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Critical Theories of Gender

In gender studies there are a great many influencing factors. The theories behind these factors vary through many different types. The critical theories of gender find deep root differences in hierarchal social aspects. The world has long seen society pan out to reveal the advantaged and the disadvantaged strata. Gender theorists have made the standpoint and queer performative theories to explain fundamental gender theories that stem from society. This paper will explain both critical theories of gender and my view on them as well.

Gender in the standpoint theory is affected by the hierarchal groups that form in society and how people relate to both the groups around them and the groups they belong to. Societal standing influences everyone. People in places society says are good receive good experiences. People in places society says are bad have bad experiences. At least this is what we would think. Do the perspectives of the rich and happy mean more because society holds their experiences higher than those of the disadvantaged? I think that they may be more amiable but can never hold more truth or more respect.

Standpoint theory is a learned and acquired mindset. It can change front and back in one person's life. It is very flexible because it is a reflection on the experiences of different groups. People can reflect on their relationship or those of others. The standpoint idea and view is faceted and complex. Everything can build a standpoint yet

not everything is a standpoint. I have a feminist outlook and although it was influenced by the fact that I am female it is mostly because of all that I have seen and learned from my five sisters and mother. My father has always been outnumbered and so he has grown new ways of thinking to fit into various environments and social settings. I also know that I do not identify myself with the Mexican group even though I am Hispanic and have many similar Mexican standpoints.

One of my most respected people is my father because he has lived through triple the social experiences than anyone else I know. He has been through three financial levels. He has moved from being a lowly minority to member of many higher status groups and his racial and gender reflections have changed greatly. He has even been through all religious levels. Because of his great many changes in standpoint, he can respect and be respected by nearly everyone. He is different from me, his daughter, and from his brothers and sisters who were dealt similar cards.

“According to standpoint theory, marginalized groups can generate unique insights into how society works” (Wood 59). Critical reflection is a primary duty of lesser groups. It is how they make sense of their lives and the lives of others. It is also a trait that can get them respect or hate. Not everyone wants to be scrutinized if they consider the examiner inferior. Then again, “first take the wood out of your own eye. Then you will see clearly to take the dust out of your friend’s eye” (Holy 827). We should always encourage a diversely influenced gender perception to grow within us.

The second critical theory of gender is queer performative. This theory revolves around any gender action that varies from heterosexual behavior. Any gay, lesbian, transsexual, bisexual, transgender, etcetera person is in the gender queer group. The

word queer refers to straying from the normalcy of heterosexuality to any abnormal sexual or gender preference (Wood). Researchers of the queer performative theory realized that because gender changes in all people and people do gender, categorizing gender as a verb makes more sense.

The interchangeability of gender traits in stereotypical straight and queer people is easy and often done. The gender identity of a person is fluid and not a rigid structure (Wood). Gender identity change is common now in most every group of people. Respect and knowledge of all types of gender queer people is a major goal in this theory (Wood). If all races, groups, and sexes are to be respected then shouldn't all other traits?

Queer performative theory has two main points to convey. The first point is how gender should not bind a person's attributes and characteristics. Physical traits can always change. People dye their hair other colors, get braces, lose weight, and go bald. Queer performative aims to prove that gender just like those physical characteristics can be changed. The term "man" interchanges from an eighteen year old, to a WWII veteran, then to a bedazzled drag queen. Consequently, the term woman interchanges between a young bride, to Cat Zingano, to Marilyn Monroe. The sex of a person is only one part of a whole human being (Wood).

People cannot look to the sex of another person for the gender stereotype they wish to impose upon them. Even biological sex characteristics get murky at times. Back in 1629, a court was troubled with the case of manservant T. Hall (Meadow). Hall was both womanly and manly to the people around. The people physically checked Thomas/Thomasine and when they could not prove or find a sex, court order Hall to wear

both women's and men's clothing at all times (Meadow). Nearly four hundred years ago this case was given and stories nowadays hardly have changed.

The second main idea of queer performative is how our gender is in a constant state of flux (Wood). We could never live completely without changing our gender outlook. Identities are performed when dads watch baseball meanwhile bottle-feeding their newborn child. Gender identities are expressed when second grade girls do not cry when they are teased but retaliate with force. Some girls love to be girls; others just like to be themselves without any boundaries at all. I grew up in dresses. I actually had to learn how to crawl on my hands and feet because my knees would become caught in the skirts. When I grew and was in grade school, I still wore dresses very often. However, I would fight, kick, and hit any boy or girl who said any harm to my friends or me. Gender is not a wall or structure!

In conclusion, I feel the examples and my opinions have explained both standpoint and queer performative critical theories. These theories are very critical to understanding and categorizing gender. The world around collaborates with us as we find our stance and ideas of gender (Wood). Through our understanding of gender, we can unweave old harmful rules and create new minds.

Works Cited

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