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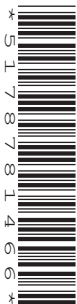
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Monday 15 May 2017 – Afternoon

GCSE SOCIOLOGY

B673/01/CS Applying Sociological Research Techniques

Duration: 1 hour



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Investigation 1 – A study (2015) by a sociology student in the first year of a university course in Sheffield.

Title: Family types and how they are changing

From studying sociology, I know the family to be an important part of a person's life. I have also come to understand that over time, peoples' experiences of family life are changing. I have decided to research this for my individual study. As I intend to continue studying sociology after my degree, I will make my research the first part of a longitudinal study which I will continue during my career in sociology.

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My aims are to find out which family types exist today and to find out how family types are different in the future.

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Secondary sources

Secondary data was useful to find out what type of households there are in the UK. I was surprised to find which type of household is the fastest growing.

Source 1

Table 1 – Type of Household by Percentage in the UK in 2000 and 2014

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Type of Household	2000	2014
One person	28.5	28.5
Two or more unrelated adults	3.0	3.2
Couple (no children)	28.9	28.4
Couple (with children)	29.4	28.1
Lone parent	9.5	10.6
Multi-family households	0.7	1.2
All households	100%	100%

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Adapted from Office for National Statistics 2015

Primary research

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Method 1

Soap operas on TV are part of popular culture in the UK and watched by a wide range of people. They are said to reflect real life so the audience can identify with the characters. Therefore, I decided to carry out a content analysis of two soap operas to find out the types of family shown in them.

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I watched and recorded data from the soap operas for one week in November. I decided this would give me information on the family life of the regular characters. From this, I could choose which category to put them into. I put my results into tables by matching them to my household and selected family types so that I could see how common they are.

Family types:

nuclear (parents and kids)

lone parent (only one parent and kids)

extended (other relatives eg grandparents/aunts etc living with a nuclear family)

blended (step parents/kids)

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Table 2 – Family types in Eastenders

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Type	Number	Characters
Single person	4	Donna Yates, Dot Branning, Claudette Hubbard, Carmel Kazemi
Couple	1	Shirley and Buster
Nuclear	1	Ian, Jayne and Bobby Beale
Lone parent	2	Ronnie Mitchell Masood Ahmed
Blended	3	Phil and Sharon Mitchell + 3 children Martin Fowler, Stacey and Lily Branning Dean Wicks, Roxy and Amy Mitchell
Extended	4	The Cokers + Paul* Kim and Vincent Hubbard + baby, Denise and Patrick The Carters + Aunt Babe The Jackson/Fowlers
*Not really extended but as Paul is the grandson, not nuclear either.		

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Table 3 – Family types in Emmerdale

Type	Number	Characters
Single person	3	Eric Pollard, Edna Birch David Metcalfe
Couple	3	Adam and Victoria Barton Ashley and Harriet Diane and Doug*
Nuclear	1	Emma and James Barton + sons
Lone parent	2	Debbie Dingle Marlon Dingle
Blended	3	Paddy and Rhona Goskirk + child Bob and Brenda Hope + twins Dan and Kerry + child Rakesh and Priya + 2 children
Extended	2	Lisa, Zac and Belle Dingle + Joanie and Grandson The Barton – Dingles** Jimmy, Nicola, Rodney Blackstock + child
*But Chas also lives in the pub with them **Also a blended family		

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Method 2

I decided interviews would be the best way of gaining the information I need for my longitudinal study. My plan is to conduct 20 interviews with women of different ages to find out about the type of family they live in. My next step is to interview the same people again every 5 years for the time I spend in my career in sociological research. 80

I could have used historical documents to find out about differences in the family over time but I am more interested in the future rather than the past.

I did not use random sampling to select my interviewees but chose them individually from personal contacts in my local area so that I achieved the type of sample I wanted. In my sample, four were elderly, four were middle aged, four were young single parents, four were teenagers and four were children. I would then be able to compare their experiences of the family. I will record what type of families they live in now and find out what happens later. 85

My interviews went really well. I let the elderly people talk freely but the others were more structured. In the case of the teenagers, I practically had to ask direct questions to get them to open up. I think this was because it was in a youth centre, in the evening, and they wanted to go off with their mates who they could see and hear enjoying themselves. 90

Most of the interviews were recorded on my phone. However, sometimes my battery ran out (especially with the elderly who wanted to talk for hours about all sorts of things – I think they were lonely!). When this happened I had to write down the information in brief note form and write it up later. When I interviewed the children in a nursery and the teenagers in the youth centre, it was very noisy and I found later I could not hear all they had said. 95

Results

(Here is a part of two of my interviews)

Interview 1 (Person A – Mrs Carter, aged 90)

Me – ‘Tell me about your family life over the years.’ 100

Mrs Carter – ‘I came from a nice family, lots of hugging, but we didn’t have much money. My mum took in washing and sewing to make ends meet because there were six of us. I was the youngest. Mum struggled when Dad died when I was 13. He had an accident in the mine. I got married after the war ended. I had to. I was already expecting but no-one else knew because it would have been a disgrace. I had three children and my husband passed away in 1955. I never married again. Now I live on my own and my children, grand-children and great grand-children all live a long way away and have their own lives. My brothers and sisters are gone. Families are different today.’ 105

Interview 2 (Person B – Kate, single parent aged 37)

Me – ‘What type of family did you grow up in?’ 110

Kate – ‘It was a kind family, mum, dad, kids who all cared about each other. Mum went out to work but always made us feel loved. I think that’s important don’t you?’

Me – ‘Yes, but what was the structure of your family?’

Kate – ‘Sorry – not sure what you mean.’

I explained this to her and she went on to say she came from a nuclear family but that she herself was divorced with kids. Her Mum and sisters help her out every day. However, she is now engaged to a man who has two younger children and an adult child. The oldest child and her baby have just come back to live with him because she had no child care and couldn’t afford her rent. 115

I guess when they marry they will be a blended family. (Or maybe a boomerang family?). I could write both down. 120

Conclusion

I found and wrote down a range of family types. I look forward to my future research so I can see what happens and can write a detailed conclusion.

Investigation 2 – A social worker, aged 46, in Merseyside, 2015. 125

After working for social services in Liverpool for over 20 years, I have become aware the family does not always support its members in the way that some sociologists claim. Many of the people I work with have very poor experiences of family life. I have been asked by my managers to research this.

Background information 130

Functionalist sociologists argue the family has jobs (functions) to perform and this is useful to keep society running smoothly. Therefore, they see the family as good. Marxist and feminist sociologists do not see the family as good. They think the family helps to make society more unequal.

Functionalists believe the family carries out the following jobs (functions): 135

- primary socialisation (including socialisation into gender roles)
- physical and emotional support
- a home
- the money for economic support

They also believe that society works better if men and women have separate roles with mum responsible for caring and dad as the breadwinner. Some functionalists even believe that men and women are biologically suited to the different roles but most think it is learnt behaviour. 140

My aim is to find evidence to show whether or not families in the UK carry out the jobs functionalists say they do. My view is that many families fail to support their members in this way. I know I need to be careful to avoid researcher bias. 145

The best way to study the family would be to observe them without their knowledge. However, I need to make sure my research is ethical.

Secondary sources

Documentary programmes on TV gave me some ideas for collecting evidence on the first two functions of the family. 150

I watched *'My Transgender Kid'* (Channel 4, 6 October 2015). This used case studies of two children who had been socialised into one gender but were choosing to live as the opposite gender.

I made notes on discussions with Paddy (P), born a boy. I selected and shortened some of them. The 'interviewer' (I) was either the programme maker, Dad or Mum at different times. 155

Interview 3 (Paddy aged 7, wearing a pink dress)

- I – 'You are going to be 8 soon'
 P – 'I will still be me'
 I – 'I suppose going from boy to girl is just like you going from 7 to 8'
 P – 'I was never a boy!' 160
 I – 'So is it a secret that you want to be a girl?'
 P – 'Actually, I don't want to be a girl, I am a girl. I just don't want people to make fun of me. You're just the gender that you are. I wish everyone was a girl.'
 I – 'Do you think you will ever be a boy?'
 P – 'Of course not!' 165

While out shopping:

- I – ‘Are they (gold glitter boots) too sparkly, even for you?’
 P – ‘Too sparkly doesn’t even make sense!’
 I – ‘Do you want to look at girls’ school uniforms or boys?’
 P – ‘Boys (while picking up a school dress)’ 170
 I – ‘How come?’
 P – ‘They have already seen me as a boy’
 I – ‘What would make you most happy?’
 P – ‘If they actually knew I was a girl’

8th birthday – Paddy in a ‘Frozen’ dress: 175

- I – ‘Do you feel more confident as a girl now?’
 P – ‘Yes’
 I – ‘What would make you happier in the future?’
 P – ‘Getting married as a girl. Yes, that would make me really, really, really, really, really happy!’

The second documentary I watched was ‘*Professor Green: Suicide and Me*’ (BBC 3, 27 October 2015) presented by the rapper (real name Stephen Manderson) about his family life. It became clear that rejection had caused him much unhappiness. His mother left him with his Nan when he was one and his father was rarely in his life. His dad’s death happened when Stephen was 18 and had not seen him for seven years. Stephen is trying to raise awareness about suicide being the biggest cause of male death and how this is affected by men not being able to express their feelings. 180 185

When he was interviewed on ‘*Newsnight*’ (BBC2) the following day, I decided it would be useful to watch this and record his responses. The interviewer had a list of questions but it looked like he adapted these and made it seem more of a conversation. I wrote down the main points.

Interview 4 (Professor Green) 190

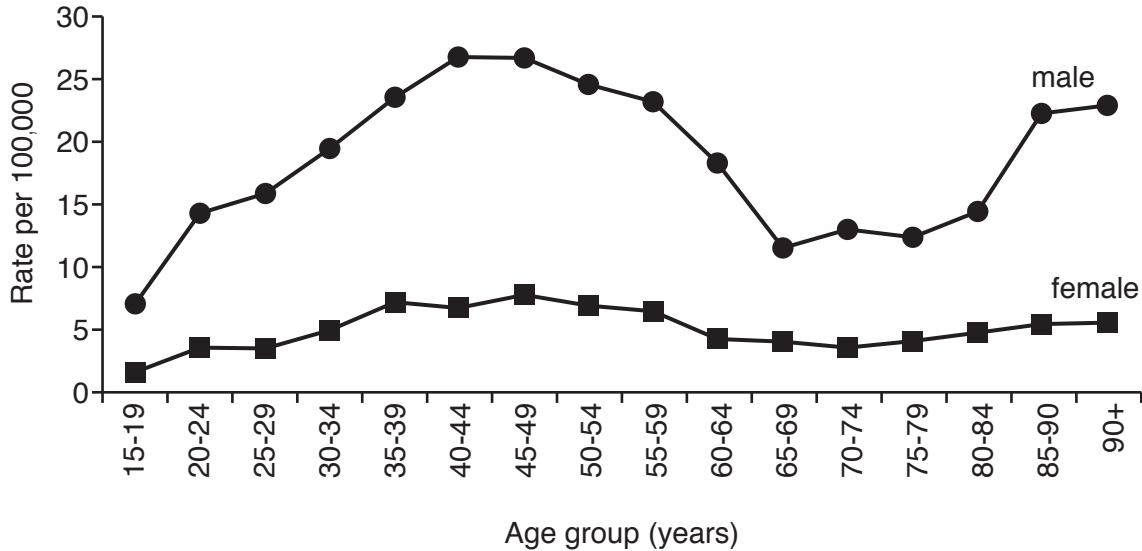
- I – ‘Why men do you think?’
 PG – ‘I guess there is a lot of pressure on men to be real men... to be hard, a lot of men feel the need to put forward that image.’
 I – ‘So it’s not expressing their feelings, bottling them up?’
 PG – ‘Yes, just feeling that you have to be a certain way to be a man. They think if you allow yourself to be weak in any way you are less of a man.’ 195
 I – ‘Does ‘laddism’, the culture of guys slapping each other on the back, playing practical jokes get in the way or not?’
 PG – ‘Maybe but I think it is the responsibility of all of us to take care of each other.’
 I – ‘It seems to be a particular generation of men, mid 40’s who are at risk.’ 200
 PG – ‘Yes, there was a lot of stress in their lives. There has been some change in society but men have stress in all parts of their lives and they can’t deal with it.’
 I – ‘One thing which came out in the documentary is your family problems as a child. Has this left you feeling that family and keeping the bonds between family members is important?’
 PG – ‘Definitely family is important but as a child it was difficult because I felt it was not my responsibility. My father let me down again and again.’ 205
 I – ‘What would you say to your dad now?’
 PG – ‘You muppet (PG breaks down in tears).’

Source 2

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Listening to Professor Green made me wonder whether suicide was a big problem in society. To find out, I used official statistics which are easily available and accurate. However, because of the topic, suicide statistics may be unreliable data.

Graph 1 – Suicide Rates in UK by age group, 2013



Adapted from ONS 2015

Source 3

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Homelessness

In November 2015, Frank Field the MP for Birkenhead, told Parliament about the number of homeless families in his area around Liverpool (Merseyside). The information was given to him by the local councils.

Table 4 – Number of families with children registered as homeless in Merseyside in 2014 and 2015

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Council Area	2014	2015
Birkenhead	279	305
Sefton	11	21
St Helens	62	81
Wirral	73	54
Halton	33	24
Knowsley	34	32
Total	492	517

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In response to this, the homeless charity Shelter made an urgent appeal for help and said 1100 children in the North West would wake up homeless on Christmas day 2015.

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Primary Research

Method 3

I decided to carry out interviews with different types of people who would be able to help with my aims. One was a homeless child in Liverpool who I met through my role as a social worker. Both the child and his mother agreed to the interview and knew it was part of my research. I gave him a bag of crisps and some sweets at the start of the interview. 235

As he was a child, I decided a semi-structured interview would be best. I can make sure I get both relevant and good information. I recorded this and wrote it up word for word later.

I have permission to visit emergency homeless accommodation in London and Glasgow to carry out more interviews, all with children of this age. In total, I will interview 10 children. My guess is the children's experiences will be very similar to Jack's. 240

Interview 5 (Jack – homeless and aged 10)

Me – 'Hi Jack. Can you tell me about where you are staying tonight?'

Jack – 'Yes. My mam, me, five-year-old brother and baby sister will be in the B&B again. We have one room with a big bed and a cot. People run round and bang doors at night. It frightens me and I can't sleep. Mum cries.' 245

Me – 'Where do you have your meals?'

Jack – 'There is a kitchen downstairs with a fridge but people pinch our food. We use the microwave in our room. I like beans on toast but not every day. When I can go to school I like the school dinners.' 250

Me – 'Tell me about school'

Jack – 'I liked my old school but the B&B we were put into is miles away. I went for a while but Mam had to take us all on the bus and it cost too much. I have been to five different schools. I don't like the one now. The other kids laugh at me as I don't have the right uniform. It is hard to wash and dry our clothes so we have to try not to get them dirty. Mum shouts at us if we spill anything. Often I don't go but it's boring, as we don't have much to play with in the B&B.' 255

Me – 'Tell me how you feel'

Jack – 'Mostly angry and I fight with my brother. At school I get worried about where we will be sleeping that night. I just want a home like everyone else.' 260

My final interview was with a steelworker who has just been made redundant. He is my brother. As he lives a long way from me in Redcar (Teesside), I interviewed him on the phone. I had to keep stopping the interview so I could write down what he said.

I did a structured interview so I could have the questions already written down. This was more practical. I used closed questions such as: 265

- How long he had worked there
- How much he earned

I also used open questions and here are some of the questions and replies.

Interview 6 (Rob – male aged 45)

Me – ‘When did you find out you were to lose your job?’ 270

Rob – ‘Only days before we were finished. There were rumours but we all thought someone would buy the plant to keep it running.’

Me – ‘What are your chances of finding another job?’

Rob – ‘None really. I am a specialist steel worker. Even if I was to move, all the steelworks in the UK are closing. My only chance is in the service sector such as restaurants which pay less. There again, no-one in Redcar will have any money to eat out so the restaurants will close before long.’ 275

Me – ‘How is this affecting your family?’

Rob – ‘Money! How will we pay the mortgage? Christmas is in two months. My wife is worried and already the kids are upset by the arguing about how we can cut down. I feel a failure. I should be able to look after my family.’ 280

Rob said he would put me in touch with other unemployed men so I can get a wider sample.

Conclusion

My research is not yet complete. However, I have gained some data on all four of the jobs or functions that functionalists say the family does. So far it does seem as though some families are not able to carry out these jobs. 285

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