The cohort was unusual because they had all completed a college-level qualification before going on to study at an elite university. We draw attention to the impact of higher education on their positions in the labour market, as well as to their development of learning identities that supported them to make changes in their personal and professional lives. Although higher education brought real benefits to the cohort, including better employment prospects and the development of confidence in themselves, we show that they were clustered in various caring and public sector professions at the lower end of the graduate labour market.

Keywords

Introduction

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In the UK, it is now accepted that higher education is a key factor in social mobility (Cabinet Office 2011). University graduates have the opportunity to improve their earning potential over the course of their lifetime, and have access to improved social and cultural capital that brings advantages for themselves and their families. Over the last three decades, successive governments have sought to expand higher education as a way of distributing these benefits to a larger section of the population. In particular, there has been a concern to widen access to students who, by reason of their social or economic circumstances, have traditionally been under-represented at university.

Despite this emphasis on widening access and the overall growth in the number of people participating in higher education, widespread and persistent inequalities remain, carrying over into the life circumstances and opportunities of the graduate population (Britton et al. 2016; Bukodi and Goldthorpe 2011). In Scotland, which has a long tradition of supporting entry to higher education, the market is highly differentiated by social class. Students from low participation neighbourhoods and lower social economic status are more likely to be undertaking higher education within a college of further education (FE). These colleges offer courses for people aged over sixteen mainly leading to work-related qualifications, including Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), which use unit-based assessment and offer articulation routes into some degrees. Moreover, those who do make it to university are more likely to study in the post-1992 sector (those created from former polytechnics and other institutions following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act) and to be taking shorter and vocational courses. Once at university, the retention rates of non-traditional students are lower than those of their more advantaged peers (Scottish Funding Council 2015). It is no surprise, then, to find that the graduate labour market is highly stratified, with greater financial and personal gains accruing to those graduates who come from more affluent backgrounds and who attended prestigious universities, took longer courses, and were more likely to study the traditional and professional subjects that act as a gateway to the established (and well-paid) professions (O'Leary and Sloane 2011).

Of course, this averaged picture hides as much as it reveals about the complexities and circumstances of the students who choose to participate in a university sector that they know to be highly differentiated. Our interest in this paper is in a group of students who are

unusual in Scotland, in that they had studied for HNCs and HNDs at local FE colleges before going on to read for a degree at a Russell Group (research-intensive) university. For the purposes of our study then we defined non-traditional students as those who had undertaken a college level qualification before going on to attend university. This is not a common pathway and the purpose of the initial study was to track the students over the lifetime of their degrees to understand the challenges and opportunities that they negotiated during their time at the university. We attempted to contact them again ten years after they started at university, to find out the extent to which they have used their degrees for personal and professional development.

It is against this background that the paper is located. Our focus is on the experiences post-university. We begin by setting out the research context and methodology. We then draw on data from the participants to investigate the steps that they took in the labour market. We look at the extent to which they felt that having a degree had contributed to their personal development, and to any changes in their identity.

Getting a degree: professional benefits

Research into graduate outcomes has been dominated by a focus on quantifiable measures such as income and occupation. Most of this has been based on quantitative surveys such as the *Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education* survey, which maps the employment circumstances of graduates six months after completion of their courses (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2015). Similarly, other studies track the success of graduates in the labour market but over longer periods of time and identify the extent of any graduate 'premium'. An Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) project, for example, based on cohorts of graduates who started university in the period 1998-2011, and whose earnings were then observed in the tax year 2011/12, reveals the significantly higher earnings that graduates accrue compared to their peers without degrees (Britton, Shephard and Vignoles 2015). This study indicates the importance of the graduate premium for women: the median earnings of English women around ten years after graduation were just over three times those of non-graduates. (Median earnings of male graduates were found to be around twice those of men without a degree.) In a more recent study, the IFS investigated how the earnings of

English-domiciled graduates vary by subject and socio-economic background, as well as with gender and institution attended. This found that students from higher income families have median earnings that are around 25 per cent more than those from lower income families. Once the study controlled for institution attended and subject chosen, this premium fell to around ten per cent (Britton et al. 2016).

Other studies chart the benefits of a degree for future career development. Locke (2008) gathered data on graduates' retrospective views of higher education some five years after graduation and found that attending higher education was rated highly as a good basis for 'future career' and 'personal development'. Purcell et al. (2005) examined the relationship between higher education and career development, tracking labour market trajectories for four years after graduation. Here the majority of respondents prioritised the value of the degree in terms of personal development, rather than in economic or career terms per se.

Getting a degree: personal benefits

Together, Locke (2008) and Purcell et al. (2005) make an important contribution to debates about the value of higher education because they move beyond a simple emphasis on the economic benefits of a degree. Rather than conflating success with labour market position, they recognise the importance of subjective experiences and perceptions of success in understanding the experiences of graduates (Gunz and Heslin 2005). This is particularly pertinent in the context of the widening participation agenda in the UK, where the benefits of higher education are heralded to lessen the social class gap and facilitate upward social mobility (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2015).

This focus on subjective success is important because it recognises the advantages of attending higher education in relation to the personal and intellectual development of the individual, as well as to society as a whole. For Brennan, Durazzi and Sene (2013), civic participation, health and wellbeing are all forms of individual and societal benefits that are correlated with participation in higher education. The subjective benefits of higher education were also scrutinised by Brennan et al. (2010) in a longitudinal study in which they tracked students and graduates to identify any changes in their development through time. Drawing on evidence from students from 15 institutions, they found that university

experience is associated with increases in self-confidence, independence and maturity, as well as improved communication skills and understanding of others.

The impact of higher education on shaping beliefs, values and behaviours of individuals is generally considered to persist, and does not diminish as the graduate moves through the life course. Indeed, as Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) argue, changes in self-esteem, identity and sense of control extend beyond the individual to their households. Again, this is particularly important for non-traditional students where a university education is promoted as a key way of enhancing the social mobility of both individuals and families (Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission 2013).

Issues about the progressive impact of higher education are often discussed by looking at questions of capital and the extent to which processes of capital mobilisation and acquisition are used by students to enhance 'future social positioning' (Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller 2013, 723). Earlier work indicates that higher education is progressive in its impact on personal development, in that it is more beneficial in non-monetary dimensions to individuals whose parents are not themselves graduates or in managerial/ professional positions (Belfield et al. 1999). Despite this finding, however, non-traditional students continue to be disadvantaged in the graduate labour market (Thomas and Jones 2007). This process of stratification centres on the more limited ability of this group to develop the social and cultural capital which enables greater success in employment. Recent changes in the graduate labour market mean that competition for 'good, middle-class jobs' is increasingly a global struggle, with middle-class families, in particular, adopting sophisticated strategies to stay ahead of the competition for future employment (Brown, Lauder and Ashton 2011). There is a growing recognition that 'the degree is not enough' (Tomlinson 2008) and students increasingly adopt capital acquisition strategies based on extra-curricular activities and curriculum vitae building (Roulin and Bangerter 2013). Non-traditional students are less likely to engage in these capital acquisitions strategies during their time at university (Pennington, Mosley and Sinclair 2013) and have more limited access to the social networks that facilitate decision-making about careers, both of which are powerful drivers in the process of matching graduates to jobs in a highly stratified labour market.

Thus, there is a disparity in terms of the benefits that individuals from non-traditional backgrounds gain by going to university. On the one hand, they may gain considerably in terms of personal development. But, on the other hand, they continue to be disadvantaged in the graduate labour market. As yet, there is little research evidence about the experiences of non-traditional students once they have left university. Our focus is thus on a cohort of non-traditional students and their perceptions of the personal and professional benefits they accrued after leaving university.

Methodology

The original study used semi-structured interviews undertaken with participants at key points during the lifetime of their degrees. This research design was chosen to provide in-depth insight to the experiences of the participants and to allow the development of a narrative about the processes of change that they underwent. The research began in 2004/2005 when the cohort started their studies, and a total of 45 students at one Russell Group university were recruited. They all came to university having undertaken HNC and HND qualifications in FE colleges. The students were interviewed up to five times over the lifetime of their degree and the findings have been discussed elsewhere (Christie et al. 2008, 2014).

In 2015, an attempt was made to contact the whole cohort ten years after they had started their studies. The research question in this phase focused on the impact of the participants' university experiences on their later professional and personal lives. We found 15 people who were willing to be interviewed. Table 1 shows their characteristics. In total, 14 were women, most were in their 30s when they began their studies and twelve were the first in their families to attend university. This gender and age profile of the respondents reflects the wider nature of the caring professions into which many of them aspired to work, or, in some cases, were already working. A focus on caring thus started with their subject choices at FE college and continued into their choice of degree subjects. The caring professions have traditionally been dominated by women, and this accounts for the over-representation of mature women in the sample.

Table 1 here

We used the follow-up interviews to ask informants to reflect on their whole experience of university and the impact that their studies had had on their subsequent personal and professional lives. Interviewing the cohort more than 10 years after they started their studies meant that enough time had elapsed to allow them to establish themselves in the labour market and to progress with their careers, as well as to come to an understanding of any wider benefits of having been to university.

This is, of course, a small sample of students but the findings are important because they give insight into the experiences of non-traditional students once they leave university, and this is something about which we know relatively little (Crew 2015). As already stated, there is little qualitative research based on the narratives of students who come to elite universities from non-traditional routes, or about their experiences after graduation. It is our intention to contribute to these debates by giving a voice to those graduates, and by documenting their pathways through the labour market.

The interviews were carried out by telephone and respondents were asked about: the academic experiences during their time at university; the extent to which this had led to changes in their personal and professional lives; and how their education had led to changes in their learning identities. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using the constant comparative method (Braun and Clarke 2006).   The advantage of this was that we could develop concepts from the data by coding and analysing simultaneously, and this allowed us to generate theory that was integrated and close to the data. The findings required careful analysis because of their retrospective nature, and the possibility of recall bias which represents a major threat to the internal validity of studies using self-reported data (Hassan 2005). Looking back has inevitable pitfalls, because some events get forgotten while others become solidified in the memory (Freeman 2010). Further, this study ran the risk of being based on a self-selecting sample where the people who chose to be interviewed were the ones with positive stories to tell. We were unable to hear the stories of a significant number of people from the original study, and we must acknowledge that their views might have been very different. We do not know, for example, if the graduates we could not trace were

more mobile and/or more successful that the ones we did find. However, we were able to undertake internal checking of the data from each respondent to ascertain that what they told us in the retrospective interview was consistent with what they had told us during the interviews undertaken when they were at university. We found that across the board, respondents in the retrospective interview were more positive about their university experience than they were while undergoing their studies; they explained this in terms of the ways that it had been a powerful force in reshaping both their professional and personal lives.

In the analysis below, respondents are identified by a number that was assigned to them at the first interview in 2004. Although we recognise that identifying people in this way rather than via a pseudonym potentially detracts from their humanity, we have used this system consistently in the series of papers published from the project and continue with it here so that interested researchers can cross check the participants' stories. The interviews were transcribed verbatim and standard English was used with no attempt to try to capture the accents of the participants.

Did the degree bring labour market advantage? Non-traditional students in a stratified graduate labour market

Instrumental accounts of higher education point to the labour market advantages that are conferred by having a degree. Here, higher education is seen as a private investment that brings longer terms financial benefits to the individual; getting a degree is a passport to social mobility. What is common in these explanations, however, is an emphasis on the 'good, middle-class jobs' that graduates compete for in an increasingly global market. Much less is known either about the range of jobs at the lower end of the graduate labour market that now need a degree or about the experiences of the graduates who undertake them. Table 2 shows that the informants in the follow-up study were clustered into a number of degree programmes allied to professions in the public sector including childhood studies, teaching, social work and community education. Only two participants read for degrees in more traditional subjects. This clustering was a consequence of the original study, which

focused on the experiences of arts and social sciences students, the majority of whom had come to the university from courses linked to the caring professions.

Table 2 here.

The informants indicated that most felt they had benefited economically from their degrees and it was common amongst the cohort to view the degree as 'an investment for the future' (No.3). In total, 12 out of the 15 were working in (self-reported) graduate-level occupations at the time of the final interview. These destinations are shown in Table 3.

This 'investment' in higher education had two aspects. First, some of the informants were in established occupations, primarily in social care and allied professions, and needed a qualification either to maintain their current job or to get promoted to the next stage. The cluster of eight women in Childhood Studies is particularly notable here and casts light on questions about how the lower end of the graduate labour market is being restructured (Brown 2013). In the early 2000s, regulatory changes in Scotland led to new requirements for staff working in childcare professions to undertake training (Scottish Social Services Council 2014). Without this, they would be unable to progress in their careers and, in some cases, getting a qualification was essential to staying in their current job. No. 24 provided a striking example of someone who had been able to use her Childhood Studies degree to move up the career ladder. She began as a nursery manager and, after graduation, was promoted to a position as an educational welfare officer. Some four years later she was promoted to team leader. At the time of the interview she had become a professional adviser to the Scottish Government. She was clear that she needed the degree for that development and 'to progress within the career I was in'. But it is important to acknowledge that although childcare had become a newly professionalised sector, and the participants felt they had to go to university to get the degree, jobs in this sector remain poorly paid and graduates have experienced little immediate financial gain (Simon, Owen and Hollingworth 2016).

Secondly, there were the individuals who realised they needed a degree if they were to move into graduate-level professions. There were clear financial benefits for these participants. No 3, for instance, wanted to be a social worker and knew she needed a degree to make this possible. She described how her career changed once she graduated:

'I got a position in […] council in what was then the access team […]. So I was first employed as a community care worker until my degree came through, and then in the July it just automatically tripped over to being a social work post'.

Sometimes recognising what profession they wanted to enter was a two-stage process involving getting a first degree and then gaining the confidence to do another qualification that would allow them to take the next steps within the graduate labour market. Both No. 37 and No. 41 did degrees in Childhood Studies and then returned to university to train as teachers. No. 37 commented:

'it (first degree) moved me forward in my career. I used that degree to further myself on into teaching. … Each qualification that I did led on to the next qualification. So it was a build-up and you kind of need that to get into teaching'.

No. 41's journey to teaching was different. She was frustrated that her degree in Childhood Studies had not brought any labour market advantage:

'I had a job (nursery nurse) when I was studying for the course. I wanted a new job and I kept applying to different posts … and I just had no luck at all and to be honest I just thought "well I'll just have to stay where I am" […] It was only after my husband had a very serious accident that I took the plunge and moved' (to do her teaching qualification).

Nonetheless, she got there in the end. The first degree allowed her to raise her aspirations and take the next steps in her career. Again, she commented:

'had I not managed to have done that (first degree) I would certainly not be where I am today (teaching)'.

Further, there were three respondents for whom the degree had not conferred any labour market advantage. Interestingly, these included the two informants who had read for more traditional degrees – one in Psychology and one in Social Policy and Sociology, neither of which is associated with a specific profession. No. 2, the only male in the cohort, was working as an administrative assistant in local government. He commented:

'I've not used my degree as yet, so I am under-employed. I know everyone's in the same boat, but I've not used the degree […] in seven years now. […] I would say I

was definitely, at least on paper, over-qualified, under-employed for my qualifications'.

Later he expressed his disappointment that he was 'maybe not where I thought I would be when I was doing the degree'.

No. 44's trajectory was different because she became a carer for an ill parent and her only option to work was to undertake volunteering jobs in a part-time capacity. Like No. 2 above, she indicated a 'level of regret that I've not majorly went forward with it [the degree]'.

Did the degree confer wider benefits? (1) Developing the 'knowledge bug' and a learning identity

The impact of higher education extends well beyond the labour market to include subjective benefits to the individual as well as to society. A clear finding from the interviews was the continued commitment that the participants had to learning. Almost all of them had undertaken some form of learning after they finished their degrees. In total, ten had participated in continuing professional development as part of their jobs, including eight who had engaged in post-graduate study. Although they were mainly in professions which have embraced the need for employees to undertake further training, the reason the interviewees gave for continuing with education was the passion for learning they had developed during their earlier studies. This started at college and developed during their undergraduate degree. No. 3 commented:

'I think it's always good to learn something different all the time so that you're always growing […]. I went to college, and then obviously on to university. And when I was at college I really found I had the knowledge bug, that I liked finding out more about things'.

This emphasis on the pleasures of learning was a recurring theme. No. 4 wanted to keep on studying:

'I remember when I finished university I was like 'what am I going to do now?', […], and I had that kind of study bug and I went back to night school'.

No. 38, who went on to complete a Master's degree and was now studying for a doctorate on a part-time basis, described how the opportunity to undertake further study was something she 'grabbed […] with both hands' because she 'loves studying'. She continued:

> 'part of that is having found this is the subject I'm absolutely in love with, […]. I'd say I really, really like and it's not because it's my job (college lecturer). If I didn't have my job tomorrow I would still be loving this (her doctorate)'.

The commitment to learning did not stop with formal education. No. 44 described how the degree had sparked a particular interest in criminology and how this carried on through her life:

> 'I think a lot of what I learned I took with me and I approach things with a bit more knowledge. […] I'll be quite happy to read a book about (criminology) […] I continually read stuff about that […] criminology was something that I did while I was doing the degree as well. So that's an interest that I've had for years and that's still going'.

As well as a thirst for knowledge, the participants outlined how the degree had led to changes in their identities and they often articulated these experiences in relation to the skills they had developed in thinking critically and reflectively. While McCormick (2003) argues that being at university situates students as 'reading subjects', what we found in our study was evidence that the participants now saw themselves as 'learning subjects'.   And while this was a new identity that had developed during their time at university, it was one that continued to form and reform long after they had completed their degrees. This was often explained in terms of changes to their ways of thinking and practising. No. 4 commented:

> 'I really appreciate the whole reflection thing … as a concept for life, you know, to learn, to try to take something positive from everything that comes along'.

No. 40 was also very aware of the changes she had undergone:

> 'I wasn't sure what I could achieve […] and I hoped that … I would learn and think in a different way, and that happened […]. There was a difference in me after I'd finished my first degree in how I thought about things'.

Often participants singled out the importance of university in encouraging them to be reflective thinkers. For No. 29 university 'opened her mind' and made her 'start to think and question everything'. Similarly No. 37 commented:

> 'I think there's been a lot of changes in my thinking over the years based on all the courses that I've done […]. The course has made me more reflective in practice, work and personal'.

Did the degree confer wider benefits? (2): Changing selves, changing lives.

For Baum, Ma and Payea (2013, 9), 'education means much more than job training. It means providing people with the opportunity to develop their sense of themselves and their relationship to other people and to their environment'. These sentiments were evident in the participants' discussions of how the benefits of the degree were much greater than any labour market advantage it gave them, and of how these benefits extended well beyond the lifetime of the degree.

Overall, what emerges from the data is a sense that university had lasting benefits for the participants. They articulated this through a recognition of their new found confidence and belief in themselves, something which was experienced in positive terms. Reading for a degree was a social practice and their comments indicate the role that it played in constituting changing notions of identity and selfhood (Lea and Street 1998). Central to this was the confidence it instilled. Getting a degree:

> 'fills you with confidence […]. 'Apart from having a family, getting a degree is probably the best feeling in the world' […]. '{It} gave me a lot of confidence in who I was, and what my thoughts were on things. But it also got me thinking a bit wider and about the bigger picture' (No. 60)

Developing this confidence had an impact on the totality of their life experiences. No. 30 reflected on this: 'it gave me so much. I've made lifelong friends, I've got a career that I love, and it opened up so many new doors for me'. This sense of the degree opening up what No. 38 called 'opportunities now that I never dreamt I would have' was a common theme.

Together these changes in their confidence and in their identities were transformative for the participants and had lasting benefits for their both their working lives and their personal circumstances. As indicated above, this was tied up with a new found confidence and belief in their abilities. No. 37 commented:

> 'Just helping me to understand other colleagues and where they've come from […] it then leads you to be clear about expectations […] and just to consider the different roles and effective leadership and working in teams'.

And it often changed their working practices, and for the better. No. 29 outlined how she 'benefitted […] I think in regard of my work' because she 'learnt to listen and ask for clarification'. She went on to describe herself as having become a more critical employee: 'I question management practices all the time'.

The benefits of a degree transcend its lifetime and extend to more than just professional lives. The respondents outlined how their developing confidence, and their sense of themselves as learners, had benefits for their personal lives as well as for their families. No. 60 found that her studies:

> 'just take you out of your comfort zone, it takes you somewhere else' […]. 'It lets you look at things in a different light […] which helps, I suppose, with your own personal life, your work life, your relationship'.

Others reflected on how the degree had tangible benefits for their families, both in terms of their own social mobility and that of their children. No. 40 was very clear that:

> 'doing the degree gave me and my husband some upward mobility that we didn't have before, and that changed our lives. You know we were able to move on, we were able to afford a bigger mortgage. I know that sounds really middle class but I actually wouldn't have been there if I hadn't done what I'd done all those years ago (gone to university)'.

An ability to inspire their children to attend university was a common theme. No 38's son was at university at the time of the interview and she commented that: 'I love studying, I feel that I can really and hopefully inspire my children to have a love of learning'. She argued that this would give them new, and broader, horizons: 'my kids can see […] that they

can go off and have their life and not feel like they've got to stay at home for their mum'. For No. 41 the support of her children was invaluable and she, in turn, felt that this had encouraged them to go on to university:

> 'I think for [son] it certainly had a positive impact on him and to want to go there [university] and he was very proud that his mum had been to university when a lot of his friends' mums hadn't'.

Conclusions

The key message to emerge from this study was of the transformative potential of higher education for this cohort of non-traditional students. Attending university, and getting a degree, had opened up new opportunities to them that had previously been unattainable. The evidence we have presented suggests that these benefits persisted long after the participants had graduated from university because they had developed new ways of thinking and acting, especially in relation to the development of reflective skills.

The majority of the cohort were able to use their degree to achieve some level of economic mobility, whether to gain entry to a new profession or to progress within an existing career. That said, however, they were all clustered in various caring and public sector professions with less power and prestige than are ascribed to the more elite professional occupations such as medicine or the law. This is not a surprise, given that their pathway to university had been from social care qualifications in the college sector. This indicates the ways in which social stratification within the graduate labour market is produced and reproduced such that participants from non-traditional backgrounds remain relatively disadvantaged (Brown 2013). This is particularly notable given that the respondents in this study all attended a Russell group university from which many graduates gain entry to better paid, and more prestigious positions. Although our sample is small, it supports other research (Bathmaker, Ingram and Waller 2013; Britton et al. 2016, 2013; Reay, Crozier and Clayton 2010; Tomlinson 2008) that wider social inequalities are more important than university attended, in determining the labour market outcomes of graduates. As Bourdieu (1999) has pointed out, the privileged social classes understand 'the rules of the game' and, in a 'performocracy' (Brown 2013), where the goal is to gain individual competitive advantage,

know instinctively that capitalising on extra-curricular activities and social networks is the key to maintaining their positions in the class hierarchy.

However we have also shown the value of supporting non-traditional students to attend university because university has powerful, and often very positive effects especially in their personal development, that take time to develop (see also Jarldron et al. 2015). One aspect of this was gaining credentials that gave most of them the opportunity to have a rewarding career. Another was their increase in self-confidence that led to their personal flourishing. As Purcell et al. (2005) point out there is a close relationship between satisfaction with career development and personal development and these are clearly subjective experiences arising out of existing expectation about what might be possible. For this group, the process they had gone through in university had enabled them to see themselves and the world in new ways that had a strong impact on the other aspects of their lives. Changes in their identity and selfhood, articulated through the development of critical and reflective ways of thinking as well as through a growing confidence in their own abilities, brought enormous benefits for the participants, as well as for the people they lived and worked with. On the one hand, it brought enhanced social mobility for their households, including opportunities to move up the housing ladder, as well as to inspire and support their children to attend university through generating an atmosphere at home where learning was nurtured (Marandet and Wainwright 2010). On the other hand it fostered change – and success – at work, as participants used and developed their newly-found confidence and skills in ways that influenced their colleagues and clients. Overall then, higher education had been a truly transformative experience for this cohort of non-traditional students. Attending university, and getting a degree, had opened up new opportunities that had previously been unattainable to them.

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Table 1: Age at entry to university, sex and entry status of informants at follow-up interview in 2015

Age	Female	Male	1st in Family to higher education
18- 20	2	1	2
21-30	2	0	1
31-40	9	0	8
41-50	1	0	1
51-60	0	0	0
Total	14	1	12

Table 2: Degree studied at university

Degree studied	Number of students
Childhood studies	8 (No. 24, 29, 33, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41)
Primary teaching	2 (No. 13, 30)
Social work	2 (No. 3, 4)
Community education	1 (No. 60)
Psychology	1 (No. 44)
Social Policy and Sociology	1 (No.2)
	15

Table 3: Occupation ten years after commencing undergraduate degree

Occupation	Number of respondents	Degree required (self-reported)
Teacher	3 (No. 30, 37, 41)	Yes
Social worker	3 (No. 3, 4, 40)	Yes
Scottish Government (advisor)	2 (No.24, 60)	Yes
Family support worker	2 (No. 13, 36)	Yes
College Lecturer	1 (No. 38)	Yes
Social care worker	1 (No. 29)	Yes
Local government administrative assistant	1 (no. 2)	No
Carer	1 (No. 44)	No
Nursery nurse	1 (No. 33)	No