

Feminism

- Feminism, like Marxism, takes a macro approach to studying society. They argue that there is **inequality** between genders
- Feminist sociologists argue that, on account of their sex, women experience injustices in favour of men
- For Feminists it is living in a **patriarchal** society that leads to inequalities for women. This means that men have tended to determine the lives of women

However there are striking differences between feminists in their values and perspectives. These differences can be divided into 4 broad tendencies.

1. Liberal Feminism
2. Radical Feminism
3. Marxist/Socialist Feminism
4. Black Feminism

Radical Feminism

- Radical feminists believe that the main rival of women is patriarchy, which guarantees male supremacy and the **subordination** of women at work and in the home
- In their view men inflict physical and sexual violence over women and commandeer the majority of material rewards



- They believe men are able to justify their actions by persuading people that it is natural that men should be the dominant sex. For Radical Feminists sexual inequality is **institutionalised**

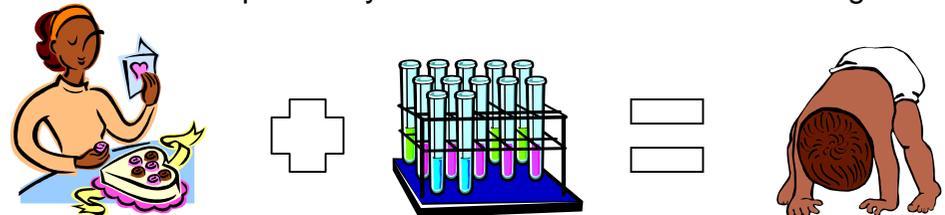
Liberal Feminism

- Liberal Feminists seek equal rights with men and believe individuals should be treated in accordance with their talents and effort etc as opposed to characteristics of their sex
- They campaign to remove any obstacle, be it political, social, legal or economical, that gets in the way of women having the same opportunities as their male counterparts
- Thanks to this approach certain discriminatory practices have been uncovered and legislation has been put in place successfully (the Equal Pay Act 1975)



Radical Feminism continued

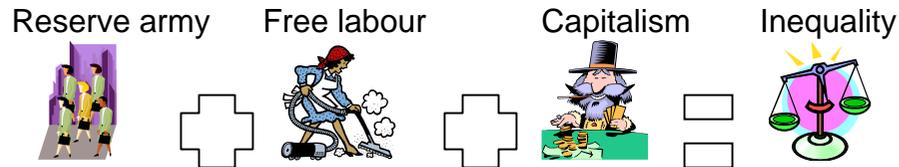
- Radical Feminism advocates lesbian relationships to free themselves from men. They argue that **new technology** eliminates dependency on men as a means of conceiving



- **Remember** women's position in society has changed in the last 50 years and there is no evidence to suggest that a **matriarchal** society would be preferable
- It is important to note that not all gender relationships are characterised by oppression and exploitation

Marxist/Socialist Feminism

- Marxist/Socialist Feminists believe social class affects the life chances of women, it is a key factor in the relationship between men and women
- They believe capitalism has led to amplification of conflicts between the sexes and that introducing communism would solve this.
- Under capitalism women are a 'reserve army of labour' who are excluded from crafts and exploited for free labour in the home



- They believe men are socialised into exploitative roles

Functionalism

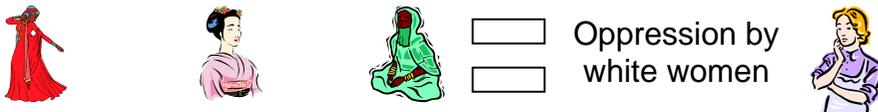
- Functionalism takes a structural approach to society meaning it examines society as a whole. It, like Marxism and Feminism takes a macro approach
- Functionalism views society as a set of interconnected parts. It often uses the analogy of a human body where each part is separate from the next but requires every other part to function adequately



- Institutions within a society are viewed of as part of the social system with consideration given to the contribution they make to the running of society e.g. the family, education or religion etc

Black Feminism

- Black Feminism has developed in recent years as an attempt to highlight the importance of race and ethnicity
- It is argued that a racism model exists and that white Feminists have simply paid lip service to the anti-racist struggle and in fact stand as persecutors to black women
- It has also been argued that the racism model neglects women from other ethnicities such as Greeks, Filipinos, and Chinese etc. Here it is argued that submissiveness to male orders differs between ethnic group



It is important to consider both the racism model and the ethnicity framework to understand the problems of specific minority women

Functionalism continued

- The basic needs of a society are sometimes referred to as functional prerequisites. There are some institutional arrangements common to all societies e.g. the family
- From the above evidence it is assumed that a mechanism of socialisation is a functional prerequisite of society.
- However even if the same institutions appear to exist from society to society it can not be assumed that they meet the same needs
- It is also suggested that prerequisites exist to eliminate the possibility of the destruction of society e.g. reproduction and health systems
- Remember an organism will eventually die when its basic needs are not met, but society can learn to adapt