

Thematic guide: Gender studies (using qualitative data)



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Introduction

The study of gender and gender relations has become increasingly significant for our understanding of society, social structures, social interactions and social policy.

In particular feminist studies have contributed new conceptual and methodological insights to understanding the formation and continuing problems of gender inequality.

Feminism in the 1960s and 1970s was largely represented by issues of concern to white, middle-class western women, resulting in an over-simplification of the female experience. Since then its focus has been on the plurality of perspectives across race, age, class and culture.

The studies on gender amongst UK Data Service qualitative collections have addressed a diverse range of feminist issues such as identity, health, education, sexuality, domestic violence, politics, and body image.

Pahl's study 'Coping Responses to Marital Violence: a Longitudinal Study of Women Who Sought Help From a Refuge, 1976-1980' investigated the issues faced by women leaving home after suffering domestic violence and the role of refuges in assisting women with their problems.

Although gender studies have tended to emphasise the experiences of women, studies of men and masculinity have also become increasingly prevalent.

In a similar development to feminist studies, the stereotypical male image has not generally accounted for the diversity of male experiences and has not taken into consideration changes in men's traditional roles.

These gender biases and stereotypes are frequently reinforced in the media and are explored in Jackson, Stevenson, and Brooks' study of men's lifestyle magazines.

Searching for related materials

The [UK Data Service catalogue](#) can be searched for data on gender studies using subject terms such as:

- motherhood
- masculinity
- domestic violence
- feminism
- sex
- relationships
- intimacy
- labour.

Every data collection is accompanied by comprehensive documentation. These are open access and available to the public from the website and it is not necessary to be a registered user to access and download them.

Some insights into feminism in academia are provided by the [Pioneers](#) website.

It describes the backgrounds of a group of classic social science researchers, their motivations for undertaking particular pieces of research and interesting observations about studying sociology in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s.

Each of the interviews with these researchers includes an account of the major phases of the researcher's work and family life and the significant influences which have shaped their interests.

A number of highly influential women in academia are featured in this collection. The site enables faceted browsing and can be searched by themes including 'gender', 'women in academia' and many more.

Other resources on gender studies

[LSE Department of Gender Studies](#)

[The Women's Library @ LSE](#)

Summary of selected qualitative studies on gender studies

[SN 1670 Coping Responses to Marital Violence: a Longitudinal Study of Women Who Sought Help From a Refuge, 1976-1980](#)

Pahl, J.

This study investigated the problems faced by women who have to leave home because of violence and the usefulness of the refuge as a response to the problems of battered women. The study involved interviewing the women who set up and ran the refuge, as well as those women staying at the refuge and interviews with them after they had left.

Coverage

Sample: women running and/or staying at the centre where the study was carried out.

Data: 92 interviews/observations.

Topics

- domestic violence
- employment
- health
- offences
- residential care
- spouses.

SN 4943 Mothers and Daughters: Accounts of Health in the Grandmother Generation, 1945-1978

Blaxter, M.

This research project looked at beliefs and attitudes to health and medical care, inter-generational relationships, and social history of members of a grandmother generation.

Coverage

Sample: women in a Scottish city, who had a child between 1950-1953.

Data: 46 interviews.

Topics

- childcare
- childbirth
- family life
- gender role
- health.

SN 4927 Gender Divisions and Gentrification, 1960-1992

Bondi, L.

This study investigated the significance of gender as a factor in processes of gentrification, and explored the interplay between changing gender divisions and urban change.

Coverage

Sample: consumers and producers of private sector housing in Edinburgh.

Data: 57 interviews.

Topics

- gender
- gentrification
- urban development.

SN 4543 Consumption, Lifestyle and Identity: Reading the New Men's Lifestyle Magazines, 1985-1997

Jackson, P., Stevenson, N. and Brooks, K.

This study explored the new generation of men's lifestyle magazines, which emerged since the mid-1980s. The researchers examined the extent to which variations in the magazines' content and the way they are read by different groups of men can be explained according to

competing sociological theories of masculinity and the media. This study is also available as a teaching dataset under SN 6964.

Coverage

Sample: readers and editors of men's magazines.

Data: 5 individual interviews; 20 focus groups.

Topics

- masculinity
- gender
- identity
- lifestyles
- mass media
- consumption.

[SN 5072 Mothers Alone: Poverty and the Fatherless Family, 1955-1966 \(Fatherless Families\)](#)

Marsden, D.

This study explored the lives and experiences of mothers living alone: unmarried, separated, divorced or widowed. The study asked about housing conditions, homelessness, diet and nutrition, family relations, marriage and marital breakdowns, and the levels and adequacy of community and national assistance. It examined the problems families faced as a consequence of both low income and the lack of fathers.

Coverage

Sample: mothers living on their own (or with children only), receiving National Assistance, in West Yorkshire and Essex during 1965-1966.

Data: 116 interviews.

Topics

- family structure
- housing
- sources of income
- children.

SN 6309 Becoming a Mother, 2005-2007

Hollway, W.

This research project explored the changes in women's identities in the process of becoming mothers for the first time. It gave equal emphasis to the psychological and social worlds of the mothers and pioneered methods that allow both to be studied as part of the same questions.

Coverage

Sample: thirteen first time mothers from Greater London.

Data: 35 interviews with 13 first-time mothers.

Topics

- ethnicity
- childbearing
- marriage
- women's identity
- motherhood.

SN 5190 Cross-Generational Investigation of the Making of Heterosexual Relationships, 1912-2003

Hockey, J., Robinson, V. and Meah, A.

This study asked how women and men manage and subjectively experience the institution of heterosexuality. The study used a life course perspective to investigate the processes which women and men have identified or constituted themselves as 'heterosexual' in the last 80 years.

Coverage

Sample: extended families with three generations of adults aged 15+.

Data: 54 interviews.

Topics

- sexual knowledge
- weddings
- parenthood
- separation and divorce.

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We are supported by the Universities of Essex, Manchester, Edinburgh, University College London and Jisc. We are funded by UKRI through the Economic and Social Research Council.
