

Race class gender essay sample

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Race, class, and gender are the three main things that separate and hold people back in today's society. I'd like to be able to say that things have progressively gotten better as time continues to pass, and to an extent they have, but in reality we still live in an extremely ignorant and subjective society. The fact is, people everyday are being turned down for jobs and opportunities not because of what they are or aren't capable of or what they do or don't know, but because of what they are and where they came from. People are involuntarily classified as soon as they are born based on their race, class, and gender. These three things combine together to form a social status. People spend their entire lives trying to boost this status in a positive direction. Others are content with where they have been placed and live life in a lethargic manner. How people go about moving up and down the social ladder is up to them and how quickly they learn from their experiences dictates where it is they end up when all is said and done. Why all this is I could try and explain but it would take more than my knowledge and understanding to really even break the seal.

One of the main issues in today's society stems from race, and that issue is segregation. There are two types of segregation, De jure segregation, which is when laws require racial separation or allow segregation, and De facto segregation, which occurs when people are segregated based on race due to their economic situation or their social status. The United States has come a long way in ending De jure segregation in the 1960s but De facto segregation still plays a huge role in our society today. Two of the main areas in which segregation occurs are in neighborhoods, and in turn, school systems. Studies have shown that racial discrimination occurs in the real

estate market (Newman 286). One case study in particular, involved a rental agent lying to a black family, saying that the unit was unavailable for fear that she would be out of work in that particular suburb had she rented to a black family (Newman 286). To think that our country fought so hard to get where it is today, yet people are still being discriminated against based on the color of their skin. In my opinion, discriminating against minorities in the housing market is the root of segregation and it is because of this that enables segregation to occur.

Segregation restricts access to jobs and to quality schools by concentrating African Americans and Hispanics in central cities, when job growth and better schools are found in the suburbs (Newman 287). So if you can control where a group of people reside, you can then control almost every aspect of that group. By funneling minorities through the lesser school systems they are already off to a slow start than their Caucasian counterparts. Due to the inferior educational opportunities available to African Americans and Hispanics, it then becomes harder for them to compete in the job market forcing many of them to settle for low-end jobs consisting of minimal pay. These people are just more victims of the system we have put in place. This system ensures that, for the most part, society doesn't change too drastically so everyone can stay comfortable and not have to worry about adapting to the community. There are plenty of stereotypes for all races, classes, and genders and they have a multitude of different effects on people's lives.

The first one I will examine is the stereotypes I have to deal with myself. Being an upper class white male, I can't say I have it too tough. I have been

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classified as a pretty boy, a rich boy, and someone who's afraid to get his hands "dirty." I'd be lying if I said that any of these things affect me in a negative way or have much of an impact on society at all. I would say I was born with much more opportunity than 95% of all minorities in the United States just because of the fact that I am white and my family has enough money to where my education is free, for me at least. Now does that make it impossible for minorities in the United States to grow up and be successful? No. It just means that if you are a minority and you are born into a poverty stricken/lower class family, you have much less room for error. Some poor Hispanic twelve year-old boy is debating whether or not he wants to deal with school for the next ten years of his life and attempt to receive a college degree, or be with his friends and get involved with drugs, all the while I'm getting excited to be entering middle school and the thought of quitting school has simply never come across my mind because it is the same path all my friends are taking and it has been imbedded in my mind that school is where I belong.

Now I will explore some of the stereotypes black males are inclined to deal with. Blacks are thrown in the baskets of being lazy, dumb, poor, stingy, thievish, and athletic. There are plenty more but these are the ones that came to mind. All of these listed would be considered negative except of course the athleticism usually associated with the race. These stereotypes conjoin to make it extremely difficult for black males in our society to reach the top of the mountain so to speak. It's not that there aren't people who have no problem looking past a person's skin; it's just that there are mass amounts of people who have set up a barrier against minorities and they just

simply won't let anyone through. Now say you have two men apply for a job both equally qualified, one black one white (assuming the interview is white and has all say). There are a number of different outcomes that can result from this situation. First, you have the man who takes a look at skin tone and picks the white man by default; some would label this man as a racist.

You then have the man who, to make a statement or rather he just feels sympathetic for what all the man has to deal with, accepts the black applicant. Then there is the man who feels for the black applicant but thinks about things such as; Do I want to be put in the situation of being friends and socializing with a black man?—Do I want my children to be friends with his children?—I don't know what to expect from this man, do I really want to take a chance? This man accepts the white applicant not because he is discriminating against the black applicant but because he's afraid to flow against the grain of society. Lastly, there is the pure man who sees no color, who carefully weighs each candidate, who throws all meaningless variables out the window and picks the most qualified person. This last man is a rarity in today's society and it is for this reason that society will forever drift in, for the most part, the same direction.

Now we shall tweak our equation in a way that you have a black female and a white male applying for a job in which the black female is, without any shade of doubt, more qualified than the white male. We'll also throw in a little bit of a variable, the white male hit it off with the interviewer; made a great first impression, had great things to say, and really the two just connected on a personal level. Whereas the black female, although over-qualified, did not seem to mesh very well with the interviewer. How often a

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situation like this comes along I could not say with any amount of certainty, but I were to give my best guess I would say 85% of the time the white male would be hired. To most people this statistic leaves a sick feeling in their stomachs, almost like the feeling you get if someone is killed on death row and you later find out they were innocent, except not quite as drastic. I would be hard pressed to say if I were in a similar situation that I would do the right thing. The thing that scares me about this situation is the fact that I feel like it would be a difficult decision for myself, coming from someone who considers themselves indifferent towards minorities and females in the workforce and in general.

Now the debate of whether or not this situation affects our society in a positive or negative way begins. It can be argued that not hiring the more qualified worker will hinder the overall production of our economy's workforce and advancements. But then there is the question of whether or not the more cohesive workforce is more productive than the less cohesive, more skilled workforce. If my opinion counted for anything, I would presume the more skilled workforce to be the more productive crew. Assuming this, and assuming there are in fact people out there who hire based on appearance and social performance, our society is in turn tighter knit but less productive. Now, to be fair, and in no way am I saying that this is any sort of reparation for what has gone on. But what would happen if we were to tweak it so that two equally skilled men, one black one white, were competing for a spot on a football or basketball roster?

The funny thing is, I was literally just fixing to talk about how the black person would make the team over the white person in this sentence based <https://assignbuster.com/race-class-gender-essay-sample/>

on his skin color. When I think about it though, I would say if the two men really did possess equal talent, the team would probably give the spot to the white man just because he might be considered less of a liability to the organization, although the outcomes of these situations will always vary.

Race also plays a huge role in the area of marriage. The majority of people in today's society are reluctant to involve themselves in a serious relationship with someone of another race. Some people are reluctant because they are afraid of what others might think, mainly their friends and family. Others because they feel they are breaking an unwritten rule of society. Interracial marriages in the United States have nearly tripled over the last twenty years, yet fewer than 2% of all marriages consist of people of different races (Burns 149). This small percentage makes it so that race is still very much a part of society.

It makes it so that we still live in a multi-cultural society. Now say we flip the percentages of interracial marriages. You now have a society in which race is hardly an issue. It now becomes much harder for people to be stratified and everyone is unique, to a certain extent. The only way for this to happen is if society as a whole becomes oblivious to people's shell. If this does in fact happen, you will be able to observe a society that rarely has to deal with internal problems, one that truly bases its priorities on the will of the people, and a society that can act as role model for others to follow. Unfortunately, this society will probably never arise because people are too content with their individual lives, and also because people are made in a way such that they are attracted to people of same or similar values and characteristics

One of the main things going on in our country at this point in time is the presidential election.

This year was a breakout year for people all over the world. Not only did a woman try and run for office, but also a dark skinned man, one who is actually between the two main candidates and is representing the Democratic Party, Barack Obama. It seems as though Barack's plan of attack is to target the lower and middle classes, as well as fresh voters. I only watch presidential news every now and then and don't consider myself really deep into politics, but from what I have seen from Barack have been nothing but great things. He is a great public speaker although I'm not 100% sure how that translates into being a good president. I really think he's swayed the likes of many of the lower and middle class voters towards his side but the fact that he is dark-skinned makes for an interesting situation. There are plenty of people down in the Deep South who don't take kindly to Barack or what he stands for, simply because of the color of his skin. Now because of this, there are going to be people who will straight up refuse to vote for him no matter what.

Whether or not this group of artificial voters will affect the result of the election probably won't ever be determined, but the fact that our society might possibly let something like that happen says wonders about the country we call "The Land of the Free, and the Home of the Brave." Let's say for instance the outcome of the election was in fact altered because of Senator Obama's color. This would cause our society to change in a way that the will of the people was actually not being fulfilled. Class is another wall that is put up to impede the rise of today's youth. Typically, the higher the

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class of a child's family, the higher the education that child is bound to receive. Kids whose parents can afford to send them to fancy private college prep schools receive a much more prodigious education than that of the inner city schools. These inner city schools are predominantly black and Hispanic and have some of the lowest graduation rates of any other types of schools, which really shouldn't come as a huge shock. To understand this we must explore what is going on and why it is happening.

First of all, we must understand that growing up in the lower class, survival is the first priority, not education. Where I come from, survival wasn't really as much of an issue. Food was always provided, my family was always intact, and I was always welcomed and loved in my home. So kids, who weren't born into the same luxuries that I was fortunate to have, end up getting involved with the wrong group, dropping school, and committing crimes usually until they are caught and thrown in jail. It is this constant cycle that helps societies to formulate the labels that it has, and to place people into the groups in which they belong. Of course, not all people affiliated with these groups deserve their label, and by no means did they ask for it, but society as a whole couldn't care less to be quite honest. Society can be the harshest enemy for a person to have sometimes simply because there is just no reasoning with it, if you don't like it, it doesn't care, and if you do care, it still remains somewhat indifferent.

The sooner one moves on from the fact that he or she should not be sitting around trying to change the way they act in an attempt to befriend as many people as possible, the sooner we will all understand what it takes to be in a state of worry-free simplicity. The more people there are who can be worry

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free, then the more and more potential there is for a happier society.

Unfortunately, it is many people's nature to worry; worry about their family, worry about their job, worry about themselves, worry about the world, worry about everything. It just seems like class is pre-determined for people based on where they came from and what circumstances they were born into. In "From: Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work" Jean Anyon describes how she believes curriculum is geared towards maintaining class in America and that the event of a rise or fall in social status is rare. It is clear that she feels class directly corresponds to the type of education a child is to receive. She investigated five different schools and organizes them into four different categories, each with its own distinct set of objectives. She describes the curriculum of working class schools as being very procedural and mechanical (Anyon 42-43).

I agree with the fact there are indeed schools that follow this standard of operation and I think the children who attend these schools are being cheated out of a solid education. I think everyone deserves an equal opportunity to grow and develop his or her minds. I feel that when kids are manipulated into thinking in a way that holds them back in any way, their minds are being wasted. Children educated in this way are meant to maintain their place in the low-end of society and not to ask questions. Anyon also discusses a middle-class type of education in which students are taught to find answers but not to delve too deep into each area of study (Anyon 46). I agree with the fact that there are schools that go about teaching their students in this way because I think the schools that I attended were these types of schools. I feel my biggest weakness is my

ability to think critically and looking back on my early years, I don't recall ever having to do this. I feel like I was put into place at someone else's discretion.

The last two types of education Anyon explores are intended for kids who are derived from the upper class. These children are given all the proper tools in order for them to be successful. They are taught in a way that gets them to be creative, apply ideas, and to think critically (Anyon 48, 51-52). Although I can't be certain, I do think there are indeed schools out there that develop their children in this way. These kids are given everything they need in order to reach their maximum potential and get a head start on the rest of the pack. Everyone else either has to catch up on their own, or is permanently left in the dust. Gregory Mantsios inquires that the reason people are unaware as to how severely stratified our society is, is because of the media. Mantsios argues that the forty million poor people in our country are practically ignored by the media (Newman 243). Maybe the media doesn't find the poor interesting, or maybe they are trying to appeal to a bigger audience with stories of more uplifting and joyful nature, because most stories about the poor just leave you with feelings of guilt and sadness.

Mantsios says that when the media does indeed cover the poor, they portray them in a way that is ambiguous and misleading (Newman 243). Mantsios later states that he feels this happens because those who own and direct the mass media are from the upper class and they are just trying to maintain the status quo (Newman 248). From this point of view everything makes perfect sense. I completely agree with Mantsios in the fact that the upper class tries to shield the lower class from the middle class. Why they would want to do

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this could be because it keeps them at the top for one. Also it makes it so that they don't have to deal with a problem that could be potentially unsolvable. The problem that arises from this, however, is that the rich are going to continue to grow richer, and the poor are going to continue to grow poorer. The rich are on a seemingly never-ending power trip and the United States will always be divided into three separate and unequal groups. This impacts our society in that some people will always have pre-determined stigmas towards others.

' Poor man A' might see ' rich man A' and instinctively become bitter towards him regardless of the fact that they have never met because of his social and economic hardships and the fact that ' rich man A' leads a seemingly easy life. For the most part, people of the same class befriend those of similar social status. The reason for this is simply because people do what they like to do. If ' rich man A' likes sports and likes to go on spontaneous trips, he is not going to be as likely to be friends with someone who cannot afford to split season tickets or cannot afford to vacation when he pleases. More often than not, ' rich man A' will find someone who is willing and can afford to do these things. Likewise, you have ' poor man A' who works hard to support his family and has little time for leisure. Most likely he will find someone in a similar situation as himself, someone who he can talk to. Perhaps someone he meets at a bar one night after work. Someone who he can have a beer with and discuss what it is he is going through.

Now this sounds somewhat depressing, and to a certain extent it sort of is, but this is sometimes the case. Of course there are plenty of poor people in this country who are grateful for what they have and don't stop for a second

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to think about what they do or don't have. Then you have ' middle-class man A' who plays golf on Sundays and watches football on television every Sunday is most likely going to become friends with ' middle-class man B' who plays golf at the same country club and also enjoys watching football on Sundays. People of the middle class are diverse in that they are able to associate with all three classes without a great deal of trouble. Although they might have an easier time interacting with someone of similar social status, they are capable of dipping down or jumping up a level depending on who it is they are trying to associate with. Class is always going to be something that separates people, and because most people prefer not to stand alone, they conjoin with each other in order to possess a sense of meaning and power.

Often times we are led to believe that class doesn't exist when in reality, class actually dictates virtually every aspect of our lives. Gender is the last idea in the top tier of social structure. As we go further and further back in time, examining the role of women, we find that, compared to what they are today, women hardly used to be individuals. It used to be understood that a woman was by no means equal to the dominant male. Women were to take care of the family and prepare simple day-to-day tasks. Women were not the decision makers and had very little say if any at all in the family affairs. However, women gained more and more rights as time went on and we see that nowadays women have more say than ever and are willing and capable of doing whatever it is they so desire. Even though men dominate a majority of the workforce, there is now at least space available for women to occupy if they prove to have what it takes.

The roles of women in a family nowadays vary more than ever. Most men have too much pride to take a step back and let their wife be the sole provider for the family. Personally, I would never want to be in a situation where my wife did the legwork for the family while I stepped to the side and I don't really find that abnormal at all. Society has imbedded the fact that the male should provide for his family into our heads and for some reason this thought just seems standardized to me. This is the way I was socialized in this matter and while others may have a problem with this point of view, in no way do I feel in the wrong for having this belief. Gender plays a big part in the work force. The workforce is the group in which almost all men are required to enter. It is also a group in which females are able, but not usually required, to enter. As of right now, women are more prevalent in the workforce than ever before. However, many areas of work are still somewhat off-limits to women, whereas few areas of work are considered off-limits to men.

Men have the upper hand in almost all aspects of work. In fact, studies show that men out earn women in teaching, librarianship, and social work (Newman 306). Given that these three job fields are typically women's professions, and considering the fact that men out earn women in their own field begs the question of whether or not women are given an equal chance to succeed. I would say that women are probably not given an equal chance to succeed in the workforce simply because they are not considered to be the primary providers in today's society. As with every other area of stratification, society has a status ranking system for gender in the workforce and since males are ranked above females they receive higher pay.

Researchers have reported that many women encounter invisible barriers to promotion in their careers, caused mainly by the sexist attitudes of men in the highest positions (Newman 307).

What is and isn't considered sexist in this situation is always going to be debatable. Often times people will use the term sexist much too loosely. For example, if a man is deciding to give a promotion to a man or a woman, and he gives it to the man because he knows that the man is the sole provider for his family, some people could consider that being sexist. Really at this point it is just a matter of personal opinion and unless someone is looking to go to court, there really isn't anything that can be done to change this matter. Stratification helps our society to be competitive and progressive.

If people are not separated into different ranks and statuses, then there is no incentive for people to excel. Even though the top three areas of stratification are all different in their own ways, they all fall under the same category of uncontrollable variables. How people vary in ways they have no control over, serve as the guidelines as to who they are and who they may become. What type of impact they have on today's society is based mainly on the overall representation of the social structure in which they fall under and how it is viewed by their society.

Works Cited

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