



GSOC.SA3 Feminist Perspectives in Sociology

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 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 Feminist sociologists use the term 'patriarchy' to describe a key feature of society.

- ☐ A) A society structured to benefit men more than women
- ☐ B) A society with no social classes
- ☐ C) A society organised entirely around religious belief
- ☐ D) A society where only elected officials hold power

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

2 Sociologists identify several distinct types, or 'strands', of feminism, rather than a single feminist position.

- (a)** Explain the main idea of liberal feminism. (2)

- (b)** Explain the main idea of radical feminism. (2)

(Total for Question 2 is 4 marks)

3 Marxist feminists combine ideas from Marxism and feminism.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 'Difference feminism' is a further strand, which developed partly as a criticism of other feminist traditions.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 The sociologist Sylvia Walby argued that patriarchy is not a single thing, but is made up of several separate parts.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Look again at Item E. The firm pays men and women equally for the same driver and warehouse roles.
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 6 is 4 marks)

- 7 Look again at Item E. Several women say they were quietly moved onto less demanding, lower-paid shifts after returning from maternity leave, and almost all senior managers are men. 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 7 is 4 marks)

- 8 State one criticism that has been made of radical feminism.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

- 9 State one criticism that has been made of liberal feminism.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

- 10 State one criticism that has been made of Marxist feminism.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** Feminist sociologists disagree about how best to understand and challenge gender inequality, but they also share some common ground.

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 11 is 12 marks)

- 12** For each statement below, state which strand of feminism (liberal, radical, Marxist or difference) it best reflects.

- (a) Women's oppression is rooted in unpaid domestic labour that benefits a capitalist economy. (1)
- (b) Mainstream feminist campaigns have often overlooked the different experiences of women of colour. (1)
- (c) Equal pay legislation is an example of the kind of change needed to achieve gender equality. (1)

(Total for Question 12 is 3 marks)

13 Explain one similarity shared by all the strands of feminism covered in this pack.

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

14 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 14 is 2 marks)

15 Define 'patriarchy'.

(Total for Question 15 is 2 marks)

16 State one similarity between radical feminism and Marxist feminism.

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

17 State one reason feminist perspectives such as radical and Marxist feminism are sometimes classed as 'conflict perspectives', alongside Marxism.

(Total for Question 17 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.SA3 Feminist Perspectives in Sociology

Question 1

- **B1** A (a society structured to benefit men more than women)
- **Answer: A**

Question 2

- (a) **B1** identifies that liberal feminism seeks gender equality gradually, through reforming laws, policies and attitudes rather than by radically restructuring society (oe)
- (a) **B1** development/example, e.g. campaigning for equal pay legislation, anti-discrimination law or equal access to education and employment
- (a) **Answer: Liberal feminism seeks to achieve gender equality gradually through reforming laws, policies and attitudes, such as equal pay legislation or anti-discrimination law, rather than by radically restructuring society.**
- (b) **B1** identifies that radical feminism sees patriarchy itself, rather than any single law or policy, as the root cause of women's oppression (oe)
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. radical feminists argue patriarchy operates through personal relationships and everyday life, not only through the state, so change requires transforming these deeper power relationships
- (b) **Answer: Radical feminism sees patriarchy itself, operating through personal relationships and everyday life rather than only through the state, as the root cause of women's oppression, so it argues these deeper power relationships must be transformed, not just individual laws.**

Question 3

- **B1** identifies that Marxist feminists argue women's oppression is linked to capitalism, not only to men in general
- **B1** explains that women's unpaid domestic labour (housework, childcare) reproduces and maintains the workforce at no cost to employers
- **B1** credits the tradition traced to Friedrich Engels' argument, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884), that women's subordination is linked to the emergence of private property and inheritance through the male line
- **B1** development, e.g. Marxist feminists therefore argue women's oppression cannot be fully solved without also changing the capitalist economic system
- **Answer: Marxist feminists argue women's unpaid domestic labour reproduces the workforce at no cost to employers, and trace women's subordination, following Engels' 1884 argument, to the emergence of private property and inheritance through the male line, so oppression cannot be solved without also changing the capitalist system.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies that difference feminism (including black feminism) argues that women are not a single, uniform group with identical experiences of oppression
- **B1** explains that differences of race, class and sexuality shape women's experiences differently, so a single account of 'women's oppression' can miss important variation
- **B1** credits the writer bell hooks' argument (*Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 1984) that mainstream feminism has historically centred the experiences and priorities of white, middle-class women
- **B1** development, e.g. difference feminists argue a fuller account of gender inequality must also consider how it intersects with race and class inequality
- **Answer: Difference feminism argues women are not a uniform group; bell hooks (1984) argued mainstream feminism had historically centred white, middle-class women's experiences, so difference feminists say gender inequality must be understood alongside race and class inequality.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies that Walby (1990) argued patriarchy operates through several distinct structures, rather than one single cause
- **B1** names at least one structure Walby identified, e.g. paid work, the household, the state, male violence, sexuality or culture
- **B1** names a second, different structure from the list above
- **B1** development, e.g. Walby argued the strength of patriarchy can vary between these structures and can also change over time, rather than being fixed
- **Answer: Sylvia Walby (1990) argued patriarchy operates through several distinct structures, such as paid work, the household, the state and male violence, whose strength can vary and change over time rather than being fixed or single-caused.**

Question 6

- **B1** 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)
- **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 7

- **B1** 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)
- **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.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. critics argue radical feminism's claim that patriarchy is a near-universal system can overgeneralise across very different cultures and time periods
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that it can understate the real, formal progress made through legal and policy reform
- **Answer: Critics argue radical feminism's claim that patriarchy is a near-universal system can overgeneralise across very different cultures and time periods, and can understate real progress made through legal and policy reform.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. critics argue liberal feminism focuses too much on formal, legal equality and can miss informal or cultural forms of inequality that laws do not directly reach
- **B1** brief development, e.g. or that gradual reform can leave deeper structural patterns of male power largely unchanged
- **Answer: Critics argue liberal feminism focuses too much on formal, legal equality and can miss informal or cultural inequality that laws do not directly reach, leaving deeper structural patterns of male power largely unchanged.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. critics argue Marxist feminism explains women's oppression mainly through capitalism, but patriarchy also existed in non-capitalist and pre-capitalist societies
- **B1** brief development, e.g. so ending capitalism alone would not automatically end gender inequality
- **Answer: Critics argue Marxist feminism explains oppression mainly through capitalism, but patriarchy also existed in non-capitalist and pre-capitalist societies, so ending capitalism alone would not automatically end gender inequality.**

Question 11

- **Level 4** (10-12): 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.
- **Level 3** (7-9): 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.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of one or more feminist strands, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison between strands.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about feminism or gender inequality, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content.
- **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 12

- (a) **B1 marxist**
- (a) **Answer: Marxist feminism**
- (b) **B1 difference**
- (b) **Answer: Difference feminism**
- (c) **B1 liberal**
- (c) **Answer: Liberal feminism**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies a genuine shared feature, e.g. all strands agree that gender inequality exists and is a socially produced pattern rather than a natural or inevitable one
- **B1** development, e.g. they disagree mainly on the cause of that inequality and on what kind of change is needed to address it
- **Answer: All the strands of feminism agree that gender inequality is a real, socially produced pattern rather than natural or inevitable; they disagree mainly on its cause and on what kind of change is needed to address it.**

Question 14

- **B1** 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
- **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.**

Question 15

- **B1** 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
- **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 16

- **B1** 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
- **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 17

- **B1** identifies that, like Marxism, these strands of feminism see society as divided by structured inequality between groups (in this case, men and women) rather than held together by shared consensus
- **B1** brief development, e.g. both traditions argue that one group benefits at the expense of another, rather than institutions benefiting everyone equally
- **Answer: Like Marxism, radical and Marxist feminism see society as divided by structured inequality between groups, here men and women, rather than held together by shared consensus, with one group benefiting at the expense of another rather than institutions benefiting everyone equally.**