

The feminist standpoint theory



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According to Marxist theory, a standpoint cannot be achieved by mere ascribing to a fact like a perspective is, it is an achieved common identity, and it is “ arrived at through the experience of shared political fight (Ruxton, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory began with Hegel’s account of dialectic relationship between a slave and a master, and then it was strengthened by Marx and more specifically Lukacs’ formulation of the concept of the stand point. They argue that a suppressed slave will eventually arise and reach consciousness freedom as an end product of their struggles against the master. Hegel’s theory gave insight to the fact that oppression and injustices can be best analyzed, and a clear understanding made if it is viewed from the oppressed view point (Hardings, 1991).

In a similar view as that of Hegel’s view of the relationship between a master and his slave, it can be deduced, the themes of the feminist stand point theory. According to feminist standpoint theorists Dorothy Smith and Patricia Hill Collins, the socio-political positions that women have been socialized to occupy can become important areas for information about those who are in many aspects of their social lives disadvantaged as well as those who are privileged to occupy the positions of oppressors (Smith, 2012). Thus, Hardings (1991) concludes that, starting a research on women’s life will result in less biased and indistinct accounts for both the men and women the whole social order.

It is for this reason that feminist standpoint theorist Dorothy Smith tries to account for the fault line of gender, in that the male counterparts are privileged socially and politically unlike their female counter parts. She further goes on to attribute the failure of men to sense the disjuncture

between daily life and what they know of the world to this social location of the two genders. She defends that women by the idea of being disadvantaged in the gender power relation can relate their daily life to what they know of the world.

The rationale by Dorothy Smith and the other feminist standpoint theorist to their assertion of this standpoint include three main principles. First, is the assertion that knowledge is socially situated, secondly, is the assumption that less privileged groups both socially and politically, are socially predisposed in a manner that make it possible for them to ask questions and be aware of things that the socially and politically privileged cannot. Finally, for an informative research, especially that which focuses on power relation, it should be carried out beginning with the lives of those marginalized.

It is this three principle assumptions about feminist theories that Smith employs to analyze the reason behind the different viewpoints that men and women have on social and political issues. She puts it that collecting women's experiences, which in most scenarios is cleaning up, after men's mess forms rich site for research, for policy reform and most importantly for social change (Smith, 2005). An example is the house holds chores that women do that no one pays for or offers lifelong pension scheme. The society views such tendencies as normal while most women remain oppressed as housewives.

While feminist standpoint theories claim that this status cannot be acquired by mere point of fact, or believing in the struggle, but through being part of the experiences and sharing in the struggle. On the other hand, masculinity

is a performed gender identity not a sexual orientation. This implies that it can be performed by either a male or a female. Hegemonic masculinity could be analogously referred to as an absolute form of masculinity which is virtually unattainable. It is actually the opposite of femininity (Kimmel, 2005). While women find themselves locked in the corners of feminist standpoints and are only relieved from this social orders by first attaining a mentally free conscience, masculinity on the other hand, men are socialized to perform it right away from birth.

According to a masculinity sociologist Michael Kimmel, masculinity in men is because of certain cultures, one is that men grow with a mentality that they deserve something, and this culture is normally referred to as the culture of entitlement, where they look forward to having children, a generation, power, and/or women. Secondly, is the culture of silence among men, this comes out in cultures where men are not allowed to do certain things such as cry, or admit emotional pain especially to people considered outsiders to the culture of masculinity. Last is the culture of men protection, which can either be portrayed by assuming that the men would not do such an action especially that which is considered illegal, or they brush it aside as being in men's nature to do that, for instance in some cultures especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In their culture, men cheating on their wives may as well be given a blind eye as it is in the men's nature or it is the women's fault that such happened (Ruxton, 2004).

Now from these two perspectives that is; feminist standpoint and masculine sociology, Dorothy Smith's view on textually mediated ruling relations brings out clearly the difference. While from a masculine point of view, there is a <https://assignbuster.com/the-feminist-standpoint-theory/>

fixed set of expectation that any of the two genders trying to demonstrate it are expected to fit into. This includes how the society perceives them or is expected to perceive them even before their arrival (Rubin and Rubin, 2005). For instance, men are expected to dominate over women in some cultures and to protect their wives plus to provide for them. Thus when a boy is born he lives trying to reach this expectations that are set out for him. This is contradictory to the feminist standpoint that works to shake off the pre-existing social order. Feminist standpoint theory, which borrows a lot from Hegel's theories, postulates that those in marginalized in social or political power relations, will rise to challenge the social order within which they find themselves.

The theory bases itself on the idea that women are utterly oppressed. While the situation may be real in some societies some women also have their privileges. Why men have to work all day to feed women who believe it should be so while they still fight for equality is still not clear in the theory. It is for this privilege that most women are never willing to confront the oppression. The ones that do are joined by the oppressed while the rest sit and watch.

Conclusively, it suffices to conclude that the concept of masculinity sociology conflicts ideologically with the feminist standpoint theory. Smith attempts to explore the disjuncture between men and women in society by using the standpoint theory. Her account further attempts to explain the inevitable fault line between the two genders, which she does perfectly. However, she fails to clearly capture why exactly women have to struggle to be at par with their male counterparts.

She fails to answer the oppressed male societies who go through struggle to be named by women equal with their other male strong characters. While men are frowned upon when they portray female characteristics having a list of endless abuses to such men, women who behave like men are adored. Pointing to the problem is not enough, the gap between male and female gender is much perpetuated by perceptions which each of us have to come against.