

Hilary Graham-Social policy

Hilary Graham was a feminist who carried out a lot of extensive research mainly on factors concerning women. She placed great significance on socioeconomic inequalities in women's lives and how this had an effect on them. Furthermore, Graham has been involved in four research assessment exercises. In the 1989 research selectivity exercise, she was a member of the social work and the social policy panel. And also in 1992, 1996 and 2008 she was a member of the research assessment exercises; as well as being a member of the NIHR public health research board.

Hilary Graham examined how social policies and social trends are making hardship an increasingly common experience for women. She published many books giving further information and research on this topic and some of her most famous publications were: 'Understanding Health Inequalities' and 'Women, Health and the Family'. Also her most famous research study was carried out on smoking and how this tended to have an effect on women's lives. Findings from this research indicated that while men were most likely to smoke in order to gain pleasure women's reasons for turning to smoking were significantly different. Hilary Graham found that women were most likely to smoke to help themselves cope with the stress and inequality that they were subjected to in their everyday family lives. Also, she found that smoking was most common amongst working class women as opposed to middle class women or upper class women. She claimed that this was simply because working class women were much more likely to be living in poverty or have very low paying jobs which consequently contributed to their stress and they used smoking to try to cope with it. Hilary Graham also found that smoking had a direct impact on women's health and argued that women who smoked were more likely to suffer from life threatening illnesses.

As much of Hilary Graham's work was on women she also looked at how social policy increased hardship for women. For example, she stated that changes in housing policy have made it difficult for women who do not have enough money to buy or rent their own home, to find decent housing for themselves and their children, which no doubt creates a lot of stress and depression for them. She also claimed that a decline in council housing has been the result of the government encouraging home ownership under the Right To Buy scheme and it has consequently become difficult to get a council house unless you are seen to have a 'priority need'. She said this was deeply unfair as not all women are seen to have a priority need therefore the system is unfair and biased. Furthermore, she argued that women on average earn less than men, therefore those who do not have children or enough money to buy a home of their own find it particularly hard to get a council house and may have

to wait years in the council waiting list and this is because they are not seen to have a 'priority need'. According to Graham, housing problems are the major long term difficulty faced by women and also are the reason why many women suffer from depression.