

# Understanding humanist feminism and how to right it sociology essay



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Humanist/ Sameness feminism is the different treatment of women from men in a social setting or a social system. The problem is different treatment, (social rights, political rights, etc) and a solution would be the same treatment, the reasoning behind this approach is the similarity between male and female, and ignoring the differences between the two. The work of Mill exemplifies the humanist approach in many ways for one, Mill argues that there has been no experience of any other gender roles and that there was never any real deliberation, that gender roles are just “ might makes right”. By stating this, Mill is explaining that gender roles really do not exist, gender roles are what separate man and women in a social setting. Sojourner Truth really works with the ideas of humanist/sameness feminism. In response to claims about the equality of the sexes Truth responds that she is physically equal to men, in both her abilities and her appetites. Truth argues that if women do in fact have smaller intellects there is still no reason to prevent women from being educated. Truth is explaining women should be able to show their best talents, traits and abilities be given the same opportunities in any setting, in the same way that men can. Truth also claims that men have nothing to fear of women’s equality, meaning men will still have their rights as a result of women’s equality. Crenshaw’s work relates to humanist/sameness feminism as well, but in a more direct way when working with women of color in particular. Sexist oppression being the inequality of social/political status is touched on throughout Crenshaw’s work. Gender and race are served as a negative frame, social power is working to oppress and exclude those who are different.

**#2 –**

Difference/Gynocentric feminism is the feminist approach at looking at the difference between men and women. Gynocentric feminism favors valuing women's contributions in society and takes a look at women's values and integrating them into society. Lorde's work favors gynocentric feminism very heavily by discussing the erotic. The erotic is a huge difference that stands between man and woman. Lorde explains that women often suppress the erotic, for two main reasons. 1. Our patriarchal society convinces women to fear the erotic. 2. Women's character is drawn into question if the erotic is expressed anywhere besides in the bedroom. Lorde is arguing that our society encourages the erotic to be suppressed in order to keep patriarchy going and to make women subordinate to men. Allen's argument, is from a very different viewpoint than that of Lorde's but Allen's argument points in favor to Gynocentric feminism as well. Allen's argument is that if American society judiciously modeled the traditions of the various Native Americans then the place of women in society would become central. Allen describes how America has lost its place of origin, which derived from Native Americans. Indians established their communities on mainly female energies. Females were the center power in Native American culture. Allen is arguing that if we as a nation acknowledged the Native American ways a little bit more, then there will be a greater equality. Shiva's work is all about women's knowledge and Biodiversity Conservations. Difference feminism really plays into what Shiva describes, where women's work is "othered" by patriarchy. Shiva explains that diversity is the principle of women's knowledge. Women's knowledge of nature and experience is important to the maintenance and promotion of ecological biodiversity. Women's

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experience of nature is different from that of men. The same patriarchal forces that deny the value of women's lives also deny the importance of diversity in the natural world. Nature becomes the other, and patriarchy attacks the environment.

### # 3 —

Dominance feminism rejects both the sameness and difference approach to feminism. Dominance feminism does not break down feminism in terms of similarities and dissimilarities but in terms of power. In order for justice to exist there must be equal power for both man and woman. Marilyn Frye's work, is all about feminism and lesbianism and whether or not they have to tie into each other or can exist separately. Lesbianism is the "fear of men" the fear of men's power; power is not equally distributed among the two sexes. Thoughts of lesbianism can be constraining making some women feel that they are betraying their communities if they are even associated with any of the thoughts about a non patriarchal society. Women who go against a patriarchal society and do not act like a stereotypical woman are considered "lesbian" being lesbian they are therefore going against society, and losing power. Female heterosexuality is a key mechanism of the phenomenon of male domination, oppression and exploitation of females. Kimmels work was much different then much of the work read about in class, Kimmels work was from a man's perspective but ties very deeply into the dominance feminism approach. Kimmel explains how manhood gives men something valuable, manhood is rewarded with great ceremony. Men always want to obtain power, but with men it is different then with women, men are under the constant scrutiny of other men. Homophobia, men's fear of other

men is the animating condition of the dominant definition of masculinity in America. Men have virtually all of the power, and women do not, men are the dominant sex. However men do not feel as powerful as feminists may think they feel. Feminists observe that women as a group do not hold power in our society but men as a group are in power. Differentiation of power among the two sexes is precisely how Kimmel explains the dominance approach. Bell Hooks takes a different approach to the difference in power between the two sexes. Bell Hooks describes rape culture and relates it very closely to masculinity. Bell Hooks describes power in the bedroom, and the dominance of the man over the woman in the bedroom, whether females really enjoy that or whether they do not. Bell Hooks states that the rape of women by men is a ritual that daily perpetuates and maintains sexist oppression and exploitation. Rape is about power, in rape the female does not have power.

### **Question #6 –**

Women's personal lives I would say are not a concern for all three types of these feminist frameworks but are more of a concern for certain ones. When dealing with the sameness/humanist approach absolutely not, women's personal lives are much less of a concern. The sameness approach is ignoring the difference of women and is the unequal treatment of them in a social setting or against social power. On the other hand the difference approach is much more of a concern of women's personal lives. One example being the erotic that Lorde discusses, the erotic is not just about sex but is about a women's very personal desire. This alone, describes that women's personal lives would be a concern when dealing with the difference/gynocentric approach. The gynocentric feminist approach is all

about the very differences between man and woman, that being said a woman's personal life would be of concern to this framework, just because it points out many differences that may have been over looked. When thinking about dominance feminism, women's personal lives are less of a concern but there may sometimes be an exception. Power, is obtained in groups, women as a group are not in power, men as a group are in power. When dealing with power in the bedroom, sure women's personal lives would obviously be of some concern as to whether or not they let themselves be dominated or whether they enjoy the domination. Overall I would say women's personal lives are less of a concern when dealing with the dominance framework of feminism because what a woman does on her own time in her own personal life does not relate to the separation of powers among man and woman.

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