

FEMINISM

There are a variety of feminist perspectives on society. There are some differences between these but all types of feminism consider society from **the perspective of women** and focus on **PATRIARCHY**.

PATRIARCHY: this means a system whereby men hold more power and have more status than women. It refers to a situation where women suffer from oppression and blocked opportunities.

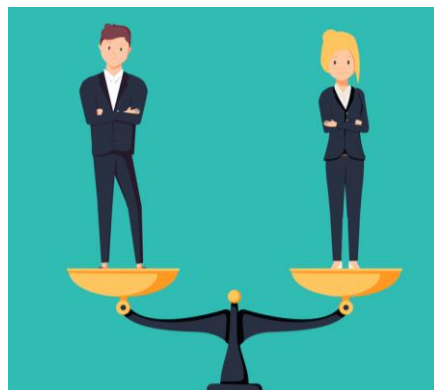
Liberal Feminism :

Liberal feminists are seen as the most **reasonable** and realistic. They **campaign for gender equality** to improve opportunities for women and girls.



Liberal feminists believe **patriarchy continues because agencies of socialisation**. For example the media reproduce the view that women are lower status than men. Media images continue to objectify women's bodies and encourage them to focus on diets/weight loss and striving for the ideal image in order to appeal to men. Even within **families, primary socialisation** encourages boys to be physical, tough and competitive while girls are encouraged to be passive, caring and concerned with appearance.

Liberal feminists **want equality** for women and campaign for changing cultural attitudes as well as laws and policies. Liberal feminists believe that while dominant ideology is **patriarchal** and sees women as primarily housewives and mothers, women will not be able to attain equality.



Some liberal feminists are **optimistic** that girls' opportunities are improving. **Sue Sharpe** researched girls' aspirations and found that now many girls have high career aspirations and want financial independence over and above marriage and a husband.

Liberal feminists believe **patriarchy harms MEN too**. It forces men into narrow stereotypes and denies them opportunities to express more "feminine" attributes. **Getting rid of patriarchy will benefit women AND men.**

Marxist feminism:

This group of feminists believe that patriarchy (women being seen as inferior or subordinate to men) benefits the ruling class and the capitalist system.

1. Women are predominantly seen as **housewives** and mothers and this means that they can **be paid less** when they do any sort of paid work because it is viewed as secondary to their main role. In this way the capitalists make more profit!
Women earn less than men despite the Equal Pay Act.

2. **Women look after the workforce.** Marxist feminists believe that male workers suffer a sense of frustration due to low pay and long working days. Women are used by capitalism in their role as housewives to absorb this frustration and soothe the exploited male worker. In this way the work of women in the home (domestic housework, cleaning, washing, cooking..) all serve to benefit the ruling class bosses because the frustrated worker returns to work the next day refreshed. Without women performing this role, perhaps the male worker would realise his exploitation at work and stop being so willing to put up with it!



Marxist Feminists believe that it is **not men** that oppress women it is **the capitalist system**. Only a revolution to get rid of capitalism will free men and women to live equally with each other!



Radical Feminism:

This strand of feminism is the **most extreme!!!** (Radical)

All men and **all** women are in conflict. (Can be seen as a conflict theory, this time on the basis of gender)

Radical feminists see men as the **enemy**.

Radical feminists believe the patriarchal oppression of women starts in the intimate and family relationships that women have with men. All women suffer inside relationships with men.

Radical feminists believe that women are forced to accept compulsory heterosexuality, women are forced to be heterosexual because this is the only accepted form of sexuality according to men.

Lesbiansim is presented as deviant and abnormal. However for radical feminists women will only be free from patriarchy if they live separately from men in single parent households, as lesbians or as single women.

Radical feminists tend to focus on the way women **suffer violence and control by men**, for example domestic abuse in families and relationships, and sexual violence and harassment.



Women are controlled within the family and society in terms of their appearance, their bodies and their activities. Radical feminists are particularly critical of media and pornography because they argue the objectification and sexualisation of women and girls' bodies leads to sexual violence.

Postmodern feminism:

Postmodern Feminists point out that there is still a need for feminism but that we must realise different women experience patriarchy in different ways, e.g. Asian women, Black women, working class and middle class, older women and young women, all have different experiences of oppression and inequality. There is no universal experience or women.