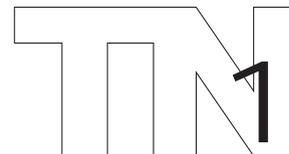


Topic 1

Investigating domestic roles within the family



This lesson is designed either as a classwork activity, which can be carried out without a sociology teacher being present and followed up as a whole-class exercise when the teacher returns, or as a homework activity, which can be completed during the next lesson. If there is no teacher present, students can work individually to complete WS1a and WS1b. There is no need to provide any resources other than IS1, WS1a and WS1b, but if students are familiar with perspectives on the family, they will better understand the findings of this piece of group research.

The lesson could also be used as a critique of the postmodern view of the family. Findings usually indicate that, although the family may be 'anything we think it is', roles and work in the family remain strikingly similar to those of the past, especially in relation to gender. Students need to have a basic understanding of quantitative methods before tackling this topic.

Aims

- To provide students with an opportunity to do a small piece of sociological research about their own family.
- To develop a sociological understanding of the nature of housework in contemporary society/families.
- To show students how perspectives link to an understanding of family life.

Resources

- Photocopies of IS1, WS1a and WS1b.
- Sociology textbook/A-Z of sociology.
- Interactive whiteboard if available, with grid loaded on it in an appropriate size for whole-class summary; digital mouse if available.
- Photocopies of the article 'What is the value of domestic labour?' provided at the end of this topic.
- More statistics can be found on www.sociology.org.uk/as4aqa.htm.

Introduction

15 minutes

- 1 Explain to the students that this lesson is about investigating who does what in their own family/household.
- 2 Inform them that their own experiences of family will be important in putting results together.
- 3 If the students have their own textbooks, ask them to read the relevant section on 'domestic labour'. Miss this out if already covered in class.



Topic 1 Investigating domestic roles within the family

TN1

Main

35 minutes

Session 1

5 minutes

- 4 Ask students which tasks they think are the most essential in family life.
- 5 Write answers on the board systematically in a spider diagram. These may include preparation of meals/cooking, washing up, washing clothes, ironing, cleaning the house, care of children and shopping. Make sure that activities are organised into broad categories: for example, dusting, vacuuming, tidying and putting things away might become part of the category 'cleaning the house'. Four to six categories are sufficient.
- 6 Now ask students to put these categories in an order of importance — most important first. Give students a few minutes to do this on their own.
- 7 Ask students, working in pairs, to come to a broad agreement about the order and then ensure that the whole class can accept this.

Session 2

15 minutes

- 8 Give a copy of WS1a to each student.
- 9 Ask students to think about who, over a 2-week period, completes the tasks defined in Session 1 most often in their household on each day.
- 10 Instruct students to fill in the division of tasks grid by putting a single *1* in the appropriate box for each time an individual performs a task: for example, if the person who most often prepares an evening meal is their mother, then that box should contain 14 *1*s for the 2-week period.
- 11 Remind students to be as accurate as possible.

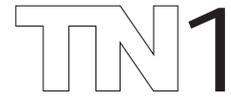
Session 3

15 minutes

- 12 If you are using an interactive whiteboard (IWB), ask students, as they finish, to put their results on to the grid on the board, either coming up to the board individually or using a digital mouse. If this is not appropriate, write the results on yourself. If there is an issue with keeping concentration, move the early finishers on to the extension activity while this section of the lesson is completed. If you do not have access to an IWB, this activity can easily be completed on an ordinary whiteboard containing the same grid as the students have completed.
- 13 Give out IS1 and ask students to make sure they understand the ways in which data can be expressed — percentages, ratios and actual numbers.
- 14 Ask the students to count the number of times an individual carries out household tasks, using the grid compiled from the whole-class activity, and then to construct their own histogram, scattergram or pie chart to illustrate the results, using IS1 for guidance.
- 15 A spreadsheet can be used to analyse the results quantitatively. You might also make use of the IWB for this.



Topic 1 Investigating domestic roles within the family



16 Ask students to write a conclusion to the findings in the space provided at the bottom of WS1. This should follow a whole-class discussion about the findings (5 minutes).

Conclusion

10 minutes

17 Give a copy of WS1b to each student. Ask them to write down which sociological perspective they would use to explain the findings of the class activity, and then to complete the rest of the grid.

Extension activity

Give out copies of Dan Pritchard's article, 'What is the value of domestic labour?' for students to read.

Key skills

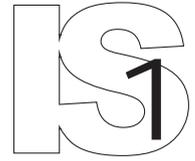
There are opportunities for developing numeracy key skills at Level 3 if students convert their content analysis grid into charts or graphs to represent the outcomes numerically (N3.3.2).





Topic 1

Investigating domestic roles within the family



Quantitative methods

You need to convert the results from the whole-class activity about who performs which tasks in the family into a chart or graph. Use the information below to help you decide how you are going to express the results.

Quantitative methods of sociological research aim to provide statistical or numerical data about a topic that can be analysed and expressed in basic mathematical terms. Quantitative data can for example express the number of times a particular form of behaviour occurs. In this case the number of times is a quantity. Such figures help us to understand the behaviour in a population.

Data can be expressed in a number of ways:

- **Percentages:** for example, 52% of 16-year-olds entered for the examinations gained at least five grade A–C passes at GCSE; or, expressed the other way around, 48% of 16-year-olds achieved fewer than five passes.
- **Rates or ratios:** for example, per 1,000 or 10,000 of the population. The birth rate is expressed as a ratio of live births per 1,000 of the population per year. A birth rate of 28:1,000 means that, for every 1,000 people in the population, 28 live births take place every year.
- **Actual numbers:** for example, the number of people who live below a certain pre-defined level of income and may be considered poor.

Topic 1

Investigating domestic roles within the family

Division of tasks in your household

Household job	Job usually undertaken by?	
	Father/male member of household	Mother/female member of household
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Summary

Write totals for each job below, ready to add to the summary for the whole class.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

Conclusion

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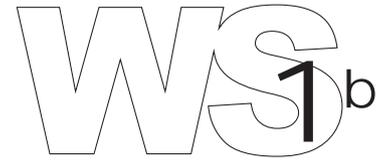
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Topic 1

Investigating domestic roles within the family



Sociological perspectives

Identify a perspective that agrees with the findings of your class research into domestic roles in the family. Fill in the grid below.

Theoretical perspective	
Brief summary	
Names of sociologists adopting this perspective	
Evaluate the perspective in relation to the findings of your class activity on domestic roles in the family	
Strengths	Weaknesses

Topic 1

Investigating domestic roles within the family

What is the value of domestic labour?

If we advertised 'housework' today as a job in a local newspaper, how many people would apply? One spoof advertisement in the *New Internationalist* magazine back in 1988 asked for candidates who might be interested in a 'job' that meant:

- 50–100 hours work a week
- few holidays
- less job satisfaction than assembly-line work
- job security that was threatened by the increasing rate of divorce
- not only was this 'post' unpaid, but it also involved sharing a bed with your 'employer'

Domestic labour in the 1950s

Despite changing households and changing work experiences, today we still associate housework or domestic labour with women. Before industrialisation, when husbands and wives were both heavily involved in craft-work and work on the land, tasks in the home would more likely be carried out by the children who were still at home. It is not until much later that we start to see women as being almost synonymous with domestic labour. Nick Jorgenson et al. (1997) point to a famous US home economics examination paper of 1952 in which it was made clear whose job it was to carry out certain functions in the home (and with a smile of gratitude). Its instructions to female students read:

- **Have dinner ready.** Plan ahead, even the night before, to have a delicious meal on time.
- **Prepare yourself.** Take 15 minutes to rest so that you'll be refreshed when he arrives. Put a ribbon in your hair and be fresh-looking.
- **Prepare the children.** Take a few minutes to wash the children's hands and face. They are little treasures and he would like to see them playing their part.
- **Listen to him.** You may have a dozen things to

tell him... Let him talk first.

And so on.

The 'first wave' response of the 1970s

By the 1970s many feminists, such as Jesse Bernard, argued that there might, indeed, have been more than a dozen things to 'tell him', but they were unlikely to include profound thanks for being the main carrier of the burden of domestic labour. Bernard and others argued persuasively that there were really two marriages in every marital union — 'His is better than hers!' Pat Mainardi (1970) a feminist activist from the group 'Red Stockings' in New York is quoted on the Chicago Women's Liberation Union history website www.cwluherstory.com/CWLUArchive/polhousework summing up the situation forcefully in this way:

We women have been brainwashed more than even we can imagine. Possibly too many years of seeing television women in ecstasy over their stunning waxed floors or breaking down over their dirty shirt collars. Men have no such conditioning. They recognise the essential fact of housework right from the very beginning. Which is that it stinks.

And today?

Some 35 years on, we live in a different age. Or do we? Most surveys suggest that, at the end of the day — and through it — it is still women who carry out the bulk of the work in the home. Sociologists today talk not just about a *dual* burden (with women being expected to carry out the majority of the household tasks even when they work outside the home) but a *triple* burden for females, with the additional expectation that women will also undertake emotional labour in dealing with the emotional crises in families.

A recent *British Social Attitudes Survey* (2002)

Topic 1 Investigating domestic roles within the family

continued

Table 1 *Division of household tasks*

	Always me (%)	About equal or both together (%)	Usually/always my partner (%)	Third party (%)
Male responses				
Prepares meals	14	30	55	1
Household cleaning	7	32	55	5
Shopping groceries	9	48	42	1
Caring for sick family	6	46	46	2
Small repairs in house	80	12	5	3
Does laundry	8	16	75	2
Female responses				
Prepares meals	62	28	9	1
Household cleaning	64	28	4	4
Shopping groceries	49	44	7	1
Caring for sick family	62	35	2	1
Small repairs in house	10	21	65	4
Does laundry	81	14	3	1

Source: British Social Attitudes Survey 2002

of men and women revealed that some tasks in the home are still quite dramatically gendered (see Table 1).

A major new survey on domestic workers by the Work Foundation (2003) claims that while men may *appear* more anxious to take a more active role in parenting they are still reluctant to help out in the everyday domestic chores. Nevertheless, a recent article in the *Observer* newspaper (Coren 2004) argued that housework was, improbably, becoming 'sexy'. A number of prominent female celebrities have even used domesticated images in photo shoots and interviews. Zoe Ball posed with a feather duster, for example; Victoria Beckham posed in a 'baby doll' nightie at an ironing board; and Kylie Minogue exclaimed: 'I love to get my Marigolds [rubber gloves] out and have a good clean.' Really? Maybe this sort of thing appeals to rather conservative male fantasies about a sexy partner at home —

though none of *these* women is homebound, far from it. The article anticipated the arrival of a new DVD called *Modern Loving for Couples*, which claimed that: 'Housework is the new foreplay.' If it is — and this seems open to question — it does not seem to have seduced the majority of men so far.

How much is domestic labour really worth?

The sociologist and writer Ann Oakley has often claimed that housework is invisible, largely unappreciated and unpaid work, hence the theory that housework is a direct benefit to capitalism by providing this exploitative economic system with a free service — women's unpaid work at home. One of the problems with housework is how to quantify just how much this labour is worth — or is *perceived* to be worth.

This area was recently investigated by insurance companies in Britain. Certainly, most men in these sorts of surveys seem to underestimate the real cost of the domestic labour involved, especially for families with children. One survey, by Norwich Union in March 2004, revealed that one in six working fathers thought that £5,000 would be enough to replace a mother's domestic labour, in monetary terms. Norwich Union itself put the figure at closer to £30,000 a year — six times higher

Methods note

A survey such as Table 1 is based, of course, on what people think their own contributions are to household tasks. Might this fact cause some methodological problems? Compare the male and female responses above. Do they match up?

Topic 1 Investigating domestic roles within the family

continued

Table 2 *Estimated value of domestic labour*

Cooking	£58.89 a week	(£7.15 an hour)
Cleaning	£15.00 minimum a week	(£5.89 an hour)
Childcare	£97.75 a week	(£6.29 an hour)
Housekeeping	£115.30 a week	(£6.15 an hour)
Driving	£25.94 a week	(£6.79 an hour)
Gardening	£12.00 a week	(£7.35 an hour)
Sewing	£8.29 a week	(£5.99 an hour)
Other	£17.49 a week	(£6.11 an hour)
Weekly total	£407.39	

Source: Legal and General, 2004

than the cost estimated by men. This is equal to the salary of an experienced college lecturer, a qualified social worker, a senior librarian or a midwife.

This Norwich Union figure was based on the Office for National Statistics valuation of total unpaid housework and informal childcare in the UK as being in the region of £700bn. If you divide this figure by 24 million households, you get £29,166. This is a much higher figure than that calculated by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) in 2002, which put the annual value of domestic labour per household in the UK at £7,500. The CEBR was, possibly, more accurate in its assessment that women spend roughly twice as long as men doing household tasks, even though 13 million women are also now employed outside the home in the UK labour market.

How is the value of domestic labour estimated?

In 2004, in a report called *The Value of a Mum*, the Legal and General insurance firm came up with a domestic labour figure for women with children that is closer to Norwich Union's than to the CEBR's. Angela Robert Shaw, the managing director of the company, seemed to see UK households in traditional terms. She commented:

Our research highlights just how much it costs someone to do all the tasks a mum does. It's a worrying thought that if anything happened to a full-time mum it would cost around £21,840 a year to pay others to do tasks that mum does for free.

It is easy to see from Table 2 how the 'real' costs of domestic labour might mount up.

A yearly estimate for this work comes to £21,184. The same survey estimated the value of men's domestic workload at £234.05 per week. Only in the garden did the value of men's labour exceed that of their female counterparts (£23.67 a week). The time spent per week by women on domestic labour was estimated at 75 hours. This is 27 hours more than the maximum 48 hours currently allowed under European law.

The figure of around £21,000 for domestic work is supported by findings from another survey conducted by Freeview Channel abc1 in February 2005. The survey estimated that a full-time female domestic worker spends 1,968 hours a year, or the equivalent of 82 days, doing housework. This means a cost of £21,000 a year to cover domestic labour duties. This is higher than the average salary currently paid to women who work *outside* the home.

Female office workers are, arguably, better off in comparison to women working in the home, however. They work, on average, 88 hours fewer each year and are eligible for nice perks, such as pensions and healthcare, which are simply not available to domestic labourers.

Conclusion: a new age?

Many people argue today that the old theories about divided conjugal roles in the home are now becoming redundant. New technologies have made domestic work much easier than it was only 10 years ago. In any case, in a world characterised by more full-time and part-time workers of *both* sexes, don't many more of us just pay somebody else to do all those tasks around the house that we either don't want to do or don't have the time to do?

Topic 1 Investigating domestic roles within the family

continued

In answer to the first point, the fact is that our expectations about housework are much higher than in the past: if we have better equipment we are expected to do a better job. In the case of the second point, the recent report by the Work Foundation shows that only one in ten UK families pays for domestic help. These families tend, not surprisingly, to be those which can afford to pay. Families with total incomes of over £70,000 were 16 times more likely to hire help in the home than those with incomes below £25,000. These days, according to government figures, we are collectively spending some £4bn pounds annually on domestic services.

It might pay for some people to work in the home, but I still can't see many people replying to that *New Internationalist* job advertisement if it reappeared today.

References and further reading

- Coren, V. (2004) 'Housework turns men on? Please don't talk dirty', *Observer Review*, 22 September.
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