

Outline and explain two criticisms of using Feminist approaches to study society (10)

One criticism of using Feminist approaches to study society is that Feminism lack a coherent approach to studying society. An important concept in understanding human behaviour is intersectionality, the process by which individuals are treated based upon the range of social characteristics that they possess. For example, a white middle-class woman may be judged very differently to a black working-class woman and have very different concerns when it comes to the social world around her. Whilst some Feminist groups, such as Difference or Intersectional Feminists would argue that women should be treated as individuals, others such as liberal feminists pursue an agenda of social and economic equality for all women but fail to stipulate the different characteristics within the groups they are fighting for. This has led some commentators to argue that some feminists are fighting for equality in the boardroom or the bedroom, whilst other women are fighting for their right to live, choose when they reproduce, choose who they marry and have control over their own bodies. As the range of problems that women face globally is so diverse, some argue that the priorities of Western feminists are not aligned with those of women in other parts of the world. Women suffering from FGM, being sold into slavery, being forced into child labour, prostitution and marriage are in more urgent need of assistance than gaining equal pay for female actors or equal representation in the media.

A second criticism is that feminism can be seen as quite a divisive approach, which several branches that disagree over the extent to which women are exploited in society. Liberals tend to believe that there has been progress in society and that women's social, economic and political rights are gradually progressing towards equality with males. However, other groups, such as Radical Feminists fail to recognise some of the progress that has been made buy the feminist movement and still point to the operation of patriarchal structures in society as oppressing all women. They disagree that reforming the existing system is possible and instead advocate revolution or separatism. This means that Feminism lacks a unified approach to studying the issues of women in the 21st Century.