Choose a Group in Society and Consider How Thay Have Had to Engage in the 'Politics of Recognition' in Order to Seek Greater Equity in the Last 50 Years.

This assignment considers how the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans-sexual and queer (LGBTQ) community have sought recognition to gain greater equity, particularly in the UK, the Western world and anglo-sphere, in the last 50 years. The concept of recognition will be considered, examining a number of theoretical stances and considering the implications for identity, self and self-esteem. Also discussed are issues of concepts of sexuality, and of gender as a social identity and the reproduction, through social construction, of the binary heteronormative state as the social and cultural norm, whereby heterosexuality is constructed as normal and heterosexuality as abnormal (Weeks, 2018). The historic and current oppression of homosexual and other non-heterosexual socio-sexual relationships will be considered. The development of a social movement aimed at 'gay liberation' (Nicholas, 2014) will be explored and as implied in the word 'community', whether there has evolved a common gay identity and sub-culture whose members have sought to be recognised (Seidman, 1996). Concepts of freedom, rights, equality and equity are explored in context of human rights, citizenship and the provision of welfare. This assignment will be considered through the lens of 'Queer Theory', which attempts to reconsider the 'natural' model of male to female to include sexuality as encompassing the whole spectrum of 'other'; gays, lesbians, transgendered people, cross-dressers and heterosexuals and others who challenge the social 'norm' (Seidman, 1996).

Whilst gender theory has been the subject of sociological discourse for many years, recognition theory is a relatively new area of social debate. It has become important because of its contribution to the understanding of the negative impact of the non-recognition of social identities on individuals and groups, and for providing a viable explanation for the mechanisms which result in social and political resistance. (Martineau et al, 2012). Taylor (1994) posits that recognition is fundamental to human well-being, and that the failure of society to afford recognition to individuals and groups causes severe psychological harm. In terms of social justice, recognition theory can be contrasted with multiculturalism and the approaches on universal rights and recognising, respecting and accommodating difference (McQueen, 2019). Many recognition theories rely on philosophical concepts of ethics and self as laid out by Kant, Hegel and Rosseau (Martineau et al, 2012). The position of three recognition theorists are described briefly; Charles Taylor, Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser.

Taylor (1994) argues that sociological demand for recognition originate in social movements such as feminism, racism and multiculturalism. The term recognition, however, has several distinct meanings, including how people are identified, understanding of a position or influence and an act of acknowledgement (Taylor, 1994). Recognition is seen as infusing many aspects of human psycho-social life and is closely linked to personal and social identity; from being recognised in the street, to

having achievements applauded, social relationships sanctioned and having the right to choose lifestyles, belong to groups and hold opinions (Taylor, 1994). As stated above, Taylor (1994) argues that recognition is a fundamental human need; failure to recognise, or to misrecognition the social identity of a person, has serious negative social consequences on the individual's concept of self and self-esteem which results in a struggle for recognition. Taylor (1994) proposes two counterpoint positions; the politics of equal recognition and the politics of difference. Under this model there is the idea of a universal principle of dignity and rights through the recognition of common aspects of humanity or citizenship, whilst also recognising a counterpoint of individualism, and the uniqueness of individuals or groups (Taylor, p3). Taylor contests that such a distinction is necessary since the concept of dignity often arises from the values that the hegemonic culture imposes on the minority which results not only in the loss of the uniqueness of their identity, but in the internalisation of the oppression and othering as inferior, thereby damaging or limiting psychological wellbeing. Honneth (1995) agrees with Taylor's argument that recognition is fundamental to self-realisation but also identifies three 'spheres' of interaction which are necessary for self-realisation; love, rights and solidarity. All three spheres are essential to a healthy positive attitude, and a breakdown in any of these spheres leads to conflict. Honneth argues that the it is a denial of recognition which is the foundation for social struggles (Mattias, 2009). Honneth therefore sees societal change as founded in negative experiences of disrespect (McQueen, 2019) Whilst Taylor and Honneth are concerned with recognition in relation to self- esteem, Fraser (2000) works from a radical premise based on redistribution and restructuring of society (McQueen, 2019) suggesting that recognition promotes differentiation, whilst redistribution is intended to eliminate it. This position assumes that cultural injustice arises from whether one's identity is viewed positively or negatively, and social justice is therefore contingent on all members of society interacting as peers (Fraser, 2000).

According to the Office of National Statistics (2019) 1.1 million people in the UK, or 2% of the population of 52.8 million, self-perceive their sexual identity as either gay, lesbian or bisexual. Yet as Tatchell (2017) points out, for almost half a century homosexuality was the subject of oppression, stigma, ostracism and to the severest sanctions of the law. Indeed, it was only until the early 21st century that the lawful age of consent for sex between men reached parity with heterosexuals, and same sex marriage was not possible in the UK until 2013, although civil partnerships had been lawful since 2005 (Tatchell, 2017).

Arguably, therefore, the LGBTQ community has made significant progress in obtaining civil rights over the past 50 years through defining a collective identity which demanded recognition (Ghaziani, 2011; Seidman, 1996). The Human Rights Act 1998 protects individuals within the private sphere, for example, and affords the rights to marry and to a family life. The Act promotes the concept of

universal equality by asserting that everyone's rights are equal, and prohibits unfairness because of sex, gender, sexuality and other characteristics. The right not to be discriminated against because of sex, gender, gender orientation and other protected characteristics is also guaranteed by the Equality Act, 2010. Some argue, in fact that progress has been so successful and that a new class of LGBTQ identity has emerged of gay people who have never experienced oppression or abuse (Ghaziani, 2011, Seidman, 1996). How then did a social movement based on gay identity emerge? Hogg and Vaughan (2008) argue that social movements derive from collective social identity which strives for recognition. Tajfel and Turner (1979) have argued that there are two broad classes of identity; social identity and personal identity, each of which defines a different type of self. Social identity is defined in terms of an identity which derives from membership of social groups whilst personal identity is defined in terms of the unique personality or traits, and relationships of individuals. Social identity means identifying with a group and conforming to group norms, adopting group solidarity and stereotypes (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008). An individual will have numerous social identities according to the number of groups they feel they belong to, and as many personal identities as there are interpersonal relationships and individual behaviours. (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008). Social Identity Theory suggests that as society is constructed of numerous distinct social groups which have a relation to each other with regards to power and status, membership of a group, whether large, as in a nation state or religion, intermediate such as organisations, or smaller groups, membership of the group entails certain attributes or behaviours which are prescribed through group membership (Hogg and Vaughan, 2009). Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) proposes that one consequence of this social membership is that people adopt roles and behaviours congruent with their social group identity (Eagly, 1987). For example, men and women routinely adopt roles which are congruent with their gendered social stereotypes of the heteronarmitive male and female identity. Women are considered nurturing, passive and communal and are therefore deemed more suited to caring roles such as nursing and motherhood. Men are perceived to be more aggressive, agentic and dominant and are therefore considered more suited to business, competitive sport and 'masculine' employment such as firefighting and the armed forces (Eagly, 1987). Incongruence happens when someone adopts a role outside of the gender stereotype or fails to meet the group norm, which leads to social punishments such as ostracism, ridicule, or even violence (Eagly, 1987). Queer theory, which emerged in the 1990's however challenged the notion of a single heterosexual oppositional identity called homosexuality, conceptualizing queer as a diverse spectrum of cultural and gender displays and helping to advance the understanding of the gay experience (Seidman, 1996). Butler (2007), however, argues that queer theory could be divisive; by identifying certain cultural aspects as 'gay' those that do not fit group expectations of 'gayness' could be subject to 'queer policing' and the same sanctions resulting from heteronormative incongruence.

Many stereotypical identities developed from social developments related to the Industrial Revolution where individuals became units of production, expected to organise their lives and relationships around employment and mobility (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008). Oakley (1974), for example, contests that the role of housewife can be traced to the separation of the private and public spheres whereby women were expected to maintain the home and raise children whilst men inhabited the public sphere of paid employment and areas such as politics. This view of traditional femininity and masculinity is a powerful social force, replicating social role modelling of genders from generation to generation (Butler, 1990). Pascoe, for example (2007) demonstrates how masculinity is reinforced through control and dominance during adolescence. However, poststructural and postmodern theories of the self suggest that identity is much more multi-faceted; people act in different ways in various social situations, and people have much more freedom to adopt an identity of their choice (Haralambos and Holborn, 2013). For example, Connell (2005) challenges the view of hegemonic masculinity theorizing that many masculinities exist or are possible. Similarly, Lorber (1994) identifies numerous socially constructed gender possibilities. In addition, constructionist theories of gender have been criticized as being ethnocentric and individualistic. For example, whilst the need for individuals to have a distinctive, integrated sense of self is probably universal, this distinction of self means something different between cultures (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008). For example, developed, western and anglo-sphere cultures are individualistic individualism, promoting the independent self-contained self, whilst societies in Asia, Africa and South America tends to be communal, deriving the sense of self from various connections; family, personal and religious (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008). Definitions of identity are, therefore, culturally defined and complex (Hogg and Vaughan, 2008). Zevallos (2018) for, example, points out that whilst homosexuality is specifically defined in western societies there are many examples of cultural variations, particularly in so called 'warrior' cultures. In addition, the expansion of mass media into almost every area of social life has meant that perceptions of identity and difference have shifted as individual's have almost limitless access to cultural and individual variation (Haralambos and Holborn, 2013). In addition, access to previously heteronormative employment, the increase in spending power and the resulting consumerism by the LGBTQ bloc, identified as the pink (or rainbow) pound has led to pink capitalism aimed at, and arguably has led to, the commodification of gay culture (Yaksich, 2005; Ghaziani, 2014). This commodification of gay identity has led to criticisms that the LGBTQ movement has increasingly become politicised and commercial, with, for example LGBTQ Pride parades being promoted as tourist events (Johnston, 2005).

The historic development of a homosexual identity is relevant. According to Foucault (1980), although acts now considered homosexual have existed throughout human history, the homosexual identity only becomes possible because of the creation of a taxonomy of 'homosexual', and later the

counterpoint 'heterosexual' during the late 19th century. This followed the development of many new areas on scientific and social enquiry, one of which was Sexology (Foucault, 1980; Weeks, 1989). The use of the word 'homosexual', gained traction amongst the judiciary and psychiatric services which viewed homosexuality as a perversity, but which, argues Foucault, created a new form of identity as homosexual social relations became reified, or tangible. Foucault (1980 p101) also argues that this discourse on homosexuality resulted in the formation of a "reverse discourse" in which homosexuality demanded its own recognition, requiring legitimacy and naturality. The recognition, and adoption of the homosexual identity therefore, allowed for the, eventual, claim for and guarantee of, civil rights (Namaste, 1996).

As can be seen, Foucault provides an account of the social production of identities (Namaste, 1996). Similarly, Jenkins (2014, p. 96) provides a definition of social identity through social interactions as 'our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, and reciprocally, other people's understanding of themselves and others'. Social identity is therefore created through social interaction, which in turn creates meanings which are essentially socially constructed rather than about essential differences between people. Social identities can have an enormous impact on an individual's wellbeing; for example, Jenkins (2014) uses as an example the potential impact on an individual's social identity when they become of pensionable age and are therefore classed, overnight, as 'old aged'. Jenkins concludes, that there is no society without social identity (Jenkins, 2014). Seidman (1998) however, points out that many gay and lesbian people felt unable to express their identity, complying instead with the heteronormative expectations of their birth sex and creating identities which conform to the societal expectations of heterosexuality. However, the spread of the concept of liberalism and universal human rights has helped counter the belief of homosexuality as deviance (Stychin, 2004).

During the 20th century, the LGBT community, particularly in America, began to demand recognition of their civil rights (Siedman, 1996). Many gay people faced interconnected forms of disadvantage, a phenomenon called intersectionality (Giddens and Sutton, 2018); for example, gay people were not free to marry partners of their own sex and were not allowed to serve in the armed force, many were discriminated against in employment and excluded from joining institutions, such as social clubs and churches (Seidman, 1996). There are arguments as to whether the gay community constituted a sub-culture (Norton, 2002). According to Norton (2002), however, there is evidence of recognisable queer subcultures throughout Europe as early as 1700, such as the molly-man subculture in England. Though there had been several campaigns for homosexual equality during the 1950'a and 60's, Norton (2002) argues that a gay resistance developed because of the invasion of the private space by state social control authorities such as the police and judiciary. This invasion and reconstitution of what was private meant that covert resistance, through for example, the existence of gay nightclubs and bathhouses, became covert when the Stonewall Inn, a gay club in Manhattan, New York, became

subject to repeated raids by police and the staff and clientele actively resisted resulting in six days of rioting, acting as a triggering event and becoming the symbolic incident driving home the need for social and political recognition (Giddens and Sutton, 2018: Norton, 2002). Following the Stonewall riots a movement for political recognition ddid eveloped which adopted symbols intended to reflect and promote legitimacy, such as the rainbow flag and the term 'gay' which, though associated with homosexuality previously, was not in common usage (Norton, 2002; Seidman, 1996). Hogg and Vaughan (2008) point out that when social change is associated with a recognition that the status-quo is considered illegitimate and unsustainable, intergroup conflict results and typically, social movements emerge from these conflicts, Giddens and Sutton (2018) point out that with symbolic triggering points act as a focus for action. Giddens and Sutton (2018, p213.) describes social movements as 'collective attempts to change society'. Following the Stonewall riots there was a rapid expansion in gay-rights organisations, and 'gay' became the global symbolic standard for homosexual (Norton, 2005). The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) which was formed in London following the Stonewall riots became a social movement with the aim of 'asserting basic rights' and challenging 'straight supremacism' (Tatchell, 2019). The word 'liberation' in GLM suggests a wish to gain freedom from some restriction, therefore the concept of freedom requires consideration. Most people have an understanding of what freedom means to them, but the term is variable and has meant different things at different times (Spicker, 2014). In his 1762 treatise on inequality 'The Social Contract' Rosseau (1712-1778) stated that 'All men are born free, and yet everywhere he is in chains.' MacCallum (1967) argues that to be free a person must be free from restraint to act; therefore, there is a psychological element relating to choice, negative or restrictive element whereby people must not be prevented, and a positive element whereby people must be able to act. Societies which promote individualism tend to promote independence, and argue, for example that since social welfare, through the reduction of disadvantage enhances freedom and empowers people (Spicker, 2014). Spicker (2014 p.185) describes rights as rules which govern relationships between people. People, or groups of people with rights are treated differently compared to those that do not (Spicker, 2014). Rights have various cultural elements and are important in defining social policy; for example, moral rights have an ethical or moral basis, legal rights are enforceable in law and there are general rights which should apply to everyone in a group, such as 'human rights' (Spicker, 2014, p.185).
Equality refers to the removal of disadvantage and can include concepts such as all men being created equal, citizenship, rights such as those discussed above and equality of welfare (Spicker, 2014). There is also the question of equity. In its broadest sense equity can be described as fairness and is closely linked to welfare (Spicker, 2014). In its widest sense welfare concerns wellbeing, although social commentators disagree as to whether social policy is concerned with all aspects of wellbeing such as love and security (Spicker, 2014).

In conclusion, recognition of social identity is an important facet of human wellbeing. Social identities are complex, inter-relational aspects of human social life, which are culturally dependent. Over the past fifty years the LGBTQ community has gained recognition in many areas of western societies, particularly in respect to rights, freedoms and equity. The creation of homosexual and heterosexual identities in the 18th century laid the foundations for social recognition.

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