

# Saffron Walden County High

## Sociology Summer Homework 2023

This pack includes a summary of different sociological theories to help prepare you for your course. You are expected to read each theory in the booklet, answering questions about the theory. This can be found in the booklet and links provided. You will also be expected to complete the summary table.

Tip: Think about 'chunking' your work – undertake one task at a time or take short breaks between reading to refresh and re-engage!

**DUE: BE READY TO HAND THIS TO YOUR  
TEACHER ON YOUR FIRST SOCIOLOGY  
LESSON BACK IN SEPTEMBER 2023.**

Good luck and we look forward to seeing you in September 😊

# **YOUR TASKS:**

## **Task 1: READING TASK ON SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES**

1. Read through each sociological theory.
2. Highlight and annotate key ideas about each theory. The focus should be on:
  - How does this theory view society?
  - How can this be applied to society? (Think about education and inequality)
  - How can this theory be criticised?

Notes can be written on your booklet, if you would like to add more detail create your own notes eg. A mind map.

***THIS TASK SHOULD TAKE YOU 1 HOUR (MAX) TO COMPLETE***

## **Task 2: RESEARCHING KEY CONCEPTS**

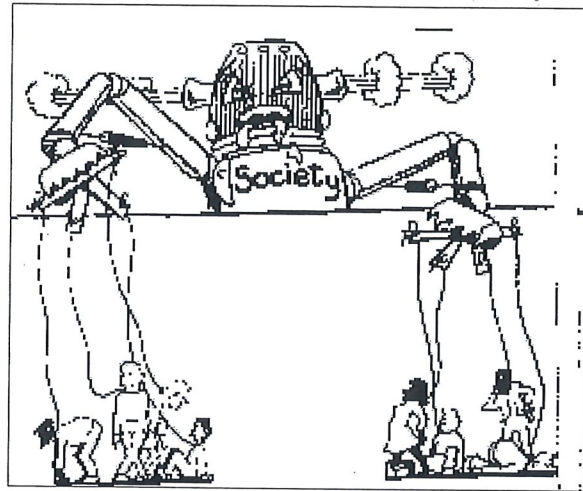
1. Using the booklet and links below, find the sociological definitions of key concepts. This can be found after each theory.
2. Links:
  - [Sociological Theories – ReviseSociology](#)
  - [Student Resources - Glossary \(wiley.com\)](#)

***THIS TASK SHOULD TAKE YOU 1 HOUR (MAX) TO COMPLETE***

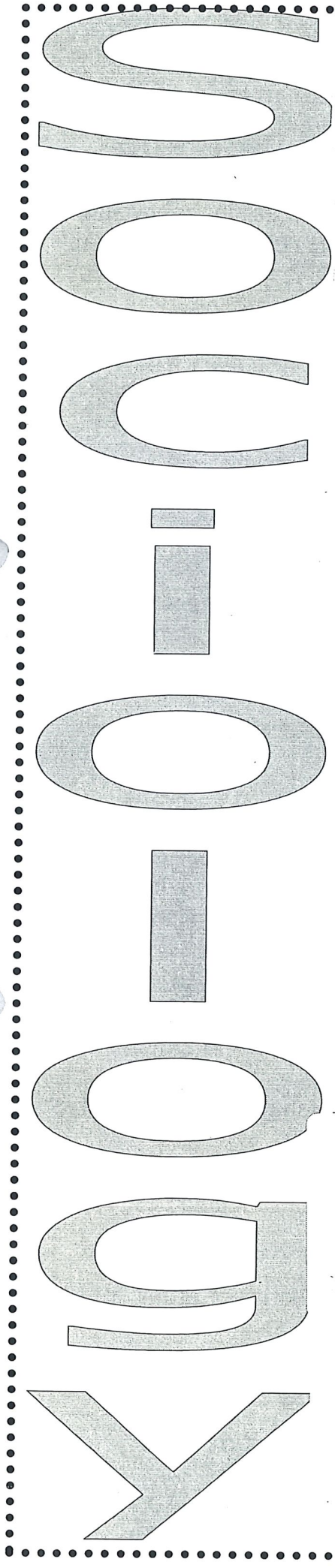
## **Task 3: SUMMARY OF THEORIES**

1. Complete the summary table on sociological theories. The information can be found in the booklet.

***THIS TASK SHOULD TAKE YOU 1 HOUR (MAX) TO COMPLETE***



# Sociological Theories







## Sociology Theory

In the A2 course you will need to have a good understanding of a range of sociological theories. Most of the theories you will cover are included in this booklet and you will be able to use this as a reference work throughout the year. You will have already encountered some of these theories in the AS year so you will hopefully find those fairly easy to understand.

### What is A Sociological Theory?

At its simplest a theory is a model of how you think the social world works. You may think that everything is fair and for the best or you may see the whole thing as a conspiracy to keep one group in power over the rest of us. As in science theories can be tested by carrying out research to see if the real world matches up with the model. However unlike science the scope for interpreting what you see is so wide that it is often difficult to be sure that the model you have in your head is not influencing what you see in your research. This happens in science as well but it is a much bigger problem for sociologists who are examining a complex system like human society.

### Notes on Sociologists and Theory

It is difficult to categorise some sociologists since their ideas are not static. This is important as you should avoid seeing sociologists as being in a particular sociological box. It is best to see these theories as broader approaches that are adopted by individual sociologists but over time these may be changed or completely rejected as their research and writing leads them to have new ideas and models of the world around them. Think how often for example your views have changed as you have moved through education. Interesting examples of this can be seen in the work of Anne Oakley or Stephen Ball who have developed a range of ideas over the years.

Sociologists do not come in teams, all Marxists do not wear red shirts and have the same thoughts.





## Some Differences within Sociological Theory

### Modernist v Post Modernist

In recent years this has become one of the most important divisions in sociological theory. It refers to the argument between those, such as Functionalists or Marxists, who argue that it is possible to have a large scale understanding of society and those who argue that life is too complex to be reduced to such simple descriptions.

This debate is mainly seen in the argument that there are no longer clear class or gender identities as we are all given access to a much wider range of options than existed in the pre-mass media society.

### Conflict v Consensus

A simple divide between those who believe that society is dominated by powerful groups who run things for their own advantage; Feminists and Marxists. And those who are more optimistic about the way in which society produces advantage for all in spite of inequality and even exploitation.

### Structure v Agency

This is the "it's all society's fault" v "you made your own bed now lie on it" explanations. Theories such as Marxism and Functionalism emphasise the way in which society creates our identities and life chances whereas post modern and new right approaches emphasise the individual choices we all make.

### Positivist v Interpretivist

This refers to their methodological approach. Positivists prefer the kind of sociology you can measure; how many, for how long, where etc. This allows for comparisons and trends to be examined. There is a link between structure theorists and those adopting a positivist approach.

Interpretivists are more interested in questions such as "how did you see the situation you were in?" "What were your reasons for a particular action?". There is a link between those emphasising agency and interpretivism.

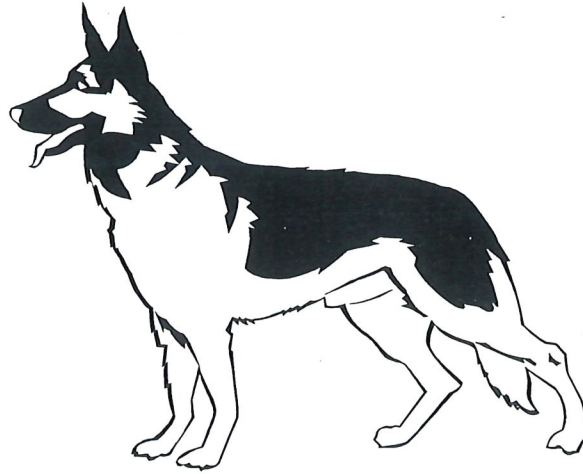
However New Right theories have their roots in economics and tend to adopt a positivist approach in which they see the individual as making rational choices that can be measured.





Everything in  
society is for the  
best

# Functionalism



## A brief description

A theory that examines society as a whole and the way in which each of its parts work to keep the whole thing going. They are often said to use an organic model of society (hence the body), just as a body needs all its parts to work together, so society needs all its parts to work together.

Socialisation gets us to accept the norms and values of our culture as 'normal' and the inequalities of society as 'natural' and 'necessary'.

Functionalism often performs the role of a "straw man" in sociology. This means that it is offered as a theory that is easy to criticise. However there are elements of it that provide interesting explanations of society and as sociologists we should always try to see the world from the view of those we are encouraged to disagree with.

## Key Theorists

Talcott Parsons

Davies & Moore

Robert Merton

## Key Concepts

Social Solidarity

Value Consensus

Role Allocation

Functional pre-requisites

Organic Model

## Evaluation

Functionalists are arguably good at explaining the ways in which society sticks together. Through processes such as socialisation.

Marxists argue that Functionalists ignore the way in which the powerful people in society manipulate the whole system to their advantage. For example we are socialised into accepting our leaders.

Interactionists argue Functionalists ignore the effects of small scale interaction creating everyday reality.

Feminists argue that Functionalists view gender relationships as being an extension of a natural set of characteristics and use this to justify the inequalities between the genders.

Post Modernists argue that it is simply another Grand Theory or Meta Narrative. They are often accused of being ethnocentric as they see white North American culture as normal society.



## History

Functionalism was the mainstream approach to sociology from the 1940's to the late 1960's. Its main approach was to see society as a living system with all its parts helping to support each other. This means that the theory focuses on the positive effects of all its members and agencies.

Many of its ideas are taken from the work of Emile **Durkheim** a nineteenth century French sociologist, but it is a good idea to avoid treating him as a functionalist. Durkheim's key interest was what held society together, and, in general, his answer is culture. Functionalists extend this idea to argue that everything in society functions to keep society in one piece.

**Parsons** argued that society must have four key things to make it work

1. It must adapt to its physical and geo-political surroundings
2. It must establish societal goals and encourage individuals to work toward them.
3. Society must have a way to integrate all its parts into a single whole
4. Individuals must carry out their roles for the benefit of the whole.

"The fundamental starting point is the concept of social systems of action. The *interaction* of individual actors, that is, takes place under such conditions that it is possible to treat such a process of interaction as a system in the scientific sense"

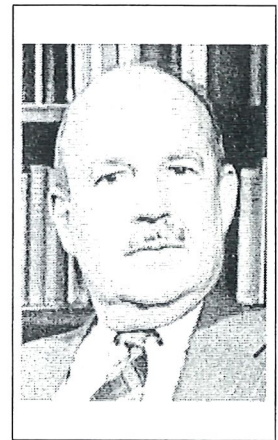
**Talcott Parsons**

## Inequality

**CLASS:** The work of **Davies and Moore** emphasises the positive effects of inequality as well as the inevitability of it in any society. Their theory of role allocation argues that inequality puts the most able at the top of society with high status and financial reward so the rest of us look up to them and they can run society. Different social classes have different cultures that help them to accept their position in society.

**GENDER:** inequality is argued to be 'natural' as women are more suited to an 'affective' domestic role and men to an 'instrumental' world of work role.

**ETHNICITY:** The **Host-Immigrant Model** was used by Functionalists in the past to argue immigrants to a society go through a process of assimilation. Ethnic inequality is explained by saying that the groups at the bottom are not yet integrated into society.



**Talcott Parsons**  
1902-1979

## Education

Education is seen as an important part of the socialisation process because it helps to create social solidarity and value consensus. It is seen as part of the key process of **Role Allocation** sifting and selecting the most and least able to be placed at the appropriate level of society. Functionalists argue those groups who do badly in education do so as a result of their own cultural values which are not helpful in the education system. For example they argue that the working class do not place a high value on education and this is why they then do badly.



**Robert Merton**  
1910-2003

Functionalism key concepts – what do they mean?

Social solidarity

Value consensus

Social order

Integration

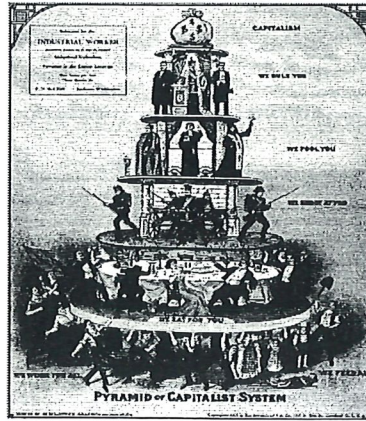
Socialisation

Social control





The world is dominated by the rich. They create our sense of reality, culture and economy.



## A brief description

A theory that looks at society on a large scale and examines the way in which the very rich dominate society and run all aspects of it for their own advantage. Marxism is a complex theory of history which argues that we are passing through a capitalist stage that will lead to communism. As time has passed and communism has failed to appear Marxism has settled into being a critique of the way capitalist society has been exploiting everybody.

## Key Theorists

Karl Marx

Louis Althusser

Pierre Bourdieu

Stuart Hall

## Key Concepts

Class Conflict

Exploitation

Hegemony

Ideological State Apparatus

Repressive State Apparatus

Economic Infrastructure

## Evaluation

Interactionists and others accuse Marxists of being overly deterministic as they blame everything on the simplistic economics > class > culture > behaviour argument.

Post Modernists would argue that this is all simply Grand theory or Meta-Narrative.

Functionalists and New Right theorists would argue that the bourgeoisie are not the unified dominating group that Marxists say they are.

New Right theorists argue that Marxists ignore the real amount of choice that people have and that people do many things not because of society but because of their own rational choices.

Marxism



## History

Marxism has its origins in the nineteenth century in the work of Karl Marx. There are many forms of Marxism some of which stress the economic control exercised by the bourgeoisie and some which focus more strongly on the ideological control of society. Recent forms of Marxism (Neo-Marxism) have concentrated on explaining why the revolution that was predicted by Marx has not come about. They concentrate on explaining how a revolution against capitalism is averted through hegemony, force and economic bribery. Hegemony through the education system, media and other agents of socialisation persuading us that the economic system is natural and fair. Force through the power of police and military if we actively resist. Economic bribery through the way in which western and middle class workers are pushed into worrying more about what new goods they can buy rather than the condition of their fellow workers who made them.

## Inequality

A key idea is that inequality is a consequence of economics. The divisions in society are caused by your relationship to the means of production. This means that some own the means of production and some own only their labour power. Marxists would argue that the vast majority in society are dependent on selling their labour and this puts them into a much less powerful position than the bourgeoisie.

## Education

The classic Marxist study of education **Bowles & Gintis** (1976) argues that education exists simply to prepare workers for their exploitation in the workforce. In doing so they are taught to accept hierarchy of school and to study subjects even if they are meaningless as this is the perfect preparation for paid work which also appears to be meaningless.

**Willis** (1977) argued that the working class in school can see through the whole system and reject it but this still leads to them becoming workers in the capitalist system.

Contemporary Marxist attitudes to education are critical of the move to make education more vocational particularly for the working class.

Marxism key concepts – what do they mean?

Class conflict

Capitalism

Exploitation

Hegemony

Bourgeoisie

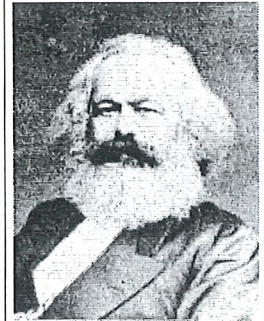
Proletariat

Alienation

Ideology

"In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality."

**Karl Marx**



**Karl Marx**  
1818-1883



**Louis Althusser**  
1918-1990

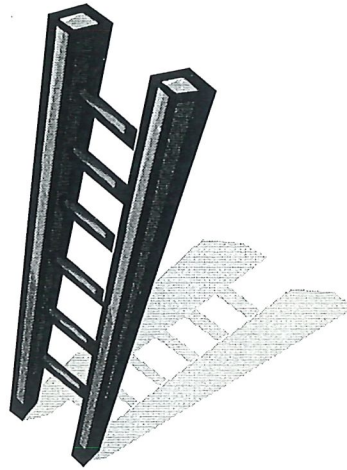


**Pierre Bourdieu**  
1930-2002





Class, status and  
political power all  
important



# Neo Weberian

## A brief description

Weber argued that there are links between your class position, life chances and market situation.

In recent years these ideas have been developed by John **Goldthorpe** and others who identify class as being linked to marketability and status position in society.

Concept of Verstehen. This means putting yourself into the shoes of the people you are studying to understand how they perceive the world in order to understand how they will behave.

## Key Theorists

Max Weber

John Goldthorpe

Barron & Norris

Anthony Giddens

## Key Concepts

Class

Status

Party

Verstehen

## Evaluation

Marxists argue that Weberians ignore the real power of the bourgeoisie who are at the top of this scale of different social classes. There is endless debate about the boundary lines between different social classes.

Post Modernists argue that this is another Grand Theory. They also argue that class has become a matter of choice as we select the identity we want from the vast range on offer from the mass media.

Feminists argue that gender is more important than sociologists such as Goldthorpe are willing to recognise. A criticism that could also be made of Marxism



## History

Developed in reaction to Marxism in the early twentieth century by Max Weber, Weberian approaches emphasise the real differences within the group Marx called the proletariat. Weber makes the obvious point that not all who sell their labour to survive in capitalist system are in positions of equal power. Weber suggested the concepts of class (meaning marketability) status (how society views you) and party (how much political power you possess) all help to explain the differences between social groups. Weber saw these groups as competing for the scarce resources of society, such as education, housing, etc. and each group have different amounts of power in this competition.

**Neo-Weberians** such as **John Goldthorpe** have argued that there are differences within those selling their labour based on the relationship to the employer. Some are involved in a straight work for money exchange but others have a service relationship in which the relationship is more complex.

## Inequality

The key indicator of inequality is social and economic class along the divisions of class, party and status described above. Neo-Weberians argue that inequality is a result of the competition between social classes in society. The most powerful move ahead of the less powerful in relation to their life chances. Many argue that the classes are sub-divided into many different groups so it is more accurate to talk of the middle classes rather than the middle class.

## Education

For neo-Weberians education is an important source of status and marketability. As such it is a scarce resource that groups in society compete to attain. Groups use their power to try and make sure that their children get the best education. So, neo-Weberians argue that the system of private education shows the upper classes gaining advantage through power while the worst schools are filled with the children of the least powerful groups.

Neo Weberian key concepts – what do they mean?

Verstehen

Status

"Classes, status groups and parties are phenomena of the distribution of power within a community"

**Max Weber**



**Max Weber**  
1864-1920



**John Goldthorpe**



**Anthony Giddens**





The free working  
of the economy  
will sort  
everything out

N  
e  
w

R  
i  
g  
h  
t



## A brief description

A right wing Conservative theory that stresses the need for more individual freedom and responsibility and consequently less state interference in economic and social affairs, especially in the field of welfare.

## Key Theorists

Peter Saunders

David Marsland

Charles Murray

## Key Concepts

Individual Freedom

Rolling back the frontiers of the state.

Golden Age of the Family

Nanny state

## Evaluation

There is a clear contradiction in New Right thinking between arguing for free markets and individual liberty and arguing that society should return to "traditional " values. This is particularly clear in the attitude towards working mothers.

Some have questioned whether the 'free-market', as advocated by the New Right, is really free. Most 'free' markets in the world tend to be dominated by a few transnational corporations who control vast amounts global capital and are able to put pressure on national governments to pursue policies advantageous to them.



## History

New Right ideas are the product of various historical factors. It could be argued that the most important was the long period of economic growth after World War two which ended with rising unemployment and high inflation in the late 1970s. New Right thinkers believed that these problems could only be solved by the introduction of free markets in a range of areas such as the economy, health and education.

The New Right was also a reaction to the socially liberal climate from the 1960s onwards. They saw the 'permissive' 1960s, student demonstrations, civil rights movement, feminism and environmentalism as evidence of the collapse of traditional moral principles. Thatcher in the UK gave her backing to a return to 'Victorian Values', and the 'Moral majority' in the USA campaigned for a return to 'family values'.

## Inequality

New Right theorists argue that class inequality is justified because it promotes economic growth. By allowing and encouraging people to pursue their own self-interest, the interests of the whole society are promoted. The wealth achieved by successful entrepreneurs will 'trickle-down' to the rest of society in the form of jobs, services etc. Competition and free enterprise ensure that goods or services increase in quality and fall in price, making them available to a wider section of the population. Not everyone will be able to afford consumer products, but living standards will constantly increase. Charles Murray has added to this by saying that there are clear genetic differences between people which explain inequality and there is not anything that you can do about this.

## Education

According to the New Right, education should largely be concerned with promoting economic growth. They believe that many school-leavers are unemployable because they lack basic skills. In terms of raising standards, New Right thinkers point to the introduction of market forces to encourage competition between schools and colleges which will produce better results.

New Right key concepts - what do they mean?

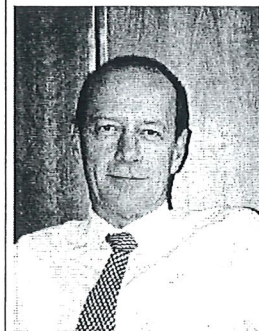
Competition

Privatisation

"If one constructs a system which systematically tries to care take of the feckless and the irresponsible, at the price of taking away a very important part of life from the vast majority who are responsible, I think it is not only appropriate to say that is politically immoral, that is the very definition of political immorality." **Charles Murray**



**Charles Murray**



**Peter Saunders**



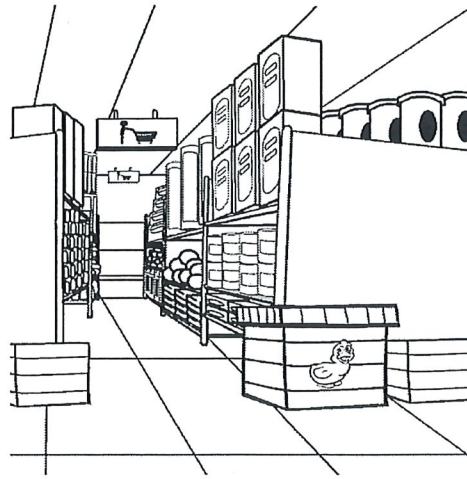
**David Marsland**





The world is a gigantic supermarket of ideas and identities from which we can pick and choose those that best suit us.

# Post Modernism



## A brief description

A theory that is very difficult to explain in one or two sentences as there are many variations on this. However they tend to believe the following.

1. It is not possible to develop large theories that explain all aspects of society, such as Marxism and Functionalism, as what is real changes from place to place and is open to many interpretations.
2. In contemporary society people are able to pick and mix their identity from a range of options available to them in the mass media.
3. However there is a strand of post modernist that is a conflict theory. This is mainly represented by Foucault and Baudrillard. They argue that what seems to be good for us in society is actually part of a system to deceive and control us.

## Key Theorists

Foucault

Baudrillard

## Key Concepts

Consumption

Relativism

Pick and Mix Identity

Pastoral Power

Meta Narratives

## Evaluation

Most other theories have taken some aspects of the very wide range of ideas that have come from Post Modernism.

Marxists are very critical of the pick and mix approach making the point that few would pick and choose to live in abject poverty so there must be structural reasons why people are poor.

Recent attacks have been made on post modernism for being a philosophy of meaninglessness that argues that there is no fixed truth. This is said to be in the interests of the powerful people in society who benefit from social inequality—which is a truth.

You do not see many ethnographies of powerful people who remain an under researched group.



## History

Post Modernism is a reaction to modernism which was a movement in art, architecture and politics to have rational systems that explain everything. This means that post modernists seem to spend a lot of time saying why you can't explain society rather than actually explaining it. The easiest approach is to think of two types.

1. Conflict approaches which look at the way ideas are used as a form of power and control. These are similar to much of the hegemonic Marxist approaches we have seen.
2. Identity post modernism. This stresses the pick and mix nature of our society where reality is created in the mass media. They argue that society is now wealthy enough that we can choose our identity through the things we buy.

## Inequality

Post Modernists argue inequality is a reflection of identity, people pick and choose different lifestyles which are seen to have different levels of status and prestige. Economic differences are not as important as the lifestyle differences that exist between different class groupings.

Some conflict Post Modernists do recognise the existence of inequalities and the fact that powerful individuals use their control of institutions such as the media to manipulate the rest of society.

## Education

Conflict Post Modernists such as Foucault would see Education as part of the system of pastoral power that is used to control us. Foucault argued that if schools looked so much like prisons then they probably share a lot of the characteristics of prisons. Schools are part of the surveillance of human life that takes place in contemporary society.

Identity focussed post modernists would argue that it is one of the ways in which we establish our identities. School is a place of subcultures as well as a system of choices that people make in deciding what type of lifestyle they wish to follow.

Postmodernism key concepts – what do they mean?

Fragmented

Metanarratives

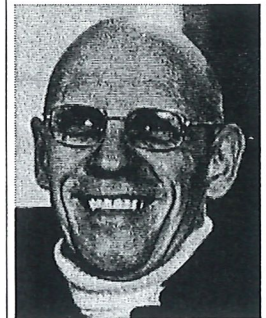
Consumption

Relativism

Globalisation

"the production of new knowledge had become aligned with corporate, disciplinary, and administrative power."

**Michelle Foucault**

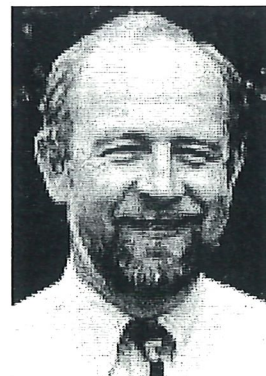


**Michelle Foucault**  
1926-1984



**Jean Baudrillard**

[http://  
www.europeangraduateschool.de/  
faculty/ baudrillard.html](http://www.europeangraduateschool.de/faculty/ baudrillard.html)



**Jan Pakulski**

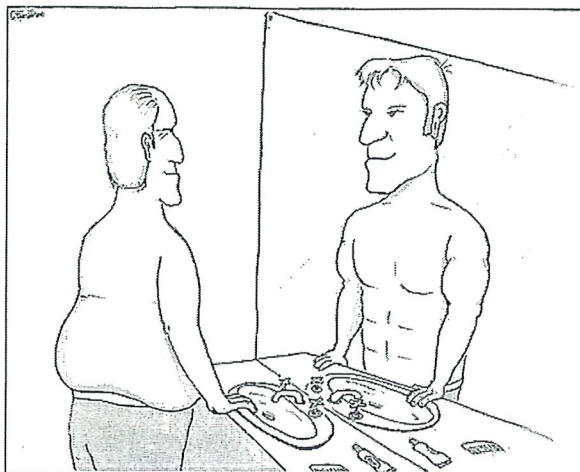
[http://www.utas.edu.au/arts/  
students/about.html](http://www.utas.edu.au/arts/students/about.html)





The world is real  
if you think it is  
real

Interactionist



## A brief description

Interactionists argue society is based on the meanings and motives people attach to the actions of others and the ways in which they interpret different situations. It is concerned with how individuals negotiate with each other and exercise agency, or choice, in relation to what they do and how they act. They argue we build up images of ourselves and our identity based on the ways in which others act towards us. We then adjust our behaviour as if we had seen ourselves in a mirror.

## Key Theorists

George Herbert Mead

Stan Cohen

Howard Becker

Erving Goffman (prefers not to be labelled as any particular type of theorist)

Paul Willis (described sometimes as a Marxist Interactionist)

## Key Concepts

Interaction

Negotiation

Looking glass self

Self-fulfilling prophecy

Agency

Labelling

## Evaluation

Marxists argue it does not adequately consider where power lies in society, which class for example holds power and why one class or group has the power to label others.

Both Functionalists and Marxists argue it does not deal with macro structural issues or explain what structural constraints there are which stop people from exercising agency

Overestimates the amount of agency that people have

Sharp and Green argue that whether pupils succeed or not is not entirely to do with how pupils are labelled but also with central government educational policies.

Takes a rather liberal view of what some might see as the underdogs in society.



## History

Originated in America from the work of philosophers such as Mead. Also has some origins in the Work of Max Weber and his concept of Verstehen. Became popular in Britain in the 1960s challenging the domination of sociology by functionalism. Many early Interactionists were interested in showing how social systems such as the criminal justice system were not fair because of the attitudes of those who worked in them. Sometimes referred to as symbolic interactionism, because it explores the range of symbols, such as language, dress etc individuals use to help them interpret the actions of others, originated in America in the early C20th Interactionism is one, the earliest, of a number of strands of interpretivist sociology others being phenomenology and ethnomethodology. The latter emphasises the doing of sociology rather than a grand theory.

## Inequality

Historically American sociologists have placed greater emphasis on the individual in society rather than the European emphasis on exploring class relationships. Mead believed social action and interaction were the keys to understanding society. In that way there are links to the work of Weber and other social action theorists and the notion of verstehen. However Weber and the other social action theorists were also interested in social structures as well as social actions.

## Education

Schools and school processes are responsible for the achievement and/or underachievement of students. Schools do not react to pupils in a neutral manner rather they label them, stereotype them and stream them. Pupils respond to these processes and a self-fulfilling prophecy often results. In the contemporary UK this labelling and stereotyping has a particularly negative effect on working class males – Black, Asian and white as well as some working class girls.

In addition banding, streaming and setting all determine what access pupils have to particular knowledge/curricula.

Interactionism key concepts – what do they mean?

Labelling

Self fulfilling prophecy

Impression management

Typification

Interaction

"Societies create deviants by making the rules that lead to their infraction."

**Howard Becker**



**Erving Goffman**



**Howard Becker**



**Stephen Ball**

[http://www.britac.ac.uk/fellowship/elections/2006/ball\\_s.html](http://www.britac.ac.uk/fellowship/elections/2006/ball_s.html)





Women need legal  
and political change  
to make them equal  
to men.



### A brief description

Liberal feminists are concerned with obtaining equal opportunities for males and females in society. They argue gender inequality is partly a result of gender role socialisation and unfair laws. Through processes of manipulation and canalisation children are taught what is expected of males and of females. They believe that equality can be achieved by the introduction and/or reform of laws that promote equality/inequalities

There is no theoretical body of knowledge that could be called liberal feminism in the way that there is with the other feminisms.

### Key Theorists

Natasha Walter

Ann Oakley – some might disagree!

Is liberal feminism really a theory and so can there be liberal feminist theorists?

Politicians rather than sociologists?

### Key Concepts

Equal opportunities

Discrimination

Reform

### Evaluation

It has been responsible for identifying basic legal inequalities but the reform of laws has only limited practical effect women for example still earn on average less than men.

All other feminists would say that liberal feminism does not go far enough in its demands. It does not challenge malestream views of what should be the focus of research.

It suggests that inequality is the result of socialisation which implies children are passive recipients of gender role socialisation

It is a reactive approach rather than a proactive one. Meaning that it starts from the view of the society that exists rather than seeking to create a new and fairer system.

It encourages women to accept inequalities and compete within that framework for jobs and university places.

# Liberal Feminist



## History

Arguably Liberal Feminism is an older approach that Radical and Marxist Feminism tried to replace. Many female politicians took a liberal feminist approach by trying to change the system from the inside. Legislation such as the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act are offered as evidence for the achievements of this reformist approach. The demand for equal rights has been made for centuries, most recently in Britain demands in the C19th/C20th to vote, in the C20th for equal pay etc

## Inequality

Inequality exists because the law lets it. Inequalities exist in the public domain as a result of legal restrictions or because equality legislation passed in the 1970s onwards has not been enforced strongly enough. In the private sphere they are the result of a lack of education and information that allows traditional anti-women practices to continue.

In employment the vertical and horizontal segregation of the labour market and existence of a Glass Ceiling which still prevents women from getting to the top

## Education

The formal curriculum in some subjects is still gendered and the hidden curriculum labels and types males and females for example reactions by teachers to male culture.

Evidence that careers teachers and others encourage gendered subject choice in some schools

Schools and schooling do not take account of needs of all girls for example single sex schools.

Feminism key concepts – what do they mean?

Patriarchy

Discrimination

Reform

Ideology

Private sphere

Discourse

Essentialism

Inequality

'Equal rights for all'  
'Equal pay'



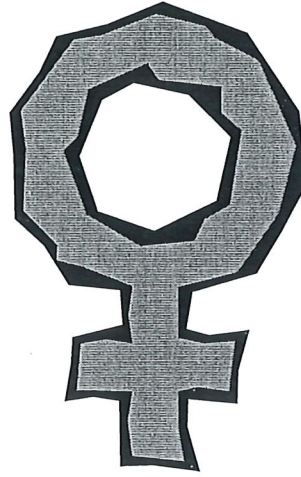
Natasha Walter



Ann Oakley







# Radical Feminist

## A brief description

For radical feminists patriarchy not capitalism is the main enemy of women. Society is run in the interests of men who are advantaged in every area and in a position to exploit and oppress women accordingly, i.e. men are the problem. The family is central to the oppression and subjugation of women. Some have argued that biology, in the sense that it is women who carry, give birth to and feed a child, has contributed to the position of women.

Radical feminists do not accept that biological differences should mean women are second class citizens. They argue that sex inequality pre-dates class inequality.

## Key Theorists

Shulamith Firestone

Kate Millet

Sasha Roseneill

Gail Chester

Germaine Greer

## Key Concepts

Patriarchy

Private Sphere

Public Sphere

## Evaluation

Radical feminism makes the assumption that gender is the main issue but Marxist feminists argue that this is an a-historical analysis and ignores the class dimension of oppression. For example how is it possible to argue that a working class women is in the same position as a middle class one?

Recently they have been accused of ignoring the extent to which women have achieved liberation.



## History

Radical feminism can be seen as a reaction to the failure of reformist feminism to achieve much. Even giving women the vote did not produce the equality that was hoped. Radical FEmisists argued that only by personal liberation of women could change really come about. Women need to free themselves from the Patriarchal Ideology that encourages them to take part in their ow oppression.

They claim their roots in the religious protests of the past and to the revivals in evangelical Christianity which swept America and to a lesser extent Britain in the C18th/C19th. The women involved in these protests developed separate organisations and in New York in the mid C19th a feminist separatist journal was started. Women also became involved with moral and social movements such as work with prostitutes and with movements to end the exploitation of black women by slave owners. Since the 1980s gay and lesbian sociology and queer theory has overlapped with radical feminism. In 1969 the Redstockings of New York wrote "We cannot rely on existing ideologies as they are all products of a male supremacist culture.....We identify with all women"

## Inequality

Argue that as a result of male supremacy in society, women are oppressed and subjected to violence in the home and on the streets.

They say men act like a ruling class and women are a subordinate class

The traditional family is patriarchal and is the basis for much of the inequality that exists – hence separatism is one way forward.

## Education

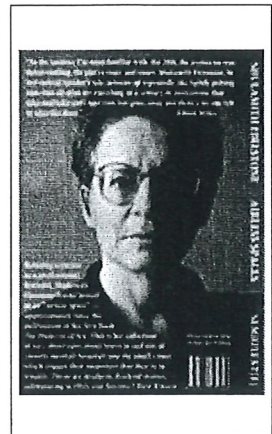
The curriculum is not neutral but reflects a masculine view of the world and in this way education contributes to the cultural reproduction of patriarchy. Subjects are still seen as male or female for example girls tend to do food technology and boys do resistant materials in CDT. Teachers, often unconsciously, treat males and females differently and have different expectations of them. This reinforces the male view of their supremacy and the female one of submission.

The competitive nature of the education system is a male one and attempts have been made to set up support networks for girls in schools as well as for female teachers.

The patriarchal structure of society is reflected in school structures, you only have to look at number of male heads at all levels.

Radical feminists have and do argue that single sex schooling is good for girls

**"The personal is political"**



**Shulamith Firestone**



**Kate Millett**



**Germaine Greer**





'Power to the sisters must mean power to the class'

# Marxist Feminist



## A brief description

Marxist feminists argue that women's oppression has an economic basis which, in the contemporary UK, is rooted in capitalism. They argue the family is a patriarchal institution and women's position in the family, as wives and mothers, leads to their exploitation by capitalism. Women serve the needs of capitalism by reproducing the next generation of workers, by looking after the current generation of workers and in many cases working outside the home as a reserve army of labour. They argue women are encouraged to accept the dominant ideology that the family is natural and that inequalities are in-built into capitalism. They argue then that gender and gender identity is inextricable linked to, and mediated by, class.

## Key Theorists

Barrett	Benston
Beechey	Breugal
Coontz and Henderson	
Hartmann	

## Key Concepts

Capitalism  
Ideology  
Patriarchy

## Evaluation

Some feminists object to using Marxist terminology since it is associated with explanations about the conditions of male workers rather than all workers.

Radical feminists argue too little attention is paid to patriarchy by this.

Black feminists would argue that the particular oppressions of Black and Asian women are not taken into account

Functionalist would argue that the socialisation of young children in the family is good for society.

Could be argued to be slightly outdated in that increasing evidence of men who contribute to domestic work and women are increasingly pursuing a career and becoming economically independent



## History

Became prominent in the late 1960's and early 1970's as part of the third wave of feminism. However they would argue the oppression of women began much earlier with the ownership of private property and women's exclusion from production. Engels writing in the C19th called the oppression and exploitation of women 'The women question' and links it with the extent to which women are or were part of the labour market.

"That's three men that I serve then, my boss, your boss and you" Sandra Kerr

## Inequality

Inequality is inbuilt into capitalism. Women are a cheap source of labour and can be bought in and out of the labour market to meet the needs of capitalism. Class as well as gender affects life chances and access to resources such as health, employment, education and housing.

Despite the Equal Pay Act women earn on average approximately 80% of male earnings and there have been some very high profile cases in the last twelve months of women working in senior executive well paid jobs but earning less than their male counterparts.



**Karl Marx and daughter Jenny**

## Education

Education reproduces gender and class inequalities through subject choices, career advice and teacher expectations. School is the major ideological state apparatus that ensures this reproduction takes place.

Education prepares girls for their unequal place in the workforce. They are still employed in a narrow range of jobs and careers and on average at a lower level than males. The economic system drives education and education reproduces class and gender inequalities that meet the needs of capitalism. For example there is some evidence that working class girls get working class jobs and the numbers of working class girls in Higher Education is disproportionately low compared to the numbers in the population. Some girls form counter school subcultures using their sexuality and their gender to resist teacher expectations.



**Heidi Hartman**

## Health

Class differences exist in relation to women's health and illness. Working class women visit the doctors and generally use the health service less than middle class women (see inverse care law under health and Marxism). Doyal argues the NHS serves the needs of capitalism by ensuring a healthy workforce and it is women who provide that. She and other Marxist feminists argue the health service is also sexist and patriarchal.



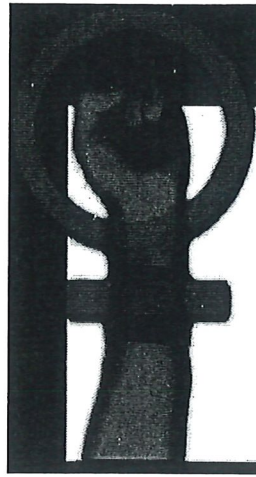
**Lesley Doyal**





Ethnicity,  
Patriarchy and  
Capitalism

# Black Feminist



## A brief description

A branch of feminism which attempts to explain the particular problems faced by black women. Black feminists argue that for many black women problems of racism and ethnic identity have put issues of sexism and women's rights on the back-burner. Black feminists are keen to address this by arguing that black women suffer from disadvantages because they are black, because they are women, and because they are working class.

## Key Theorists

bell hooks  
<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/hooks.htm>  
Heidi Mirza

Rose Brewer

Kalwant Bhopal

## Key Concepts

Patriarchy

White Supremacist Capitalist  
Patriarchy (!!)

## Evaluation

Black feminism may have introduced the idea that differences between women are as important as the similarities and shared interests, but it can be accused of emphasising one difference (ethnicity) at the expense of others (class, sexuality).

It can also be criticised for failing to address the oppression experienced by white women.



## History

The term *Black feminism* was not widely used until the start of the contemporary Black women's movement in the 1970s. However, Black feminist scholars frequently apply it to a variety of Black women's survival strategies and actions in the past. It is used to characterize Black women's tradition of courage, independence, and pragmatism under the brutal conditions of slavery and institutionalised racism

## Inequality

Black feminists have criticised other feminists' use of the concept 'patriarchy'. The way the concept is used by radical feminists emphasises that all women are oppressed as women, and therefore all women share a sense of solidarity. Similarly, all men are oppressors and as such all men share a collective sense of power over women. However, Black feminists argue that white women have some access to institutions of white power such as the courts in a way that Black women do not. They also argue that it is impossible to say that Black men have the same power over women as white men. This is all quite nicely summed up by Moraga and Anzadua: 'We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism'.

## Education

Black feminists such as Heidi Safia Mirza are interested in the way in which gender, class and ethnicity overlap in the classroom. In *Young, Female and Black* Mirza studied 198 young men and women in two comprehensive schools in South London. She found that there is a myth of under-achievement for Black women. The Black girls in her study did better academically than Black boys and white students. Overall she found that Black girls had positive self-esteem, were concerned with academic success and prepared to work hard. However, she found that Black girls were in no position to challenge the way in which teachers misinterpreted the behaviour of Black girls.

*Increasingly, patriarchy is offered as the solution to the crisis black people face. Black women face a culture where practically everyone wants us to stay in our place.*

**bell hooks**



**bell hooks**

<http://www.infed.org//>

**Bell hooks**



**Heidi Mirza**



**Rose Brewer**





<b>A Summary of Theories</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Structure or Action Theory</b>	<b>Consensus or Conflict</b>
<b>Functionalist</b>			
<b>Marxist</b>			
<b>Neo-Weberian</b>			
<b>New Right</b>			
<b>Interactionist</b>			
<b>Post Modern</b>			
<b>Liberal Feminist</b>			
<b>Radical Feminist</b>			
<b>Marxist Feminist</b>			
<b>Black Feminist</b>			
<b>Post Feminist</b>			



[illegible]

