

Gender Conflict Theory

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover the gender conflict approach to social theory, through definition and discussion of:

1. Gender Conflict Theory
2. Harriet Martineau
3. Jane Addams

1. GENDER CONFLICT THEORY

The **gender conflict theory** assumes that the chief and central inequality in society is between men and women, causing the fundamental discord in society as a whole. Closely related to this approach is the idea of **feminism**, which is a position that supports equality for men and women.

IN CONTEXT

Society has historically placed men in a position of power. In the home, men have typically been regarded as 'breadwinners' and as the heads households. In the realm of work, men have historically earned more money and had more prestigious jobs than women.

Rappers, a pop culture icon that is venerated, are primarily masculine--there are hardly any female rappers. This is an example of gender disparity within an industry, something that a sociologist working within the gender conflict approach would study.



THINK ABOUT IT

Relative to male comics, there are hardly any female comics. If you are a sociologist studying gender disparity within the comedy industry, what kind of questions would you ask? Your questions might include:

- What is it about comedy that is attractive to men?
- What is it about comedy that discourages women?
- Why does society produce more male comics than it does female comics?



TERMS TO KNOW

Gender Conflict Theory

A specific variation of social conflict theory that prioritizes the inequality and conflict between men and women.

Feminism

Support for the equality of men and women.

2. HARRIET MARTINEAU

Harriet Martineau, a 19th century social thinker, was considered to be the first female sociologist. She challenged the status quo and advocated for women's equality with men, earning her the distinction of a revolutionary figure.

She also advocated for female education. Culturally, in Martineau's time, women were expected to be subservient to men and to raise children instead of pursuing a career. Martineau challenged this overarching ideology.



PEOPLE TO KNOW

Harriet Martineau

The first female sociologist; she fought for women's rights to education

3. JANE ADDAMS

Jane Addams (1860-1935), is an example of what we would now call a public or applied sociologist-- somebody with an outward focus who practices sociology aimed specifically at improving the lives of people in society.

Although Addams wrote sociological works, she chose a life of public service over being a university professor. Through her public outreach, Addams helped to found the Hull House in Chicago, in 1889, which provided services and help to the laboring and immigrant poor. In Chicago at that time, there were a lot of immigrants working in the meatpacking industry, which was famous for its atrocious, unsafe working conditions.



DID YOU KNOW

These terrible working conditions are captured in the novel by Upton Sinclair called *The Jungle*, which details in great degree how awful these factories were.

Addams and the Hull House in Chicago helped all of these immigrants who were new to the country.

Both Addams and Martineau were not considered sociologists at the time of their work, but were later considered so by people referencing their earlier work.



TERM TO KNOW

Jane Addams



SUMMARY

Today you learned about **gender conflict theory**, a variation of social conflict theory that prioritizes the inequality and conflict between men and women. You also learned about **Harriet Martineau** and **Jane Addams**, prominent female sociologists working within the gender conflict approach.

Source: This work is adapted from Sophia author Zach Lamb.



TERMS TO KNOW

Feminism

Support for the equality of men and women.

Gender Conflict Theory

A specific variation of social conflict theory that prioritizes the inequality and conflict between men and women.



PEOPLE TO KNOW

Harriet Martineau

The first female sociologist; she fought for women's rights to education.

Jane Addams

An applied sociologist and founder of the Hull House.