

The feature of inequality in modern society



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“ Inequality is an inescapable feature of modern society.”

Inequality affects modern society in a variety of ways. It is an inescapable feature of the world we live in. The most common inequality is gender. Men and Women are treated different in a number of ways such as in wages and in sports. This has been the same for centuries. Social class also plays a very big role in inequality. ‘ 89% of

People are still judged by their class.’ (Glover 2007)

Gender inequality is a huge problem in modern society today. One of the most common issues is wages. It is a known fact that men receive higher wages than women. According to a report by the government in 2006 ‘ there is a 13% pay gap between men and women.’ (The Financial Times 2006) The Office for National Statistics website (2008) says that this statistic has risen to 17. 1% in 2008 for full time workers and 36. 8% for part time workers. The Equal opportunities Commission published an article “ Facts about women and men in Great Britain 2006” It stated that 66% of managers and senior officials are men, while women hold 81% of administrative and secretarial jobs. In the finance sector women are just over half the workforce, yet the average hourly pay for a woman working full time in finance is 41% lower than men. Jenny Watson, the chair of The Equal Opportunities Commission states that: ‘ Jobs traditionally seen as ‘ women’s work’ such as early years care and education are undervalued and underpaid, and later in life many women are forced to take a pay cut for the flexibility they need to raise their own children’ Men and women usually have an equal start with their career, but when women’s childcare responsibilities kick in, this is where the

problems start. Most companies and organisations blame maternity leave and childcare responsibilities for the pay gap between men and women. Women are allowed up to six months maternity leave. Recently men have been able to take just as much as women. So why is there still a gap in wages? Women have always been seen as the nurse the teacher or the secretary. The International Labour Organisation website (2010) claims that 'women only hold 34% of managers jobs in great Britain.' They only receive two-thirds the pay of their male counterparts. According to the International Labour Office 'Women and men in lower-paid non-manual jobs such as clerks, shop assistants are closest to being equal.'

Growing up we all had the idea of men's work and women's work. Men were builders and doctors while women were teachers and nurses. This idea hasn't changed much as we grow older. We will all automatically look twice if we see a female bus driver, a male nurse or a female foreman. It's a natural reaction. From birth we see inequalities immediately in boys and girls. Blue is the colour for boys and pink for girls. Girls have their own toys that society deemed appropriate for girls and so do boys. It seems wrong or unnatural in some way to see a boy playing with a Barbie doll or pushing a toy pram. We have all grown up with these perceptions of what colours each sex should wear and what types of toys they should play with, that it's no wonder men and women are treated differently when they grow up. It is what is natural to all of us.

Gender inequality also exists in the education system. In same sex schools the subject choices concentrate on the gender of the school.

For example in a girls only school it is rare that they would offer subjects such as construction studies or woodwork studies, the same for boys schools, they would rarely offer their male students the choice to take home economics. These subjects can only be taken for both boys and girls in mixed gender schools.

Another area where gender inequality is present is Sports. Women are in a male dominated world when it comes to sport. The ancient Olympic games website (2009) claims that Women have been fighting to gain equality in sport since 776 B. C. at the Olympic Games, originally known as the Games of Hera. Women were not allowed to play nor watch the games. Although women play the same sports as men do, women receive little or no air time. It is very rare that you would see a women's soccer or rugby match being shown in a sports bar. The media has largely contributed to false stereotypes regarding men, women and sports. They see women as inferior to male athletes. Tennis especially has seen many centuries of gender inequality. Women only play the best of three sets whereas men play the best of five. I'm sure any female tennis player would be more than capable to play five or more sets if given the opportunity. There was also a dramatic difference in prize money up until 2006. There was a big difference in prize money between men and women in Wimbledon. Men were being paid a lot more money than women. A spokesperson for Wimbledon said that the difference in prize money was due to the fact that men's tennis was more exciting than women's. The Wimbledon website (2006) said this all changed in 2006 when both the ladies and men's winners were paid the same amount of prize money. This is a step in the right direction for gender equality in tennis. On

the other hand soccer needs to follow in the same path. Women soccer players do not receive the same recognition or the same money that their male counterparts receive. Wayne Rooney earns £90, 000 a week being a professional soccer player for Manchester United and is world famous. I don't think many people would be able to name one professional female soccer player. Men get all the fame and all the recognition.

Golf is another sport where females are treated unequally. In most golf courses, women can only play on ' ladies day' and are not allowed to play alongside the male players. Professional Female golf players just like professional female soccer players, do not receive as much money or recognition. These are some of the many inequalities which women are trying to challenge and overcome today. It has stopped women from advancing as fast as their male counterparts. In my opinion women have been neglected in sports just as they have been in many other areas of life such as education and work.

More often or not people are judged by their social class. They are discriminated against by where they come from. ' 90% of 18-24 year olds say people are judged by their class' (Glover 2007). This has been happening for centuries and I do not think that it will change in the near future. As suggested by Macionis and Plummer (2008) ' Gordon Therborn has suggested that social class is one of the key features of modern Europe, as Europe was the first major arena of industrialisation.' All the main political parties in Britain are trying to work against social class. Gordon Brown claimed recently that a class free society can become a reality in Britain. There are three shapes of class: The upper classes, the middle classes and

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the working classes. According to Glover (2007) the upper class is almost extinct with only 2% claiming to be part of it. The Middle class used to be the group between rich and poor.

' In 1998, 41% of people thought as themselves as middle class, exactly the same proportion as today.' (Glover 2007) The Working Class is the lowest of the classes. A few centuries ago working class people were miners. They are known as the poorest of society. Glover (2007) said, ' Of people born to working class parents, 77% say they are working class too. One one fifth say they have become middle class.'

The fact that we still have a structure of class shows that people are discriminated because of their class and where they come from. They are discriminated against in the workplace and in schools. As Hutton (2007) described in his article, pupils from schools from middle class or working class areas are receiving little to no places in prestigious schools such as Oxford, even though they have received excellent marks. Their marks sometimes were better than pupils at Upper class schools. This just proves that there is inequality in social class. It obviously depends on where you come from and which school you attend that shapes your future education. No matter where we go in life we will be judged by our class and where we come from.

Karl Marx and Max Weber have different views upon social class. Macionis and Plummer (2008) said that Marx defined class ' in terms of those who own the means of production and those who do not with a residual class in between' He says that the owners or the means of production exploit those

who produce goods and services, while the working class become alienated consumers. Marx focuses more on the economic side of social class, especially the labour force. Weber and Marx have similar ideas. In Weber's view, a person's class status is a determinant of how they will turn out in later life. People will have a better life if they are higher up in class. He thought that a person's possessions and the way they lived was the cause of class conflict. Although Weber believed as Marx did that the economic side of social class was important and caused most of the conflict, he didn't believe that this was the only cause of the conflict between social classes. He saw society back then as having many status groups who held a vast amount of power. For example teachers do not own their schools they work for people, but they may be higher up in status than a mechanic who owns his own and runs his own business. Weber thought that people in politics had more power in society. Weber said that conflict between the classes was a result of many different inequalities.

Inequality is definitely an inescapable feature of our society. There are still gender inequalities present in modern society and some that have been around for centuries. I think there will always be inequalities between men and women. It has been around for centuries and nothing has changed, so I do not see it changing in the near future. There will also always be inequalities in social class. It was around in Karl Marx's era and is still here to the present day. People are being judged and criticized by where they come from. Even though the government is claiming that social class will not exist in years to come, they have not backed up their claims yet.