

What is the feminist view of the family?

[Sociology](#), [Feminism](#)



Examine the ways in which feminist sociologists have contributed to our understanding of family roles and relationships. Feminists believe that women in society are oppressed and exploited by men, they are not seen as equal purely based on their gender. Women are therefore expected to be subordinate to men resulting in women being disadvantaged in life. Radical feminists believe the family oppresses women by patriarchal structures and the family itself.

They believe the family benefits men as marriage acts as a prison, men do little in the family compared to women. The sexual division in the family exploits women, since their responsibilities for domestic labour and childcare are unpaid, undermines their position in paid employment and increases dependency on men. It thereby maintains an unequal patriarchal society. Therefore radical feminists support divorce as it allows women to escape from marriage, they also support family diversity e.g., single parent families and same sex relationships. Liberal feminism views the family as optimistic they see a gradual change, through persuasion women are getting men to become more involved in sharing the household and child rearing tasks and society has become fairer through its laws such as the sex discrimination act (1975) equal pay act (1970) the symmetrical family is becoming a reality women are getting more jobs and men are getting more involved around at home.

D. H. J. Morgan point out that not all families fit the model of the nuclear family with a married couple with children, where the husband is the breadwinner and the wife the housewife alone in fact, this is becoming less common and more women now work (1975). However liberal feminists don't

support family diversity and different family structures. Liberal feminists want to raise families in a heterosexual partnership; they don't see means the enemy unlike radical feminist.

They still, by think more can be achieved, by socialised to view the genders as equal which would eliminate gender roles. Difference feminist assumes families in general disadvantage women and benefit men. Helen Carby (1892) who was a black feminist believes that racism alongside patriarchal as a form of domination. They agree that for many black women the family can be an oppressive institution. However black women and men are oppressed by racism and that the family often acts a source of support and resistance to racial discriminations and harassment. Postmodern highlight differences between groups of women in the family situation they avoid making generalisations and see each women situation different. Marxist feminist see the family serve the need of the ruling class. By socialising children into ruling class norms and values leading to a submissive and obedient workforce, with false consciousness and stability for capitalism. Women sever capitalism in two ways: as mothers they have children who will become the next generation of capitalists wage slaves, and as wives, women serve their husbands by doing everything with the family whilst he works.

Parsons described the family as a warm bath, he believed that the family helps to relieve stress and tension from work, so he is refreshed for work the next day where he will be able to contribute to society. However for Marxist feminist, they believe the women freshens the man for work every day. This can be changed with the overthrow of capitalist and replacing it with

communism will see men and women working alongside each other and becoming equal, childcare therefore will become communal responsibility.