

# A Few Notes Toward a Discussion of Queer Theory

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## What It Is/What It Does:

- Queer Theory emerged from LGBTQ Studies, Gender Studies and Feminist Theory, in the context of Poststructuralist Critical Theory.
- Though the developments that led to what is now known as Queer Theory evolved over several decades, the field was recognized and named as a distinct 'genre' of theory in the 1990's.
- It remains a diverse area of criticism, theory and study with many inspirations and expressions.
  
- Queer Theory is perhaps best described as a 'position' or 'standpoint' that seeks to destabilize established power/knowledge structures and the discourses that (re)produce them.
- This is accomplished by revealing and deconstructing the mechanisms of the established order and critiquing them from the perspective of the marginalized and/or subaltern, rather than privileging the perspectives of the 'norm' and/or elites.
  
- In the context of sexuality, Queer Theory destabilizes the structures that determine, among other things, the relative value and acceptability of different identities and practices.
- It is radically intersectional and embodies the bisexual movement's valuation of 'both/and' over 'either/or'.

## An Example – The Charmed Circle:

- In her 1984 essay “Thinking Sex”, cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin introduced the idea as a tool for exploring notions of privileged forms of sexuality versus others.
- The boundary of the circle immediately sets up binary oppositions between inside and outside: the list of binaries could be expanded indefinitely, including couple/group, with toys/without toys, heterosexual/homosexual, monosexual/bisexual, monogamous/polyamorous, etc.
- The Charmed Circle also deconstructs notions of margin versus center, the meaning of boundaries between 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' acts and identities, and the sexual ideologies that undergird our notions of sexuality.
  
- What does it mean to view the Charmed Circle from the margin versus the center? From inside versus outside the line? What if your sexuality moves from one side of the line to the other? Are some 'acceptable' acts or identities more acceptable than others? Are some 'unacceptable' acts more unacceptable than others? Who polices those boundaries and what sanctions do they wield to enforce those boundaries?