

**“GENDERING OF DOMESTIC
WORK?
DIVISIONS OF DOMESTIC
WORK BETWEEN BROTHERS
AND SISTERS”**

**JANELE SHILLINGFORD
AS SOCIOLOGY COURSWORK**

Sociology Coursework.

Title

“Gendering of domestic work? Divisions of domestic work between brothers and sisters.”

Aim

The aim is to demonstrate whether there are divisions of domestic work between brothers and sister's. Using Feminist theory in a local study, I will explore Oakley's theory that “femininity is domesticity” and the concept of parental gender stereotypes. I have decided to emulate this aim because, although I have a brother of similar age and in my household domestic chores are shared, I tend to do more than my brother does. This influenced me as I chose this topic, to research for similarities in other households.
(87 words)

Context and Concepts

Ann Oakley's research on “conjugal” roles conducted in the early 1970's, investigated women's attitudes towards housework, this was the influence for my piece. Although it may be considered timelocked, nevertheless, I believe that her findings are justified as they illustrate a researched feminist explanation of stereotypical gender roles.

The study focuses on female's opinions on the divisions between husband and wife domesticity, this influenced me to research her concept that “femininity is domesticity” but concerning divisions between brothers and sister domesticity.

Feminism is relevant to my study and suggests that an individual sex refers to the biological difference between male and female. However gender refers to culture. (The social classification of male and female) These cultural differences reinforce gender segregation and result in gendering of domestic chores.

Oakley concluded that husbands are not regarded as non-domesticated creatures, which tend to share childcare tasks and withhold responsibility for domestic chores. This portrayal of “gendering” of domestic chores and proper allocated roles are assumed, reinforced through “parental gender stereotypes” which reinforce female subordination and male domination. Gender socialization is primarily enforced at home and socializes the child to convey “typical” characteristics of their allocated gender. Throughout the child's lifetime “parental gender stereotypes” reinforce “normal” masculine or feminine behaviour.

To accept, Oakley's work and my aim assumes that a women's identity is defined through domesticity. In comparison, my second source is drawn from Jonathan Gershuny study of changes in the domestic division of labour in the UK from 1975 to 1987. This study supports, Young and Wilmott's thesis of the symmetrical family. (1975) This study may be timelocked but it relevant evidence of social domestic change.

Gershuny used time-budgeted analysis of detailed diaries kept day to day by the respondents and examined cross-cultural evidence from European and Canadian studies. Gershuny discovered a clear trend towards men carrying out domestic chores, therefore supporting the idea of a “symmetrical family”. He concludes on an optimistic note portraying a substantial social change in the “gendering of domestic tasks”.

The study conveys that domestic chores are gendered but there is an increase in equality of the sexes. This is related to my research aim, as by studying brothers and sisters I will be able to research whether gender domestic roles are segregated or equalized.

(375 words)

Main Research Method and Reasons

My research method will be a pre-set questionnaire, which involves the respondents being asked a certain range of questions and answers. As his method is straightforward and not time-consuming this will enable me to gather data reliably and quickly. Pre-coded questionnaires have a limited range of questions and answers, I will incorporate an “other” answer, which will enable the respondent to record their opinion,

whether their answer is pre-set on the questionnaire or not. Through this added feature I hope to identify clear justified general opinions, from my sample group and offer possible explanations on the gendering of domestic chores.

My sample will consist of 40 students, from my previous secondary school who will be chosen using a quota method. This will enable me to specifically choose natural brothers and sisters, between 15-17 years old. My sample is selective, as it requires certain characteristics, because my study focuses on the distribution of domestic chores between brothers and sisters. The quota method enables me to fulfill my sample specification. I have specified an age range of my sample to ensure that my results are valid, because children of different ages regardless of their gender will carry out different domestic chores.

A questionnaire will also offer the opportunity to operationalise not only the Oakley's concept that "Femininity is domesticity" (where each respondent will be questioned on their opinions and facts concerning which sex does the most housework) but on my other concept of "parental gender stereotypes". In order to do this I will need to carefully construct questions to research the child's opinion on their parent's attitudes towards domestic chores. Once, I have completed this task I will be able to draw comparisons between both genders attitudes towards domestic work and draw a set of general conclusions, incorporating the influence of parental expectations.

The questionnaire will be reliable, as all my respondents will receive the same questionnaire therefore removing the familiar problem that occurs with more phenomenological methods, for example, no two unstructured interviews can be the same. My results will be valid, as although the sample population represents a characterized group, my findings will co-inside with my aim.

An advantage of my questionnaire method is that it can produce continuous reliable information as sociologists can repeat my research using a similar method and hopefully draw similar findings.

Once I have constructed my questionnaire I will run a pilot to ensure that my questions are comprehensible, unambiguous and ethical. This will be important, as it will give me the opportunity to rectify any problems before my final questionnaire is distributed.

(428 words)

Potential Problems

I am aware of the phenomenological attack on the use of a questionnaire and those pre-set questions may influence the respondent's answers, as a result of demand characteristics. The limited range of set questions and answers, may result in obtaining inaccurate and unreliable data, but to overcome this problem, an "other" answer has been incorporated into the design so that the respondent can record accurate data, if the pre-set answers don't cater for the respondent's opinions.

My sample group is selective and represents a small majority of the population therefore may sample isn't representative. My findings will be justified as they are focussed on a particular sample group (brothers and sisters) and this sample group ensures that my findings are valid. (As my findings would not be valid if they were based on married couples as I am specifically researching brothers and sisters) Taking the sample from my previous school may be conveyed as bias but as this is a local study and as my time is limited, practically this was the most appropriate sample location.

In general quota sampling has it's own set of problems, as I choose my sample. However if I keep within my strict quota's, I hope to overcome these problems, whilst researching my aim. I am aware that "family" is a sensitive topic to research but my pilot study should ensure that my questions don't offend my respondent's.

To ensure that my sample, understand the questions I will be present as they complete the questionnaire. The potential problem with this is that the respondent may feel pressured by my presence, but to overcome this I will try to keep in the background and only offer support if required.

Questionnaire research involve the operationalization of concepts, I recognize that the skills and knowledge which will define “parental gender stereotypes” and “gendering of domestic chores”, will be difficult to recognize but I only hope to address this by my previous conceptual research.
(325 words)

(Total: 1215 words)