

Societal attitudes toward homosexuality

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Societal attitudes towards homosexuality vary greatly in different cultures and different historical periods, as do attitudes toward sexual desire, activity and relationships in general. All cultures have their own values regarding appropriate and inappropriate sexuality; some sanction same-sex love and sexuality, while others disapprove of such activities.^[1] As with heterosexual behaviour, different sets of prescriptions and proscriptions may be given to individuals according to their gender, age, social status and/or class. For example, among the samurai class of pre-modern Japan, it was recommended for a teenage novice to enter into an erotic relationship with an older warrior (see Shudo), but sexual relations between the two became inappropriate once the boy came of age.^[2]

Most of the world's cultures have considered procreative sex within a recognised relationship to be a sexual norm — sometimes exclusively so, and sometimes alongside norms of same-sex love, whether passionate, intimate or sexual. Some religions, especially those influenced by the Abrahamic tradition, have traditionally censured homosexual acts and relationships, in some cases implementing severe punishments for offenders.^[3] Since the 1970s, much of the world has become more accepting of same-sex sexuality between partners of legal age.^[4] The Pew Research Center's 2003 Global Attitudes Survey found that "[p]eople in Africa and the Middle East strongly object to societal acceptance of homosexuality. But there is far greater tolerance for homosexuality in major Latin American countries such as Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia and Brazil. Opinion in Europe is split between West and East. Majorities in every Western European nation surveyed say homosexuality should be accepted by society, while most Russians, Poles and Ukrainians disagree. Americans are divided – a thin majority (51%) believes homosexuality should be accepted, while 42% disagree."^[5]

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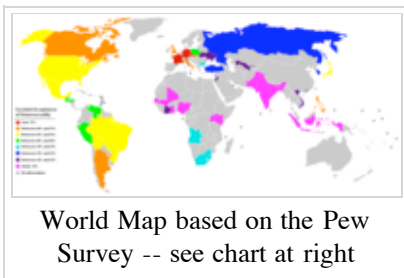
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Difficulties interpreting homosexuality in different cultures

Contemporary scholars caution against applying modern Western assumptions about sex and gender to other times and places; what looks like same-sex sexuality to a Western observer may not be "same-sex" or "sexual" at all to the people engaging in such behaviour. For example, in the Bugis cultures of Sulawesi, a female-bodied person who dresses and works in a masculine fashion and marries a woman is seen as belonging to a third gender;^[6] to the Bugis, their relationship is not homosexual (see sexual orientation and gender identity). In the case of 'Sambia' (a pseudonym) boys in New Guinea who ingest the semen of older males to aid in their maturation,^[7] it is disputed whether this is best understood as a sexual act at all.^[8] In recent times, scholars have argued that notions of a homosexual and heterosexual identity, as they are currently known in the Western world, only began to emerge in Europe in the mid to late 19th century.^{[9][10]}

Measuring attitudes toward homosexuality



From the 1970s, academics have researched attitudes held by individuals toward lesbians, gay men and bisexuals, and the social and cultural factors that underlie such attitudes. Numerous studies have investigated the prevalence of acceptance and disapproval of homosexuality, and have consistently found correlates with various

demographic, psychological, and social variables. For example, studies (mainly conducted in the United States) have found that heterosexuals with positive attitudes towards homosexuality are more likely to be female, white, young, non-religious, well-educated, politically liberal or moderate, and have close personal contact with out gay men and lesbians.^[11] They are also more likely to have positive attitudes towards other minority groups^[12] and are less likely to support traditional gender roles.^[13] Several studies have also suggested that heterosexual males exhibit slightly more negative attitudes toward gay men than toward lesbians, and some (but not all) have found that heterosexual females exhibit slightly more negative attitudes toward lesbians than toward gay men.^[14]

The 2002 Pew Global Attitudes Project: "Should homosexuality be accepted by society?"		
Country	Yes	No
North America		
United States	51%	42%
Canada	69%	26%
Mexico	54%	39%
Guatemala	44%	50%
Honduras	41%	55%
Europe		
Germany	83%	15%
France	77%	21%
United Kingdom	74%	22%
Italy	72%	20%

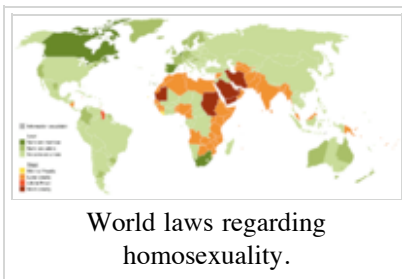
Social psychologists such as Gregory Herek have examined underlying motivations for homophobia (hostility toward lesbians and gays), and cultural theorists have noted how portrayals of homosexuality often center around stigmatized phenomena such as AIDS, pedophilia, and gender variance. The extent to which such portrayals are stereotypes is disputed.

Contemporary researchers have measured attitudes held by heterosexuals toward gay men and lesbians in a number of different ways. Commonly used scales include those designed by Herek,^[15] Larson et al.,^[16] Kite and Deaux^[17] and Haddock et al.^[18]

Much less research has been conducted into societal attitudes toward bisexuality.^[19] What studies do exist suggest that the attitude of heterosexuals toward bisexuals mirrors their attitude toward homosexuals,^[20] and that bisexuals experience a similar degree of hostility, discrimination, and violence relating to their sexual orientation as do homosexuals.^[21]

Law

The legal status of homosexuality varies greatly around the world. Homosexual sex acts may be illegal, especially under sodomy laws, and where they are legal, the age of consent often differs from country to country. In some cases, homosexuals are prosecuted under vaguely-worded "public decency" or morality laws. Some countries have special laws preventing certain public expressions of homosexuality, such as Britain's Section 28 (now repealed). Nations or subnational entities may have anti-discrimination legislation in place to protect against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the workplace, housing, health services and education; such acts may also differ from state to state. Some give exemptions, allowing employers to discriminate if they are a religious organisation, or if the employee works with children.



Legal recognition of same-sex relationships also varies greatly. Legal privileges pertaining to different-sex relationships that may be extended to same-sex couples include parenting, adoption and access to reproductive technologies; immigration; spousal benefits for employees such as pensions, health funds and other services; family

leave; medical rights, including hospital visitation, notification and power of attorney; inheritance when a partner dies without leaving a will; and social security and tax benefits. Same-sex couples without legal recognition may also lack access to domestic violence services, as well as mediation and arbitration over custody and property when relationships end. Some regions have laws specifically excluding

Czech Republic	83%	16%
Slovak Republic	68%	30%
Poland	40%	48%
Bulgaria	37%	36%
Russia	22%	60%
Ukraine	17%	77%
Turkey	22%	66%
South America		
Argentina	66%	26%
Bolivia	55%	40%
Brazil	54%	42%
Venezuela	46%	51%
Peru	45%	49%
Asia		
Philippines	64%	33%
Japan	54%	34%
South Korea	25%	69%
Vietnam	13%	84%
India	7%	63%
Bangladesh	7%	87%
Indonesia	5%	93%
Lebanon	21%	76%
Jordan	12%	88%
Uzbekistan	10%	66%
Pakistan	9%	56%
Africa		
South Africa	33%	63%
Angola	30%	62%
Cote d'Ivoire	15%	84%
Uganda	4%	95%
Nigeria	4%	95%
Ghana	4%	93%
Mali	3%	96%
Senegal	2%	98%
Kenya	1%	99%

same-sex couples from particular rights such as adoption.

In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country to recognize same-sex marriage, and same-sex marriages were subsequently recognized in Belgium (2003), Spain and Canada (2005), the U.S. state of Massachusetts (2004) and South Africa (2006). Other legal recognition of same sex relationships (offering fewer benefits than marriage) include civil unions and domestic partnerships.

On the other end of the spectrum, several countries impose the death penalty for homosexual acts. As of 2006, these include Mauritania, Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Pakistan and Chechnya under the Sharia law and some regions in Nigeria and Somalia. Homosexual acts between consenting adults are known to be illegal in about 70 out of the 195 countries of the world; in 40 of these, only male-male sex is outlawed.^[22]

Religion

As with social attitudes in general, religious attitudes towards homosexuality vary between and among religions and their adherents. Traditionalists among the world's major religions generally disapprove of homosexuality, and prominent opponents of social acceptance of homosexuality often cite religious arguments to support their views. Liberal currents also exist within most religions, and modern lesbian and gay scholars of religion sometimes point to a place for homosexuality among historical traditions and scriptures, and emphasise religious teachings of compassion and love.

Abrahamic religions such as Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, traditionally forbid sexual relations between people of the same sex and teach that such behaviour is sinful. Religious authorities point to passages in the Qur'an (7:80-81 (<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/007.qmt.html#007.080>) , 26:165 (<http://www.usc.edu/dept/MSA/quran/026.qmt.html#026.165>)), the Old Testament (Leviticus 18:22 (<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus%2018:22;&version=16;>)) and the New Testament (Romans 1:26-27 (<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%201:26-27;&version=16;>) , I Timothy 1:9-10 (<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=I%20Timothy%201:9-10;&version=16;>)) for scriptural justification of these beliefs.

Among Indic religions (also known as Dharmic religions), including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, teachings regarding homosexuality are less clear. Unlike in western religions, homosexuality is rarely discussed. However, most contemporary religious authorities in the various Dharmic traditions view homosexuality negatively, and when it is discussed, it is discouraged or actively forbidden.^[23] Ancient religious texts such as the Vedas often refer to people of a third gender, who are neither female nor male. Some see this third gender as an ancient parallel to modern western lesbian, gay, transgender and/or intersex identities. However, this third sex is usually negatively valued as a pariah class in ancient texts.^[24] Ancient Hindu law books, from the first century onward, categorize non-vaginal sex (*ayoni*) as impure.^[25] Same-sex sexuality and gender transformations are common among the Hindu pantheon of deities.

Among the Sinic religions of East Asia, including Confucianism, Chinese folk religion and Taoism, passionate homosexual expression is usually discouraged because it is believed to not lead to human fulfillment.^[26]

Other religions view same-sex love and sexuality as sacred, and a mythology of same-sex love can be found around the world.

Anti-homosexual attitudes

Conservatism

Conservatism is a term broadly used for people who are inclined to patriotism, traditional values, and (typically) strong religious beliefs.

Whilst conservatism includes people of many views, it has a significant proportion of adherents who consider homosexuals, and especially the efforts of homosexuals to achieve equal rights and recognition, to be a threat to valued traditions, institutions and freedoms. Such attitudes are generally tied in with opposition to what some conservatives call the "homosexual agenda".^[27]

The finding that attitudes to alternative sexualities correlate strongly with nature of contact and with personal beliefs is stated in a variety of research over a substantial time period, and conservative men and women stand out in their views specifically.

Thus Herek, who established the Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale in psychology, states:

"The ATLG and its subscales are consistently correlated with other theoretically-relevant constructs. Higher scores (more negative attitudes) correlate significantly with high religiosity, lack of contact with gay men and lesbians, adherence to traditional sex-role attitudes, belief in a traditional family ideology, and high levels of dogmatism (Herek, 1987a, 1987b, 1988, 1994; Herek & Glunt, 1993; Herek & Capitano, 1995, 1996)" [1] (<http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/atlg.html>)

and that:

"The strongest predictor of positive attitudes toward homosexuals was that the interviewee knew a gay man or lesbian. The correlation held across each demographic subset represented in the survey--sex, education level, age--bar one: political persuasion. [Conservative men and women]" [2] (<http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/articles/nowack.html>)

An example of conservative views can also be found in the discussion of what conservatives call "homosexual recruitment", within a document released by the conservative Christian organization Alliance Defense Fund states:

The homosexual activist movement are driving an agenda that will severely limit the ability to live and practice the Gospel, whether it is in the boardroom, the classroom, halls of government, private organizations, and even in places of worship. In their relentless attempts to obtain special rights, that no other special interest group has, they are in the process of redefining the family, demanding not only 'tolerance' [...] but 'acceptance', and ultimately seeking to marginalize, censor, and punish those individuals who stand in the way of their multiple goals.^[28]

As this statement illustrates, those who believe that a disapproving attitude toward homosexuality is a tenet of their religion can see efforts to abolish such attitudes as an attack on their religious freedom. Those who regard homosexuality as a sin or perversion can believe that acceptance of homosexual parents and same-sex marriage will redefine and diminish the institutions of family and marriage.

More generally, conservatives—by definition—prefer that institutions, traditions and values remain unchanged, and this has put many of them in opposition to increasing the cultural acceptance and legal rights of homosexuals.

Violence

Gay people have been the target of violence for their sexuality in various cultures throughout history. Violence

against gay people reached its height during the Holocaust, when at least 15,000 homosexuals were killed and many more imprisoned and institutionalised as insane. Violence against homosexuals continues to occur today.

Anti-gay speech

Anti-gay slogans date back at least as far as Classical Greece 2500 years ago. These slogans have expressed numerous derogatory viewpoints against gays which have ranged from disrespectful to overtly insulting.

Psychology and modification of sexual orientation

Main articles: Homosexuality and psychology, Reparative therapy

In 1973, the (US) American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. The decision was supported by a majority of the membership, though some criticized this as a political decision unsupported by any advances in psychological research. In fact, the research of Evelyn Hooker and other psychologists and psychiatrists helped to end the notion that homosexuality was in and of itself a mental illness. Nonetheless, many religious groups and other advocates, like National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH), believe that they can "heal or cure" homosexuality through reparative therapy. Many Western health and mental health professional organizations have concluded that this therapy is ineffective, unnecessary, and potentially harmful and that sexual orientation is unchangeable. Most notable for his dissent from this opinion is Dr. Robert Spitzer. Another study refuting the claims of reparative therapy proponents was done in 2001 by Dr. Ariel Shidlo and Dr. Michael Schroeder.

In many non-Western post-colonial countries, homosexual orientation is still considered to be a mental disorder and illness. In Muslim areas, this position is ascribed to the earlier adoption of European Victorian attitudes by the westernized elite, in areas where previously native traditions embraced same-sex relations.^[29]

Stereotypes

In Western culture, gay men are often stereotyped as effeminate or sometimes as hypermasculinized (*see homomascularity*). Other stereotypes are the child molester in a position of moral authority (such as the pedophile priest or boy scout leader), and the muscle-bound prison rapist. Additional stereotypes surrounding gay male identity include hypersexualization, extreme care regarding personal appearance, and knowledge socially inappropriate for males, such as how to sew or decorate. Many of these stereotypes have led to the creation of the metrosexual, a man who fits gay male stereotypes but identifies as heterosexual.

Lesbians are often stereotyped as being overly masculine or butch, as having been molested or raped at an early age, as being angry, having typically masculine knowledge (such as how to fix plumbing), and as extremely needy or codependent.

Bisexuals are often stereotyped as promiscuous, manipulative, insincere and/or still confused.

Blame for plagues and disasters

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as takes place in the Bible is currently attributed to attempted homosexual rape, but this is disputed and differs from earlier beliefs. Early Jewish belief variously attributed the destruction to turning a blind eye to social injustice or lack of hospitality.

Since the Middle Ages, sodomites were blamed for "bringing down the wrath of God" upon the land, and their

pleasures blamed for the periodic epidemics of disease which decimated the population. This "pollution" was thought to be cleansed by fire, as a result of which countless individuals were burned at the stake or run through with white-hot iron rods.

Since the end of the 1980s similar accusations have been made, inspired by the AIDS epidemic. In the years since, the epidemic has spread and now has many more heterosexual victims than homosexual.

Other contemporary American examples:

- Jerry Falwell made remarks interpreted as blaming "pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way" for the September 11th attacks, but later apologized for his remarks. (Pat Robertson was also participating in the broadcast.)^[30]
- Westboro Baptist Church leader Fred Phelps blames homosexuals for the September 11th attacks and his sect blames the Indian Ocean tsunami of December, 2004 on American and Swedish sodomites and fornicators in Thailand.^[31] Phelps has little or no support among the wider religious community.

Association with child abuse and pedophilia

Relations between adults and youths, both male and female, were practiced historically dating back to at least antiquity, when they were reported among a number of cultures, among which the Celtic, the Persian and the Greek. *See Plato's Phaedrus (dialogue) and Lucian's Erotes*. The best documented, and perhaps the most formalized, being the Greek tradition, it is the one that has become emblematic of erotic relations between men and adolescent boys. The association of modern masculine desire for adolescent youths with Greek man/boy practices has been resuscitated periodically by various cultural movements such as the Italian Neo-Platonists (including Marsilio Ficino) and literary figures such as Oscar Wilde and Andre Gide, and has continued into contemporary times. Invariably, each such instance has been met with alarm and accusations of corruption of the young.

Thus, some people fear exposing their children to homosexuals in unsupervised settings, lest they be molested, raped, or recruited to be homosexuals themselves. The publicity surrounding the Roman Catholic Church sex abuse scandal, which included many cases of pederastic relationships, has heightened these concerns. Many organizations focus on these concerns, drawing connections between homosexuality and pedophilia.^[32]

According to a study commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops,^[33] under the auspices of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and an all-lay review board headed by Illinois Appellate Court Justice Anne M. Burke, "81% of the reported victims of child sexual abuse by Catholic clergy were boys." The review board went on to conclude that, "the crisis was characterized by homosexual behavior", and in light of this, "the current crisis cannot be addressed without consideration of issues related to homosexuality." One of John Jay's researchers, Louis Schlesinger, argued, however, that the main problem was pedophilia or ephebophilia, not sexual orientation and said that some men who are married to adult women are attracted to adolescent males.^[34]

A number of small-scale studies by Dr. Carole Jenny, Dr. A.W. Richard Sipe, and others have not found evidence that homosexuals are more likely to molest children than heterosexuals.^{[35][36]} Based on phallometric tests, Dr. Kurt Freund asserted that "androphiles" (male homosexuals with a preference for adults) are no more attracted to young boys than "gynephiles" (male heterosexuals with a preference for adults) are to young girls.^[37] According to him, most men who abuse boys, unlike gay men, do not have an attraction to adult males.^[38] Other researches available also suggest most men who molest boys (specially prepubertal boys)

prefer adult women over adult men as sexual partners.^{[39][40][41][42][43]}

Johns Hopkins University psychiatrist Dr. Frederick Berlin, who runs a treatment program for offenders, says it's flawed to assume that men who molest young boys are attracted to adult men; Berlin defines attraction to children as a separate orientation of its own.^[44] Psychotherapist Dr. A.W. Richard Sipe, also argue that the sexual deprivation that occurs in the priesthood could lead one to turn to children and that boys are more accessible to priests and other male authority figures than girls.^[45] A study by Dr. A. Nicholas Groth found that nearly half of the child sex offenders in his small sample were exclusively attracted to children. The other half regressed to children after finding trouble in adult relationships. No one in his sample was primarily attracted to same-sex adults.^[46]

The question of whether it is even possible to change or direct a child's sexual orientation is a matter of sharp debate. *See Environment, choice, and sexual orientation*

Regions and historical periods

Ancient Greece

In Ancient Greece homoerotic practices (usually of a pederastic nature) were widely present, and integrated into the religion, education, philosophy and military culture.^[47] The sexualized form of these relationships was the topic of vigorous debate. In particular, anal intercourse was condemned by many, including Plato, as a form of hubris and faulted for dishonoring and feminizing the boys. Relations between adult males were generally ridiculed. Plato also believed that the chaste form of the relationship was the mark of an enlightened society, while only barbarians condemned it.^[48]

Athens and Sparta are both well known for encouraging pederastic relationships as part of a youth's education and socialization. In both societies, though, once a youth came of age he was expected to take on another youth as beloved, and eventually to marry and continue the family line.

See also Pederasty in ancient Greece, Homosexuality in the militaries of ancient Greece



An image of Achilles and Patroclus, presenting the mythological figures in the pederastic context common to Greece of the 5th century BCE.

Ancient Israel

Throughout most of the history of ancient Israel, intercourse between males was condemned outright as an "abomination" and Mosaic Law demanded the death penalty for those men who "lie with a man as with a woman".^[49] Other aspects of same-sex relations were not discussed.

Ancient Rome

Roman attitudes toward same-sex relations varied over the centuries. In the early days of the Roman Republic, pederasty was considered a degenerate Greek practice. As Greek attitudes gradually became accepted in Rome during the late Republic and early Empire, however, a form of same-sex relations emerged that was quite different from the Greek form. As men, particularly the pater familias, wielded complete authority in Roman

society, the Roman experience of same-sex relations is often characterized by master/slave-style interactions. Indeed, at the height of the Roman Empire the Lex Scatinia was promulgated, effectively banning relations (consensual or not), male prostitution, and sexual passivity involving free born boys and girls.^[50] Slaves still were considered legitimate sexual partners, often if not always regardless of their wishes.

By the time the empire had been firmly established, many forms of sexual expression were tolerated. Though perhaps not the originator of the practice, the emperor Nero appears to have been the first Roman emperor to marry a male. According to Edward Gibbon, writing in 1776, of the first twelve emperors only Claudius was exclusively involved with women. All others took either boys or men as lovers.^[51]

China

In China, historical records tacitly assume bisexuality as the human norm.^[52] Same-sex practices have been documented there since the "Spring and Autumn Annals" period (parallel with Classical Greece) and its roots are found in the legend of China's origin, the reign of the Yellow Emperor, who, among his many inventions, is credited with being the first to take male bedmates. At the same time the practice was not in the mainstream of the culture, and was condemned for corrupting the judgement of rulers, as did relations with female concubines.

Attitudes have changed radically in the past hundred and fifty years, swinging from casual acceptance to antagonism to guarded acceptance again. The Chinese Psychiatrists' Association removed homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses in April 2001. However, as scriptwriter and teacher Cui Zi'en, one of the few openly gay intellectuals in today's China points out, in his country, it is still seen as a psychological disorder. "In the West, it's frowned on to criticize homosexuals and even more to make them feel different", says Cui Zi'en, contrasting it with Chinese society which, "is changing, but there'll always be people who'll feel disgust."

Early Christianity

Many contend that from its earliest days, Christianity followed the Hebrew tradition of condemnation of male sexual intercourse and certain forms of sexual relations between men and women, labeling both as *sodomy*. Some contemporary Christian scholars dispute this however. The teachings of Jesus Christ encouraged a turning away from and forgiveness of sin, including those sins of sexual impurity, although Jesus never referred to homosexuality specifically. Jesus was known as a defender of those whose sexual sins were condemned by the Pharisees. At the same time, Jesus strongly upheld the Ten Commandments and urged those whose sexual sins were forgiven to, "go, and sin no more".^[53]

Saint Paul was even more explicit in his condemnation of sinful behavior, including sodomy, saying, "Know you not that the unjust shall not possess the kingdom of God? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor the effeminate, nor liars with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall possess the kingdom of God"^[54] However, the exact meanings of two of the ancient Greek words that Paul used that supposedly refer to homosexuality are disputed amongst scholars. Some liberal theologians believe that Paul was not referring to the 21st Century concept of homosexuality, but rather some other unspecified form of homosexual or pederastic behavior. Some theologians who hold more liberal viewpoint regarding homosexuality even argue that the exact meaning of these ancient Greek words were not to mean homosexuality at all but to the sin of adultery instead.

Christian Roman Empire/Byzantine Empire

After the emperor Constantine ended the persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire and made Christianity the official state religion in the 4th century, Christian attitudes toward sexual behavior were soon incorporated into Roman Law. In the year 528, the emperor Justinian I, responding to an outbreak of pederasty among the Christian clergy, issued a law which made castration the punishment for sodomy.^[55]

The Pacific basin

The Bedamini people of New Guinea believe that semen is the main source of masculinity and strength. In consequence, the sharing of semen between men, particularly when there is an age gap, is seen as promoting growth throughout nature, while excessive heterosexual activities are seen as leading to decay and death.^[56]

The United States

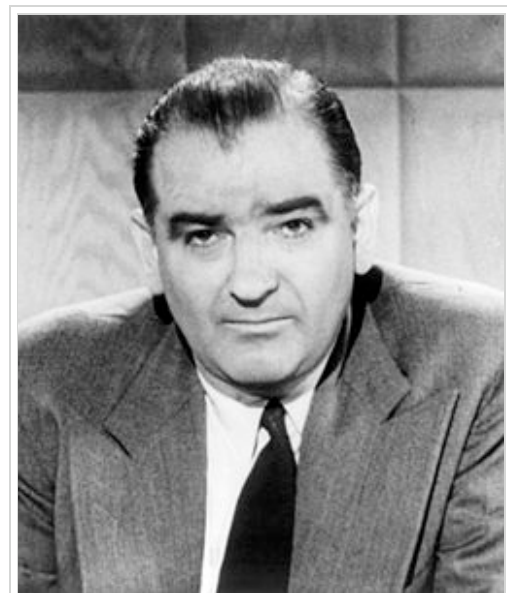
Modern attitudes towards same-sex attraction and sexuality have been determined by a number of different factors. Chief among these are the religious and the scientific establishment. On one hand, Christian dogma in recent times has been routinely interpreted as condemning same-sex relations. On the other, the medical establishment, as part of its professionalization during the course of the nineteenth century, used warnings against the newly diagnosed sexually deviant identity.^[57]

Sexuality and the state: Homosexuality as unpatriotic

In the 1950s in the United States, open homosexuality was taboo. Many politicians treated the homosexual as a symbol of antinationalism, construing masculinity as patriotism and marking the "unmasculine" homosexual as a threat to national security. This perceived connection between homosexuality and antinationalism was present in Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia^[58] as well, and appears in contemporary politics to this day.^{[59][60]}

Senator Joseph McCarthy used accusations of homosexuality as a smear tactic in his anti-Communist crusade, often combining the Second Red Scare with the Lavender Scare. On one occasion, he went so far as to announce to reporters, "If you want to be against McCarthy, boys, you've got to be either a Communist or a cocksucker."^[61] Some historians have argued that, in linking Communism to homosexuality, McCarthy was playing off of prevalent anxieties about sexuality in order to gain support for his anti-Communist campaign.

Senator Kenneth Wherry likewise attempted to invoke some connection between homosexuality and antinationalism as, for example, when he said in an interview with Max Lerner that "You can't hardly separate homosexuals from subversives." Later in that same interview he draws the line between patriotic Americans and gay men: "But look Lerner, we're both Americans, aren't we? I say, let's get these fellows [closeted gay men in government positions] out of the government."^[62]



Senator Joseph McCarthy

There were other perceived connections between homosexuality and Communism. Wherry, for example,

publicized fears that Joseph Stalin had obtained a list of closeted homosexuals in positions of power from Adolf Hitler, which he believed Stalin intended to use to blackmail these men into working against the U.S. for the Soviet regime.^[63] Another version of this sentiment can be found in the 1950 report produced by a Senate committee headed by McCarthy titled "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government" which states, in part, "As has been previously discussed in this report, the pervert is easy prey to the blackmailer... It is an accepted fact among intelligence agencies that espionage organizations the world over consider sex perverts who are in possession of or have access to confidential material to be prime targets where pressure can be exerted".^[64] Ironically, McCarthy and Roy Cohn more often used the secrets of closeted gay American politicians as tools for blackmail than did foreign powers.^[65]

There were sometimes actual connections between gay rights groups and radical leftists. Emma Goldman, an anarchist, argued for treating gay people like any other person. The Mattachine Society had connections to American Communist parties. McCarthy, Wherry, Cohn, and the House Un-American Activities Committee, however, did not appear especially interested in obvious homosexuals and leftists, but in weeding out the hidden subversives claimed to be planted in every branch of government.

LGBT civil rights movement

Beginning in the 20th century, gay rights movements have led to changes in social acceptance and in the media portrayal of homosexuality. The legalization of same-sex marriage and non-gender-specific civil unions is one of the major goals of gay rights activism. (See Category:LGBT civil rights.)

Attitudes toward homosexuality have changed in western societies in the latter part of the 20th century, accompanied by a greater acceptance of gay men and women into both secular and religious institutions.

Criticisms of the LGBT civil rights movement

Some say the term 'LGBT civil rights' is a misnomer and an attempt to piggyback on the civil rights movement. Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson, for example, called the comparison of the civil rights movement to the "gay rights movement" a "disgrace to a black American". He said that "homosexuality is not a civil right. What we have is a bunch of radical homosexuals trying to attach their agenda to the struggles of the 1960s",^[66] while Jesse Jackson has said "Gays were never called three-fifths human in the Constitution." Gene Rivers, a Boston minister, has accused gays of "pimping" the civil rights movement.^{[67][68]}

Some opponents of the movement, such as Ralph Reed, former executive director of the Christian Coalition, say that gay people are seeking special rights, not equal rights, and that the movement should not be referred to as a civil rights movement. They argue, for example, that in seeking the right to marry members of the same sex, gay people are seeking a special right for themselves and disregarding the fact that polygamists and other groups defined by sexual behaviour do not have this right either.^[69]

Statistics

73% of the general public in the United States in 2001 stated that they knew someone who is gay, lesbian, or bisexual^[70]. This is the result of a steady increase from 1983 when there were 24%, 43% in 1993, 55% in 1998, or 62% in 2000. The percentage of the general public who say there is more acceptance of LGB people in 2001 than before was 64%. Acceptance was measured on many different levels — 87% of the general public would shop at a store owned by someone who is gay or lesbian but only 46% of the general public

would attend a church or synagogue where a minister or rabbi is openly gay or lesbian. 51% of the general public think that "homosexual behavior" is morally wrong (38% "completely agreeing" it is morally wrong and 13% "somewhat agreeing"). Males and people over 65 years old are more likely to think it is wrong. Among people who don't know someone who is LGB, 61% think the behavior is wrong. Broken down by religion, 60% of evangelical Christians think that it is wrong, whereas 11% with no religious affiliation are against it. 57% of the general public think that gays and lesbians experience a lot of prejudice and discrimination, making it the group most believed to experience prejudice and discrimination. (African Americans come in second at 42%).^[71]

In terms of support of public policies, according to the same 2001 study, 76% of the general public think that there should be laws to protect gay and lesbian people from job discrimination, 74% from housing discrimination, 73% for inheritance rights, 70% support health and other employee benefits for domestic partners, 68% support social security benefits, and 56% support GL people openly serving in the military. 73% favor sexual orientation being included in the hate crimes statutes. 39% support same-sex marriage, while 47% support civil unions, and 46% support adoption rights.

A separate study shows that, in the United States, the younger generation is more supportive of gay rights than average. For example, a Kaiser Family Foundation study found that 18-24 year olds strongly supported gay rights in 2001. However, polling data also shows a trend among Americans in general toward rejection of homosexual-specific legal expansion of rights, especially same-sex marriage. A poll commissioned by CNN/USA Today Gallup in 2005 asked the question, "Do you think marriages between homosexuals should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages?" 56% said "should not be valid", while 39% said "should be valid", and 5% were unsure.^[72]

Law

In the United States, Federal law does not restrict discrimination on the basis of homosexuality, but many states and localities do. Federal constitutional considerations can override such laws, as in the case of *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*. At the same time, states and localities cannot single out homosexuality as an *acceptable* basis for discrimination, because this is considered unconstitutional animus under *Romer v. Evans*.

The U.S. Supreme Court has not taken a case dealing with same-sex marriage. At the State level, several judicial bodies have considered whether there is a right to same-sex marriage based on state constitutions, particularly based on the doctrine of equal protection under the law. In Massachusetts, the Supreme Judicial Court required legal recognition for same-sex marriage. In New Jersey the State Supreme Court has directed the State Legislature to enact legislation enabling same-sex couples in New Jersey to have equal legal footing with heterosexual marriage, but permitting the legislature to call it civil union rather than marriage. This goes further than the legislation in other states that creates statuses called domestic partnership or civil union that are not required to be the same as marriage. Twenty-seven states have amended their constitutions to limit marriage to opposite-sex couples, with some using language that would forbid same-sex domestic partnerships and civil unions as well.

See also Gay rights in the United States and Same-sex marriage in the United States.

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See also

- Gay agenda
- Heterosexism
- Homophobia
- Media portrayal of bisexuality
- Sociology of gender

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