

The assignment will provide a descriptive account of the feminism theory, continuing the theme the text will explore the historic timeline of the movements that made the women's voting rights a reality in the early nineteenth century. Additionally, it will describe a popular concept of society which is functionalist, it will challenge features that stem of the foundation of Inequality and Societal Divisions for instance, biological or cultural factors. Last of all, the piece of work will attempt to apply the sociological theories to issues that occur in the Twenty – First Century.

Feminism was derived from the unequal treatment interlinked with gender could result in exclusion from society, The World Health Organization (2018) introduced a in depth defination of exclusion and the long-term consequences;

Exclusion consists of dynamic, multi-dimensional processes driven by unequal power relationships interacting across four main dimensions - economic, political, social and cultural - and at different levels including individual, household, group, community, country and global levels. It results in a continuum of inclusion/exclusion characterised by unequal access to resources, capabilities and rights which leads to health inequalities (World Health Organisation, 2018).

The work of Sociologist, Emelie Durkheim (1858) was greatly contributed to the functionalist theory when it was first introduced in the nineteenth century. Alongside, the work of Talcott Parsons (1902) was one of the main focuses in the twentieth century. Over the years, many sociologists donated a vast amount of knowledge and perspectives. (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p9).

Maslow (1954) introduced his humanistic theory, which is named the hierarchy of needs. His work formed a five-tier pyramid, which outlined stages for human motivation. However, many people have stated that the majority of the stages could be defined as basic needs for humans (Simply Psychology, 2017). They stage include Firstly, physiological needs; food, water, rest and warmth. Secondly, safety needs; security of employment and resources. The Third stage is, love and belonging; friendship, family, partners and sexual intimacy. Fourthly, the esteem needs are next, they include self-esteem, confidence, respect and achievement. The last stage of Maslow's (1954) theory is self – actualisation; this refers to a person reaching their full potential which leads to the acceptance of their weaknesses and using them as their strengths (Simply Psychology, 2017).

To simplify, functionalism can be categorised into four aspects; structure, function, functional prerequisites, value consensus and social order. (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p10). Haralambos and Holborn (2000) note that an important aspect of functionalism is concentrated

on structure, and how that structure acts a guide for behaviour in society. They believe that behaviour being structured by social systems outline acceptable behaviour in terms of norms, values, roles and beliefs. Research has shown that society consists of social institutions, they follow as; the economy, political, educational and the family are influential systems. (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p11).

When linking the structure and the function of society, the function of societies institutions is observed to determine the effectiveness of the institutions with other social systems, what they contribute and how they work universally. Functionalism refers to ‘...the maintenance of society, since order, stability, and cooperation...’ ((Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p10).

Interweaving structure, functions and functional prerequisites all work together, similarly, Maslow (1954) relates to the functionalist’s belief that each society have different, but essential needs, that regulate the survival of people and groups within society. Haralambos and Holborn (2000) provide a useful example of how functional prerequisites are vital to the effectiveness of society;

...producing food and shelter may be seen as a function prerequisite, since without food and shelter members of society could not survive. A system for socialising new members of society may also be regarded as a functional prerequisite, since, without culture, social life would not be possible (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000 p10).

All the parts of functionalism work together, as their concept’s intention. Considering the prior topic of discussion, the final aspects of functionalism are the value consensus and social order in society. From a functionalist perspective, they believe that having a shared value consensus results in harmony, having universal norms, values, beliefs and ideologies. They highlight the importance of value consensus as social order is the outcome which is desired for any society (The History Learning Site, 2018).

When Meghan Markle gave her speech at the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women’s event in 2015, she addressed a key issue that has been present for many decades within society. Additionally, Markle (2015) expanded on this, she shared her experience of the constraints and expectation of gender roles and revealed the impact she had on the oppression of women by one person speaking out, this refers to a micro-level (Megan Markle, 2015. *Cited in Daily Mail*, 2017).

Yeah, that’s where women belong, in the kitchen... it was at that moment, that I realized the magnitude of my actions... I had created my small level of impact, by standing up for equality. In doing this, we remind girls that, their small voices are

in fact not small as all, and they can affect change. It means, that a wife, is an equal to her husband, a sister, to her brother, not better, not worse, they are equal (Megan Markle, 2015. Cited in Daily Mail, 2017).

Alike Markle's (2015) experience, women have fought for many decades to obtain equal rights in contrast to the rights that men were entitled to. A brief history of the process of women's voting rights, and how their actions determined their success in the United Kingdom will follow;

Within society, issues occur frequently, members of society seek those in power to take action to tackle the issue effectively such as, politicians, churches, the government, and the local authority. Elections give the voice to the public, as members of society, to determine who will be in power resulting in long term choices being made that directly affect those who are not in a powerful social group. However, equally important is that according to Parliament, when elections occur a number of representatives attend and discuss their concepts and values that they will expect people of society to conform to. It raises the question, why did those in authority in eighteen – thirty-two, publish The Great Reform Act eliminates women voter's rights by stating that the rights only extend to male persons (Parliament, no date).

Firstly, Records reveal that the concept of 'Feminism' was introduced in the early moments of the Eighteen Hundred, in Eighteen Sixty – Seven people engineered The Society for Women's Suffrage in London. The women's suffrage refers to the legal ability to vote with the elimination from gender discrimination, when voting in upcoming elections in that period (Parliament UK, no date). Additionally, a significant part in the success of the women's right to vote interlinks to a British Feminist named, Millicent Fawcett (1842) (Parliament UK, no date).

Following that an impact was made in a form of a ripple effect, a short while after women were granted the right to own property. This was a momentous milestone in women's history, the changes to important legislation caused a great impact within both Meso and Macro levels. (Haralambos, and Holborn, 2000. p127). Furthermore, The Married Women's Property Act (1870) had affected socially constructed norms, beliefs and secondary socialisation by altering societies views on females, and males by authorising the change to legislation. Moreover, women were no longer seen as being the property of a man, this was just the starting point of the rights women have in the twenty first century in contrast to the late eighteenth and in the early nineteenth century (Parliament, no date).

The inspirational concept of feminism was becoming acknowledged through; groups, organizational and global levels. It has been previously noted that The Institution for the Women's Suffrage (1867) was first introduced in eighteen sixty – seven however, it was not until the early nineteen hundred, when the progression of the women's right to vote was noted (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2017). Feminist, Ester Morris (1814) gained employment as the Justice of the Peace in the United States. Additionally, some time later Morris's (1814) status grew due to the actions she took regarding women's right to vote by challenging the norms of society (History of American Women, 2014). Moreover, Manchester Metropolitan University (2017) published a text which documented momentous events in supporting equality; According to MMU (2017) a massive two hundred and fifty thousand people attended an event even more so, it has been reported that a group of women protested to have the opportunity to introduce a request for women's right, which had thirty – seven, thousand people supporting the petition (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2017).

Lastly, in the progress of obtaining the women's right to vote in elections two feminists were suspected of triggering a disruption at an election rally, Annie Kearney and Christabel Pankhurst were later deemed guilty and offered a choice from two punishments; serve prison time or pay a substantial, fine (Manchester Metropolitan University 2017). However, it is important to state, that Kearney and Christabel (1905) refused to pay the fine, not because of their financial resources, the feminists wanted to show how strongly they felt about the cause, due to the nature of the event, a great amount of attention is placed on the people or organisations that are in power. This caused a vast amount of publication, which required people to acknowledge and engage with important issues, such as the unequal quality gap. In particular, because of the actions taken by women, and those who felt strongly about the inequalities, women finally gained the equal voting right as men in the United Kingdom. (Manchester Metropolitan University 2017).

Socialization has great importance for society to function effectively, every person will experience both, primary and secondary influences. During this time, the child will obtain essential social skills for instance, talking, gestures, building relationships, sharing, listening, and participation (Child and Youth Health, 2018). Firstly, Primary Socialization occurs in early childhood which acts as the foundation for their norms, values, beliefs and ideologies into adolescence, adulthood and old age (Boundless Sociology, 2015). Additionally, the child is socialized by their family, this can include; carers, guardians, and siblings which are referred to as agents (Colins Resources, 2013, p90). Secondly, Secondary Socialisation happens in later

childhood however, it is important to note that Secondary Socialization never ends. The learning method refers a person developing their attitude furthermore, attitudes may differ due to the individual or group conforming to agents of secondary socialization for example, Peers, Mass Media, Schools, Employers and Religion (Colins Resources, 2013, p91).

Alike socialisation, the concept of 'othering' can be linked to the societal structures of how a person's identity should be. Zevallos (2011) highlights that society consists of social groups, groups that may identify with certain characteristics, that other groups that are of high status or hold power may exclude or take advantage of (Other Sociologist, 2011). for instance, the unequal power dynamic between males and females is an example of this. (Legislation.gov.uk, no date). Additionally, in Twenty – Ten, The Equality Act received royal assent and formed a law, one of the law's intention is to ensure people who may hold any 'protected' characteristics are not disadvantaged by those who have control for example, discriminating a person because of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018).

It is a common misconception in both, previous and current day societies that girls and women are mechanically engineered to employ domesticated roles namely, Haralambos and Holborn (2000) highlight that being a female has particular expectations to uphold for example; being inferior to men, having sole responsibility on household chores and being excluded from positions of power, which are normally dominated by men. (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p 127). Additionally, women are expected to take on a maternal role due to their ability to reproduce, the sexual characteristics being different to boys and men have furthered gender role constraints. (Haralambos, and Holborn, 2000. p127).

Socialisation and gender roles are exclusively interlinked, a universal norm that has been around for many generations is that females engage in domesticated roles oppose to males that will employ work roles to provide for the family, commonly referred to as a breadwinner (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p129).

Alongside norms that are still used in present day society, the question of how gender roles are produced is still in existence. Additionally, researched has been undertaken by many academics to determine if in fact, gender roles are the creation a person's biological characteristics or are they heavily influenced by cultural aspects. (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p133). Furthermore, a British sociologist named Ann Oakley (1972) took a great interest in this debate. Oakley (1972) disregards the biological explanations in relation to gender roles, she states that;

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, 2000. p133).

Oakley (1972) has briefly touched upon the norms of the socialisation gender roles and the constraints within them. She furthers her work by identifying three detrimental norms for socialisation. Initially, she states that parental roles focus on a lot attention on the female child's physical appearance in comparison to the male child, she emphasizes that through the process of socialisation (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p134). Children are encouraged to play with certain toys relating to gender for example, boys will play with cars, and action figures and girls will play with dolls and toy kitchens. Furthermore, Oakley (1972) notes that children are primarily exposed to activities, she introduces the terms femininity and masculinity for examination (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p135).

From a biological standpoint, psychologist, John Bowlby (1953) dismissed the viewpoints from sociologists like Oakley (1972) he protested that a female's place was limited to the home, because of their reproductive organs such as, the link between attachment and the maternal role. Bowlby (1953) makes a concluding comment on his work in relation to feminism; 'The infant and young child should experience a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother. (John Bowlby, 1953 *Cited in* Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p132).

Historically, the nuclear family was a norm back in the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. It can be defined as;

The traditional nuclear family... in which the wife works in the home without pay while the husband works outside the home for money. This makes him the primary provider and ultimate authority (Sociology Guide, 2018).

However, it is important to highlight that the traditional nuclear family is now known as a social phenomenon in some cases. There are many reasons for the decline of the traditional family. In the twenty first century, gender role constraints are almost non-existent, both, women and men have equal access to job roles in both formal and informal aspects. Additionally, as for equality women have disregarded the expected domesticated roles and men have dismissed the role of the breadwinner and taken on parental responsibility. (Haralambos and Holborn, 2000. p119).

To conclude, whilst taking into account the impact of the feminism movement on women's rights, in particular how their voting rights were developed. The essay explored how perspectives differ from each person's research and experience. Additionally, Oakley (1972) supports the importance of socialisation and how limitations of gender constraints result in short and long-term effects. Viewpoints can differ from biological or cultural factors. The research undertaken by Bowlby (1953) provides clarity from a scientific standpoint, however the work of Oakley (1972) overrides the biological evidence as looking through cultural lens, we can examine the reality of the situation. Referring back to Maslow's (1954) theory of need, women being deemed to be the inferior sex they need can go unmet. In extreme circumstances, women may experience a lack of food, water, rest and warmth if they fail to conform to societies outdated expectations, due to their sexual characteristics. Furthermore, their self-esteem, confidence, and universal respect may be affected because of their exposure to oppression in each aspect of their lives for instance, physical, intellectual, emotional and social factors. Moreover, the final stage of self-actualisation acts as a barrier to women due to their gender being discriminate and excluded from high power positions. Although, the evolution of gender equality is still continuing, although it is important to acknowledge how far societies institutions such as, the family, political, educational and economy have progressed to provide equality and inclusion for everyone, deeming them all an active member of society with valued contributions, allowing society to thrive effectively.

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