



Feminism

The basics

Feminism is a political movement; it exists to rectify sexual inequalities, strategies for social change vary

Inequality between men and women is the most significant

Gender norms are socially constructed, not determined by biology

Society is patriarchal – men are the ruling class, and women the subject class

Rape, violence and pornography are methods through which men maintain power over women. Dworkin (1981)

Difference and Postmodern Feminism

Do not see women as a single homogenous group

PM Fem - concerned with language (discourses) and the relationship between power and knowledge rather than 'politics and opportunities'

Critiqued preceding Feminist theory as being part of the masculinist Enlightenment Project

Criticised preceding feminist theory for claiming a 'false universality' (white, western heterosexual, middle class)

Criticised preceding Feminists theory of being essentialist

Radical Feminism

Strategies for change

Political lesbianism

Campaigns against objectification/ DV

Rosemarie Tong (1998) two groups of radical feminist:

- Radical-libertarian feminists aim for a state of androgyny
- Radical-cultural feminists believe in the superiority of the feminine - celebrate characteristics associated with femininity such as emotion

Separatism - women only communes, and Matrifocal households

Marxist Feminism

Capitalism rather than patriarchy is the principal source of women's oppression

Women's subordination benefits capitalism

Women reproduce the labour force for free (socialisation is done for free)

Women absorb anger – women keep the husbands going.

Because the husband has to support his wife and children, he is more dependent on his job and less likely to demand wage increases.

In Communist society, Marxist feminists believe that gender inequalities will disappear

More sensitive to differences between women who belong to the ruling class and proletarian families.

Liberal Feminism

Liberal Feminist ideas have had most impact on women's lives – e.g. mainstreaming

Do not seek revolutionary changes, work within the existing structures

Discrimination prevents women from having equal opportunities

both men and women are harmed by gender inequalities

Socialisation into traditional gender roles produces rigid, inflexible expectations of men and women

The creation of equal opportunities is the main aim of liberal feminists – e.g. the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay