

What is standpoint feminism

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Feminist theory, it should be mentioned from the beginning of the paper, is not a unified theory. As women experience the social world differently (according to class, age or "race"), there exist different feminist standpoints within the feminist tradition - i. e. Marxist or Postmodernist feminists (and this explains the need to talk of Feminisms - in plural). In general though, feminist theorists in order to explain the marginal position women's issues hold in the social sciences - and why they are merely "added on" in the academic discourse, focus their critique upon traditional scientific approaches existing in the social sciences, offering alternative theories of knowledge. In addition, they attack concepts that originate from the founding fathers of each discipline, and which still hold an exceptional position in the social sciences. For example, feminists believe that the concepts of scientific neutrality, or objectivity, or the belief that we can achieve "pure" knowledge of the social world, have all contributed to the androcentric status of the social sciences.

Feminists criticised traditional social science, suggesting that it offers a distorted picture of social reality, as it predominantly focuses its attention upon men's experiences. Sociology's role in the exclusion and silencing of women from this discourse has also been the object of feminist criticism. This renders problematic the attempt to think how women experience the world from their place, given the limited concepts and theoretical schemes available to employ. The contribution of Sociology to this is that of working up the conceptual procedures, models and methods by which the immediate and concrete features of experience can be read into the conceptual mode in which the governing is done.

Feminist thinkers have fiercely challenged those concepts found in

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traditional epistemologies, offering new approaches towards the research praxis. They place particular emphasis upon the location of the researcher in the research process. In addition, they introduce new subject areas for research, stressing the importance of conducting research on the subject of everyday life experiences.

But what is the alternative approach of the feminist standpoint? First of all, it is the location of women within research. And this is crucial to our understanding of women's place in the social world. In order to increase our understanding as women, we need a method from where women are, as subjects, located in the everyday world, not in imaginary spaces constituted by the objectified forms of sociological knowledge. Similarly there is the need for research in "local" settings, which are largely populated by women in their daily rounds of life and which have received no serious sociological attention. Thus, for them the importance of ordinary aspects of our social life becomes more prominent in a feminist perspective, as women have traditionally been chained to an existence of cleaning up and caring for others.

Another way of challenging conventional methodologies in social research is to encompass "emotions" and "experience" in the research analysis. And that because the employment of emotions in the social investigation challenges dominant notions of the inferior status of emotions as a reliable source of data. Thus, the use of emotion in research does not somewhat fit with the conventional image of the detached, objective social researcher.

The "feminist standpoint" position on the other hand, claim that their research findings offer a more complete and less distorted picture of social life. And this because knowledge is supposed to be based on experience and <https://assignbuster.com/what-is-standpoint-feminism/>

feminist standpoint theorists argue that their experience is more complete because it originates from the struggles against their male oppressors. Considering now another feminist epistemology - the lesbian one we can see how diverge feminist epistemologies are. The starting point of this epistemology is that " women" is a social category defined in terms of economic, physical (or other) dependency on men. As a result, they view women as a politically and socially constructed class. It is evident therefore how this epistemology challenges conventional theorising on women, in the social sciences.