

Education essay

Throughout the twentieth century, there have been many changes made to the structure of the education system. These include the 1944 Education act which made secondary education compulsory and introduced the tri-partite system of school, though the move to a comprehensive system of schools in the 1960's, to the introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988. While official statistics have shown that all these measures have served to increase the overall levels of educational attainment (as defined by attainment of qualifications), both official and sociological evidence indicated that class-based inequalities in educational attainment have shown no tendency to decline.

It has been suggested that class base differences in educational success are due to home and familial factors: that children from lower social backgrounds are more likely to fail because of what they experience inside the home environment. This approach is based on the belief that those from different social classes have significantly differing home lives. It is possible to split home and family based factors into two categories: material factors and cultural factors.

As educational success generally rises with family income, many researches see material deprivation as the major cause of inequality in educational success. Hasley, Heath and Ridge examined the education careers of males, and found that those from higher social backgrounds were much more likely to stay in education past the minimum leaving age than those from working class backgrounds. They pointed out that a major reason for this was the cost of staying in education, and this denied many working class people from gaining higher-level educational qualifications. Douglas also believed that poor living conditions in the home were major factors in educational failure. In a survey, he divided his sample into two groups: those who had sole use of household facilities, such as bathrooms, and those who did not. He found that the children living in 'unsatisfactory condition scored much more poorly on tests than those in 'satisfactory' conditions. Reason suggested for this include poor housing conditions and diet leading to ill health, leading to absence from school, and underperformance while there.

It is also often believed that difference in class culture can contribute to educational success or failure. Douglas believed parental interest was the most important factor in educational success, his research suggesting middle class parents showed more interest than working class parents. However, his research has been criticised, as he measured parental interest by attendance at open days, and job difference between middle class and working class parents may account for this. These and other finding came to be known as cultural deprivation theory, believing that those at the bottom for the class structure are deprived of certain values and skills that are vital for educational success, and that working class children suffer from a lack of ambition, and fatalism. This theory has come under great criticism however, from those who support materialistic reasons for leaving school early, and those who believe that differences between class cultures are minor and insignificant.

Rather than looking at factors within the family, there are those who believe that it is the class structure that generates educational inequality, and that equality is impossible in a class-based society. Pierre Bourdieu, a structural Marxist, argues that the role of the education system is to reinforce class differences. This is achieved by promoting the 'dominant culture' of the ruling classes in the classroom though use of language, ensuring that working class students will be less likely to understand and be understood. This disadvantages working class students, and by creating educational success and failure, legitimises the position of both

those at the bottom and top. Basil Bernstein pointed the different speech codes used by the middle and working classes, the 'restricted code', which is context bound and requires previous common knowledge between users, and the 'elaborated code' which is not context-bound, and does not require previous common knowledge. He believed that middle class children are fluent in both codes, but that working class children are confined to the restricted code, and are therefore placed at a distinct disadvantage, because teachers use the elaborated code. Middle class children are therefore more likely to understand the teacher, and be understood they.

Finally, rather than focusing on the societal structure or relationships outside of the school, others, particularly those of an interpretive viewpoint, focus on factors inside the school, believing that this is what determines educational success or failure. This type of approach centres around the concepts of labelling theory and self-fulfilling prophesy, believing that if someone is labelled in a particular way, other will respond to their behaviour in terms of that label, and the person will act in terms of that label, resulting in a self-fulfilling prophesy. This has been illustrated in studies by Rosenthal & Jacobson, where it has been shown that a teacher perception of a pupil's abilities strongly affects how that pupil progresses.

Rist, in a study of an elementary school for black children in St. Louis, showed that teachers are more likely to perceive middle class children as being of higher ability than working class children, and treats them as such. He was also able to show, in concordance with Rosenthal & Jacobson's study, that the children classified as being of higher ability performed better throughout their time in education. This illustrates that because of labelling by teachers, working class children may be placed at a distinct disadvantage.

In separate studies, Lacey and Hargrove's examined the effects of streaming in schools, and found that children from working class backgrounds were more likely to be placed in lower ability streams. They also found that in these classes, the children were denied high-quality teaching and knowledge, and that the teachers spent more time controlling behaviour than teaching the class. This works to artificially disadvantage those in the lower ability streams, disadvantaging those from working class backgrounds.

It is worth pointing out, however, that none of these studies examined why teachers labelled working class students in this manner. It may be argued that this labelling is a result of family-influenced factors, such as dress, appearance and manner.

Similarly, Bernstein's theory of language codes, although regarded as a structuralize explanation of education failure, owes much to primary socialization within the family. It may therefore be argued that family factors are the root cause of other explanation of failure.

Finally, it has been suggested that class-based differenced in education attainment are purely to do with the genetic distribution of IQ and therefore family factors (and any other social factors) are irrelevant.

In conclusion, there are many different explanations of class-based differences in educational success. However, they are not necessarily isolated, and the factors identified on one theory may be a cause of the factors outlined in another. The reasons for class-based differences may therefore be very complex, and not able to be explained by a single factor in isolation

Equality between men and women

In this essay the myth of equality between men and women will be discussed and progress made by women so far, for the fight of equality will be examined. Two areas will be mainly looked at; equality of men and women in the workplace and equality of men and women in the home.

In the nineteenth century most women in Britain did not have many of the legal and political rights, which men had. Most women were dependant on men for money and support. They faced major discrimination at work and in education. A wide range of jobs and opportunities were not available to women. The main role of a woman's life was expected to be that of a housewife and mother, having dinner ready on the table, looking after the children, cleaning the house and answering to her husband, while he went out to work to provide an income for his family. Women were seen as the weaker sex and men were seen as strong and the ruler. It was a strongly male dominated society. However women were not going to stand for this much longer and in the twentieth century began to fight for equal rights hence the uprising of the feminist's movement. This was to be the start of a long hard upward struggle. During the twentieth century, there has been a gradual improvement in the status of women in Britain. At the beginning of the century the suffragette movement won the right for women to vote in parliamentary elections. By nineteen, all women over thirty could vote, this was lowered to twenty-one in nineteen twenty-eight. For the first time this put women equal to men in relation to voting rights. The first step towards equality.

Women today have equal rights with men to education. It is now illegal to discriminate against either sex by denying them access to certain subjects and courses at school and in higher education because of their sex, for example women doing woodwork or men doing home economics.

Today women make up forty-three percent of the workforce in Britain, which gives them more financial independence. More types of jobs are available to women today and more and more women are going out to work in paid employment instead of staying at home to be the house makers. More women are seen nowadays to be in positions of power and management. Before women were seen as suitable for jobs such as a secretary, childminder, cleaner, hairdresser or shop assistant. A woman in a position of power such as manager if a large firm was totally unheard of. Men dominated professional positions in the medical, financial and law fields of employment. Today, however we are seeing more and more women in the mentioned sectors. Women have also won equal rights in property ownership. The married women's property act's of eighteen eighty and eighteen eighty two gave married women the right to own their own property and the nineteen seventy matrimonial proceedings act established that all property was to be equally divided between husband wife in the event of a divorce.

Equal opportunity laws have helped women to get a better deal and overcome prejudice and discrimination, for example the equal pay act of nineteen seventy made it illegal for employers to offer different rates of pay to men and women doing the same or similar job. The sex discrimination act of nineteen seventy five made it illegal to distinguish between men and women in work, leisure and educational opportunities and the equal opportunities commission has been formed to help enforce the sex discrimination act and the equal pay act

and to promote equality of opportunity between men and women. Despite the progress made by women in the twentieth century, which has undoubtedly brought around a substantial amount of changes and has put a stop to inequality and discrimination between sexes in many areas. The question that needs to be addressed is, have women won the battle of equality between men and women? The answer is no which can be seen in work and in the home. When talking about women at work, it can be assumed that this refers to paid employment. However it is important to remember there is one job which is performed full time almost exclusively by women-in paid housework or domestic labour. The domestic work done by women is hardly ever recognised as real work. Many housewives themselves often devalue the status of their work and they simply sum it up, as 'I'm only a housewife.' It is estimated that an average of seventy seven hours a week are spent on housework and related tasks which is far more than most people spend in paid employment. Being a housewife does not have any of the advantages of paid employment such as regular working hours, paid holiday, sick pay or chance of promotion. Housework and childcare are still seen as primarily the main responsibility of women even when both partners are working full time outside the home in paid employment. In most cases it is still women who are expected to take the major responsibility for housework and children. In nineteen eighty seven, seventy per cent of married women or women of cohabiting couples where both partners were working full time had responsibility for general domestic duties. What this means is that many full time working women had two jobs in comparison to the men's one job. In nineteen eighty seven a survey was carried out to see who performs jobs in the home. This survey incorporated married and cohabiting couples with both parents working full time. It showed that seventy percent of women were responsible for general domestic duties, twenty two percent shared the responsibility equally and only eight percent of men took full responsibility for the work to be done in the homestead.

Today women still have an unequal position with men at work much of this inequality arises because the central role of women is still seen by a male dominated society as that of housewife and mother. Many jobs are still seen as men's jobs and women's jobs, with women's jobs often having lower pay and fewer promotional prospects and lower status than men's. Fewer women than men are employed in managerial positions. Women are mainly employed in jobs which are concentrated at the lower end of the occupational scale, unskilled and semi skilled manual jobs and in routine low level clerical jobs such as typing and filing, which require little or no training. Women are mainly employed in low grade and low paid jobs, which are seen as 'female occupations'. These are often extensions of the traditional domestic roles of housewives and mothers into which many women continue to be socialised. These involve serving and waiting on people, catering for them and cleaning and clearing up after others. These are jobs women have traditionally done in the home. Such jobs include nursing, primary school teaching, secretarial and routine clerical work, low grade catering work, such as that of waitresses and canteen assistants, working as shop assistants, supermarket 'shelf fillers' and checkout operators. For example secretaries and typists often serve their (usually male) bosses, organise the office to make things easier for them, making coffee and providing papers for them and clearing up after their meetings. Primary school teaching involves childminding, nursing is caring for the sick, catering involves cooking and the list goes on and on.

Women have more limited career opportunities than males for a number of reasons. Because of gender stereotyping at school and the wider gender role socialisation process. Women often lack the educational qualifications for the top jobs and the self- confidence and assertiveness

required to apply for such jobs. There is widespread male prejudice to women in career jobs and senior positions. There is evidence that some men are reluctant to be supervised by female managers. It is often assumed single women will leave paid employment to marry and have children, and married women particularly are often seen as unreliable because of the assumption that they will be absent to look after sick children, although research has shown there is little difference in the number of days absent between men and women. As a result of these factors, male employers often overlook women for training and promotion to senior positions. Top jobs require a continuous career pattern in the twenty to thirty age period, yet these are the usual child bearing years for women. So while men continue to work and get promoted, women miss their opportunities. Finally, married women are more likely to move house and area for their husbands job promotion rather than their own. This means women interrupt their career and have to start again, often at a lower level, in a new job, which means the men are getting promotion at the expense of lost opportunities of their wives

As can be seen above and throughout this essay, yes it is true that women have made huge progress, but total equality in the home and in the workplace is still a myth. No doubt the fight will still go on, and maybe some day the battle of the sexes will end and meet in equilibrium

Women in Society

Women. What comes to mind when you think of that word? Cooking? Cleaning? Babies? If you ask any man in the world no doubt they will mention at least one of those words. Why do you think that is? No, not because they are sexist, but because that is what women do; that is what they have done since the start of mankind and, like it or not, that is what they will continue to do until the end. A problem with this is that a lot of women today seem to have forgotten what they are here for. Forgotten that if it weren't for them none of us would be here because their role is to create babies and, no matter how much they try to deny that is their only job, it shall always be so. What they don't seem to understand is that they think they should be something more than just vessels for carrying babies in. But if they looked at the genetic facts they would see that it is obvious that is what they are designed for. Women's bodies are not made for physical activities but are designed perfectly for carrying children.

Increasingly women's groups argue that there should be equal opportunities between the sexes, but why should there be? Nowadays women put pressure on everyone to "respect their right to do everything a man does", but they don't seem to realise they can't! Women in the Army - how many of you have ever seen a woman beat up a man, or even heard of a woman shoot a man? Never. Now I'm not saying this sort of activity should be encouraged for either sex, but in war that's what it comes to quite often, and do you see women on the news walking through Kosovo? Braving out Desert Storm? No, it is men in the front line who get killed. Now what kind of equal right is this where the women are not able to actually fight but are still supported by the army?

Women want everything their own way. "If it is male change it" is their attitude. I heard recently that a so-called women's equality group want Parliament to change the official name of "manholes" to "people holes". Well, when you see someone down a manhole is it ever a woman? No, of course not because that wouldn't be proper sending a lady down a manhole, but they still want the name changed. When women are prepared to go down a dark smelly hole in the ground and scrape human excrement from the sides while avoiding the rats around their feet then I will be the first to ask for a name change, but until then they should keep quite.

This brings me to my main point about women wanting men to stay at home and look after the children while they go out and do the work. Have you ever heard of anything more stupid? Men's role is to go out and do the work, not change babies' nappies. In nature do animals argue over who should stay home and look after the children? No, they work with their partners because they know if they do not do what they are supposed to, their children will die. Now we are obviously more intelligent than animals, but do we want our children growing up having experience of men's role being only that of carer, not the provider like we are meant to, and not the person who actually produces the child like the mother. If we let our women go out and be both provider and baby maker, then we have lost all the dignity and respect we ever commanded, and we have also lost our purpose in life, for what use is a person without a role? - None.

I suggest if women want us to start staying at home looking after babies then they should find a way for us to have babies of our own. We will not be the scapegoats for some women's idea that they are more important than they are. My blunt message to women that will hopefully get through to them is this; 'know your role and shut your mouth!' Take heed of this unless you want to start the collapse of Society, as we know it.