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Queer Education and Attitudes:

Lack in Historical Inheritance Lead to Self-rejection among Queer Culture

While reading through papers concerning queer culture, I found the part talking about self-rejection attitudes within queer groups extremely thought-provoking. In this paper, I will explore the usual expression, the possible reason, and the suggested solution of such common mentality in queer culture.

One of the main issues when talking about queer culture is in which direction are the people within the group struggling for recognition. While certain characteristics set them apart from the mainstream and marked outsiders, queer members’ perspectives and attitudes towards acceptance is always a prime determinant of their development.

Kate Harding, the author of *How Do You Fuck a Fat Woman*, described fat-woman group’s self-abasement under so-called objective beauty standard, which leads to a rejection inside the group itself. She indicated that the “rejection wasn’t even coming from outside us. We rejected ourselves as potential dates or partners or fuck buddies before anyone else got the chance” (72). She told the story about her and her back-rub friend in college: even if that guy expressed explicit crush on her body, she didn’t believe he was attracted to her. (Harding 70) I found this part exceptionally evocative, and drawing forth to the distorted understanding of attraction. Victim of the circumstances, fat women’s self-rejection can hardly be simply cleared away and thus results in a counter-productive condition of unattractiveness.

From the book *The Trouble with Normal*, Warner would find the above point right on target and accurately applied to the embarrassed condition of gay and lesbian’s movement: “Like most stigmatized groups, gays and lesbians were always tempted to believe that the way to overcome stigma was to win acceptance by the dominant culture, rather than to change the self-understanding of that culture ” (Warner 50). Through the long history of gay movement Warner reviewed, repudiating sex and only emphasizing shared values with the dominant culture had been its core ideology. By ruling out the very element that brings them together, Warner pointed out, homosexual group actually expressed ashamed and repulsive to what makes them themselves. Such condition has been, proved in Warner’s later argument, largely due to being too obsessed with alleged normal sex rules, and fear of deviance from social normativity.

Harding and Warner have both discovered the Achille’s heel among queer groups- they struggle for recognition from outside while rejecting themselves from inside first. Either that fat women desire to be attractive to prevalent standard, or that homosexual groups wish to be accepted by dominant sex culture, is all understandable and positive aspirations if not at the same time fat women rejected themselves as attractive and the homosexual repudiated their sex difference. The same hope underlying both arguments is that queer groups should instead first accept their basic distinct values before attempts to win recognition from the mainstream, which, in their condition, are outsiders to them.

However, to dive to a deeper investigation, what makes the norm by which so-called “queer” groups are queer, the definition of which is accepted by almost both “normal” sides and “queer” sides? German philosopher Hegel said, “What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational.” Existence itself can justify everybody’s individual character created by God. While everyone born with or developed certain characteristics exist together in this world, why is “all men are created equal” engraved on the birth of this nation still a distant and romantic dream? Many said the rule is decided by the majority. Majority determines mainstream while minority repelled as queer. Yet it still sounds ridiculous when it comes to many realistic cases. For example, The Vatican City State is the country with least population in the world, but nobody call it the queerest country; Indians only account for 0.2% in American population, but nobody call them the queerest race in America; in the newest quick poll on Blackboard, students using Nokia/Motorola Smartphone only take up 2.5% among US students and teachers, but nobody call them queer users. So many minority groups are not identified queer, and even maintain recognition from public. Apparently we need to consider some other key factors that lead most queer groups to their current positions.

Fortunately Warner and Harding thought about the same question. Instead of accusing the majority public as the chief culprit for exclusion of queer group, the neglect in inheriting history of self-culture has been brought on the table, which should take heavy responsibility for an inferiority complex developed among queer culture. In *Trouble with the Normal*, Warner concluded “One reason why we have not learned more from this history is that queers do not have the institution for common memory and generational transmission around which straight culture is built. Every new wave of queer youth picks up something from its predecessors but also invent itself from scratch” (51-52). Throughout the past movement of LGBTQ, those revolutionary pioneers mainly concentrated on winning recognition from outside mainstream, rather than direct energy into constructing their own internal cultural system that can be passed on through generation. As a result, people deviant from the mainstream basically received fixed values education from childhood, and developed alike conception about normal and queer, which bring them persistent pain and feeling of isolation. That’s exactly how Harding’s cases happened: “When you’re a fat woman in this culture, everyone- from journalists you’ll never meet to your own mother, sister, and best friend- works together to constantly reinforce the message that you are not good enough to be fucked, let alone loved” (74). Either fat women’s believing of “the underlying premise on which that twisted leap of logic is based: No one wants to fuck a fatty” (Harding 69), or the lesbian leader’s declaration mentioned by Warner that “homosexuals would gain equality only by ‘integrating’” (46), is an inevitable consequence of lacking independent and powerful cultural systems and institution within its own culture.

Therefore, to enhance the inheritance of self-culture history inside each respective queer culture can be a recommended way to challenge the status quo. The influence of history education can never be underestimated in building up self-recognition and self-esteem. Developing with four-thousand years of history, for example, Chinese nation is born with strong self-pride. Even suffering from decades of territorial aggression and political enslavement during modern history, the radical nature of this nation has never lost its independency and self-esteem, based on its absolute confidence in its unique culture that would not be dominated by any other nations. Similarly, if queer culture can develop its systematic cultural continuity, people identified deviant from mainstream culture can then gain confident self-identification and sense of belonging. Rather than feel different and isolated built upon value system infused by the main pop culture, they will never ever categorize themselves as queer but as normal, acceptable existence just like any other straight people. Positive self-culture education can really bring such effect to people’s concept building- this is the point that leaders of queer groups should never disregard in developing their own culture.

From the discussion above, we can see self-abasement is a capital factor that result in the outcast position of queer groups. By analyzing the lack of cultural inheritence in development as a key cause, building positive history education within each individual queer cultural group is proposed as an advisable way to bring home to people their self-importance.

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