

# Inequality in the workplace, still- harriet martineau

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



Inequality in the Workplace, Still. HARRIET MARTINEAU Harriet Martineau, the founding mother of sociology, was a very accomplished female. She was, among other things, a feminist, Unitarian, critic, social scientist, and an atheist. She began many methodological, theoretical and substantive studies that would now be considered the study of sociology. She analyzed women's rights, disability, education slavery, history, health and religion within her lifetime. Long before Marx, Weber, or Durkheim, Martineau also studied and wrote about social class, suicide, forms of religions, domestic relations, delinquency, and the status of women" (Gordon). Her neglect by sociologists in later years is a perfect example of how academic sociology has excluded women sociologists from its study. Martineau stated that, " an American woman's life is equal to that of a slave's, (in that) they were both given indulgence rather than justice. " (Berleant) Harriet saw that women were denied education and had only one option and duty in the United States: marriage.

Her attitude towards the injustice of women would most suit the feminist theory which focuses on analyzing gender inequality and promotes women's rights, interests and issues. A recent incident, showing the inequality women still face today, occurred when a female was denied equal treatment at the workplace causing a gender discrimination lawsuit. Monday March 15th, 2010, a federal judge announced a \$2. 5 million discrimination verdict in favor of Michelle Maher, who was forced out of the Fresno Fire Department's training academy.

Maher, a single mother, former professional mixed-martial arts fighter and certified EMT with 13 certificates in firefighting skills, was clearly qualified for <https://assignbuster.com/inequality-in-the-workplace-still-harriet-martineau/>

the job at hand but apparently the fire training academy supervisors continuously focused on asking her personal questions and setting her up to fail certain tasks while unfairly grading her exam. Maher sued the Fire Department in 2008 due to the discrimination she faced. Maher says, “ A supervisor repeatedly asked about my divorce and suggested that I was not giving my full effort in the academy because I was a single mother” (Ellis).

She was also told that because she scored below an 80% on a midterm, she would have to resign or be fired from the academy, therefore she resigned. “ After the three-week trial last fall, jurors said they believed Maher was not given adequate time to prove herself at the academy. They felt the evaluations were inconsistent since the men in the academy were given extra chances to improve in weak areas and nobody from the Fire Department could pinpoint the department standards” (Ellis). It is likely that Maher will win her lawsuit and the city of Fresno will have to pay \$2.6 million plus another million for attorney fees. The judge concluded that the evidence was “ very substantial” in Maher’s favor. Martineau suggested “ improving women’s position in the workforce including education, nondiscriminatory employment and training programs. ” She also promoted “ women’s admission into medical school and the importance of physical fitness and exercise for girls and women...” (Soc, 10) In this case, Martineau was right on queue with the goals Maher set in working with the Fire Department.

Maher was qualified physically and academically but unfortunately faced discrimination. The feminist theory concerning gender inequality and sexuality sees gender stratification as “ benefiting men and the capitalist

system. Sexuality is linked to gender inequality... and that male dominance is especially harmful because it results in men controlling women's sexual behavior" (Soc, 172). If Maher had applied to another profession, appropriate for her sex, her personal business and lower test grade wouldn't be an issue.

For her to apply for a " man's job," was bold and daring and unnecessary actions to prove she was inadequate was a poor risk the Fire Department chose to play. " All feminists agree that men and women should be valued equally, women should have more control over their lives and gender inequality can be remedied by changing political, economic, family and other institutions as well as everyday interactions, attitudes and behaviors" (Soc, 172) Change needs to occur and gender equality is possible through equal civil rights and opportunities.

Women have been internalized to achieve the womanly roles based on gendered socialization. Teaching young girls how to be passive and maternal while promoting boys to take on the dominant roles and taught to strive to achieve educational and career success is how the gender inequality begins. Martineau was raised in a Unitarian community which focusing on rationalism, individualism and democracy. Amazingly Martineau, along with her seven brothers and sisters, received equal education until college when it came time for a higher education for the boys only.

Being the feminist that she was, she wrote an anonymous article, " On Female Education" for a Unitarian journal expressing " Women's intellectual inferiority to men is based on women's lack of mental training, others' expectations of women, and women's circumstances rather than women's

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ability" (Berleant). Later her brother found out she wrote the article and said, " Now, dear, leave it to the other women to make skirts and darn stockings, and you devote yourself to this" (Webster. du). And indeed, Martineau was destined to become is monumental figure in sociology and to feminist history. Maher's skills exceeded the qualifications for the Fire Department but the one opportunity she wasn't given was the pinnacle for her demise. In the end, I'd say she won, since she made her voice heard and was awarded some major bank from her lawsuit! Work Cited Benokraitis, Nijole V. Soc + Review Cards + Bind-in Printed Access Card. Wadsworth Pub Co, 2009. Print

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