**Discussion Paper 1**

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Standpoint theory highlights the essentialism of a naturalistic or experiential side of knowledge-producing. According to feminist theorist Sandra Harding, standpoint theory emphasizes the notion that marginalized or oppressed individuals of the society may have more objective knowledge during the knowledge production (Harding, p.129).

Compared to the outsider position individuals, those have an important position to show the patterns of behavior or the dynamics behind them. It can be said that standpoint theory may be accepted as a medium to give voice to discriminated or marginalized individuals in the society. In a predominant society, the experiences of individuals may not be perceived in the same way by all individuals or groups. For example in a society in which patriarchy is a dominant power, the experiences of women may not be validated (Harding, p. 129).

On the other hand, standpoint theory also emphasizes some social concepts like race, class, gender or culture. It can be said that thanks to the standpoint theory, it possible to have a feminist epistemology that gives importance to the voice of marginalized individuals as a source of knowledge. However, in the west, second-wave feminists reject Marx’s attribution of epistemic privilege to the proletariat alone. But they still believe that marginalized individuals in the social context have an epistemic advantage over the ones who locate at the social center. Feminists aim to transform Marx’s conceptualization of the relation of social marginality to epistemic privilege (On Bar, p.85).

 “We [African-American lesbian women] are in the position to challenge the feminist movement as it stands to date and not out of any theoretical commitment. Our analysis of race and class oppression and our commitment to really dealing with those issues, including homophobia, is something we know we have to struggle with to ensure our survival. It is organic to our very existence” (Smith 1981, cited in On Bar 1993, 90).

Considering the quote above, I would say that African- American lesbian are epistemologically privileged because of their position of being marginalized and oppressed. Those individuals are accepted as marginalized individuals both because of their race and their orientation so they are in an advantaged position to have more objective accounts of knowledge. Most people in the dominant group culture would not recognize the patterns of behaviors because they are in an outsider position. Also, it is a fact that some individuals in society have their perspectives which are shaped by their experiences. Marginalized groups may have some common experiences and perspectives and they may be related to their orientation, class or race. Also, group experiences are more easy to create a unique experience.

**References**

Harding, Sandra (1993) ‘Rethinking standpoint epistemology: What is ‘strong objectivity’? In Sandra Harding (Ed.) The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies, pp. 127-140, New York: Routledge.

On, Bat-Ami Bar (1993) ‘Marginality and epistemic privilege’, in Linda Alcoff and Elizabeth Potter (Eds.) Feminist Epistemologies, pp. 83-100, New York: Routledge.