

***SOCIOLOGY INVESTIGATION PROJECT 2015***

***Inequality in the Workplace***

***Perceptions of gender in the workplace***

***Word Count: 949***

**Gender inequality is one of the largest agents of inequality among institutions such as the media and the workforce. Individuals and their perceptions on gender in the workforce, such as gendered jobs and gender discrimination, are mainly what drive this inequality.**

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## Introduction

Gender inequality is one of the largest agents of inequality among institutions such as the media and the workforce. Individuals and their perceptions on gender in the workforce, such as gendered jobs and gender discrimination, are mainly what drive this inequality.

There are many outlets for gender inequality in institutions such as the workplace or the media. Such examples include the difference in pay between men and women, which has been a problem since the mid-nineties. Pay gaps can vary from 10.8% to 26%, (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2015) all in favour men earning more money. The social norm is to know that men earn more than women, which could be due to stories of complaints in the media. Another thing that causes a great deal of this inequality is how people perceive gender roles such as signalling a certain job as masculine or feminine. The aim of this study is to see how perceptions of gender roles in the workforce affect gender inequality as a whole. Through channels such as the media and family, certain ways of thinking are moulded to individuals and the way they think, such as seeing certain professions as either masculine or feminine. This creates a barrier for men and women in terms of the jobs they can work that are seen as socially acceptable. Women face a much tougher task in terms of the public's perceptions on them working. The social norm is to see a job such as a waiter or nurse as a women's job. This social perception that most healthcare and social assistance jobs are dominantly female creates a large inequality to both women and to men, in terms of a woman having a harder task of finding a socially accepted job, and a man not being completely socially accepted into a nursing role. Another gender inequality in the workforce caused by perceptions of gender is the issue of sexual abuse. Most people will assume that men are the only gender to sexually abuse at work, where in fact 1 in 12 men report sexual abuse from a female co-worker. This creates an unwanted tag on the shoulders of men in the workforce, in which they do not deserve.

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### **Research design and method**

The aim of the research was to gain a perspective of stereotypical gender roles in the workforce, and compare them to perspectives put out by the media, and other outlets that change the way we think about inequality. By researching the opinions of people aged between 16 and 18, a solid overall opinion was developed that shared the views expressed by that certain age group. The opinion formed was based on answers to a devised survey, which gained peoples perspectives on what jobs are seen as either masculine or feminine, and how they feel about those of the opposite gender doing primarily gender dominant jobs. The survey also addressed what jobs people think are dominantly male or female. Twenty participants took place in the survey (Appendix 1), which consisted of three sections with three questions in each section. There was also a section to write down why the reason that the participants believed they got the answers. The survey was handed out on three pieces of A4 paper, and a pen was provided to the participant. There was no time limit.

### **Ethical considerations**

The survey had a statement (Appendix 2) in which noted that participants had every right to leave at any time. It also noted that any questions were allowed to be asked in regards to the survey. Each participant was informed that there information would not be printed and/or used in any document involving the research. They were told what the survey would be used for, and what the research was trying to achieve. One problem that occurred during the surveying period was the confusion to the aim of the research. One participant was confused about why perceptions would influence gender inequality as a whole, which may have affected the seriousness in which they answered the questions. To fix this problem, previous research was shown to show some proof that it does have an effect.

## Results

### *Table 1*

#### *Section 1, Question 1*

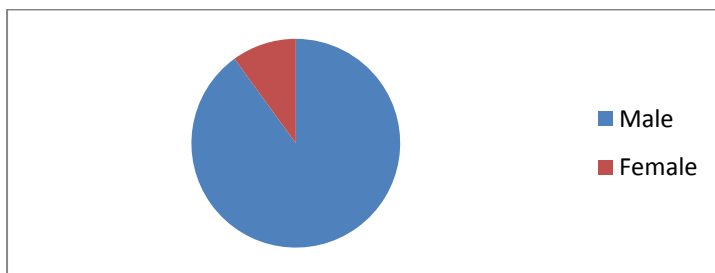


Table shows the answers to question one, in which asks what the participants gendered perception of the doctoring profession was.

### *Table 2*

#### *Section 1, Question 2*

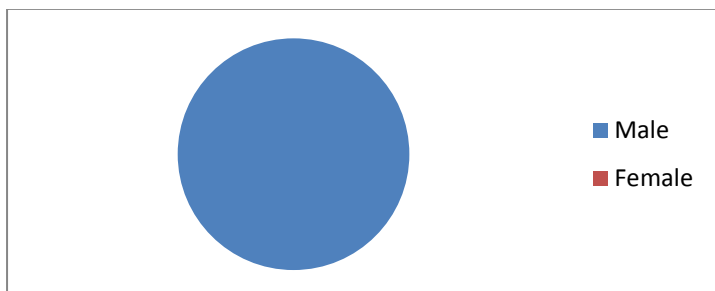


Table two depicts what the participants gendered perception on sexual harassment was, in terms of which gender is more likely to commit.

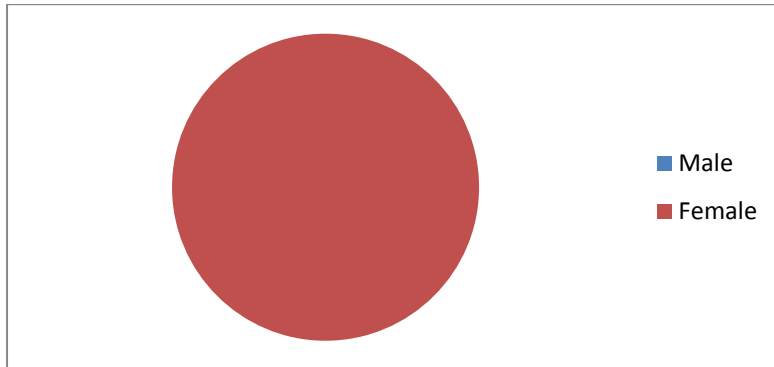
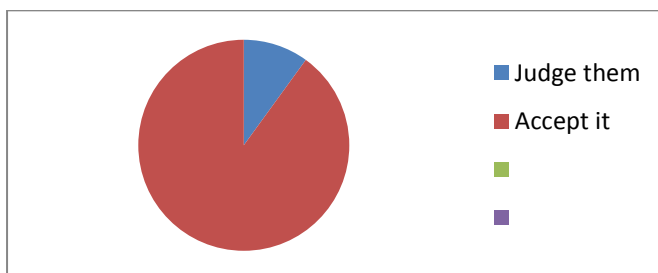
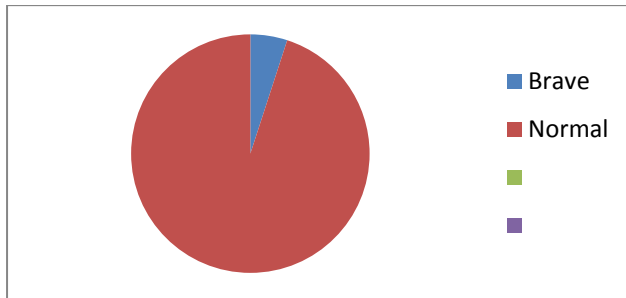
**Table 3****Section 1, Question 3**

Table three shows the gendered perception of the nursing profession, in terms of the dominant gender.

**Table 4****Section 2, Question 1**

Results to the question "If your male friend worked a pink collar job, would you..."

**Table 5****Section 2, Question 2**

This question is similar to question 1 of the same section, except in the fact that the genders have switched.

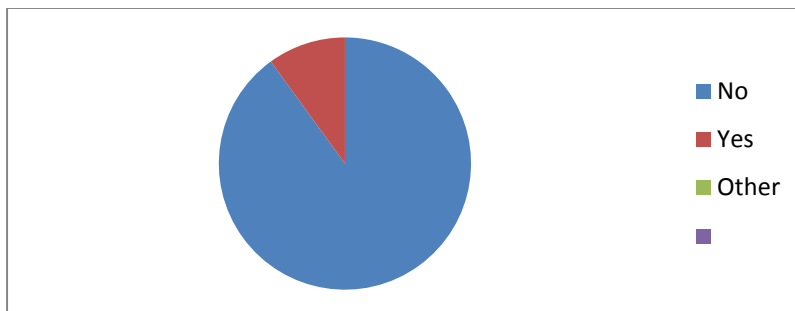
**Table 6****Section 2, Question 3**

Table six shows the results to the question “Would you feel embarrassed if your friend of the opposite sex had a more feminine/masculine job than, depending on your sex?”

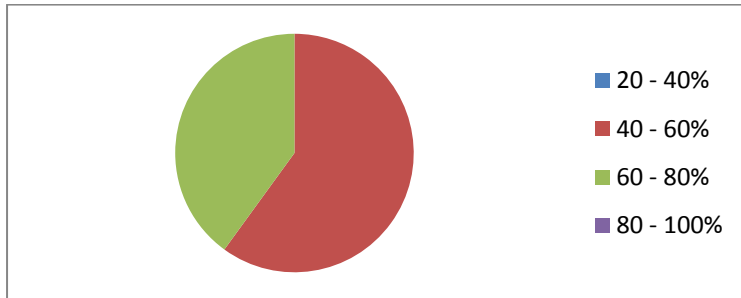
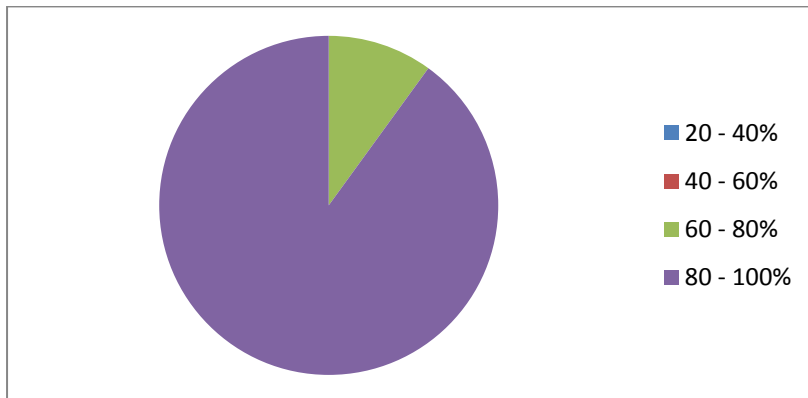
**Table 7****Section 3, question 1**

Table seven addresses the participants guess as to what percentage of healthcare and social assistance jobs women work.

**Table 8****Section 3, Question 2**

The participant's perceptions on what percentage of the construction profession are made up of men.

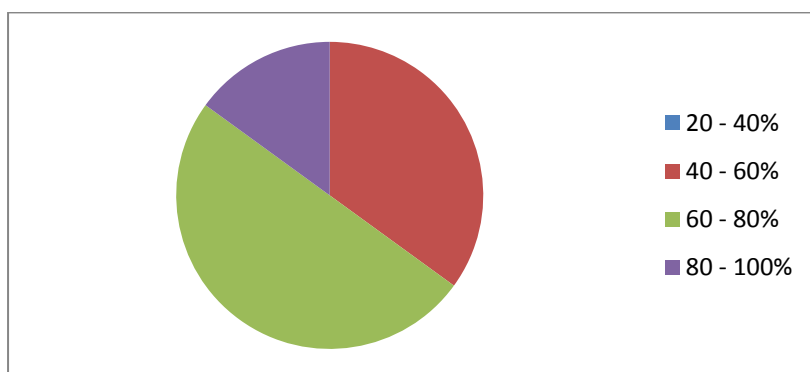
**Table 9****Section 3, Question 3**

Table nine shows what percentage of housework the participants think women do.

**Analysis and discussion**

400 From gathering these results through the twenty surveys handed out, it is clear that the perceptions gathered from students aged 16 through 18 do match the gender inequalities that men and women face in the work force every day. The first section of the survey had only two people who thought differently than the others. So that means that 85% of participants all thought the same about both pink collar jobs and seemingly masculine jobs. All twenty participants thought of a male when asked what their first thought of a sexual abuser was. This inequality that men face is outrageous, in the fact that women also have the power to do so, yet do not have to carry the burden of being attributed with that stereotype. This inequality mainly experienced by men completely degrades how the male population is seen. When it comes to the perception of women doing pink collar jobs, 100% of participants think that a nurse would be dominantly female. In section 2, the issue of judging people in dominantly male or female jobs is addressed in terms of if an average



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individual would judge them. The first questions asked participants if they would judge or accept a male being a nurse or another feminine job. 90% of people said they would accept it as a regular career. The results to this question weigh in heavily in relation to the next one, which asked primarily the same questions, but with a woman working a masculine job instead. 95% of the participants said it is fine, considerably more than a male doing a feminine job. This example proves that there is a gendered inequality through people's perceptions.

600 The third question of section three asked participants what percentage of housework at home women did. The average answer was 60% to 80%. The true percentage is 66% (Humanrights.gov.au, 2015). This means that the perception of women doing housework is quite correct. The last three questions also set out to show that gender inequality isn't all about pay. "Gender inequality has widened the horizons of public debate beyond the issue of income and pointed to the binding connections between paid and unpaid work" (Greig, Lewins and White, 2003). This quote perfectly sums up that what happens away from work, such as household duties, also affects gender inequality as a whole.

The end of the survey had a section in which participants could write how they perceived gendered occupations the way they did. Such answers included the media, and what is said on the news. What their family had taught them through socialisation was also mentioned. But one that made a lot of sense in terms of statistical evidence was one participant saying that all previous experience with aforementioned gender dominated professions were stereotypically correct. It was noted that most past experiences with these professions were worked by the stereotypical gender. For example all past experiences with hospital involved female nurses and male doctors. This, along with the media and family, ultimately slow down the fight for gender equality.

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### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Gender inequality is one of the big issues that may never be fully solved, and the inequality that men and women face in the workforce is a huge contributor to the issue. Through the average person's perceptions on what a woman or man can or cannot do, everyone is disadvantaged. The research taken place can firmly argue that the media is

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giving stereotypical perceptions into the minds of 16 to 18 year olds, which is not good, as they will carry on these out-dated perceptions into the next generation.

## References

### Websites

Humanrights.gov.au, (2015). Face the facts: Gender Equality | Australian Human Rights Commission. [online] Available at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/face-facts-gender-equality> [Accessed 26 Sep. 2015].

Workplace Gender Equality Agency, (2015). Gender Pay Gap Statistics. [online] Available at: [https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender\\_Pay\\_Gap\\_Factsheet.pdf](https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Pay_Gap_Factsheet.pdf) [Accessed 27 Sep. 2015].

### Books

Greig, A., Lewins, F. and White, K. (2003). Inequality in Australia. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Section 1**

Question one - A doctor walks into the room. Are they...

.Male

.Female

Question two – An employee is fired for sexual harassment. Are they...

.Male

.Female

Question three – A nurse enters to check if everything is okay. Are they...

.Male

.Female

### **Section two**

Question one – If a male friend has a pink collar job (E.g. nurse, waiter etc.) would you...

.Judge them

.Accept it as a regular career

Question two – If a female pursues a dominantly male job such as construction or being a doctor, would it be seen as...

.Brave with today's perceptions of the workforce

.Normal

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Question three – would you feel embarrassed if your friend of the opposite sex had a more masculine/feminine job that you?

.yes

.no

.other

### Section three

Fill in the blank.

Question one – Females work \_\_\_\_\_ of construction and social assistance jobs.

- A) 20 – 40%
- B) 40 – 60%
- C) 60 – 80%
- D) 80 – 100%

Question 2 – Males makeup \_\_\_\_\_ of the construction profession.

- A) 20 – 40%
- B) 40 – 60%
- C) 60 – 80%
- D) 80 – 100%

### Appendix 2

The purpose of this questionnaire is to analyse the general public's perceptions of the workforce in relation to inequality. As being a part of this questionnaire, all your details will be kept confidential. You have the right to ask me any questions in regards to the questionnaire or the research. You may leave the questionnaire at any time.

Question Three – Along with being a part of the workforce, women also do \_\_\_\_\_ of household chores.

- A) 20 – 40%
- B) 40 – 60%
- C) 60 – 80%
- D) 80 – 100%

#### **Section Four**

How do you think you got these perceptions of gender?