

# Feminist critique of post war social policies sociology essay



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This essay will explore the post war social policies and provide a critique of these. It will include the discussion about the different types of feminism and how the notion of feminism has changed over the years. The essay will end with a conclusion summarising the key concepts and arguments presented around feminism. The feminist movement has over the last century or so undergone many interesting twists and turns. Most significantly, there have been a number of strands which have been responsible for key developments in the post war period.

Feminism is a diverse, competing, and often opposing collection of social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies, largely motivated by or concerning the experiences of women, especially in terms of their social, political and economical inequalities. (Report: Feminism theory, A. Mahmoudi, York University 2006) this is the broad and general definition of feminism.

### Main body

There are many types of feminism ranging from liberal feminism social feminism, radical feminism and post-modern feminism. Liberal feminism does not seek any special provisions for women and simply requests equal rights for women without any form of discrimination based on the sex of the individual.

Socialist's feminism is quite different from this and is based on the belief that technology and the social shaping of technology has been monopolised or hijacked by the men in society. This has meant that women have deliberately been excluded from this arena.

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Radical feminism is based on the notion that the oppression of women is the worst form of oppression within society. It is for this reasons that radical feminist have very little respect for most scientific theories, analysis and data. The reason is that such research and deliberations exclude the women prospective and are definitely not women centre.

Post-modern feminism is rooted in the idea that any universal research or gender associated with it or technological resource will be appropriate and women will have different experiences and reactions to technology depending on their particular circumstance in society including their class sexuality, country of residence and other such factors. It has to be understood that there is no behaviour or meaning which can be considered either feminine or masculine in a common or all surrounding manner.

Over the last few hundred years there have been many examples in different aspects of society which clearly indicate that there is a prejudice favouring males. For example, the work of the women activist Emmeline Pankhurst with her supporters led to the right of women to vote in Britain. This was not easily achieved and saw many conflicts and struggles before it became accepted as a norm. In many ways, it seem astonishing that women should have to fight for such a fundamental right and that it was not automatically conferred to women as they became eligible at a certain age in their lives. Thus, the role of men in the construction of sociological thought and ideologies has been an obvious obstacle which has prevented the female perspective to be brought into performance in the sociological and social field generally.

One of the most unfair examples of women's rights is that entitlement to property is limited and males usually have a greater and unfair advantage over females. This is a major issue when entitlement to estates is contested by female's relatives of departed males. The amount of procedures makes it almost not worth fighting for ownership.

The feminist argument against male stream sociology which was concerned with research on the male experiences and extended this to the whole population for example around youth work and factory work.

The other issue which is quite negative is that there have been many pieces of research which have been done on males within the context of sociological topics. However, despite the fact that female experiences were not researched in such pieces of work, the teams involved took the liberty of concluding the results to include females as if they had. Clearly, this is unethical even if there may be some weak justifications provided in the way of explanation.

## **References:**

“ A woman can insist she would never choose to have an abortion while affirming her support of the right of women to choose and still be an advocate of feminist politics. She cannot be anti-abortion and advocate of feminism.” (Bell Hooks, *Feminism is for everybody* Pg. 6) So a woman has rights which she can choose to use them. The element of choice in various matters has to be given to women and it is when this is taken away that the rights of women are also eroded.

The other issue is that the right of Black people and their struggle against racism is similar to the prejudice and its destruction within society that is faced by women. “ Given the reality of racism, it makes sense that white men were more willing to consider women’s rights when the granting of those rights could serve the interests of maintaining white supremacy.” (Bell Hooks, *Feminism is for everybody* Pg. 4) So this is a sign of the complex issues which makes it more pleasant when white men feel that allowing women’s rights will confer an advantage for them and allow them, in turn to keep their own status higher than of Black people.

Rawls identifies society “ as a fair system of social cooperation” and looks for “ principals specifying the basic rights and liberties and the forms of equality most appropriate to those cooperating, once they are regarded as citizens, as a free and equal persons” ( Rawls 1993. 27) from the Book (P. DiQuinzio and I. Young, *Feminist ethnics and social policy*)

So the issue of equality of the individual was one for debate and discussion following WW2 as well as the latter end of the nineties. This does provide an indication that the need for equal rights for men and women is still a matter being contested within society.

### **Other research:**

Second wave” feminism began after the Second World War with a critique of middle class suburban feminism” (Betty Friedan & Germaine Greer). The issue which needed to be addressed were employment, education, status within society and the roles that women wanted to play rather the ones they were forced to play.

One of the most fundamental issues that feminism has had to deal with over the last 50 years or so is that many of the sociological pieces of work and research have been based upon what may be called malestream sociology. Basically, this means that the research has been based upon the male perspective and participation

Sociology was soon at the forefront of developing feminist perspectives on various social problems. The feminist critique of malestream sociology argued that sociology had been mainly concerned with research on men. As such it did not present such a major threat to the female perspective. What did was that the males superimposed their own ideas and theories or extended these to include females. This gave an invalid set of results or conclusions to the whole research. The female experience was, thus an add-on rather than a real and tangible response to the experiences that women had. In particular there were a number of pieces of research which related to youth sub-cultures which were attributed to the male and female experience when in fact it only related to the male experience. So, as the new wave feminism came into being there were two strands of concerns that feminism activists faced. Firstly, there was the need to correct the errors of the past and second, there was the need to ensure that there was real inclusion in new projects and research in order to give full validity to the sociological concepts and ideologies being developed or refined. This is not to say that men cannot carry out research in the field of the female experience but rather that there need to be a number of sensitivities and consideration give to a fair and equitable representation of females in the sampling methods used in research and that appropriate methods need to be used when

dealing with issues relating to females. Basically, the use of common sense should be used and not female issues should not be glossed over or remain unrepresented.

Even in relation to the whole area of employment and the deliberations and issues within it, there were numerous concepts explored around the male perspective but there was a stark absence of the female experience. This naturally meant that the planning of employment strategies by the government was attuned to the needs of men rather than women. This in turn meant that many women capable of undertaking white collar jobs or management jobs could not aspire to do so since the initiatives and analysis is biased towards males within society. As a result of this women have been subtly 'forced' or coerced into undertaking roles which are more 'domestic' or home-based. It is not surprising then that there is a lack of representation of women within middle/higher management within large multinational companies as a norm.

One of the main concerns that women have had for a considerable time has been the fact that issues that affect them on a day to basis seem to get no mention or practical support and guidance within the general fabric of life. This includes issues such as domestic violence, domestic labour and so on.

Exclusion from the planning and decision making process has been a crucial and important issue as far as women are concerned. In addition where women did have some form of representation the quality of the representation was not very good or was rather limited. This was more driven by encouraging a stereotype of women or to pay lip service to the

whole notion of representation. Some argued that this was just another of introducing another independent variable without being taken seriously.

There has been much discussion about the unequal playing field over the last few decades. Whilst males may profess that women have had equal rights and that they are not treated in any way different from men, the fact of the matter is that the representation of women in the structural machinery of decision making is still nominal when compared to men. The situation still smells of lip service and tokenism. In many ways this is comparable to many countries making attempts to allow minority ethnic people equal rights in employment, training, education and other sectors of life but never really achieving the targets or quotas set as part of some action plan.

One of the things that can arise out of asking such questions is that the underlying feminist theories allow us or assist us to analyse what we observe within society and give us a chance to make valued judgments about the scientific ideas and concepts that are applicable to social life.

## Conclusion

There have been many developments in different aspects of feminism over the last half a century or so. A host of strategies and legislation has been introduced to balance the inequalities associated with gender and has led to many issues being raised by feminists. The unequal playing field and the male stream perspective has and continues to provoke feminists. Granted that some of the errors of the past have been useful in forging developments and feminism of various forms has been associated with the driving the wheels of change. However, many issues still need to be addressed and <https://assignbuster.com/feminist-critique-of-post-war-social-policies-sociology-essay/>



society needs to ensure that the barrier to the rights of women are destroyed and there is equality of opportunity for women in society without any special treatment or bias being give to them. Many feminists have demanded equal treatment and not special treatment which makes them appear like delicate and sensitive creatures whose place is in the home, bearing and rearing children and having the meals prepared for the males when they come home after a hard day's work. (expand)