



Wednesday 14 May 2014 – Afternoon

GCSE SOCIOLOGY

B673/01/CS Applying Sociological Research Techniques

Duration: 1 hour



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Investigation 1 – A study by a female Year 11 student in Leeds, 2013.

Title: Gender differences in work.

Hypothesis:

‘Attitudes to women doing traditional men’s jobs nowadays are different from attitudes in the 1940s.’ 5

Introduction

I would like to become a motor mechanic or study mechanical engineering. If I had lived in the 1940s I would have had to stay at home and look after my husband and children, as it was frowned upon for women to work.

My dad works at a factory which makes electrical goods such as power tools. My mum and my sister both have typical women’s jobs: my mum works as a sales assistant and my sister works in a sandwich bar. There is one exception in my family, my auntie. She has her own skip hire company and she does manual work delivering and collecting the skips in her skip lorry. She is the only woman in the firm and at first people didn’t take her seriously because of her gender. 10

I think women are just as capable as men. I am doing my work experience at Brown’s Tyre and Auto Centre in Leeds. I decided to use my work experience, not only to find out about the work but also to complete my investigation which I have been set in my sociology lesson. 15

First I decided to get some secondary data.

Source 1

I asked my history teacher if she had any information and she gave me a textbook. I found out that in 1943 a survey was done to find out what women thought of working and why they did it. Another survey was done in 1965 to see if things had changed. I shortened and adapted some results: 20

- In 1943, 58% of women did not believe in paid work for women after marriage.
- In 1965, 89% of women believed in paid work for women after marriage but 11% still did not believe in paid work. 25
- In 1965, 22% of people felt that working women were taking jobs from men.

Source 2

I wanted to find out what jobs males and females do. I used official statistics, as the method used by the government to collect them is high in reliability.

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These statistics were very long so I had to miss out some occupational groups (eg professional occupations). I also rounded the main groups to the nearest 10000.

I have chosen only one example of a type of job from each group as there were so many! For example, under 'Admin and secretarial' there were 31 types of jobs ranging from receptionists to library clerks.

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Table A**Occupational Group by Gender, 2011 (in 1000s)**

Occupation	Male	Female
Managers and senior officials	1960	930
eg Construction managers	41	13
Admin and secretarial	740	2520
eg Receptionists	22	215
Skilled trade	2950	260
eg Vehicle repairs	25	0 *
Caring and leisure	450	2170
eg Nursery nurses	0 *	170
Sales and customer service	880	1510
eg Sales assistants	461	998
Plant and machine operatives	1650	210
eg Train and tram drivers	21	0 *

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* Number below 1000

Adapted from UK Labour Force Survey

Primary Research

There are two parts to my primary research during my work experience at Brown's:

1. I will be observing the other employees to see how I am treated as a girl doing manual labour in a male job. Will they be patronising and sarcastic or treat me fairly? 55
2. I will also do an interview with the workshop manager. 60

Method 1

I am going to observe the other employees at Brown's but without them knowing. This will stop them from changing their behaviour. There is a boy in my class also on work experience there. I want to see if they ask me to do the same jobs as him or whether they will 'go easy' on me as I am a girl. I will make notes but everyone will think this is a diary of my work experience, not a record of my observations. Obviously I will not be able to write everything down as it happens, such as a sexist comment made when I am in the middle of changing a wheel! I will just add this later. I will see how the men treat me eg patronising, with sarcasm or just the same as the other (male) employees. 65

Method 2

I will interview Ian the workshop manager. I have arranged this for the last day of my work experience and it will take place in the office at Brown's. I decided not to interview the boss Peter Brown as he does not work with his employees and does not know what it is like working with women in the workshop. 70

I have made up some specific questions to ask. These are two examples of my questions:

1. How many females have you employed here either as full-time workers, part-time workers, apprentices or on work experience? 75
2. Do you give females the same type of jobs as males?

I will ask follow up questions if the answers are interesting. I will also ask some open questions to find out his view of women working in garages and how they fit into this type of workplace. Ian looks about the same age as my dad so he must have worked in several different garages.

Method 3

I will carry out a content analysis of the jobs section of the local newspaper to find out what types of jobs are available for people. I will be able to see whether there are more typically male or typically female jobs or neutral ones. I can also find out if employers target their adverts specifically at men or at women. This method should show me if employers are sexist and discriminate against women. 80

Results of all methods

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Method 1 results – Observation

Firstly I observed that everyone was friendly and polite to me and did not swear. Some of the young males did seem shocked to see me. They said I didn't look like the type of girl to want to work in a garage, which I found a bit offensive. It became easier but sometimes I did wonder if they were talking about me (not in a bad way though).

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Later in the week things got easier and I found I could have a laugh with them. They did speak about women in a weird kind of way though. They had pictures of naked women in the tea-room but they were taken down. They helped me with things like lifting but did ask me first if I needed help.

By the end I was mates with most of my colleagues and most accepted me. I never got used to having to use a men's toilet though!

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Method 2 results – Interview

Ian was really helpful when I interviewed him but he did have to go out to an emergency break-down so the interview ended suddenly.

He said he had only worked with three girls – all on work experience. I was the only one to last the full week! He said sometimes girls are better as they listen whereas the lads think they know it all. He also said he was really pleased with my puncture repair; it was 'spot on'!

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Ian said the lads in the garage do change when girls are around as they try to impress them (Steve and Marty in particular). He said some customers can be funny about a girl working on their cars but he said to me he would tell them to go elsewhere if they refused to let a girl do the work.

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Method 3 results – Content Analysis

Altogether there were 43 adverts in the local paper one Wednesday night in August. However, some adverts were for more than one job eg 'Care Assistants Needed', or 'Supply Teachers Wanted', but they did not say how many. I took a guess and thought about five. One engineering company advertised a long list of jobs but this was easy as there was only one of each. Overall I estimated about 68 jobs. I assumed this section in the paper was typical of job adverts everywhere.

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I produced this table to show the content analysis results overall.

Table B

Male jobs	Female jobs	Gender neutral jobs
23	29	16

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I assumed chef jobs to be aimed at males as women who make food are usually called cooks. I also assumed the job of rig electrician to be a male job as women do not usually work away on oil rigs. However, I did have problems with the 'Onshore well engineer' as this was not away on the rig, but it seemed to me to be a job more likely to be done by a man.

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I also categorised the primary supply teacher adverts to be aimed at women as more females work in primary schools and male teachers probably want a permanent job to support the family.

No advert said the job was only for a male or female so it seems things are fair today. Overall there were more jobs for women than for men! However, I did not study pay (adverts did not always have this information). Most care assistants are women but those jobs were advertised as having legal minimum pay levels which is not much!

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Overall Conclusion

It seems to me that women today are doing well at work and that attitudes have definitely changed.

Investigation 2 – A supervisor in a call centre in Cardiff carrying out a study for a qualification at an evening class, 2013. 130

Introduction

I think it is important that people enjoy their jobs. If they do, they will work harder and this will be better for the economy. It will also make them feel happier.

On my course we have learnt about alienation at work. This is when workers do not have any job satisfaction. It is said that people used to get satisfaction from using their skills at work but today advanced machines eg computers, have taken over and their skills are no longer needed. This is called automation. 135

I am interested in finding out if males and females have different views about their jobs. However, my overall aim is to find out what causes people to enjoy or not enjoy their work. To do this I will carry out primary research and collect secondary data. 140

I think it is useful to start research with a hypothesis. Mine is:

‘The increase in automation and computerisation in the workplace has led to an increase in alienation and reduced job satisfaction.’

Background Information 145

To prepare for my study, I found out about the ideas of Blauner (1964) from my daughter’s sociology textbook. He used the word alienation for a situation where a worker gains no satisfaction from their job. I found there are four features of alienation:

Alienated at work	Not alienated at work	
1. Feeling powerless – having no control over your work or working conditions	1. Feeling you have some control at work	150
2. Feeling your work is meaningless – seeing no point in what you do	2. Feeling your work is meaningful and worthwhile	
3. Feeling isolated from other people	3. Feeling you belong at work and are part of a community	155
4. Self-estrangement – feeling dissatisfied and not involved with the work	4. Being involved – feeling that you can use your ability and achieve your potential	

Primary research

Method A

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As I have easy access to call centre workers I decided to hand out a questionnaire to people at work. I could have used interviews but there is always the risk of interviewer bias, especially in my role at work. Participant observation could have been useful but it would have been difficult to both observe as well as do my job!

I asked my manager for a list of all the employees who work on the phones. This included people who worked day shifts and those who worked evenings. The employees were listed according to how long they had worked at the centre. I used a systematic sample by choosing every 5th name on the list. I only wanted a sample of 100 so I stopped halfway down the list as there are 1000 people working at the call centre. I asked them to fill it in during their break then leave in a box for me to collect.

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I asked their gender and also their name so I could get back to them if I had any problems with their responses. Other questions I asked were about the job. Some examples are:

- | | | | |
|---|---------|--------|-----|
| 1. Do you enjoy working here? | Yes () | No () | |
| 2. Do you feel you earn enough? | Yes () | No () | |
| 3. Do you feel you are treated fairly by those above you? | Yes () | No () | 175 |
| 4. Are you able to use your skills at work? | Yes () | No () | |
| 5. What are the best things about working here? * | | | |
| 6. What are the worst things about working here? * | | | |

* I left 20 lines for each of these questions so people could explain their answer in detail.

Altogether I asked 20 questions as I wanted to get plenty of data for my study. I decided I did not have time for a pilot study as I wanted to finish my investigation by the end of term. This was only two weeks away and I knew it would take me ages to process the results. In the end it did not take me long as only 56 questionnaires were returned and some answers were left blank.

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Results

I found out some quantitative data:

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- 73% enjoyed working in the call centre
- 69% thought their pay was too low
- 97% thought they were treated fairly.

I also found out from my open questions that what people most enjoyed was the breaks when they could meet for a chat; most felt they had made some good mates at work and often had nights out together.

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Many people commented that the work was pointless as most people they phoned hung up and some were very rude. A large number felt they could not make use of their ability and skills. They were also unhappy about having to ask the supervisor if they needed the toilet; this made them feel like they were back at school with no power and others controlling them.

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Method B

I go to the supermarket near my house most days (on my way home from work at 6pm). I decided I would get some data by observing the people who work there.

I carried out my observation over five evenings – Monday to Friday. I used a tally chart to record data. It looked like I was checking my shopping list. I decided to count the number of employees each evening who were smiling ie happy at work, and the number who were not smiling ie unhappy at work. I added together the results from the five evenings. 200

I decided to record whether each employee is a supervisor, till worker or shelf stacker. I could then see whether those who are using the till ie a computer, are less happy than the other workers. 205

Table C

Numbers of supermarket employees who were smiling or not smiling

Job type	Smiling	Not smiling	% not smiling
Supervisor	10	5	33
Till worker	40	10	20
Shelf stacker	10	40	80
Total	60	55	48

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Secondary Research

I did not have much time to look for secondary data but found some relevant information in the British Social Attitudes Survey. I found out what people have said they think is important when choosing a career. If I had found this earlier I might have asked different questions such as how they feel about job security. 215

Secondary Data**Table D**

What people think is important when choosing a career 220

A secure job	36%
Interesting work	25%
A good work/life balance	20%
Good pay	10%
Opportunities for promotion	8%
A chance to help others	1%

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Adapted from British Social Attitudes Survey, 2006

Conclusion

I still have this to write.

Future research

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One thing I am interested in doing is using my results to see if the people I have researched are alienated in the way that Blauner has described.

I would like to use historical documents and accounts of working conditions in the past to see how things have changed. I would also like to look at personal documents such as workers' diaries. There again, there are problems with these types of data.

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