

Year 12 Summer 2 Research Project - Example

TASK1: Choosing a research topic.

Topic area: *Gender and Education*

Possible research questions/what do you want to find out:

Is there still a gender difference in subject choice?

If so, why is there this difference?

What influences the different gender's to choose their subjects?

Why do girls achieve better grades than boys?

What motivates the different genders

I think I am going to explore gendered subject choices.

What might be the practical issues of researching this topic and how will you overcome this?

Time- finding the time to ask many people

What might be the ethical issues of researching this topic and how will you overcome this?

Asking U18's- how will I get their permission? The subject matter of my research is appropriate and U18's could give their permission.

What might be the theoretical issues of researching this topic and how will you overcome this?

Feminism- looking at gender in education

What research has already been done into your topic area? (this can be copied and pasted)

Provide a reference and brief description of each piece of research you find.

Naima Browne and Carol Ross (1991) Gender domains- early experiences and expectations from adults socialise children into seeing certain tasks and activities as either 'boys' or 'girls' territory'. So children feel more comfortable in their domain.

This is seen in careers, and then trickles down. This sex-typing of careers means that when choosing subjects to study, boys and girls choose subjects that are similar to the careers and they are gendered.

Kelly - gendered subject image- STEM subjects are more likely to be seen as a boys subject because these teachers are more likely to be men, resources include more boys and boys dominate the spaces.

Alison Dewar (1990)- peer pressure and bullying from boys calling girls lesbian or butch for liking sports.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED581226.pdf>- Vannak Dom and Gihong Yi- *In the education landscape, subjects have been gendered and hierarchized in the development process of knowledge economy. Being hierarchized means that only top ranking subjects can bestow*

an individual with high returns in terms of success and career. Particularly, STEM subjects are considered having higher values contributing to economic development and growth (Roberts, 2002). These gendered and hierarchal subjects, sociologists of education argued, are the reasons behind the under-representation of women in the globalized mainstream knowledge economy, while feminists saw as one of the factors perpetuating gender inequality in education, reinforcing gender stereotypes, and reproducing patriarchal control although subject choices based on the gender identity are reducing and stereotypes are lessened in some science subjects (Devine et al., 2012).

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/913311/Attitudes_towards_STEM_subjects_by_gender_at_KS4.pdf

Proportionately, female pupils were less likely to rank a STEM-related subject first for enjoyment: 32% compared to 59% of males. • Females were also less likely to consider themselves to be best at a STEM subject: 33% compared to 60% of males. • When asked about which subjects were most likely to lead to a future job, 69% of male pupils named a STEM subject compared to 51% of females.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03055698.2016.1160821>

The second way in which gender ideology can steer boys and girls towards different educational tracks is by influencing what they value in a future occupation. Research has shown that women value working with people and emphasise social and altruistic values in their ideal job, whereas men like to work with things and value economic wealth, prestige and status (Diekman et al. 2010; Su, Rounds, and Armstrong 2009). These results concur with traditional gender ideology, in which men are supposed to be breadwinners and women are supposed to be caregivers.

Are there any gaps in the research that you would like to explore?

The focus has mainly been on stem and gender socialisation. However, a lot of data is outdated. It would be interesting to see if this is still relevant today. I would like to look at if gender stereotypes still impact this as I believe there is much more awareness and education and acceptance about breaking these stereotypes.

What is your final research question?

How do gender stereotypes impact A-level subject choice?

Checked by teacher: Yes, subject matter approved.

TASK 2: Choosing a research method.

Are you taking a positivist or interpretivist approach?

Interpretivist

Why?

*Verstehen- to gain a deeper understanding and empathy towards why choices are made
Each person has different reasons and there will not be a one size fits all, cause and effect answer to these choices.*

How are you planning on doing your research? What method are you going to use?

Semi-structured interviews

How is your chosen method suitable for your research topic?

I will have a basic set of questions to ask like 'What subjects do you study?, What industry do you want to work in? Why have you chosen this area of study?' and then based on the answers I am given, I can explore further and unpack any gender stereotypes that come out. This is suitable because I will be able to fully understand the choices and see if it is because of gender stereotypes.

I am going to ask my participants questions about genders stereotypes in society and in jobs to see if they believe any. This will be able to show that there may be a link between thinking/somewhat believing stereotypes impacts choices.

What might be the practical issues of researching this topic and how will you overcome this?

Time consuming to interview and analyse the data from lots of people so will have to interview less people than I would if I did the questionnaire

Memory on what people say - could record interview with their consent

What might be the ethical issues of researching this topic and how will you overcome this?

Consent to participate and record- I will provide a consent form outlining the purpose of the interview, asking for their consent to participate and have it recorded. I will also include that they can withdraw at any time.

What might be the theoretical issues of researching this topic and how will you overcome this?

Reliability of unstructured part- this wont be the same for everyone- but will have some for the others.

Validity- high in validity

Inflexibility of structured countered with flexibility of unstructured part

Can't quantify and will not be representative but will gain a deeper understanding

Interviewer bias- I will keep personal beliefs to myself and just ask questions.

Social desirability- When telling ppts the purpose of the study I will keep it brief so I dont give it all away.

How are you going to get your participants?

I am going to use opportunity sampling. I am a sixth form student so I am going to ask peers to be a part of my sample.

Advantages- time, easy access, real students and validity through this.

Disadvantages- most of the participants will be people i know so may impact the professional relationship between interviewer and interviewee. However, this may also mean they open up more and increase the validity of my results. Representativeness and reliability will also be impacted.

What is your plan of action?

- 1) *Write my questions and consent form and get them checked over by my teacher.*
- 2) *Find my participants and organise a time for interviews.*
- 3) *Conduct the interviews*
- 4) *Analyse them, looking for common themes*

5) *Write up my report.*

Checked by teacher: Yes. 10 participants may be too many. 4 would be enough for this scale of research. Everything else is good. In your report, you could explain further how/why representativeness etc will be impacted.

TASK 3: Secondary Research

On your main report, produce a 500 word summary of the secondary research already done around your topic and research question. Include references.

TASK 4: Do your research

Once all has been checked okay by your teacher, do your research. Make sure you get your questions/guides/consent forms etc checked by your teacher.

TASK 5: Write a methodology

On your main report, write 500 words on how you conducted your research and why you made the decisions you did. Use sociological studies, theories and concepts that you have learned to back this up.

HINTS AND TIPS

Advantages and disadvantages of using interpretivist/positivist methods?

Advantages and disadvantages of using qualitative/quantitative methods?

Key Words: subjectivity, objectivity, values, scientific

TASK 6: Write up your findings

On your main report, write 500 words explaining your findings and conclusions

What did you discover?

What is the answer to your question?

Did you discover anything by accident?

TASK 7: Write up your evaluation

On your main report, write 500 words evaluating your study.

Evaluation based on: your research method, your findings, your conclusions.

HINTS AND TIPS

Advantages and disadvantages of using your sampling method?

Advantages and disadvantages of using your research methods?

Practical, ethical, theoretical issues of your research method and how it maybe impacted your findings.

How could you analyse/evaluate your findings through the lens of interpretivism/positivism?
How could you analyse/evaluate your findings through the lens of functionalism/marxism/feminism etc?
Has your research opened up any other questions?

Task 8- Bibliography

On your main report, provide a bibliography of references you have used.

If you are using any studies from a textbook, there is normally a bibliography at the back where you can get the reference from.

If you are using google scholar, if you press the “ symbol it will have the references on there.

For anything else if you are not sure how to reference go to this website

<https://library.aru.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm> and there is a guide with lots of different sources and examples.

TASK 9- Annex

On your main report, provide an annex with any blank questionnaires/interview/observation guides and any blank consent forms used. Remember your answers need to be anonymised so do not provide any completed forms.

Main Report Example

How do gender stereotypes impact A-level subject choice?

Student A, 2021

Secondary Research

One of the core social divisions in society is gender. The social construction of gender and the personality, behavioural and social characteristics that have become attached to each gender have become ingrained into socialisation and our society. These stereotypes can be found in all aspects of society- from expectations on gender roles in the family and how women should be expressive and men instrumental (Parsons), to the ever too common portrayal of helpless princesses and strong knights in shining armour in children's movies. These expectations and representations have meant that there is a glass ceiling in workplaces and have real life consequences. Women represent 28% of senior management positions in 2020 (Mckinsey, 2021). Although there has been an improvement, with this percentage being an increase from 23% in 2015 (Mckinsey, 2021), it is still far from equal. The issue is not just with workplace authority, but industry too. STEM, law, and politics are professions that are seen as top of the hierarchy and are still dominated by men (Dom and Yi). It is argued that this is a result of gendered subjects and stereotypes. Therefore, showing a relationship between gender stereotypes and career aspirations.

What is interesting is that Browne and Ross (1991) highlight how early expectations and experiences socialise children into these gendered stereotypes. This then leads to children growing up believing that certain tasks and activities are either 'for boys' or 'for girls'. For example, in childhood football is a boys domain and playing hairdressers is a girls domain. This is further enforced through the media and advertisement of boys and girls toys. Through this reproduction of gender roles and stereotypes, children subconsciously create what Browne and Ross call, gender domains. Therefore, careers are sex-typed which will then influence the career aspirations of young people and then their subject choices at school. Kelly strengthens this argument by explaining how different subjects have gendered images. She found that STEM subjects are mainly taught by men, uses resources with boys in and the boys in these classrooms dominate.

Research shows that gendered subject choices in school are an issue. A government report has revealed that 32% of females enjoy STEM subjects in school, compared to 59% of males as well as only 33% of females saying their best performing subjects fall within STEM, compared to 60% of males. This opens up questions as to why girls do not choose these subjects which lead to more powerful, higher paying careers, especially as on a whole, females outperform males in school (JCQ 2013). Van der Vloten et al (2016) highlights how there is a difference in job preferences based on gender: "women value working with people and emphasise social and altruistic values in their ideal job, whereas men like to work with things and value economic wealth, prestige and status". Again, showing that there are differences between men and women. This is also argued to be a result of gender ideology and stereotypes.

On the other hand, the breaking of gender stereotypes is becoming normalised, accepted and more common and there is a march of progress for the changing position of women and the achievements of women. Therefore, I am going to conduct research into if these differences are still prevalent and if gender stereotypes have any contributing factor.

Methodology

Findings and Conclusion

Evaluations

Bibliography

- Forbes. 2021. The Gender Pay Gap: Why It's Still Here. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tomspiggle/2021/05/25/the-gender-pay-gap-why-its-still-here/?sh=6bf4ebbf7baf>. [Accessed 16 June 2021].
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- Department of Education, 2019. *Attitudes towards STEM subjects by gender at KS4*. Social Science in Government. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/913311/Attitudes_towards_STEM_subjects_by_gender_at_KS4.pdf [Accessed 16/06/2021]



Sociology Research Project Consent Form

Name of researcher	
Name of participant	
Date of research	

My research
<p>I am a sixth form student at Southfields Academy doing research into the reasons why people choose their particular subjects at A-level. The research will be a recorded interview lasting 10-15 minutes. My research topic, process and method have all been checked by my sociology teacher and has passed the requirements of being an ethical and practical study.</p>

Your rights
<p>Your name and personal details will not be recorded anywhere but on this consent form, the recording will be kept anonymous and confidential. I will only keep the recording until I have analysed the data.</p> <p>At any given time, you can stop the interview and you do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to.</p>

Participant Declaration		
Declaration	Signature	Date
I give my consent to participate in this research		
I give consent for my interview to be recorded		
I understand my rights as a participant		
Researcher sign		

Annex 2- Interview Guide

Sociology research project interview guide

Unrecorded:

Explain research and rights to participants and fill in a consent form.

Recorded:

What is your gender identity?

When you were younger, what did you want to be when you grew up?

What subjects have you chosen to do at A-level?

Why were these your choices?

Have you given any thought into what you want to do after sixth form?

If so, why do you want to go into this area of work/further study?

Describe to me, what a man should be like?

Describe to me, what a woman should be like?

What would you consider to be a man's job?

What would you consider to be a woman's job?

Are there any subjects you consider to be 'boys' subjects?

Are there any subjects you consider to be 'girls;' subjects?

Would you feel comfortable being in a classroom and subject dominated by the opposite gender?

Do you think gender stereotypes have an impact on day to day life?

Do you think there is still pressure to conform to gender stereotypes?

Some examples of follow up questions:

Why do you think this?

How do you mean?

Could you give an example?

Then I will also ask questions based on their answers.