

# Good example of term paper on ethics and homosexuality

[Sociology](#), [Social Issues](#)



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## **Abstract**

This paper is devoted to the issue of homosexuality, the way it is perceived in the society and the current ethical issues that exist in the sphere. In order to better understand the theme, the origin of homosexuality is presented and its history. Besides, the known reasons of this reality are given along with the general description of peculiarities of homosexuals. As a result, it was found out that homosexuality has existed for thousands of years and there exist many factors that influence it, although at the same time there is no possibility to change it purposefully. I believe that it is necessary to understand that homosexuality is not illness or crime and that we have to respect homosexuals along with their nature and give them the same rights

that each of us has. In this way, we will not violate the human rights of these people and will make their life more comfortable and pleasant.

## **General Definitions**

Homosexuality is sexual attraction to persons of the same sex as opposed to heterosexuality (sexual attraction to persons of the opposite sex), and bisexual (attracted to both sexes). Like heterosexuality and bisexuality, homosexuality is clearly manifested in sexual dreams and fantasies, sexual activities, hobbies and romantic love.

The terms "homosexuality" and "heterosexuality" were proposed by reformer of the laws on sexual behavior K. Benkert, who first used them in 1869 in an article for the German newspaper. After that, they were forgotten and rediscovered by Berlin sexologist M. Hirshfeldom in 1905. The word "homosexual" derives from the Greek homos – "same" (heteros means "other") and the Latin sexus – "gender." H. Ellis legalized use of the term in his book *Sexual Inversion*, published in 1908. Then the term "homosexuality" quickly entered the scientific and everyday usage to refer to contacts with persons of the same sex both between men and between women.

The term "lesbian" was spread over a century ago and is now generally accepted to refer to female homosexuality. It takes its name from the Greek island of Lesbos, where in about 600 BC Sappho lived, the famous poet who wrote about love between women.

Widespread use of the word "gay" to refer to homosexuals in a positive sense began with a movement for their rights in the 1960s. The origin of this

use of the word is unknown. In American slang meaning homosexual it goes back to the 1920s, and perhaps even earlier time.

### **General trends of the past 30 years:**

1. Increase of tolerance to same-sex love, especially among younger (18-24 years) and more educated people.
2. Increase in the number of men and especially women, who recognize that they have experienced sexual- erotic attraction to persons of the same sex, this is especially often in adolescence.
3. However, it is accompanied neither by any increase in the number of homosexual contacts (in the time of survey or for life), nor by the growing number of people who consider themselves bi- or homosexual. Increase in the number or proportion of homosexuals happens virtually nowhere. Exceptional homosexuals comprise a small minority of the population everywhere.

In nationally representative surveys, respondents who are usually men over 18 years of age, data about teenage homosexuality is not enough, they must be supplemented by special surveys of teenagers and homosexuals. In addition, many teenagers and young men have difficulties with clear definition of their sexual orientation and differentiation of sexually erotic feelings from friendship .

Of the 1000 English homosexual respondents in one study, 22% before 10 years suspected that they were sexually different from other men, by 20 years, almost all of them had such a suspicion, but among those sure about it there was only every tenth under 10 years, and by 20 years – 86%. A

quarter of these men entered into homosexual sex even before the feature was suspected, but two-thirds did so only after being convinced of their homosexuality.

## **Homosexuality in History**

It is recorded in almost all societies. In ancient Greece, the sexual relationship between teenage boy and his mentor was called pederasty and was socially acceptable. Greek philosophers Plato and Socrates disapproved of these relationships, as well as Roman authors. Catullus wrote a poem about love between men. In the army, there also happened homosexual relationships, for example, between Alexander the Great and the Persian boy Bagoas. Roman emperors, including Julius Caesar and Hadrian, had homosexual relations. Indian texts of 2500 years ago describe the same practice (Whitehead 70).

In ancient Judaic tradition that formed the basis of Judeo-Christian morality, homosexual relations were condemned. The Biblical story of Sodom is the basis for the concept of "sodomy" – religious and legal term for homosexual acts.

In spite of social disapproval, gay men and women not only continued to exist, but sometimes reached prominence in society and government, science and the arts, church and law. It was discovered that such geniuses of the Renaissance as Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo were homosexuals. Among the prominent people of our time known as gay there are playwright Oscar Wilde, writer Gertrude Stein, mathematician and inventor of the computer A. Turing, writers T. Williams and Dzh. Bolduin.

## **Distribution**

Homosexual behavior in socially acceptable situations is practiced in many ethnic groups. Some tribal communities have institutionalized bisexuality. In some communities, homosexual behavior of men was taken as a special social role, which could include wearing of women's clothing. In these roles there are the Hijra in India, xanith in Oman and Byrd (shaman) in the Indian tribes. Male partners of these individuals are not regarded as homosexuals. Homosexual behavior is observed in fish, reptiles, birds and mammals, including primates, both in vivo and in captivity. In some situations, active homosexual acts mean dominance, although there may also occur copulation. Through homosexual contact in female monkeys, orgasm was registered. Among the various species of birds, including gulls and other waterfowl, there were marked stable homosexual couples of males and females.

There is also known the so-called situational homosexuality that is associated, for example, with the long stay in an isolated same-sex team. Consequently, participation in homosexual act does not necessarily mean that a person is homosexual. Many people who have had occasional homosexual experience do not define themselves as homosexuals and do not conduct an appropriate lifestyle.

## **Behavior**

Sexologist John Money recently proposed a term love card. It includes the individual's ideal type of partner, the perfect relationship, and the types of exciting sexual or erotic action. Love card of homosexual tells him (or her)

that same-sex partner would be ideal for them. Love cards, like native language, begin to develop long before they start to show. They are not only the result of a simple learning or social choice.

First homosexual passion, like heterosexual, can occur in the lower grades of elementary school. Distinct erotic fantasies occur in puberty, if not earlier. They manifest themselves in daydreams, night dreams, and fantasies during masturbation, in the thinking and writing erotic themes. In teenage homosexual fantasies sometimes, a romantic element is present. In other cases, these fantasies are focused solely on the physical characteristics of another person or on specific sexual acts.

In adolescents homosexual experience awareness of attractiveness of persons of the same sex precedes such experience. Adolescents with homosexual inclinations and fantasies may suffer from a feeling that no one else likes them, and they can have trouble with sexual identity. Adolescents who experience feelings of guilt and depression due to negative social evaluation of their possible homosexuality have increased suicide risk. They may try to deny, ignore or hide homosexual interests, engaging in heterosexual (or nonsexual) activities.

Only in a few cases homosexuals show effeminate (for males) or masculine (for women) behavior that would allow others to suspect their homosexual orientation. Except for sexual behavior, most of them adhere to the generally accepted way of life.

Defining themselves as homosexual most often occurs after about twenty years, when a person learns what is appropriate behavior and homosexual lifestyle. Then self-discovery is possible, i. e., open acknowledgment of his

homosexuality first before homosexual associates, later – before the "right" friends, family, strangers.

Homosexuals follow many social standards accepted in their environment. In the community of lesbians, clarity and commitment in the relationship are valued. Gay sexual behavior among men has changed as a result of the AIDS epidemic. There is a tendency to reduce the frequency of casual sexual relationships. Many aspire to stable, although not always excluding other partners, relations.

Sexual fantasies play an active role in many sexual relationships. They can also characterize gay subculture, for example, some specialize in sadism and masochism, others – in wearing the skin of different uniforms, women's clothing. Gay bars and clubs often specialize in accordance with fantasies of the customers. Their subculture has grown significantly in recent years.

## **Reasons**

One of two alternative causes – heredity or environment, nature or nurture, cannot explain homosexuality. It is the result of multiple influences interaction shaping the development of personality. Some of them affect only specific critical periods of development, not before and not after. Some factors that determine sexual orientation begin to act before birth, others – much later.

In the prenatal period a major role in shaping the future of sexual orientation play fetal sex hormones that affect the respective centers and pathways of the brain. However, their effect is only partial and inconclusive. After birth, social stimuli that affect the brain through the senses further influence the



differentiation of the brain as the one corresponding to male or female type, homosexual or heterosexual.

Some babies in the womb are exposed to abnormal amounts or abnormal type of sex hormones, which sometimes leads to birth defects in the genitals, such as hermaphroditism. This increases the likelihood that they will develop a predisposition to homosexuality or bisexuality in terms of sex, in which they were brought up and lived socially. The study of these cases showed that sexual orientation is formed mainly up to eight years, after which it remains unchanged (Haider-Markel and Joslyn 301).

Apparently, even in the absence of hormonal abnormalities some boys behave like girls, and some of the girls – as boys. Sissy boys often grow up to be homosexuals. For girls, it is not always typical. Only a small minority of homosexuals in childhood observed atypical sexual behavior. Some homosexuals have homosexual relatives; one or both parents may have homosexual experience. On the other hand, fully or partially gay parents usually bring up heterosexual children (about the same probability as any other family).

As already mentioned, there is no single underlying cause of homosexuality. There are no significant differences in hormonal levels or body structure between heterosexual and homosexual men. No special relationship between homosexuality and fear of the opposite sex or the desire to be like them. Homosexual arises from exposure to pornography. Life situations in adolescence or adulthood cannot cause a change of the individual's sexual orientation. Homosexuality does not depend on the arbitrary choice. It

cannot be changed on their own or other people's will. Punishment or prayers cannot change it also.

## **Attitudes toward Homosexuality**

Social attitudes towards homosexuality vary in different cultures and in different historical periods. In the Western culture, homosexual behavior was originally regarded as a sin and later – as a crime. Then homosexuality was defined as a disease. Relatively recently, it began to be perceived as an individual state.

Religious condemnation of homosexuality has been transformed into laws, all homosexual acts considered as illegal. In recent years, many religious groups are beginning to accept homosexuals, not necessarily approving of homosexual behavior. Some Christian and Judaic groups condemn discrimination of homosexuals, sometimes even allowing them the dignity of construction.

Over the past 30 years in most U. S. states, homosexual contacts of adults undertaken by mutual consent were no longer assessed as a crime. Being homosexual is legal, but in some states, it is illegal to persuade someone to appropriate action. In the past, homosexuals were often discriminated. In Nazi Germany, they were forced to wear pink triangles and were killed in concentration camps. In the United States discrimination against homosexuals was during the anticommunist hysteria in the 1950s and later. AIDS epidemic intensifies nowadays the need to protect homosexuals from homophobia, which manifests in prejudice, persecution and discrimination. In terms of mental health, between homosexual and heterosexual persons

there was no difference found. Previously homosexuality was defined as a disease, which was the result of degeneracy, family history, masturbation or promiscuity. Freud and other psychoanalysts described it as a sexual perversion. There were used different types of therapy to change homosexual orientation, but all attempts proved to be unsuccessful. Experts in the field of mental health recognized that homosexuality itself was not associated with mental disorders. In 1974, the American Psychiatric Association has deleted homosexuality from the official list of mental disorders (Bhatnagar).

Public attitudes toward homosexuality also changed. Some still believe that homosexuals are sick sinners or criminals. However, more and more people are convinced that homosexuals should have the same basic rights and protection from discrimination guaranteed by other social groups.

Same-sex marriage is the one between persons of the same sex. Gay marriage should be distinguished from the " same-sex civil partnerships" and other forms of same-sex unions that are legally different from marriage and often have significant limitations when compared to it.

Opponents of gay marriage argue that by tradition and religious norms, only man and woman may enter into marriage, and therefore the requirements of gays and lesbians to recognize them the same right is absurd and we are not talking about equality of homosexuals and heterosexuals and homosexuals to provide new unprecedented rights.

Supporters of same-sex marriage indicate that registration of marriage has legal effect, regardless of religious norms (in most modern states legal and church marriage occurs separately), and that the law should follow the social

changes that lead to the elimination of inequality between people. It occurs during the last centuries, when the previously existing prohibitions on marriage registration were gradually abolished (e. g., between spouses belonging to different social strata, religions or races). At the same time, they are considering marriage rights through the lens of natural rights, the right to physical and mental health, equality before the law.

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