

Free critical thinking about hate crimes and homophobia: questions

[Law](#), [Criminal Justice](#)



- Can such violence also be attributed to individual violence, based upon the perceived notions of a "lax society?"

As against individual violence, violent homophobic crimes are a manifestation of an irrational and visceral feeling towards homosexuality. The extreme vilification and discrimination against people with same-sex sexual orientation is often justified by invoking the notion of lax society, where 'lax' implies something that is 'lacking in strictness', 'derelict' or 'not easily controlled'. This notion is rooted in the 'right realism' school of thought that regards all criminal incidents as social problems warranting prompt and practical solutions. (Right Realism and Crime, 2014) Such beliefs are perpetuated by, and indeed, in a vast majority of cases, are a direct result of media sensationalism aimed at creating 'moral panic' and ultimately controlling people's behavior. This phenomenon classically manifested itself in the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The disease was portrayed as a 'gay plague' in the media trials which severely stigmatized homosexuals as the originators of the virus. When this attribution got refuted by science, the media focus and the consequent moral panic then started targeting the lax moral standards amongst the younger generation. (The Media and the Crime, 2014)

- Do you think crimes motivated by the victim's sexual orientation are the same as crimes motivated by the victim's race, religion, or ethnicity? If so, why? If not, why not? Crimes motivated by victim's sexual orientation, race, religion or ethnicity all share a common characteristic of being driven by a strong bias, negative opinion or prejudice towards that specific aspect of the victim's identity. Moreover, in addition to the effect on the immediate victim,

such criminal acts profoundly impact the entire community. Furthermore, anti-gay activism seeks to capitalize on the conscious and unconscious bias against homosexuality as a form of deviance or disease, while research has again shown that homosexuals do not differ from heterosexuals in any other way apart from their sexual orientation. Lastly, victims of violent hate crimes are less likely to report hate incidents and more prone to suffer from serious psychological disturbances than victims of other comparable crimes. (FBI-UCR, 2001) Thus crimes motivated by the victim's sexual orientation are not just a manifestation of the bias, but a dangerous action motivated by a strong bias. They also reinforce stereotypes against gender non-conforming individuals.

- Do you think crimes motivated by the perceived sexual orientation of the victim should be included in the legal definition of hate crime? Why or why not? Crimes motivated by sexual orientation have serious connotations not only for the victim but also against their social group. Explicit inclusion of 'crimes motivated by sexual orientation' in the legal definition of hate crime will have a deterrent value that will increase social acceptance of homosexuality as a personal choice, just like religion.

Works cited

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