1.3 Feminist Perspectives in Sociology: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Where a question refers to Item E, use both the Item and your own knowledge of feminist perspectives in your answer.

Item E: Bramwell Logistics

A hypothetical scenario written for this exercise, for students to apply feminist perspectives to.

Bramwell Logistics, a medium-sized haulage firm, has an all-male board of directors. Company records show men and women in the same driver and warehouse roles are paid the same hourly rate, and the firm has recently introduced shared parental leave. However, almost all senior managers are men, and several women who returned from maternity leave say they were quietly moved onto less demanding, lower-paid shifts without being asked.

1 Evaluate the view that reforming laws and policies is enough to remove gender inequality from society. In your answer you should refer to more than one strand of feminism.

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

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2 Explain why sociologists studying gender inequality are careful to present it as a pattern shaped by society, rather than as a fixed difference between men and women.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Define 'patriarchy'.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 State one similarity between radical feminism and Marxist feminism.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

5 Using Item E, explain why a liberal feminist might see the equal pay policy at Bramwell Logistics as a genuine sign of progress.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Using Item E, explain why a radical feminist might argue that formal equal pay policies do not remove patriarchy at Bramwell Logistics.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.3 Feminist Perspectives in Sociology: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains liberal feminism's case for legal/policy reform AND at least one other strand (radical, Marxist or difference feminism) that questions whether reform is enough, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists or writers. Strengths and weaknesses of each view are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout. Where gender is discussed, claims about men and women are treated as social patterns rather than fixed or essential differences.	**10-12**
Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains liberal feminism and at least one other strand, with some accurate reference to sociologists or writers. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported.	**7-9**
Level 2 Some relevant explanation of one or more feminist strands, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between strands.	**4-6**
Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about feminism or gender inequality, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.	**1-3**
Level 0 No relevant content.	**0**

Indicative content:

- Liberal feminist case: gender equality can be achieved gradually through reforming laws and policies, e.g. equal pay legislation, anti-discrimination law, shared parental leave; Item E's equal hourly pay could be cited as evidence reform works.
- Radical feminist challenge: Kate Millett (1970) argued patriarchy is a system of power reaching into personal life and everyday practice, so formal legal equality alone leaves deeper power relationships unchanged; Item E's informal sidelining of women after maternity leave, despite equal pay, could be used as evidence.
- Marxist feminist challenge: following Engels (1884), women's oppression is tied to the wider capitalist economic system and the unpaid domestic labour that sustains it, so legal reform within capitalism may not be enough.
- Difference feminist challenge: bell hooks (1984) argued a single account of 'women's oppression' can miss how race and class shape different women's experiences differently, complicating any single reform agenda.
- Evaluation of the reform case: critics of radical and Marxist feminism argue they can understate genuine progress made through legal change (e.g. the Equal Pay Act, parental leave rights) and can be pessimistic about the possibility of change within existing institutions.
- Evaluation of the structural case: critics of liberal feminism argue formal equality can coexist with informal inequality, as illustrated by Item E, where equal pay does not prevent informal disadvantage after maternity leave.
- A balanced conclusion might argue that legal reform and deeper structural change are not mutually exclusive: reform can remove some barriers while informal, cultural patterns of power may need separate, ongoing challenge.
- A convincing top-level answer weighs the strengths of each strand against a specific piece of evidence (such as Item E) rather than simply describing each position in turn.

Question 2

identifies that treating gender differences as fixed or natural risks presenting inequality as unchangeable, when sociological evidence suggests it varies across time and culture (oe)	**B1**
development, e.g. this careful framing keeps the focus on social structures and practices that can, in principle, be changed, rather than on individuals' inherent traits	**B1**

Answer: Treating gender differences as socially shaped, rather than fixed or natural, keeps the focus on structures and practices that can be changed, and avoids implying that inequality is unchangeable or built into men and women's inherent traits.

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Question 3

identifies patriarchy as a system of structures and practices that benefit men more than women (oe) **B1**

development, e.g. it can operate through institutions such as the family, work or the state, not only through individual men's attitudes **B1**

Answer: Patriarchy is a system of structures and practices that benefit men more than women, operating through institutions such as the family, work or the state, not only through individual men's attitudes.

Question 4

identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both see women's oppression as produced by a wider social system (patriarchy or capitalism), rather than by individual attitudes or unfair laws alone **B1**

brief development, e.g. both therefore argue that changing individual laws is not enough on its own to remove gender inequality **B1**

Answer: Both radical and Marxist feminism see women's oppression as produced by a wider social system, patriarchy or capitalism, rather than by individual attitudes or unfair laws alone, so both argue changing individual laws is not enough on its own.

Question 5

identifies that a liberal feminist focuses on formal, legal equality, such as equal pay for the same role **B1**

applies this to Item E, e.g. men and women in the same roles are paid the same hourly rate, and shared parental leave has been introduced **B1**

development, e.g. a liberal feminist would see these as concrete examples of reform succeeding within the existing system, without needing to overturn it **B1**

clear, accurate use of liberal-feminist terminology (e.g. equal pay, reform, formal equality) **B1**

Answer: A liberal feminist would point to the equal hourly pay for men and women in the same roles, and the new shared parental leave policy, as concrete evidence that legal and policy reform is working within the existing system.

Question 6

identifies that a radical feminist looks beyond formal pay policy to deeper patterns of power **B1**

applies this to Item E, e.g. despite equal pay on paper, almost all senior managers are men, and women returning from maternity leave are informally moved to lower-paid shifts **B1**

development, e.g. a radical feminist would argue this shows patriarchal power operating informally, through everyday decisions, even where the formal policy looks equal **B1**

clear, accurate use of radical-feminist terminology (e.g. patriarchy, informal power) **B1**

Answer: A radical feminist would argue that despite equal pay on paper, the all-male senior management and the informal sidelining of women returning from maternity leave show patriarchal power still operating through everyday, informal decisions.

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