

Historical and scientific perspectives on homosexuality

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According to Rathus, Nevid, and Fichner-Rathus, (2005) the term homosexuality denotes sexual interest in members of one's own anatomic sex and applies to both men and women. Homosexual males are often referred to as gay males and homosexual females or referred to as lesbians. Gay males and lesbians have existed throughout history. The historical and scientific perspectives on homosexuality have shaped the way gay individuals perceive themselves in various ways. These perspectives may also be beneficial to heterosexuals' understanding of others in our world of sexual diversity.

When looking at historical perspectives, religion and past societies' sexual behavior is addressed. Although past Greek and Roman cultures were frequently involved in homosexual relationships, the Christian religion denounced those sexual associations and made their beliefs and intentions clear that this behavior was not to continue, for example, according to the book of Genesis in the Holy bible, the city of Sodom was destroyed by God as a punishment as a punishment for sexual activity with members of the same sex.

The legal system became intertwined with the Christian belief that homosexuality was sinful and would punish inappropriate sex acts as criminal offenses (Rathus, Nevid, & Fichner-Rathus, 2005). Another perspective to consider is heritage. Traditionally, in many cultures, there are specific roles for the male and the female. When family is the "primary social unit" as we find in Latino and Latina American culture, anything but the designated gender roles is not acceptable (Rathus, Nevid, & Fichner-Rathus,

2005). Interestingly enough, males can be sexual with other males without being considered gay (Rathus, Nevid, & Fichner-Rathus, 2005).

Women cannot be sexual with other women though because that would be a threat to the traditional male dominance in that culture. Women also need to be virgins when they marry men so any sexual acts before marriage are prohibited. Specific gender roles in many cultures around the world lay the foundation for what is correct and incorrect for males and females in regard to sexual orientation. The scientific perspective of homosexuality is whether homosexuality is caused by environmental influences or whether gay individuals are born that way.

This question has been pondered by scientists for decades, but there is strong evidence to support the idea that homosexuality is an inborn characteristic. Research done on both identical and fraternal twins, show that there are higher concordance rates of gay monozygotic twins. Rathus, Nevid, and Fichner-Rathus, (2005) report that about “ 52% of identical (MZ) twin pairs were found to be “ concordant” (in agreement) for a gay male sexual orientation, compared with 22% of fraternal (DZ) twins and only 11% of adoptive brothers” (p. 312).

Also, evidence has suggested that hormonal influences could be responsible for differences in sexual orientation. Rathus, Nevid, and Fichner-Rathus (2005) explain that prenatal sex hormones be responsible for tissues in the brain to think sexually one way, but for genital development to be the other way. Also, structural examinations on the brains of heterosexual and homosexual males have provided speculative evidence that a part of the

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hypothalamus in gay males is smaller than that region of the hypothalamus in heterosexual males.

The scientific perspectives have helped many gay people come to terms with themselves, which has made coming out easier. Before scientific evidence provided clues that homosexuality could be inborn, many people believe that people “choose” to be gay. However, the scientific evidence proves that many are actually “born” gay. Gay people do not choose their sexuality, but rather live according to sexual impulses that are going on within them. Gay individuals now accept themselves more because they are convinced that they did not choose their sexual identity, as much as it was given to them.

Many homosexuals have formed organizations that are involved personally with others in sharing life stories and involved politically in achieving equal rights for gays and gay couples. Although I have always been attracted to individual of the opposite sex, which means that I am Heterosexual, after learning about the historical and scientific perspectives of Homosexuality that I was not aware of before, I better understand others who are oriented in ways that differ from mine.

I feel as though learning about the history, the scientific research concerning cross-species subjects, and the biology on homosexuality can be beneficial for humanity in order to learn tolerance for differences among sexual orientations. References Rathus, S. A. , Nevid, J. S. , and Fichner-Rathus, L. (2005). Human sexuality in a world of diversity. (6th ed.) Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.