

The social theories of harriet martineau essay



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For the most part, men are usually credited when it comes to Sociological Theories and explanations. Women were given little attention if any, when it came to matters outside of the household. One woman in particular managed to stand out in the 1800's despite the plague of gender inequalities during her time. She not only stood up against sexism but also used her Sociological perspectives to fight for women's rights, the well being of children, suppression of non-whites, and the abolition of slavery.

Harriet Martineau ventured bravely into a world of theories that was dominated by white men. Women were far from being heard and even farther from being thought of as equals regarding education. Women were trained to stay at home to bear children and maintain the home while the husband was away. Even though a lot of women were educated, they still did not have a voice in the real world.

Despite these challenges, Harriet Martineau became a pioneer in writing and paved the road for many other women to follow. Martineau grew up in a Utilitarian household and became a major advocate for economic reform (Clearly & Hughs, 2013). Martineau took her own experiences and education to write about the things she was passionate about. This passion took her around the world and as she traveled, she advanced her observations and came up with new conclusions.

Harriet Martineau adopted Auguste Comte's concepts of Positive Science and used his methodology to study the natural and social world (Vissing, 2011). Martineau exercised Comte's means of observation, experimentation, and comparison to develop her own reasoning's. Retrieved from (<http://www.https://assignbuster.com/the-social-theories-of-harriet-martineau-essay/>

radford. edu/~junnever/theory/comte. htm) “ Martineau argued that apparent differences in intellect between men and women were the product of educational discrimination” (Clearly & Hughs, 2013).

Martineau considered the treatment of women to only be slightly better than the treatment of slaves. Both women and non-whites were suppressed and forced to play certain roles against their will. Martineau expressed much disappointment in the attitude of America towards women and non-whites especially because the unfair treatment contradicted the freedom that America stood for. “ Is it to be understood that the principles of the Declaration of Independence bear no relation to half of the human race? If so, what is the ground of the limitation?” (Clearly & Hughs, 2013).

With this statement, Martineau made a profound and reasonable claim that was unfortunately not accepted or even taken into consideration during her time. Instead she was shunned for being an outspoken abolitionist. Nonetheless, Martineau marched forward with her theories and developed more as she continued to write with defiance of everyone who argued against her. She approached the challenges as a Sociologist would and traveled far and wide to meet with people of all different walks and parts of America. Though she was British, she dedicated herself to studying and evaluating Americans, therefore only using American conditions and expressions (Clearly & Hughs, 2013). She was careful not use the standards for British etiquette and kept the presence of American culture in the books she wrote based on her personal accounts.

Harriet Martineau also took to her own painful childhood experiences to develop theories that could possibly help other children that were going through the same problems she had to overcome. Growing up, Martineau mainly relied on her siblings for love because her mother was very cold and lacked the maternal instinct to provide love and affection. She concluded that children need paternal-love in order to grow up with good self-esteem and a good self-image (Clearly & Hughs, 2013).

Martineau wrote until her dying days, in which she may have accomplished more than any other time in her life. She most distinctly opposed the controversial Contagious Disease Act that discriminated against unmarried women. The Act allowed unmarried women to be considered and treated as prostitutes even if they were not. It also took away their rights, which in turn left them without any type of defense or any chance to appeal their cases (Clearly & Hughs, 2013). Martineau's campaigning inspired women to publicly discuss politics, which led to a woman's progressive movement (Clearly & Hughs, 2013).

Harriet Martineau was the type of woman who all women should aspire to become. She was strong willed and strong minded. She began the process of breaking down the walls that suppressed women from the rest of the world. Not only did she inspire women to speak up but she also instilled a forward way of thinking to abolish slavery. Using observations, experiments, and comparisons, Harriet Martineau was able to plant many seeds, so to speak, for the feminist and non-white movements.