Gilman-Background
C.P.G. (1860-1935)

- Gilman said that sociology came from being convinced that work and finding life’s work is the most important goal of a human being
- In her experience, life as a woman caused her to be discouraged from attaining this goal
- She stressed the need for approval by the conventional, modern world, saying that women who avoided agency were considered more feminine
- Through this, she stressed the tension that always exists between desires for work and the pressures to conform to femininity
- In class, we made the connection between her breakdown and Weber’s, after experiencing his first academic job
- This tension and stress created crisis over misery, as Gilman just never felt as though she could be the agent that she wanted to be
- Gilman became so distraught that she then became clinically depressed
- The doctor prescribed complete rest and avoidance of all thinking, meaning that she was not “allowed” to work her way out of it herself, which threw her over the edge even more
- She recovered and went on to publish a newspaper/journal which she wrote most of and consisted part fiction and memoir as well as sociology of course

Purposes of Sociology Theory:

- It serves as a guide to social diagnosis
- It frames empirical inquiry
- It clarifies concepts (i.e. “oversexed”)
- It enables us to conduct textual exegesis

Concepts of Gender Polarization and Oversexed:

- The issue explored in gender polarization is the degree to exhaustive, mutually exclusive and all encompassing categories
- Masculine and feminine presences creates completeness in the household
- The extent of being oversexed is different for men and women-what are the causes? What would have to change? The answers to both are the same.
  *Dependence, especially economic and sexo-economic relations* - refer to pg. 136
Central Thesis:

- Women are conditioned to be in a role that is subordinate to men, women depending on men economically
- Human society has been systematically distorted by fused sexual and economic relations
- The duties of women are economic factors that let men produce more wealth-refer to pg. 133
- But then again so do horses as we said in class
- What makes an equal relationship in marriage in modern day?
- *Functionalist approach would say that the best way is the one that serves the group or party the best, work doesn’t have to involve money in order to be considered work*
- Why do men work and women stay at home?
- *It is an economically rational decision because men earn more in general than females do, and this tradition has been conditioned and engrained in both genders*

Argument:

- The challenges of a lived environment channel human evolution
- The food supply is the biggest challenge as women’s food supply is man’s, thus creating polarization between masculinity and femininity described as “oversexedness”
- Gilman tries to provide a diagnosis of the times using causal explanations
- Still she doesn’t confine herself to the immediately observable world using the example of the peasant woman and the horses
- She says sex distinction is not only a way of attracting a male to a female and vice versa, but a means to gaining livelihood as economic dependence gets fused in sexual relations
- Women need to attract males both for reproduction and survival which can be a problematic distortion
- The evolutionary theory applies in that we develop ourselves and our society in response to pressures to conform to our environment

We all face economic necessity ➔ subject to the natural laws of selection ➔ leads to self preservation and species preservation ➔ social custom and law ➔ accumulation of precedent ➔ species survivability

This sequence leads to gender, sex and economic dysfunction