

Feminism

An introduction

Ruth's Sociology Resources

Feminism

- Several different versions, all believe that:
- Society is divided between men and women
- Women are exploited by men
- Society is patriarchal
 - Men dominate high status/pay jobs
 - Eg. CEOs of companies
 - Men do less housework
 - Men hold the senior positions in politics
 - Eg. There has only ever been one female prime minister
- Women have shared interests
- Ending patriarchy is possible
- Sociology is criticised as “malestream” – by men, about men, from a masculine viewpoint

Liberal feminism

- Believes that there should be:
 - Equal rights for men and women
 - People treated according to merit
- Prejudice & stereotypes prevent equality
 - They therefore campaign for the removal of obstacles
 - This is done both at “grass roots” & at official levels
- They have been **criticised** for “not going far enough”
 - Just trying to slot women into the existing social structures created by men

Radical Feminism

- Believes that there is a basic conflict between men and women
 - System of patriarchy
 - Collective male power is used to oppress women – physical & sexual violence
 - There is male control over culture
 - Solution is separatism – social & sexual

Marxist/socialist feminism (Feminist Culturalism)

- Believe that:
 - Women are used as a “reserve army of labour”
 - Useful to the economy when there are not enough men eg. In times of war
 - Women have been excluded by men from trades & crafts
 - Exploitation of women – women are used as free labour in the home to raise the next generation of workers
- Solution will be found in the abolition of capitalism and its replacement with a non-exploitive socialist system

Further reading

- Sociology in Perspective, Kirby et al (2000) pp.33-4
- Introducing Sociology for AS Level, Browne, K. (2002) pp.19-20
- Sociology in Focus Taylor, P. et al (1995)
– pp.118-120