

Gender roles in the home

Lindsey McInerney

Aim:

In this assignment I will carry out an investigation into how gender roles within the family, and attitudes towards them, have changed over the last 50 years.

Hypotheses:

I am going to test the following two hypotheses:

- (1) Gender roles in the home are now, less segregated than 50 years ago.
- (2) Attitudes to gender roles are more egalitarian than 50 years ago.

Methodology:

During this assignment the research methods that I am going to use are:

The Internet – this is a secondary source of information, where I will obtain both qualitative and quantitative data. Using the Internet I will be able to find statistics, e-books and any other data that I might need.

Statistics – this is a secondary source of information and is quantitative data. These will give me data to compare from the different times.

Books – this is a secondary source of information and qualitative data.

In-depth interviews – this is a primary source of information and qualitative data. This will let me obtain first hand information that I will be able to compare and evaluate.

Sociological Background:

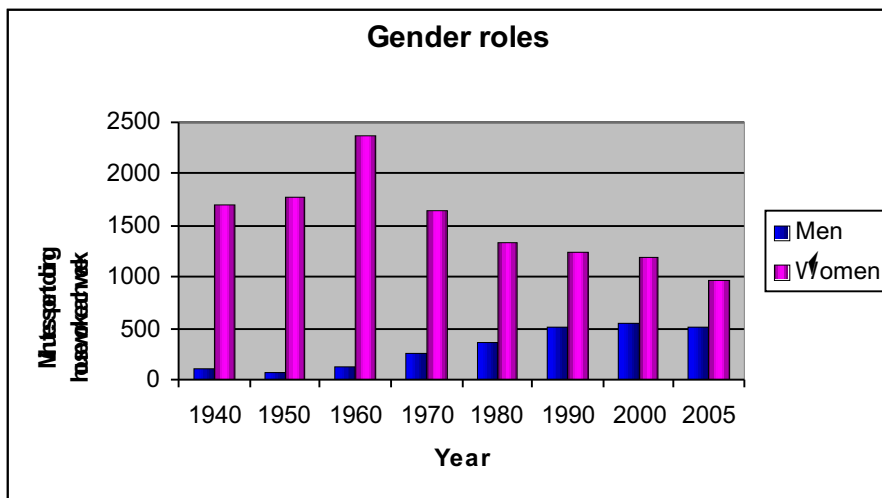
There are many Sociologists with different views on this topic.

Willmott and Young say that the 'symmetrical family' is now the typical form of family in Britain and that there is greater equality between men and women in the family than ever before. The 'symmetrical family' is a family that is more or less equal between the sexes. The 'symmetrical family' consists of the husband, wife and children, the husband and wife have joint conjugal roles. Willmott and Young claim that the 'symmetrical family' has been around a lot longer in the middle class than it has in the working class. Role relations will still vary according to social class and ethnicity.

One Sociologist who does not agree with them is Feminist, Ann Oakley. She believes that Willmott and Young's findings are inaccurate. In Willmott and Young's research, they only asked men "Do you help with the housework?" Men could answer 'yes' even if they only did the washing up once a week where Ann Oakley carried out in-depth interviews with unemployed housewives and her results did not correspond with that of Willmott and Young's. Where Ann Oakley did find some evidence to support the claim of the 'symmetrical family' it was not as clear as Willmott and Young led us to believe. Ann Oakley believes that not much has changed over last 50 years regarding the family becoming more egalitarian. She thinks that the burden of domestic duties still falls on women even when they have jobs as well, this is called a 'double or dual burden'.

Statistical evidence:

Looking at the statistical evidence, this shows that not only have gender roles changed in the home but people's attitudes towards them have also changed. Men now do more housework, which means that women are able to do less. Women going out to work has had an effect on the amount of housework that they are able to do, this also makes them equal to their partners, so gives more reason for men to do more housework. Unemployment in men has also had an effect on gender roles, as unemployed men will do more housework than they would if they were working, so this raises the statistical figures. Women now do less than half the hours of housework that they did 50 years ago and men do more than four times the hours of housework they did 50 years ago.



In-depth Interviews:

I have carried out two in-depth interviews, one with a woman over the age of 60 and one with a woman under the age of 30.

For my in-depth interview with the woman over 60 I interviewed Velma who is 61. I found that 50 years ago women did almost all of the housework and that it was classed as their job. The man's job was to go out and earn the living, which meant that they did very little housework and any that they did do was mainly DIY and jobs that women were not able to do themselves. My interview with Velma showed that times had changed very little 20 years later when she had a family of her own. This was a nuclear family. Housework was still the woman's job and men still went to work to earn the living. Conjugal roles were still unequal. This interview showed that 50 years ago men and women spent much of their leisure time separately. Men would often go to the pub after work and women would visit friends and family during the day. Husbands and wives did spend some leisure time together but this wasn't very often.

Nearly 20 years later things had changed a bit in this area. Men still went to the pub after work and women still visited friends and family but husbands and wives would socialise together more frequently. Velma and her husband would often socialise together at weekends.

For my interview with a woman under 30, I interviewed Jessica who is 23. I learnt that she was part of a nuclear family and her parents had very equal conjugal roles. When she was a child her dad worked during the day and her mum worked nights so this enabled them to equally share housework and childcare. Jessica was part of a 'symmetrical family'.

Now that Jessica lives with her partner they both work and do equal amounts of housework.

Jessica's mum and dad did socialise as couple but also spent some of their leisure time socialising separately. Most of Jessica's mum and dad's leisure time was spent in the home. This has probably changed due to people now having more technology in the home such as television, satellite TV and computers etc, I believe this has helped families to become less segregated.

Jessica's leisure time is spent much in the same ways as her mum and dad.

Conclusion:

I think that I have proved that:

(1) Gender roles in the home are now, less segregated than 50 years ago.

(2) Attitudes to gender roles are more egalitarian than 50 years ago.

I think that there are many factors that have changed gender roles and attitudes towards them over the last 50 years. Feminism since the 1960's has had a big impact on gender roles and the Sex Discrimination Act' has allowed more women to work, so this has made a huge difference to the time that women have available to spend on housework. Another thing that has made a difference is technology, such as, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, dishwashers; these will have greatly reduced the time it takes to do housework.

I think that my research supports Willmott and Young's view on gender roles and I now agree that the 'symmetrical family' is now the typical form of family.

Self-evaluation:

In this assignment I really struggled to find statistics from as far back as 50 years ago, even though I did manage to find them it took a long time. I think that the questions in this assignment are too vague and although I have proved my hypotheses, the results for this will differ greatly through out different countries and cultures.

Bibliography:

Internet:

www.4learning.co.uk
www.cbc.ca
www.educationforum.co.uk
www.enquirer.com
www.gas.sagepub.com
www.hewtt.norfolk.sch.uk
www.ideas.respec.org
www.linkinghub.elsevier.com
www.news.bbc.co.uk
www.nzmaths.co.nz
www.papers.ssnr.com
www.personal.lse.ac.uk
www.planetpapers.com
www.pobronson.com
www.schoolworkout.co.uk
www.sixthsencse.osfc.ac.uk
www.sociology.org.uk
www.statistics.co.uk
www.statistics.gov.uk
www.stats4school.gov.uk
www.wiwi.uni-regensburg.de

Books:

Sociology for GCSE – A. Kidd and P.Wilson

Word count – 1238 approx.