

The womens status in british society sociology essay



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In official statistics taken in United Kingdom, it shows that women's status and class is determined by the occupation of the 'head' of the household which is normally the husband. Before 1981 males were always seen as the head of the household, from 1981 it was largely acceptable for the woman to be the head of the family but people's status especially women, were still determined by the occupation of the husband. One supporter of this approach is Frank Parkin (1972), he argues that woman's status is basically based upon marital and economic rewards, which are done by their husbands.

Parkin states that: "If the wives and daughters of unskilled labourers have some things in common with the wives and daughters of wealthy landowners, there can be no doubt that the differences in their overall situation are far more striking and significant" Haralambos and Holborn. Ann and Robin Oakley don't support this idea and believe that sociological studies have followed this closely, they believe that the head of the household determines the social class for the rest of the family and the family is taken as one unit instead of as individuals, basically family's class has been determined by the occupation of the head of the household. Nicky Britten and Anthony Heath (1983) point out the obvious negative points with this approach and point out that some families who are called "cross-class families" Haralambos and Holborn which means a family where the woman is the head of the household with the highest paid occupation. This study shows a significant difference between a cross-class family to a family where husband and wife both have manual jobs. This could indicate that in cross-class families the family's status could be higher in the class system due to the wife's occupation. However some sociologists still disagree with this and believe that husbands should be the bread winners with the highest paid occupation

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in the family. Westergaard and Resler also support this idea that family's status is still largely shaped by the husband's occupation. In some extend Westergaard and Resler would state that " they are not sexiest but only stating the facts on the class position and the life chances of the family" Haralambos and Holborn. Another sociologist John Goldthorpe also supports the idea that men should have the highest paid occupation in the family and agrees with Westergaard and Resler. He also adds that family's status in the class system is related to the male's occupation. Nicky Britten and Anthony Heath do not agree with this idea and believe that" women's jobs make a difference".

There are other explanations to why women's status isn't the same as men. One of the explanations would be biological differences. Sociologist George Peter Murdock suggest that men's physical strength and the fact that women produce children has lead to biological difference and the power of gaining status. Murdock examined different activities carried out by men and women and found that jobs such as hunting and mining to be mainly male jobs and role such as cleaning and cooking to be females roles. Because of biological difference Murdock believed that because of childbirth, and household woman is tight to the home. Ann Oakley absolutely rejects the idea of Murdock and argues " that there is no natural or inevitable division of labour or allocation of social roles on the basis of sex" Haralambos and Holborn. Ann Oakley (1974) states: " Not only is the division of labour by sex not universal, but there is no reason why it should be. Human cultures are diverse and endlessly variable. They owe their creation to human inventiveness rather than invincible biological forces" Haralambos and

Holborn. This is a very good quote made Oakley (1974), and many women would probably agree with this. Men shouldn't have the advantage of having better paid occupations or to be more respected than women because they are physically stronger and that women give birth to children. Oakley also supports the idea that rather our gender, being influenced by biological factors it is more influenced by culture and the way we are treated from a young age. Socialisation is one the main factor on gender roles. From an early age girls and boys are treated differently. Girls are dressed feminine and boys are dressed masculine. Girls tend to play with dolls, kitchen whereas boys tend to play with car toys and building toys. This means that women's status is determined from a young age instead of depending on what social class they come from.

Discuss how women act as unpaid health workers.

Young and Willmott (1973) identified many different families, they have given different terms for different families on basis of the families roles. They have identified, what is called " symmetrical family" Haralambos and Holborn. Symmetrical family is where husband and wife share domestic duties, leisure activities, this type of roles are known as conjugal roles. The opposite of conjugal family is known as segregated conjugal. Young and Willmott studied two different families, first family, the conjugal roles were very different, it shown that labour division within the household took place and the husband was not involved in domestic tasks such as cleaning, raising the children. This separation in these roles let the husband and wife enjoying leisure time, on their own. Second family that was studied conjugal roles were more equal, even though the woman still did the primary responsibility

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of the housework and child rising. However husband did become more involved in housework and did washing, cleaning and did help with raising their children. Husband and wife become both responsible for financial decisions and home decisions that needed to be taken. The way conjugal roles shown sociologist about the inequalities in household, and they extend of work that the wife normally does. Young and Willmott argues that conjugal roles are becoming more frequent in families, however not all sociologist support this idea. Ann Oakley strongly disagrees with Young and Willmott, and say that not enough research has been carried out in this as Young and Willmott asked only one interview questions when the research was carried out. Therefore this could be perceived as biased. A different research that was carried out by " Ann Oakley (1974) she collected information from 40 different women, who all had children under the age of 5 years old they were also British or Irish, the women were either middle-class women or working-class and all lived in London." Haralambos and Holborn. This information made this research more accurate as to what research has been carried out by Young and Willmott. In this research, Oakley has found more equality in household, especially in the middle class households than in working class household. However overall she has found that domestic labour is shared more equally. Sociologist Mary Boulton (1983) disagrees with research that been carried out in order to find out whether domestic labour and child raising is equally shared and she states that" a question on who does what does not give a clear picture of conjugal roles" Haralambos and Holborn. Boulton admits that even though men help with child raising it is still the mother that is the primarily responsibility for the child. Responsibility to care for a child and domestic labour is classed as unpaid work and in some

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instanced unpaid health work. Many sociologists agree that many families have lost a number of its functions due to modern society. Institutions such as schools, business and welfare organisations now specialise in family's functions. Talcott Parsons argues that families have become "almost completely functionless". However he never speculated that the family is declining in importance, but the family has become more specialised, in school and different institutions. Parsons agreed that these institutions are important for a family, by structuring the personalities of the children and stabilising the personality of adults. Not all sociologists agreed with Parsons, however Fletcher admitted that families have not lost third functions just became modern.

Most sociologists agree that families perform an important part in the economic function. However the feminist writers argue with this, and agree that any work that takes place in the family is productive but it is not realised by others, apart from women, as this work is produced by women and is normally unpaid and normally performed by women. The contributions from women to unpaid work is very often underestimated, sometimes not appreciated and very unrecognised, because in some societies it is acceptable, for women to be doing this type of work, on daily basis.

Critically discuss gender division within the caring professions.

Marxist feminists and liberal feminists perceive employment as understanding of gender inequalities. Women face disadvantages in paid employment. Disadvantage such as, woman tend to be paid less than men, they are more likely to be in part time job, woman also tend t stay in lower

reaches of the occupation. As women still faces division in employment, men also can be discriminated against jobs and can face disadvantages.

Functionalist Talcott Parsons argued that " women are naturally suited to the expressive role of childcare and men are more suited to the instrumental role". Haralambos and Holborn. This could be why there are more females nurses than male nurses.

As mentioned in previous paragraphs Murdock expressed on the fact that gender divisions is determined biologically. He agrees that feminine roles such as caring should be female jobs and masculine work such as manual labour should be male jobs. It is possible that labour division stems from this and therefore there is a division within the caring occupation. Human capital theory suggests that female is less valuable to employers as they tend to have other commitments such as children and home labour. Study carried out by Peter Sloane (1994) suggests that " gender continued to influence pay even when qualifications and experience were taken into account"

Haralambos and Holborn. Sociologist Hakim (2004) argues that women now have more choice and that inequality stems from preference. He also points out that women have better employment opportunities than ever before.

Brunel University suggests that men in caring professions are now opting for more masculine jobs and emotionally more challenging area within their work. According to the Brunel University's research " men seem to be getting more respect than women in the same role" [http://www. brunel. ac. uk/news/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/cdata/july/men+in+caring+roles](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/news/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/cdata/july/men+in+caring+roles) .

Men that were questioned have chosen to specialise in accident and emergency employment, mental health, this to the men that were

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questioned stated that this type of work is more exciting and demanding than general nursing. According to one male nurse " Looking at people to whom I've broken bad news, they appreciated that it's a man who's breaking bad news" [http://www. brunel. ac.](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/news/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/cdata/july/men+in+caring+roles)

[uk/news/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/cdata/july/men+in+caring+roles.](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/news/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/cdata/july/men+in+caring+roles) According to this research it states" The value of masculinity within caring professions is greatly appreciated". [http://www. brunel. ac.](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/news/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/cdata/july/men+in+caring+roles)

[uk/news/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/cdata/july/men+in+caring+roles.](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/news/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/cdata/july/men+in+caring+roles) Professions are one of the fastest growing occupations, the professionals can be divided into two groups which are lower and higher professionals, higher professionals included doctors, judges, barristers and many more, the lower professionals included school teachers, nurses and social workers.

Sociologist Bernard Barber (1966) gives a functionalist perspective he argues that professionalism requires a body of systematic and wide knowledge base. He also adds that professionals need to be concern about the welfare of others and not themselves. In recent years professional bodies have criticised, nurses, doctors and more, all have been attacked because of an incident that happened in 1993 were a female nurse attacked a patient. A Marxist theory on professionals states " professionals have been weakened which means they can no longer pursue their dreams" Haralambos and Holborn. Harry Braverman claims that a lot of de-skilling has taking place in many jobs.

Critically evaluate the power of medicine in British Society.