

Feminist Explanations

All of the feminist perspectives argue that women are oppressed in British society, but they differ in their explanations of the causes of this oppression and the -ways in which it should be overcome.

Liberal Feminists

Perhaps the least radical of the feminist perspectives. They argue that the so-called difference between men and women are not innate but the result of socialisation and 'sex-role conditioning'. The different -ways that boys and girls are treated from birth discourages women from developing their full potential. In this way women are oppressed in society and are seen **as subordinate to men**. Therefore, to liberate women it **is necessary to show** (educate) that men **and women** are equal in potential, thus their **concern** is with fighting for **equal fights**.

Evaluation: Advocates and supports equal rights legislation but fails to explore **other** explanations for **inequalities**.

Radical Feminists

Their basic theory is that **men are the enemy!** They argue that there has always been a sexual division of labour underpinning and reinforcing a system of male domination. Male defined ideas about women's 'natural' roles and behaviour persists in all spheres of society and therefore benefits men and serves to keep women subordinate and inferior to men. Men use their aggression to control women and are thus able to maintain their dominant position. To be free women need to separate themselves from male domination.

Evaluation: Highlights dark side of family life but fails to account for the different experience and expectations of women, particularly in relation to class and the role of capital.

Marxist/Socialist Feminists

Recognises both the role of Capitalism and patriarchy. Men exercise power over women and in Capitalist societies patriarchy takes a specific form. With industrialisation women lost certain legal rights and -were excluded from certain spheres of paid work compared to men who gained certain political, legal and economic rights. Women became dependent on males and male needs dominated both within marriage and in wider society. Marriage and motherhood became women's primary role with limited access to paid work. Women serve the needs of Capitalism because they are a cheap source of labour and reproduce future labour at little cost to capital. **Evaluation:** Links in the role of capital but fails to explore the experiences of men.

Black feminism

Argued that 'white feminists' have ignored the position of black women. Black women have a double disadvantage as they are oppressed by racism in white society and by patriarchy. **Evaluation:** Highlights colour-blind nature of feminist approaches but ignores similarities between different women's (ethnic) groups.

Post-modernism feminism

Challenges assumptions around gender identities, suggests there are now a range of identities from which women and men can choose from. **Evaluation:** Highlights **the changes in society**, **however** ignores that for some people **there is limited choice and the power of gender ideology**.