

Sociological Theory Comparative Essay

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3240: Sociological Theory

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December 12, 2022

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The Colorado Springs nightclub shooting was a devastating hate crime against the LGBTQ+ community. On that night, five murders were committed, and eighteen people were injured by the twenty-two-year-old shooter (CBS News, 2022). Acts of violence against the community have been rampant, revealing the hateful attitudes others hold due to matters of sexuality (Shalvey & Cook, 2022). Community members are more likely to be victimized because of their identity, sexuality, and gender expression. Discriminatory laws and policies coupled with hateful rhetoric from those in positions of influence have been blamed for the surge in violence. Certainly, these issues have pushed for the need to understand violence and why it occurs against the group.

Patricia Hill Collins is an American academic and social theorist. Her works have examined issues of race, gender, sexuality, and social class. Judith Butler is an American gender theorist whose most remarkable work is on gender performativity. Patricia Hill Collins & Judith Butler provide well-expounded frameworks that generate an understanding of the issue. Through Hill's intersectionality framework, oppression and domination of the community can be understood. On the other hand, Judith Butler's framework of gender performativity gives an understanding of the norms that encourage systemic domination of others through violence.

Intersectionality Framework Patricia Hill Collins

In the book *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill defines intersectionality as intersecting forms of oppression, such as race and gender or sexuality and nation. Oppressions then work together to deliver injustice or create systems of domination on a group of people. For instance, being black and female exposes African-American women to experiences different from those of white women. According to Hill, the experiences of black women tend to be out of a common

consciousness due to common challenges.” Black lesbians have identified heterosexism as a form of oppression and the issues they face living in homo-phobic communities as shaping their interpretations of everyday events” (Collins, 2020). Homophobia also shapes the interpretations of everyday events. Gender is a critical aspect of society and fosters critical elements of social hierarchy and domination. These systems of oppression draw their strength from the acquiescence of their victims. Accepting the dominant image makes people paralyzed by a sense of helplessness. To fight against domination, those oppressed must learn to jump out of the frames and systems of authorities. Just like the images applied to Black Women, those applied to the LGBTQ+ community have been negative and necessitate resistance.

Collins posits that intersectionality can help understand a wide range of issues that affect communities. For the LGBTQ+ community, the lens through which issues are viewed is quite different from the rest of the population. Employment and marriage rights, among others, are new and are still not guaranteed. Some of the protections accorded to other groups of people are not guaranteed for the community. An intersectional lens reveals that social identities produce systems of oppression creating different lived experiences within the social context. In our society where heterosexuality is viewed as the norm. Heterosexual people are in a place of privilege and might seek to dominate others who are viewed as different. The experiences of people in marginalized communities are different as they become disadvantaged by the actions of other groups. According to Collins, violence is a critical point of how systems of domination work. It is most often the catalyst for activism on social issues or problems (Montgomery College, 2017). Intersectionality aids in finding an explanation for the cause of violence at the Colorado club.

Colorado Springs has been termed a mostly conservative city. Club Q offered a haven for the LGBTQ+ community to live without harassment from other groups. Ideas of compulsory heterosexuality can delegitimize and stigmatize certain groups in society. The LGBTQ+ community is vulnerable to domination that comes from violence. Through established order of language and sexual practices, communities, directly and indirectly, support violent social structures. These issues occur through normalizing the marginalization of groups like the LGBTQ community. Hate crimes against the group have been rampant for long. Understanding from the intersectionality perspective is imperative for effective solutions. As identified, systems of oppression start early in a society where heterosexuality is considered compulsory. The solution lies in partly addressing issues of heteronormativity by making other orientations feasible. Remedies are found in the language embraced in media and the types of structures accepted in society. Additionally, more protection laws are required to protect others from systems of domination that use violence to assert their place in society. Non-discrimination laws should be included in private, public, and professional spaces. Homophobia should also not be coded into law as it perpetuates systems of domination, leading to violence against others.

Gender Performativity Framework Judith Butler

Judith Butler explains that gender is performative, and no one is a certain gender at the start. The implication is that people act, walk and speak in certain ways that consolidate the impression of being a man or woman. According to Butler, being a man or a woman is not an inner truth or fact about a person. However, being of a certain gender is a phenomenon that is always reproduced. The framework of gender performativity changes how we look at gender as it establishes new parameters that have not been considered. “Gender is socially and culturally constructed and is established and policed in all societies” (BigThink, 2011). Through systems of

bullying and institutionalized understanding, people are forced to conform to various gender identities. Overcoming the policing function is difficult, as these systems have long been established. Hate crimes such as the Colorado Springs shootings are examples of gender identity policing fueled crimes as LGBTQ people do not conform to expected gender performativity.

The theory of performativity suggests that norms determine how we view gender. The norms that precede us determine our view of the self, and people might need help making independent decisions. The idea of self turns out to be a misnomer if what I want is produced by what is wanted from me. Gender, therefore, pushes obligations on people to behave in certain ways. The reproduction of gender ends up being a negotiation of power that unleashes unexpected effects. Systems of domination emerge, and redefining oneself is met with complex reactions that might include violence against such groups. According to Butler, "the operation of repulsion can consolidate "identities" founded on the instituting of the "Other" or a set of others through exclusion and domination" (Butler, 2002). In essence, people are forced to do gender in polarity, as an agency constructed the gender system as determinate. Since gender is constructed through acts, there are chances that different genders will be constructed through other acts. Society imposes restrictions in the form of social expectations and taboos that limit gender space. Any acts that are deviant to the socially intended gender are then punished. People are, therefore, under duress to give a gender performance that is expected of them based on their sex.

While performative actions such as the gender people display appear to be personal choices, they are not always that way. The existing framework of cultural sanctions and expectations is considered. Gender is historically constructed and cannot be considered a natural act. However, many in society do not understand this and police others to ensure they conform to the sanctioned gender ideologies. The Colorado Springs shootings are an example of such a

situation. Through acts of violence and hate crimes, perpetrators are against the performance of gender in certain ways. The cultural and societal meanings attached to historical ideologies are policed to the extent of being defended through violence. Dealing with the issues means coming up with ways to normalize different performances of gender. The LGBTQ+ community has to be visible and normalized in society. Although it will take time, it is achievable, and much progress has been made through the years.

Conclusion

Hate crimes against those who do not fall into the idealized gender categories are rising. The recent attack on the Colorado Springs LGBTQ community is one of the cases in the country. Gender identity policing is common in the United States and creates systems of oppression and dominance. These social issues that end in violence are best explained through frameworks of intersectionality and gender performativity by Hills and Butler, respectively. The intersectionality of sexuality and hate is explained through the normalization of the marginalization of certain groups. The lack of policies and regulations to protect them places them in vulnerable positions that lead to violence. Systems of domination normally result in violence to suppress the expression of identity. Butler's gender performativity opines that the social and cultural construction of gender leads to acceptance of only two types of gender. However, gender performativity notes that gender is performative, and people can move from cultural sanctions and expectations. It is problematic because gender is heavily policed, and failure to perform as expected can lead to violence. These two theories best explain the reasons for the Colorado Springs Club Q shootings.

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