

# THE CAUSING FACTORS OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE LEFT-HANDED CHARACTER IN NANCY SPRINGER'S NOVEL *ENOLA HOLMES*

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to reveal the causing factors of social problems in Springer's novel *Enola Holmes*, referring to the issues or challenges that affect society and its members, hindering their overall well-being and quality of life. These problems arise due to various factors, including economic, political, cultural, and structural issues. Descriptive method is used in analyzing the data as a comprehensive summarization in everyday terms of specific events experienced by individuals and groups. The analysis holistically is supported by the theory of Marxism proposed by Karl Marx and supported by Friedrich Engels, Stanley Coren, and others related to the analysis. Research on the causing factors of social problems of left-handed character is significant for advancing equality, raising awareness, informing policies, and enhancing the well-being and quality of life for left-handed people. By addressing the unique challenges they face, society can strive to create an inclusive environment that values and supports the diverse needs of all individuals, regardless of their handedness. It is found that there are various causing factors of social problems delving into various domains, such as racism and discrimination, men's rules everything, and underestimated, that affect the character's existence as a human and a woman.

**Keywords:** *Discrimination; domination; racism; underestimate*

## 1. Introduction

Social problems refer to issues or challenges that affect society and its members, hindering their overall well-being and quality of life. These problems arise due to various factors, including economic, political, cultural, and structural issues. They often result from disparities in wealth, power, and access to resources, and opportunities, which can lead to inequality, injustice, and social tensions.

Social problems encompass a wide range of issues, such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness, crime, substance abuse, discrimination, inequality, violence, environmental degradation, and inadequate access to education, healthcare, and basic services. These problems can have profound impacts on individuals, families, communities, and society as a whole. Social problems often arise from systemic issues

deeply embedded within society. These can include structural inequalities, discrimination based on race, gender, or other characteristics, and inadequate social safety nets. These systemic factors perpetuate and exacerbate social problems, making them persistent and difficult to overcome.

According to Marx (2001), social problems are the result of underlying conflicts and contradictions inherent in the capitalist system. Marxists view social problems as manifestations of the unequal distribution of wealth, power, and resources in society, which are rooted in the class struggle between the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class) and the proletariat (the working class). Marxists argue that social problems arise from the inherent contradictions of capitalism, such as exploitation, alienation, and inequality. Exploitation occurs when the bourgeoisie profit from the labor of the proletariat, paying them less than the value they produce. This leads to economic inequality and a concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few.

Additionally, Marxists highlight the alienation experienced by workers under capitalism, where they feel disconnected from the products of their labor and lack control over their work. This alienation can result in various social problems, including alienation from oneself, others, and the overall society. Marxists also identify structural inequalities and social divisions, such as gender, race, and class, as sources of social problems. They argue that these divisions are perpetuated and reinforced by the capitalist system, leading to discrimination, oppression, and social conflicts.

Addressing social problems requires a holistic approach that considers these interconnected dynamics and seeks to address multiple issues simultaneously. Public awareness, education, and advocacy play significant roles in addressing social problems. We can foster a more compassionate and engaged society by raising awareness about social issues, promoting empathy, and challenging stereotypes and prejudices. Despite being a prevalent trait, left-handed people often encounter social problems and challenges in various aspects of their lives.

While no specific quote from a renowned person directly addresses the social problems of left-handed individuals, Stanley Coren (2012), a psychologist and professor, has spoken extensively about the challenges left-handers face in a right-hand dominant society. He stated, "The fact is, our world is designed for right-handed people. This bias presents left-handers with numerous small and large challenges and increases the risk of accidents. It is a classic case of a majority designing the world around their own needs with little thought for the minority."

The reason for choosing this topic is, firstly, because there are lots of researches in this area done by researchers; secondly, the researchers are curious to know more about the causing factors of social problems of the left-handed character coming up in the novel; thirdly, the topic discussed often occurs in real life, even today, so that it can be a moral lesson which the researchers and the readers should notice.

Historically, left-handedness has often been viewed as abnormal, unusual, or even associated with negative characteristics. This societal bias has led to discrimination against left-handed people in different contexts. Some common forms of discrimination experienced by left-handed people include social stigma, cultural biases, education and workplace, language, and expressions. It is important to challenge and eliminate discrimination against left-handed people, promoting equality and inclusivity. Recognizing left-handedness as a natural and valid variation, society can work towards creating environments that accommodate the needs and preferences of all individuals, regardless of their handedness.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Sociology of Literature**

Sociology is objective and scientific research about humans in society, research about society and social processes (Damono, 1978: 6). Literature, like sociology, concerns humans and their efforts to accommodate and alter the community. The sociology of literature refers to the approach to literature that examines the social aspects of certain authors. In addition, he substantiates that sociological research has predominant literary tendencies. First is the approach, which is predicated on the notion that literature merely reflects socioeconomic processes. Second, the approach prioritizes literary texts as research objects. This sociology of literature employs text analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the symptom beyond literature.

In general, sociology is the objective study of humans and society, and it also includes the social processes that take place within them. Of course, in this field, all social phenomena are presented as research material that needs to be scientifically deciphered. Cultural patterns, economics, language, literature, etc. This process tells us how individuals can interact with communities and social mechanisms in a way that allows them to be accepted according to their specific needs. Sociology is, therefore, readily understood as the study of human behavior, including the formation of social structures and agreements in economics, politics, culture, etc. (Durkheim, 1958: 24).

The essential function of reflective theory is social and cultural determinism rather than personal inspiration, making it a comprehensive guide to countless works dealing with art. Literature reflects economics, family relations, climate and landscape, attitudes, morality, race, social class, political events, warfare, religion, and many other aspects of the social environment and social life (Milton, 1954: 425-436).

Literature can relate, but not directly, to real economic, political, and social situations (Saraswati, 2003: 15-16). The sociology of literary works deals with literature itself. Literary sociology studies literary works that have a social dimension. A literary work cannot be separated from social life because it is the author's work.

### **2.2 Social Problem**

According to Marxist theorists, social problems arise from the class inequalities inherent in the capitalist system. Marxist conflict theory also focuses on issues of alienation, powerlessness, and meaninglessness in people's lives.

A social problem is an issue within society that makes it difficult for people to achieve their full potential. Discrimination, poverty, crime, complicated bureaucracy, unfair law enforcement, unemployment, unequal opportunity, and racism are examples of social problems, including substandard housing and employment discrimination. Social problems are also related to acts and conditions that violate the norms and values found in society. A social problem, such as discrimination, may negatively impact a person's life and health, along with the well-being of that person's family and friends.

#### **2.2.1 Socio-psychological**

Socio-psychological refers to the intersection between social and psychological factors and their influence on human behavior, attitudes, and interactions. It explores how individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are shaped by social contexts and relationships, as well as how psychological processes influence social systems and structures. It encompasses various topics such as social cognition, group dynamics, prejudice, conformity, attitudes, and interpersonal relationships. Understanding the

socio-psychological aspects of human behavior can provide insights into individual and collective experiences within society.

By understanding the socio-psychological dimensions of human behavior, researchers gain insights into the complexities of social interactions, individual differences, and societal dynamics. This knowledge can inform various fields, including psychology, sociology, organizational behavior, and public policy, among others.

Addressing socio-psychological problems within social problems requires a multidisciplinary approach, combining insights from psychology, sociology, and other relevant fields. By understanding the underlying psychological processes and social dynamics, interventions and policies can be designed to promote positive change and address social issues more effectively.

### **2.2.2 Social Class**

Social class, as explained by Karl Marx in his seminal work, *Social Problems*, refers to a hierarchical system of society based on the ownership and control of the means of production. Marx's theory of social class is predicated on dividing society into two fundamental categories: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Social class is a crucial concept in sociology that examines how societies are stratified based on economic and social factors. It is a framework that helps analyze the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and power among individuals and groups within a society.

Moreover, social class intersects with other social factors like race, gender, and ethnicity, leading to complex and interconnected forms of privilege or disadvantage. For instance, individuals from marginalized racial or ethnic groups may experience compounded challenges due to the intersection of their social class and racial identity.

In conclusion, from a sociology perspective, social class is a fundamental concept that helps us understand how societies are stratified and how economic and social factors shape people's lives, opportunities, and social status. It is a lens through which sociologists analyze inequality, social mobility, and the complex interplay of various social factors that influence individuals and groups within a society.

#### **2.2.2.1 Racism**

According to Silva (2006: 9–10), whites and people of color have distinct interpretations of the term "racism." For the majority of whites, racism is prejudice, while for the majority of people of color, it is systemic or institutionalized. Silva states that racism is the unequal treatment of subordinate groups by dominant groups and that there is an artificially created racial structure.

From the definition above, we can conclude that racism is an ideology that exists in multiracial societies, where there is a belief that certain racial groups are superior to others. This dominant group may discriminate against their subordinates because they are racially prejudiced and are not against the idea of racial integration.

#### **2.2.2.2 Discrimination**

Discrimination refers to the unjust or prejudiced treatment of different categories of individuals, especially on the grounds of characteristics such as race, age, sex, religion, or disability. It involves actions or behaviors that disadvantage a group or individual based on their perceived membership of certain social or demographic categories. Discrimination can take many forms, from individual prejudice and

stereotyping to systemic and institutionalized bias, manifesting in social, economic, and political spheres of life. Its effects can lead to social exclusion, economic disadvantage, psychological distress, and health disparities among affected groups.

In summary, this literature review highlights the complexity of discrimination as a social problem. It forms the basis for the next chapter dealing with our research methodology and analysis of current signs of discrimination.

### **2.2.2.3 Gender inequality**

Karl Marx, a renowned philosopher, economist, and sociologist, analyzed various social problems, including gender inequality, from a Marxist perspective. Marx's theory focuses on class struggle and the role of economic factors in shaping society. While he primarily emphasized the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class, his ideas can also be applied to understand gender inequality as a social problem.

To address gender inequality, Marx proposes a revolutionary transformation of the capitalist system. He envisions a society based on socialism or communism, where the means of production would be collectively owned and the class divisions would be eliminated. In such a society, Marx believes that gender equality could be achieved by dismantling the oppressive structures of patriarchy and ensuring that all individuals have equal access to resources and opportunities.

One crucial concept in understanding gender inequality is patriarchy. Sociologists observe that many societies are organized around patriarchal structures, where men hold more power and decision-making authority than women. This power imbalance influences access to resources, economic opportunities, and political representation, leading to disparities between genders.

Gender inequality is not limited to the workforce; it also affects family dynamics. Sociologists explore how traditional gender roles impact the division of household labor and caregiving responsibilities. These expectations often burden women with unpaid domestic work, limiting their participation in other spheres of life.

## **2.3 Left-Handed**

Left-handedness is defined as a consistent preference for using the left hand over the right for tasks such as writing or eating, is observed in approximately 10% of the global population. This statistic has remained surprisingly consistent across cultures and generations, hinting at a biological underpinning. However, the exact causes remain elusive.

Several theories have been proposed to explain the prevalence of left-handedness. Genetic factors are believed to play a significant role. A study by Medland et al. (2006) suggested that genes may account for approximately 25% of the variation in hand preference. The rest appears to be influenced by various environmental factors. This "complex trait" model is widely accepted in the current scientific literature.

### **2.3.1 Emotional and Psychological Aspects of Left-Handedness**

Alongside cognitive implications, research has also delved into emotional and psychological aspects associated with left-handedness. Findings suggest that left-handers may be more prone to certain mental health challenges, such as mood disorders, but these findings are often inconsistent and need further validation.

In conclusion, while left-handedness is often viewed merely as a hand preference, it is a multifaceted attribute with cognitive, emotional, and societal implications. As our understanding deepens, a more nuanced approach towards left-handedness in education, societal norms, and product design can help create an inclusive world for all. Future research should continue to explore this rich and relatively uncharted territory of human diversity.

### **3. Research Method**

The research method used in this analysis is library research, and the primary source of the analysis is the novel "*Enola Holmes: The Case of the Left-Handed Lady*" by Nancy Springer. This research is supported by various credible sources, including relevant literature and library materials. Internet research is added to library research to increase the accessibility of data for analysis.

The descriptive method is applied for data analysis. The purpose of the descriptive method is to provide a comprehensive summarization in everyday terms of specific events experienced by individuals and groups. This method is more descriptive because the data is in the form of words and places greater emphasis on the process than the product.

According to Creswell (2012: 5), qualitative research, apart from its relationship to nominal data analysis, has six primary characteristics, the first of which is to explore a topic and develop a keen comprehension of a central phenomenon. Then, it will include the literature review, which plays a minor role in establishing the problem's validity.

The method used is qualitative descriptive. In addition, the descriptive research method provides an idea or commentary on the state of things as precisely as possible without treating the object under study (Kountur, R. 2005: 105). Also, the researchers choose this method because it requires them to describe something, determine the existing conditions, and analyze the research findings without reaching a general conclusion (Sugiyono, 2008: 14).

### **4. Discussion**

#### **4.1 The Causing Factors of Social Problems of the Left-Handed Character**

The causing factors of social problems of the left-handed character in the novel, *Enola Holmes*, are elaborated through the following points and sub-points:

##### **4.1.1 Racism and Discrimination**

Racism is an ideology that claims, directly or indirectly, that one group is fundamentally superior to another. It can be shown overtly in racial jokes and insults or hate crimes, but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values, and stereotypical beliefs. Discrimination is an unequal, unjust, and violent act against others based primarily on their race, color, and religion.

Marxist racism theorists have argued that racism is necessary for the spread and expansion of capitalism because it perpetuates the divide between workers and ideologically justifies inequality. The concept of racism is used in Marxism on two apparently independent levels of analysis. At one level, it represents a certain concept in some general theories of capitalist production relations and their corresponding ideological forms. On another level, these ideological forms are expressed as various discriminatory practices. Marxism here accepts the challenge of the struggle for

practice. The implications of this theoretical study are identified through the various strategies pursued by the Left to combat racism.

Instead of having abilities, if they have something unnatural and improper, it will negatively impact family members and society, which, of course, also affects their marriage market. We can see this in the following texts, which show that Lady Theodora was trying to hide her daughter's disgrace when Enola shook her with a simple question:

"I asked, "Was Lady Cecily left-handed?"

A simple enough question, one would think. But not when addressed to a member of the aristocracy.

"Certainly not!" Lady Theodora snatched herself away from my touch. "What a – I never – a baronet's daughter, left-handed?"

Having surmised it might be like this, I had prepared myself. Reacting not at all to Lady Theodora's bristling shock, her outrage, I murmured in soothing tones, "Of course not now, my lady." A lie, for I believed the girl indulged her left hand in the privacy of her rooms. "But when Lady Cecily was quite small – one can hardly expect an infant to be aware of the proprieties, can one? At that time did she exhibit any tendency towards left-handedness?"

Lady Theodora's glare slid away from my meek but direct gaze. Looking at the velvety, flowered carpet, she muttered, "Perhaps her nurse might have mentioned something of the sort."

"Did her governess ever comment on it?"

"Why, I – it is difficult to recall – if Lady Cecily was ever at all left-handed, why, the inclination was trained out of her, of course."

(Springer, 2007: 96)

The quotations above have shown that a woman who is left-handed will be a disgrace to family members and society. That is implied when Lady Cecily's mother denies the question at the beginning and tells Enola that if her daughter is left-handed, the inclination is trained out of her. We cannot imagine how hard it is when it is time for Lady Cecily to learn, and along with restrictive torments, she has undergone all the usual rigors of learning to be an ornament to upper-class society.

#### **4.1.1.1 Men's Rules Everything**

According to Merriam-Webster (2023), patriarchy is a social system in which dominant and privileged positions are occupied predominantly by men. It is used in anthropological jargon to refer to a family or clan dominated by a father or eldest male, or group of men, and in feminist theory to describe the broader social structure in which men dominate over women and children.

In the following quotations, Enola is asking if Lady Theodora's husband is very much older than she is, and Enola is also answering the same, which shows us the domination by the eldest male, or group of men, that describes the broader social structure in which men dominate over women and children. It can be seen from the following quotes:



"I nodded, thinking ahead to guide the conversation without, I hoped, her noticing. "Is your husband very much older than you are, Lady Theodora?"

"Only a few years. But – is Dr. Ragostin greatly your senior?"

"Yes. I am his third wife. Why, I am not much older than . . ."

She said it for me. Whispered it, actually.

"Than my daughter. Lady Cecily."

"Indeed. Quite. Therefore, I was thinking . . ."

(Springer, 2007: 45-46)

As described by the quotes above, it is evident that Lady Theodora is dominated by the eldest male, which is her husband. And Enola also says that her age is the same as Lady Cecily, and males also dominate her.

#### **4.1.1.2 Decent Woman's Must Be Taking Proper Place in Society**

Together with his close friend Frederick Engels, Marx argues that women were systematically oppressed by the ruling class, treated only as second-class citizens, and argued in his *Communist Manifesto* (2015) for raising the status of women both in domestic life and in the wider social environment. Engels' text, which contributed to a wider study of the role and character of women in the capitalist structure in his book *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (2015), was considered groundbreaking for its time because it identified the nuclear family structure as the root of women's oppression. The book argues that the degradation of women at the hands of their husbands and the resulting inequality of power arose out of fundamental hypocrisy. The role and work of women were marginalized with the emergence of double standards.

In the novel, Enola tells her brother Sherlock Holmes that she does not want to be forced into anything that would cause her to lose her freedom, but still, her brother informs her that this is every decent woman's calling. It is strengthened when she reads and replies to newspaper messages from her brother, Sherlock Holmes, and Mycroft Holmes. It is shown by the following quotation:

"To S.H. & M.H.: Rot. E.H.

"If any decent woman's calling consisted of taking her proper place in society (husband and house, plus voice lessons and a piano in the drawing-room), then this particular woman-to-be prefers to remain indecent. Or, more accurately speaking, a disgrace to her family."

(Springer, 2007: 147).

From the data above, it is seen that there is a gender gap, which tells us how every decent woman must take a proper place in society, which means they are only prepared and forced to serve their husband and house, learn a musical instrument, practice walking backward without tripping to be presented to the Queen, etc. Their life is a life without a valuable purpose, worthless, meaningless. If they do not take the right place in society, they are ashamed and despised because they have no rights, especially if they are still 14 years old.



#### 4.1.1.3 Underestimate

Underestimate means to place too low a value on (underrate or undervalue), to rate or value something or someone too low, or to treat something as having little value.

In the novel, two events show Enola getting underestimated by gentlemen with different social class treatments. Once when she disguised herself as an upper-class woman and once when she hid as Ivy Meshle, a lower-class woman who was an ordinary female employee. Some of them It is described by the quotation below:

“. . . I walked a few blocks. As Ivy Meshle, an ordinary office worker whose skirt, while decently concealing her ankles, did not trail in the dirt, I attracted leers instead of glares. This time the top-hatted gentlemen took no notice of me at all, and no one suggested it would be my own fault if I came to harm – but male clerks ogled from shop doorways, and a working-class loiterer spoke to me: “ ‘Ow do you do, sweet’ eart ? What’s yer ’urry? Stop an’ chat a bit.

Pretending I had not heard, without so much as a glance I strode past him. Thank goodness he did not follow, as had been known to happen. Indeed, a slop-girl walking in the slums enjoyed more peace than any decent female on city streets. I found it necessary to ignore several other male pests before I finally spied my destination.”  
(Springer, 2007: 62).

The quotations above show that there is a social gap that occurs with different treatments depending on the appearance of the social class; each has its advantages and disadvantages. In the sub-points below, this discussion will be categorized into two subjects that show why “underestimated” happens in social class.

##### 4.1.1.3.1 The Difference of Clothing and Uniforms Shows a Social Class

Clothing and uniforms indicate social class distinctions and are sometimes reversed. Ironically, clothing and uniforms become symbols of prestige and power within and between organizations. In the book *Stitched Up: The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion (2014)*, Hoskins shows how capitalism “stitches” its consumers, workers, and raw materials, not just into clothes these days, but into almost every other commodity imaginable, from cars to the latest iPhone or other “must-have” products.

Enola states in the novel that some women from social classes must trail a train with her long cloak. It is described by two quotations below:

“. . . still, a gentlewoman must trail a train. The hem of my long cloak and back of my even longer skirt dragged upon the icy cobbles, indicating the social class of one who rode in carriages. So I stood where I was until the cab had departed.” (Springer, 2007: 41).

The quotation above confirms that regardless of the use of clothing, it somehow creates a social identity or a symbol of social class. We can judge what class a person comes from, from the upper, middle, or lower classes, just by what they wear.

Karl Marx had a special reason to be aware of differences in clothing. As he often had to pawn his coat himself, he could not enter the British Library without claiming it. Its use value was not only to warm him; it was also a tribute, without which he would have been denied entry. Marx gave the name “ragged proletariat” (non-

proletariat) to the poorest parts of the working class, who were immediately recognizable by their clothing.

#### 4.1.1.3.2 The Difference of Accents Shows a Social Class

In 1966, linguist William Labov conducted a study looking at accent differences between different socioeconomic groups. He focused on three New York department stores: Saks, S. Klein, and Macy's. Of those stores, S. Klein was the cheapest, Saks was the most expensive, and Macy's was mid-priced. The different price categories of the stores were used as indicators of the socio-economic class of the people shopping there. For example, the people in Saks were thought to belong to the highest socio-economic class in the study. Labov studied the sound of /r/ and how the pronunciation differed in different classes.

A person's social class is determined based on their socioeconomic status. It refers to their social status in society and their income. Other factors that influence social class are wealth, education, and occupation. Another piece of evidence seen during Sherlock Holmes' search for his sister Enola was among the dosses. It can be seen from the following data sources:

"She were wearin' a waterproof much like that'un yer got on," he was saying, his accent impeccably lower-class.

"Where, if yer don't mind tellin' me, did –"

Before he could complete the question, I thrust a meat pie in front of his nose.

.....

One of the dosses told him, "The Sister uv the Streets won't answer yer. She never says nuttin'."

"I beg yer pardon." Something of his genteel courtesy sounded through his Cockney accent. "Thank ye fer the food, Sister."

In no way could he know how truly he spoke: I was indeed his sister. It was my brother Sherlock."

(Springer, 2007: 105-106).

Cockney is the traditional dialect of English spoken by the working class in London. Cockney is usually used to refer to someone from London or the East End. A common opinion about language and class in England is generally that "upper-class people tend to speak with an RP (Received Pronunciation) accent and use standard English, while lower-class people tend to speak with regional accents and dialects."

## 5. Conclusion

The causing factors of social problems faced by the left-handed character based on Marxist theory are vividly portrayed in the novel. Firstly, It deals with racism and discrimination. The left-handed character experienced racism every day, which added another layer of complex emotions. Secondly, men rule everything, and decent women must take a proper place in society, which means the left-handed character has had traumatic experiences that led her to have multiple or dual personalities. Thirdly, an underestimated or underrated Lady Cecily lacks positive freedom for her alienation of the psyche from her family. Overall, research on the causing factors of social problems among left-handed characters is significant for advancing equality, raising awareness, informing policies, and enhancing left-handed people's well-being and quality of life.

By addressing their unique challenges, society can strive to create an inclusive environment that values and supports the diverse needs of all individuals, regardless of their gender.

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