

# Religions influence on society and homosexuality sociology essay



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This research paper will look at how religious, mainly Christian, practitioners and students of science or psychology have influenced society's view of homosexuality. The Gay Rights Movement has been and is the longest fight for rights in history due to the fervent and persistent opposition put up by fundamentalist Christian leaders and scientists trying to prove homosexuality is a disability, which combined lead to society in general to ostracizing anyone of a different sexual orientation than heterosexual. The pressure that stems from religion is the long-standing belief that homosexuality is a sin. The bible, which to this day remains the best-selling book in the world, quite clearly condemns homosexuality in Leviticus 18: 22. The majority of Christian followers interpret this verse literally, condemning anyone of non-heterosexual orientation. A large portion of today's society is overwhelmingly homophobic, and a lot of this has to do with Christianity being the largest religion in the world, and it has been around for nearly 2000 years. Religion has always offered a 'why' in life, meaning an explanation for why people exist, and science became a rational alternate option. Religion is based entirely on worshipping a deity or higher being that was responsible for the creation of humankind and life in general, whereas science is based on the physical evidence that is interpreted into the scientific version of creation and becoming how humanity is today (evolution). Religion and science, as a general rule, refute each other and constantly campaign to prove the other wrong. Despite this, however, for a very long time they agreed on one thing: homosexuality is bad. Science, for a while professed that homosexuality was one of two things: one it didn't really exist and was a life choice that people made themselves, or two that it was a treatable disorder. Eventually the science community reneged this

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opinion, after maintaining it for years. Today, groups like the American Psychiatric Association (APA), who are considered the world experts on the human brain, now have officially declared that homosexuality is not a disorder, syndrome, or any form of mental disease, and cannot be changed by the individual. They also strongly oppose things like anti-gay ministries, where religious organizations will try to 'fix' or 'save' gays. Science became an alternate belief system to religion in the early 1600s. The Catholic church often ostracized members of the church for being scientists, and anyone who believed in something that wasn't Creationism. Christianity became all about tradition and science became all about discovery and changing. The two began a continuous struggle for society to follow one and not the other, and to force society to conform. The vast majority of the human race follows one or the other or both: science and/or religion.

Christianity generally condemns homosexuality, and almost always has. This total damnation eventually lead to largely Christian values becoming an intrinsic norm in society as a whole, as demonstrated by the attitude of the public. Christianity remains the root of this hatred, as perpetrated by religious denominations in the world, and by the largely Christian dominated governments in many industrialized countries. The Holy Roman Catholic church was the first established Christian church, and since several hundred denominations have split off from it and each other, producing many different takes on the bible and religious morals. Nearly every culture in the world has or has had religion and now Christianity is the most dominant religion in the world with 1.9 to 2.1 billion believers (all denominations of Christianity). Christianity started with turn of the millennium roughly 2011

years ago. The writing of the New Testament in the bible happened shortly after Jesus was crucified, which religious historians estimate was around 40 AD. Thus Christianity was born. The Old Testament, which Judaism also follows, was written a long time before Jesus came. This is where the book of Leviticus is. " 22 Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable" (Leviticus 18: 22) is the bible verse that is used to justify religious homophobia (notice that it has nothing about gay women). Many millions of Christians depend on one man to tell them what the bible means and what they should do to follow it and this man is the Pope. He is the leader of the Holy Roman Catholic church. The current one is Pope Benedict XVI. " It is a tendency toward an intrinsic moral evil, and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder...a person engaging in homosexual behavior therefore acts immorally" (Benedict XVI) is Pope Benedict's official stance on homosexuality. He does call for more compassion, but maintains that homosexuality is a sin and thinks that sex should occur only between a married man and woman. Many Christian leaders agree with him and have more to add, like Reverend Albert Mohler Jr.

" There is no conclusive research that indicates any biological basis for sexual orientation. But -- and this is a big " if" here -- if science were ever to discover a correlation or causation with biological factors, Christians should not be surprised. We believe in the catastrophic and comprehensive effects of the Fall and God's judgment upon sin...such a discovery, if it were to be accepted, would not change God's condemnation of all forms of homosexual behavior, nor would it mean that this represents the inviolable " identity" of any individual. As I argued previously, moral responsibility does not require

absolute moral choice. A soldier in battle may not have chosen to be in a situation of moral anguish, but he is still absolutely responsible for his decisions and actions. Those who commit homosexual acts, whoever they are and whatever their biological profile, are absolutely responsible for their sin. Regardless of any actual or hypothetical orientation, those who commit same-sex acts are responsible for the choice to commit the sinful act. Those who claim that they did not choose their sexual attraction are nevertheless fully responsible for choosing to perform sexual acts the Bible condemns as sin -- period." (Mohler 2007).

This is the opinion R. Albert Mohler Jr. provides for his public in the online newspaper he writes for frequently. He says that homosexuals can't change from being homosexual, but it is acting on it that is a sin. This is a used justification for the persecution of homosexuals. However, some differ from this belief that homosexuality is something that can't be changed just the actions. Many churches believe that therapy can cure homosexuality. This therapy ranges from gay-bashing seminars to shock treatment to gang-rape. There are facilities that use things like seminars on how to become heterosexual, or even shock treatment. These methods are supposed to cure an individual of homosexuality by showing them that being heterosexual is advantageous because it is holy and will get one to heaven. These seminars also tell all the disadvantages of being gay, using the inability to have children between same-sex couples and the bible as justification to become heterosexual. Some people who have exited these programs say that they work, and now claim that they are heterosexual. Although the vast majority of religion resoundingly condemns homosexuality, there are some Christians

that don't. For example, a book called *Homosexuality and the Christian Faith*, which was written by several ministers and church-associated people, says that

" Efforts to change one's sexual orientation usually (some say always) fail. People who have experimented with homosexual behavior (as many heterosexual people do) can turn away from it. And homosexuals, like heterosexuals, can become celibate. But a recent review of research on efforts to help people change their sexual orientation concludes that there is 'no evidence indicating that such treatments are effective'. Christian ex-gay organizations have had a go at this. But now most are now either defunct or abandoned by their ex-gay founders. Reading their literature, one is struck by the admitted homosexual temptations many 'ex-gays' struggle with" (Wink 68).

This is the opinion of David G Myers who is a social psychologist and contributed to this book on *Accepting What Cannot Be Changed*, in Chapter 7. Decidedly, not all Christians are homophobic, in fact there are many who aren't and completely reject the policies put out by ministries like the Holy Roman Catholic Church. Denominations like the United Church of Christ (UCC) have earned nicknames like 'the gay ministry' because they were revolutionary in their thinking. The UCC was the first Christian denomination to ordain and hire an out gay minister, as well as the first woman minister and the first black minister. All together, Christianity largely doesn't accept homosexuality and wields a significant influence over society as they have 2.1 billion members.

Science is the careful study of physical evidence to find reasoning for life and its many components. It is the way many people rationalize the existence of consciousness and being. Science is anything from the study of insects to the study of the human brain. The human brain has been a source of fascination for hundreds of years. Psychology is not an exact study, which makes it hard to pinpoint. However, people have been trying for years. Famous psychologists like Sigmund Freud had many theories on mental disorders, and homosexuality was counted among these for many years. Starting around 1867, a scientist named Karl Heinrich Ulrichs began publishing his findings on homosexuality and the human brain. He was the first pioneer in the field of homosexuality scientifically. He theorized that gays and lesbians were created during the incubation period, that the external gender was one and the internal gender was the opposite (internal woman, external man or vice versa). He also coined his own terms for gays. An 'urning' was a gay man, an 'urningin' was a lesbian, a 'dioning' was a straight person and a 'urano-dioning' was a bisexual person. 'Urning' meant follower or descendent of Uranus, 'urningin' meant heavenly Aphrodite daughter of Uranus, 'dioning' meant common Aphrodite daughter of Zeus by mortal Dione, and urano-dioning was a combination (Uranus or Ouranus was the Greek god of the sky, who married the earth god, Gaia, and their children were the Titans, who emasculated Uranus for Gaia, and then were imprisoned themselves by their children who were the Greek gods Zeus, Posiedon and Hades). Ulrichs claimed that urnings and urningins were the 'third sex'. He also believed that there was a scale of being gay.

Homosexuals were a 'wiebling' or a 'mannling'. Wieblings were the female-type, or receptive, meaning they played the role of a woman during sex, and <https://assignbuster.com/religions-influence-on-society-and-homosexuality-sociology-essay/>

were also feminine in every other manner. Mannlings were the male-type or insertive, meaning they played the role of a man during sex, and were masculine in every other way. Ulrichs was the very first to ever research homosexuality, and using his studies he advocated for gay rights for his entire career. Magnus Hirschfeld was the second real pioneer in this field of study. His theories were more widely disputed, mostly to the inconsistencies of his theories and his tendency to disagree with himself later on. He was the first scientist in this field to advocate against gay marriage. He theorized that homosexuality was invented by Nature to prevent from producing degenerate offspring. He claimed that homosexual individuals would produce disabled or handicapped children and were also produced by degenerate families, but later refuted this theory when he considered that he himself was gay and could find no fault with his family to use as justification. He did, however, believe that homosexuality was largely dependent on environment. Hirschfeld interpreted masculinity and femininity as abstractions and speculated that sexual orientation was intrinsic with male and female characteristics, of the mental and physical levels. Thus people who were more androgynous in appearance and mental make-up were more likely to be gay. He even went as far as speculating about potential spermatozoa in vaginal secretions on women and menstrual blood in the urine of men. The next scientist in this field was named Steinach and was the first to perform any physical surgery to try and cure homosexuality. He performed testicle transplants between heterosexual and homosexual males. He took the testicles of a heterosexual man and placed them in a gay man. This failed to cure the gay men of their homosexuality and actually caused many health problems, like hair loss and the loss of the ability to have an erection. Then

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came Sigmund Freud. Freud theorized on various matters of psychoanalysis, and did many studies on homosexual men (there weren't many studies on lesbians ever). He dealt mainly with the sexual drive area of the brain, called the Libido. He maintained one solid reasoning for men being gay:

"In their earliest childhood, later forgotten', they had' an intense erotic attachment to a female person, as a rule their mother, provoked and fostered by the excessive tenderness of the mother herself, further buttressed by recessiveness of the father in the child's life' at a later stage' the boy represses his love for his mother by putting himself in her place, identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as a model in whose likeness he chooses his new love objects'" (LeVay 33).

In short, Freud believed that a smothering mother and a recessive father made a gay man. A follower of Freud named Ovesey took these theories further

" According to Ovesey, a gay man is often fearful of female genitalia because they remind him of the danger castration. Therefore he represses his attraction to women and the Libido associated with that attraction finds another channel for expression namely in attraction to men. Thus, for many 'homosexual' men homosexuality is not their authentic orientation but merely a displaced route for sexual release" (LeVay 75)

The only theories he offered on lesbians were that he thought they were upset with 'only' having a clitoris and this made them jealous of the male genitalia. He thought that this shouldn't be used as justification to take rights however "'Psychoanalytic research,' wrote Sigmund Freud in 1915, 'is most <https://assignbuster.com/religions-influence-on-society-and-homosexuality-sociology-essay/>

decidedly opposed to any attempt at separating off homosexuals from the rest of mankind as a group of special character" (LeVay 67). Many psychology associations included homosexuality in their list of disorders due to Freud. Later in 1957, The American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality for its book of disorders, declaring that homosexuality was not a curable problem in the brain. Further scientific research was in the 1900s with genetic research. Many believed for a long time that there might be a 'gay gene' but this theory has been disproved.

" Most of the major science journals reported on progress in the field of genetics, but also speculated on how the information would now be used. The one piece of information that ever materialized in form the Human Genome Project was the identification of the so called 'gay-gene'" (Harrub and Thompson 1).

This was the result of the Human Genome Project, which many people hoped would come with a scientific justification for homosexuality. When it didn't, many still insisted that there was a genetic reason. Science has always existed but people didn't start really studying it until after Christianity was firmly established. There were even some original Christian scientists like Galileo Galeli, who discovered that the solar system is heliocentric instead of geocentric and was ostracized from the Catholic Church because of it. Science is based off of logic and physical evidence, whereas religion is based on faith. Science, because of this, has even influenced religion, because some Christians accept both. Many Christians also believe that homosexuality is a disorder, even though the APA declared it isn't. This is the reasoning behind many ex-gay ministries, even though psychologists

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overwhelmingly agree that they are extremely harmful to the individual and are not a psychological institution by any means. Science, therefore, wields an incredible influence over society due to some religious acceptance and those who don't have a religion who are largely accepting of scientific fact.

Society is a complex place. It is so layered with culture and ways of life that it is hard to analyze and make generalizations about. Luckily there are many consistencies and commonalities in cultures. Homosexuality has been around for centuries, around 26 centuries in fact. There is even evidence pre-dating 600 BC, but its accuracy is questionable, so everything after is what is included below:

- 600 BC- Island of Lesbos was later the inspiration for the word lesbian
- 27 BC- first recorded same-sex marriages
- 244-249 AD- Emperor Phillip the Arab tries to outlaw homosexual prostitution and fails
- 342- First law against same-sex marriage, promulgated by Christian Emperors
- 390- Homosexuality declared illegal by Christian emperors, and the punishment would be publicly burned alive
- 484- Christian emperors still collect taxes on male prostitutes
- 529- Homosexuals made scapegoat by Christian emperors for things like flooding and storms

- 1102- Council of London ensures English public knows homosexuality is sinful
- 1260- France places genital mutilation as punishment for homosexuality
- 1321- Dante's Inferno places sodomites in the 7th circle of hell
- 1476- Leonardo Da Vinci charged with sodomy, no verdict
- 1532- Holy Roman Empire makes sodomy death sentence
- 1533- King Henry VIII makes male sex death sentence
- 1553- Mary Tudor removes King Henry VIII's laws
- 1558- Elizabeth I reinstates Henry VIII's laws
- 1620- Prussia makes sodomy punishable by death
- 1649- 1st known conviction for lesbianism (USA)
- 1721- Execution for female sodomy in Germany
- 1791- France decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1794- Prussia abolishes death penalty for sodomy
- 1811- Netherlands and Indonesia decriminalize homosexuality
- 1828- " crime against nature" is first used in the criminal code in the US
- 1830- Brazil decriminalizes homosexuality

- 1832- Russia criminalizes homosexuality
- 1835- Russia forces Poland to criminalize homosexuality
- 1836- last Great Britain execution for homosexuality
- 1852- Portugal decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1858- Ottoman Empire (Turkey) decriminalizes sodomy; Timor-Leste legalizes homosexuality
- 1865- San Marino decriminalizes sodomy
- 1867- Karl Heinrich Ulrichs speaks for homosexual rights in Munich
- 1871- German Empire criminalizes homosexuality; Guatemala and Mexico decriminalize homosexuality
- 1880- Empire of Japan decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1886- England decriminalizes homosexuality in men, but not women; Argentina and Portugal decriminalize homosexuality
- 1889- Italy decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1895- Earl Lind starts first political party with gay rights in the policy agenda
- 1903- New York has 1st raid on gay bathhouse, 12 went to trial on sodomy charges
- 1910- Emma Goldman fights for homosexual rights

- 1913- 'faggot' is used in literature for the first time in France
- 1917- Russia repeals previous ruling
- 1920- " gay" is used for the first time referencing homosexuals
- 1921- England tries to make lesbianism illegal and fails
- 1924- 1st gay rights organization in the USA; Panama, Paraguay and Peru legalize homosexuality
- 1933- Denmark decriminalizes homosexuality; National Socialist German Workers Party bans homosexuals; homosexuals are sent to Nazi concentration camps
- 1934- Uruguay decriminalizes homosexuality; USSR criminalizes gay men
- 1937- Pink Triangle is means gay men for Nazi party
- 1940- Iceland decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1942- Switzerland decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1944- Sweden decriminalizes homosexuality; Suriname legalizes homosexuality
- 1945- Allies liberate concentration camps, but homosexuals have to serve full term
- 1950- 190 US government employees dismissed for being gay
- 1952- Christine Jorgenson is the 1st transgender (Male to Female, MTF)

- 1954- Alan Turning commits suicide after being given a choice between prison or hormone treatment for being gay
- 1956- Thailand decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1957- American Psychiatric Association removes homosexuality from its disorders handbook
- 1958- US Supreme Court has a 1st case involving gay rights
- 1961- Czechoslovakia and Hungary decriminalize sodomy; Vatican declares gays banned from the Catholic church; Illinois 1st US state to decriminalize sodomy
- 1963- Israel (De Facto) decriminalize sodomy between men
- 1965- 1st gay rights demonstration in Canada
- 1967- Chad decriminalizes homosexuality; England and Wales decriminalize homosexuality between men
- 1968- East Germany decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1969- Canada decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1971- Austria, Costa Rica, Finland, Colorado, Oregon, and Idaho repeal sodomy laws; Idaho reinstates because of religious outrage
- 1972- Sweden allows legal sex changes; Hawaii legalizes homosexuality; East Lansing (MI), Ann Arbor (MC), and Sam Francisco (CA) are the first cities to pass homosexual rights ordinance

- 1973- Malta legalizes homosexuality
- 1974- Kathy Kozachenko is the 1st openly gay American elected to public office
- 1975- California legalizes homosexuality; South Australia 1st state in Australia to legalize homosexuality; Panama allows legal sex change
- 1976- Christian Voice is founded, first anti-gay group
- 1977- Harvey Milk is the third out elected official; Quebec prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation; Croatia, Montenegro and Slovenia decriminalize homosexuality
- 1978- Harvey Milk is assassinated; rainbow flag is first used as gay pride symbol; IGLA forms
- 1979- Spain and Cuba decriminalize homosexuality
- 1980- Scotland decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1981- Northern Ireland, Victoria (Aus), and Colombia decriminalize homosexuality
- 1982- California has 1st gay mayor; AIDS acquires many homophobic nicknames
- 1983- Portugal re-legalizes homosexuality
- 1985- France prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation



- 1986- Haiti decriminalizes homosexuality
- 1987- Homomonument founded in Amsterdam (memorial to persecuted homosexuals)
- 1988- Belize and Israel (De Jure) decriminalize sodomy and sex between men
- 1989- Western Australia decriminalizes homosexuality between men; Liechtenstein legalizes homosexuality
- 1990- UK Crown Dependency of Jersey and Queensland decriminalize homosexuality; Justin Fashanu is the 1st out football player
- 1991- Bahamas, Hong Kong and Ukraine decriminalize homosexuality
- 1992- Estonia and Latvia decriminalize homosexuality; World Health Organization declares homosexuality is not an illness; Australia lets gays in the military; Nicaragua recriminalizes homosexuality
- 1993- Norfolk Island (Aus) repeals sodomy laws; Belarus, UK Crown Dependency of Gibraltar, Iceland, Lithuania and Russia decriminalize homosexuality; USA instates Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy; New Zealand lets gays in the military
- 1994- Bermuda, Germany, UK Crown Dependency Isle of Man, Serbia and South Africa decriminalize homosexuality; Canada grants sanctuary to gays fearing persecution
- 1995- Canada passes anti-discrimination law based on sexual orientation

- 1996- Romania and Macedonia decriminalize homosexuality
- 1997- Ecuador and Tasmania decriminalize homosexuality; Fiji and South Africa pass anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation
- 1998- Bosnia, Herzegovina, Chile, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Southern Cyprus and Tajikistan decriminalize homosexuality; Matthew Shepard is brutally murdered; Ecuador, Ireland and Alberta pass anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation
- 2000- Azerbaijan, Gabon and Georgia decriminalize homosexuality; UK lets gays in the military; Nazis officially apologize to gays and lesbians for harm and persecution up to 1969
- 2001- UK Territories decriminalize homosexuality; Rhode Island and Maryland pass anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation; Netherlands allows same-sex marriage
- 2002- China and Mongolia decriminalize homosexuality; Romania, Costa Rica and Arkansas repeal sodomy laws; Alaska and New York pass anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation
- 2003- Iraq decriminalizes homosexuality; Belgium, Ontario and British Columbia allow same-sex marriage; Bulgaria, UK, Arizona, Kentucky, Michigan, New Mexico, and Pennsylvania pass anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation; Armenia and USA repeal sodomy laws; Belize recriminalizes homosexuality

- 2004- Cape Verde, Marshall Islands decriminalize homosexuality; Manitoba, Newfoundland, Labrador, Nova Scotia, Quebec, Saskatchewan, Yukon and Massachusetts allow gay marriage; Australia, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Virginia and Wisconsin ban same-sex marriage; Portugal, Indiana, Louisiana and Maine pass anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation

- 2005- Canada and Spain allow same-sex marriage; Latvia, Uganda, Kansas and Texas ban same-sex marriage; Illinois passes anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation, Puerto Rico repeals sodomy laws

- 2006- South Africa allows same-sex marriage; Tennessee, Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Virginia and Wisconsin ban same-sex marriage; Faroe Islands, Germany, New Zealand, Illinois, New Jersey, Washington, DC pass anti-discrimination laws based on sexual orientation, Kentucky voids anti-discrimination laws

- 2007- Nepal and New Zealand territories decriminalize homosexuality; UK Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Ohio, Oregon, and Vermont pass anti-discrimination legislation

- 2008- Nicaragua and Panama decriminalize homosexuality; Connecticut allows gay marriage; Arizona, California and Florida ban same-sex marriage

- 2009- India decriminalizes homosexuality; Argentina, Philippines and Uruguay end ban on gays in the military; Serbia, Delaware, and the USA

Matthew Shepard Act, pass anti-discrimination legislation; Iceland has the first gay head of government

- 2010- Fiji decriminalizes homosexuality; Australia lets transgendered people in the military; Serbia lets gays in the military; Australia recognizes non-gender specific people; USA repeals Don't Ask, Don't Tell; Portugal, Iceland, Argentina, Mexico City, new Hampshire and DC pass same-sex marriage

As shown, religious persecution dates all the way back to the very beginning of the millennium. This shows that religion is the longest-standing resistance to acceptance of all peoples. Christianity has been trying to outlaw and even execute homosexuals for hundreds of years. Bans on gay marriage, the criminalizing of sodomy or homosexuality, or any other anti-gay legislation is almost guaranteed to be religiously based.

In conclusion, the gay rights movement is the longest rights struggle in history. It has not really had any specific leaders, but rather a mish-mash of like-minded people. This has led to there being much progress, but in many ways there has been recession as well. In the late BC, homosexuality was very much a norm in extremely developed societies like the Greek or Roman Empires. With the rise of Christianity however, this norm became an abnormality, and religion very slowly took over and outlawed homosexuality, putting severe penalties on it, such as death. This continued all over the world for many centuries. Science, in its beginning, did not really make anything better, but instead provided another rationale for homosexuality being bad by calling it a disorder.