



***The Resilience of the LGBT Communities in
Denmark, the United States, and Russia
through the past 50 Years:
A Comparative Analysis***

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Introduction

This essay aims to compare the outcomes of attempts to create progress towards LGBT/heterosexual equality and well being of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) communities within Denmark, the United States, and Russia over the past fifty years in order to search for analytical correlations between countries' different characteristics and their protection of rights. Denmark and the United States make an especially interesting comparison because about fifty years ago, their perspectives on sexuality were extremely comparable. In the 1960's, the majority of the citizens in both countries were against permitting homosexual behaviors into policy at all at first, considering it an impairment, but each nation-state's LGBT populations advocated for themselves to bring attention and support to their issues to change paradigms regarding sexual orientation, resulting in generally progressive outcomes, more so for Denmark than the United States but not satisfactorily in either nation-state. Russia is a great addition to the analysis because of its contrasting qualities. Fifty years ago, the country viewed homosexuality as not just an illness, but also a crime, and, through modern day, Russia has maintained and even strengthened its position against

protecting homosexual behavior. In and outside of the country, the amount of controversy over the LGBT community in Russia and the government's responsibility to protect human rights has increased dramatically, the nation-state even having been rated as "the least protective country in Europe for LGBT citizens, ranking it 49th out of the 49 European countries" by ILGA-Europe, the European section of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia.1).

Denmark has been able to make significant progress in its battle for equal human rights for homosexuals and established itself as a "haven" for sexual freedom by having activists and LGBT individuals act dynamically in order to protect said freedoms, though they must continue to keep their future possibilities in mind, as they have yet completed their mission of reaching equality and security and still have many battles to fight. LGBT individuals and allies in America will need to show even more resilience than the Danes to achieve equality for the entire community, for though they have made much progress towards gaining equal rights, they still face impositions of societal and legislative restrictions, oppressions, and injustices that are being maintained, some that have already been dismantled in Denmark, but many shared issues. LGBT activists in Russia still have the greatest journey ahead of them, as "nearly three-quarters of Russians believe that homosexually is morally unacceptable, more than disapprove of other hot-button issues such as extramarital affairs, gambling and abortion," a statistic that unmasks the truly overwhelming lack of progression made in acceptance for homosexual behavior, it could even be called distain, that ripples throughout the society of that nation-state (Pappas 1). This paper begins with a review of the recent history of each country in relation to LGBT rights and then moves into a comparative study of nation-state characteristics and decisions made in the last fifty years in order to analyze the hypothesis that these three different outcomes were not simply coincidental or random, but that the differences in outcomes for protecting LGBT peoples from injustices were consequential results of particular characteristics of the nations' history in geography, politics,



economics, religion and societal/community philosophy.

The Resilience of the LGBT Community in Denmark

In Northwestern Europe, surrounded by Germany, Norway, Sweden and Great Britain, one will find the small and pleasant nation-state of Denmark. Much smaller than the United States and Russia, Denmark is estimated to be just about twice the size of the state of Massachusetts or half of the size of Maine, totaling only 16,609 square miles with an estimated population of 5.37 million in 2002 (Denmark. 1). Labeled the “Happiest Nation in the World,” Denmark is among the most accepting societies of people of all sexualities, ran in a social democracy format while continuing to maintain a monarchy, parliament and connection to the church (Registered Partnership 1). In the 1960’s, Scandinavia was equally as poorly welcoming to LGBT populations as the United States, though fortunately for their citizens both of those states had a greater predisposition towards LGBT acceptance than in Russia. In the 1970’s, while more than half of Denmark’s population agreed that it was “not their own fault” that people were homosexuals, a majority also contested decreasing the criminal age for LGBT relations to the same age as other groups and also agreed that a homosexual should not be allowed to work as a teacher, revealing a continuation of discrimination and lack of progress in the social philosophy of the nation, though still slightly showing more potential for LGBT equality than America was at the time (de Boer 267-271). However, the sexual revolution that took place in the 1960’s laid the foundation for changing public attitudes towards homosexuality that made it so today, the Danish LGBT population have nearly equal rights in policy, though not entirely in society, with their heterosexual compatriots (Denmark 1).

In the 1960’s, education about gender and sexual identity spread through the routes of media, art and publications, to the point where stigmatized gender roles became increasingly questionable to the skeptical Danish people. Sexual discrimination was outlawed in Danish legislation and severe cases were minimal, though homophobia was still apparent in rural and

low-income areas (Denmark 1). Being from a society with traditionally feminine ideals, Danish men were able to experiment freely with their gender roles and were not often pushed into stereotypical representations of masculinity, and vice versa for women. Denmark certainly had gained a reputation for being open-minded and progressive in terms of sexual freedom over the years, but by the sixties, it had not yet dispelled its cultural predisposition to keep sexual matters to oneself and to not publicly consider the sex life to be too important (Denmark 1). The logic to this was that sexual behavior would be stressful on and lower the confidence of LGBT youth who are conflicted by their sexuality, and can make them afraid to outwardly label themselves as queer. In modern times, these old norms of concealment of sexual matters aren't nearly as prevalent, and there is meant to be little to no legal or social risk in being a part of the LGBT community unless pedophilia is involved (Stürup 361-368). A recent study shows that "only 1.1% and 1.4% of Danish 31- to 33-year-old males and females, respectively, label themselves as homosexuals, while 1.3% and 1.6% claim to be bisexual (Ventegodt 1996)" (Denmark 1). Such a small percentage supports the possibility of a fear of labeling oneself as homosexual within the community pressuring people to remain silent, though the country is now supposedly respectful of sexual freedoms. Social expectations of being an average, homogeneous member of society within Denmark could be the key explanation to that statistic. The Danish National Association of Gays and Lesbians attempted to address the issue of fear of coming out by establishing a telephone hotline that provides support for youth coming out of the closet and by requiring comprehensive sexual education classes for all youths in school. Contrary to the United States and its abstinence focused sex education or the sheer lack of sex education in Russia, the Danish government acknowledges the right youth have to information about sex, sexuality, contraception, and sexually transmitted infections, so it actively researches and develops education programs to provide it to them (Rose 1213).

The homosexual community has been known to be a part of society for a very long time even though they weren't accepted until recently, but

transgender people, people experiencing gender-conflict, had remained fairly invisible to heterosexuals in society until after the sexual revolution of the 1960's. The last Danish legislation that targeted trans-people was repealed in 1966, decriminalizing transsexual and transgender behavior, however, it took until the 1990's for the Ministry of Health to eliminate transvestism from being classified as a form of illness (Denmark 1). Though there is no remaining legislation against transgender people, there is also no legislation providing for the group. They can still access publicly funded sex-reassignment surgery through the free medical care system if they choose to utilize a law regarding sterilization and castration from 1929 that "warrants voluntary castration in cases of potential criminal behavior or a considerable amount of 'social disparagement' or 'mental suffering'" (Denmark 1). Unfortunately, legal sex change while maintaining all rights and equality is not possible, because even though transgenderists can marry after their transformation, they, like homosexuals, are not allowed adopting children. In 1952, an American named George Jorgensen came to Denmark to transition from one gender to the other and became the first to complete a sex-change surgery in Denmark, becoming Christine Jorgensen. Denmark was falsely and exaggeratedly labeled a "transsexual paradise" after word got out about the surgery (Denmark 1). Alternatively, activists and activist groups fighting for equal rights for transsexuals were highly visible, but transgender people themselves continue to be rare sights in the community and are still frequently misunderstood and harassed (Denmark 1).

Modern Denmark, particularly the city of Copenhagen, is often considered a haven for LGBT peoples, usually by people who are comparing it to much worse places or only aware of the minor progress that has been made, forgetting that there are still many factors challenging the LGBT community. For the past twenty or thirty years, homosexuals have been accomplishing their goals of decreasing levels of inequality battle by battle, but they won't settle until they're equal (Gay Politics 1). Denmark was the first nation-state to offer registered partnerships to homosexual couples in 1989, with Axel and Eigil



Axgil acting as the first homosexual couple to be partnered in the world at the City Hall of Copenhagen. Now it is one of many gay-friendly countries and was the tenth nation-state to offer official marriages to LGBT couples (Denmark 1). The national church is still resistant to this legal equality and does not allow homosexual couples to have a traditional church wedding ceremony, however, they do allow the priests to bless registered partners in a similar ceremony for marriage within the church and haven't charged anyone negatively for providing said ceremonies yet or significantly lobbied the government in opposition to LGBT rights progress. However, Danish LGBT couples weren't content with this form of separation through provision of a different ceremony, and so when the State Church began to debate a homosexual couple blessing ritual instead of a traditional ceremony, a major advocacy organization arranged a demonstration at the church itself during which they interrupted the service and passed out flyers to the congregation that read: "We don't want your pseudo marriage ritual. We want a lesbian bar – right here" (Same-sex Marriage 1). This form of activism is a factor that genuinely contributed to the progression towards conquering equal rights for the LGBT community, and more will be necessary to attain them completely.

It is still illegal for Danish homosexual couples to adopt children with rare exceptions made, and in vitro fertilization of lesbian couples by professional physicians is a topic of heated debate because it not currently provided by government health care, though it is available legally through private midwives (Graugaard 1). The Danish LGBT community does not have to miss out on their opportunities to parent, however, as if they had a child outside of their gay relationship, everyone is able to make use of the publicly subsidized day-care system, making it easier for LGBT people and their families to get by and work without so much worrying and suffering. Gays and lesbians have also made their way back into the education and child development world themselves, with many schools and institutions hiring homosexual staff members now that old stereotypes and fears regarding homosexuals being pedophiles have been disbanded (Gay Families.1). As Danish citizens, Danish LGBT populations also



have access to free welfare, health care systems and HIV care that provide services many American homosexuals would be unable to afford, though health care “should” now be affordable in America for LGBT individuals due to the introduction of Affordable Health Care Act (Obama Administration Record.1). Danish citizens also receive free tuition and a stipend for higher education through college, so Danish LGBT citizens have easier access to education than American or Russian LGBT citizens who receive little to no government aid for taking upper level classes. All in all, despite certain new and major issues being laid out on the table, the entire LGBT population in Denmark has been becoming increasingly visible and respected as members of common Danish society and culture in many aspects but especially through the creation of many gay-friendly establishments, events, and media appearances, like gay bars, the annual Gay Pride Parade, and the recognition of World AIDS Day, which all together is a great leap in societal ideology towards homosexuality in itself.

The Resilience of the LGBT Community in America

In the southern part of the North American continent lies one of the newest, and third largest (after Russia and Canada) nation-states in existence, the United States of America, with a population of about 280.5 million people (United States of America 1). Homosexuality was classified as an illness in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* until 1973 when it was finally repealed and homosexuality was no longer considered a disease in the United States of America. Social workers and clinicians were then able to stop looking at these people as “sick” and help them reach their full potential, opening up a new dimension of LGBT research and education that resulted in a new literature on the subjects (United States of America 1). At that time, homosexuals were still fairly discriminated against though the act was not criminalized, as seen through the following statistics that show just a few years prior, in 1970, 70 percent of Americans found acts of homosexuality always wrong, 73.5 of Americans believed that homosexuals shouldn’t be teachers, and 77 percent of Americans were still strongly against the right of LGBT

families to adopt children (de Boer 265, 274-275). Today, after the bits of progress that has been made in the U.S., about ten percent of the men in the United States are openly homosexual, and about nine percent of the women.

In the 1990's, LGBT people, who were still largely discriminated against, made up enough of the work force to have a noticeable impact on the economic standing of a company or city, a factor that not surprisingly influenced and accompanied a period of the immense rising in acceptance of LGBT populations and presence in the media in America. Advertisements that targeted gay and lesbian consumers helped begin to normalize homosexuality in America, though not all the way to an equal level (United States of America 1). As the LGBT population gained control of more of the economy, they gained some control of discriminatory legislation. Prior to 1994, homosexuals were not permitted to enlist in the U.S. Army. In 1994, the military initiated their "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which allowed homosexuals to enlist in the army as long as they didn't inform anyone of their sexuality, a "solution" that could be argued to be even more heinous than pure exclusion (United States of America 1). The policy has since been repealed by the Obama administration (Obama Administration Record 1). The 1990's were also when the transgender movement emerged in the United States. Gender reassignment surgery was made legal in the United States and was usually performed on those born with ambiguous genitalia or who feel it is necessary for self-identification. Sadly, the average age of death of a transgender woman in the United States was 23 years old due in the early 2000's to actions such as violent hate crimes, murder, depression and suicide (United States of America 1).

In the United States, there has been a small minority that has a disproportionate influence on social policy compared to their numbers. This minority is known as the Religious Right, the ten percent of the population that is able to lobby the nation into appeasing their demands for abstinence only education. It was interesting that the government would work in the interest of a religious group even more so than in Denmark, especially considering the U.S. supposedly had a separation of church and state while Denmark's state is still



connected to their church. They claim to be protecting teenagers from sex, pregnancy and disease, but their solution of abstinence free education alienates the LGBT populations by diminishing sexual activity for anyone not in a heterosexual marriage. Their belief is that individuals who are not heterosexual may enter into heterosexual marriages in order to have a “normal public life” rather than a fulfilling personal relationship, but this hasn’t warranted a great deal of support from the international community. International organizations and UN member states have accused the United States of “appeasing its core far-right constituency,” due the programs remaining quite unpopular and the style of class only utilized in America (Rose 1208-1210). Away with the categorization of homosexuality as an illness went the best “legitimate” argument against homosexuals as active members of society, so in order to defend their biblical beliefs, the religious sector became highly present in social and political dialogue against homosexual behavior (United States of America 1). They are particularly opposed to gay marriage, which is likely connected to why the United States has not yet legalized gay marriage on a federal level.

LGBT individuals in America tend to have a hard time developing a positive self-image as the heterosexism in society and Religious Right controlled government suggests that their sexuality is incorrect or defective, especially since gender role stereotypes are so strongly encouraged in American society. Transgender and homosexual citizens appearing in the media a bit in the 1990’s did not solve their self-acceptance issues and insecurity about how to live life because it was minimal, temporary and stereotypical, though various support groups and mental health professionals have been made available by the government to assist homosexual people and their families with those problems (United States of America 1). Otherwise, LGBT persons tend to receive very little support because sex education and family courses in America often ignore homosexuality in order to preach only abstinence and keep sexuality out of the conversation. Because of the heterosexual dominated culture, adults in contact with the LGBT youth will

flagrantly assume that they are heterosexual, which would act as another reinforcement of society's suggestion that their sexuality is wrong (United States of America 1). When doctors assume heterosexuality in the same way, a homosexual patient may not reveal their true sexual history out of fear of judgment and not get the medical treatment they need. Literature has been written to provide something for LGBT youths to relate to, Leslea Newman's *Heather Has Two Mommies* (1989) for example, but access to them is limited as they are generally considered inappropriate for children. More and better resources are becoming available to the LGBT community to provide useful and relatable information for surviving while identifying as LGBT in a discriminatory world, such as books, pamphlets and other publications. They are being released on local and national levels, but still, not all those who would benefit from the information in those publications would have access to them, especially those who feel socially and economically threatened to come out as homosexual in the first place (United States of America 1).

There is still a high level of discrimination observed in American elementary and high school settings. For example, the Boy Scouts is an organization for elementary students whose leaders are outwardly intolerant of homosexual members and therefore promote heterocentric beliefs (United States of America 1). Youth in America are confronted by anti-homosexualism and negative stereotypes about homosexuals in the media and society every day, which perpetuates discrimination against LGBT populations and causes unempowered LGBT youth to question their identities to the point of depression. In 1989, according to the Youth Suicide National Center Report, homosexuality and societal constraints against homosexualism were related to one third of adolescent suicides. There were twice as many lesbian attempts and three or four times as many gay youth attempts at suicide than the 10% of heterosexual youths, likely due to the lack of support and inclusion in society (United States of America 1). High schools have been created to provide asylum and extra support to homosexual youths from the regular discrimination they might face in school from students, faculty and administration elsewhere.



The relative silence towards bisexuality and its hetero-sexualization in society is also a factor that causes pain to the LGBT community because it isn't even clearly defined as a genuine sexuality. Colleges and universities tend to see less and less homophobia each year, and most have their own funded lesbian and gay organizations that facilitate open discussions, even at the more religious institutions, though some are more progressive than others (United States of America 1).

Openly gay officials have now been elected into nearly every position in the U.S. government allowing them public representation which signifies immense social progress towards tolerance and acceptance of homosexuals from when homosexuals were considered to have an "illness." Also, an increasing amount of sexuality research is being completed each year and centers for LGBT research have been built across the nation. Certain cities in more liberal areas such as West Hollywood and San Francisco have established themselves as hub communities that welcome LGBT individuals without discrimination, and Gay Pride festivals and conferences are organized there annually for the homosexual population, whereas some cities have much worse attitudes towards homosexuality (United States of America 1). Finally, much of the discriminatory government policy against the homosexual community has been repealed, and today, 17 states in America have legal same-sex marriage, though it remains inconsistent with federal law, but still represents significant progress from the United States' humble beginnings. Now couples can get married and recognized by the state, though they will not be recognized as married by the federal government. They can also adopt children within certain states, though this isn't accepted throughout the country either. 33 states have yet to legalize same-sex marriage. The first state to allow for homosexual marriage was Massachusetts in May 2004, and the most recent was Illinois in 2014, but many states have maintained their stance against gay marriage and/or have banned it in their state constitutions as recently as 2008 (Gay Marriage 1). Though much more progress has been made compared to within Russia, respect and equality towards the LGBT community are not



reflected in new American policy or society as much as they are reflected in new Danish policy and society.

The Resilience of the LGBT Community in Russia

Dominating the Eurasian Region is the largest country in the world, Russia, so large it spans ten time zones over 6.6 million square miles and was recorded to hold 145 million residents in 2002. The Russian Orthodox church has long resided within the country, and though it does not dominate society particularly due to the efforts of the Soviet Union, Russian society has long agreed with its devaluing of homosexual behavior (Russia 1). There was a short period of potential for progression towards societal respect for homosexuals from only 1917 to 1933, between the Revolution of 1917 and Joseph Stalin's rise to power and implementation of laws that criminalized homosexuality, as no legal persecutions were executed within the nation (Pappas 1). The 1917 Revolution against the Czarist leaders who did not approve of homosexuality allowed the Russian society to question traditional gender roles and write up a new set of laws that did not mention homosexuality but those were rapidly forgotten as that ideology was quickly abandoned by the U.S.S.R., which was against sexuality as a whole, gained control of Russia in 1920, re-criminalized homosexuality in 1933, and by 1934, enforced a minimum sentence to a guilty charge of homosexuality to three to five years in a prison, many of which were organized as harsh labor camps with unbearable conditions, primarily the Gulag, with punishments of "up to five years, or up to eight years if compulsion, violence, a minor, or abuse of a dependent was involved" (Russia 1). Homosexuality remained illegal, unmentionable and supposedly as an issue under control in Russia throughout the Soviet period.

By the 1980's, however, AIDS had become a growing issue for the population of Russia, especially, but not solely within the homosexual community (Russia 1). Soviet health officials publicized the HIV infection as a strictly homosexual disorder, perhaps hoping to confine it within that population or utilize them as a scapegoat for the illness, but unexpectedly actually



increased the spread of the disease as they were in effect teaching heterosexual couples to feel safe without using protection and allowing the physicians to not take the time to test blood transfusions as they believed they were safe if they came from “only heterosexual” donors (taking into account that many homosexuals and carriers donated because revealing their sexuality would result in prison terms). This became a major health cost to the discrimination by the Soviet Union and brought a majority of people significantly closer to the LGBT causes by connecting the homo- and heterosexual groups through a struggle for life and health security (Russia 1).

The actual debate over whether or not homosexuality should be legalized was irrelevant in Russia in the newspapers until 1987, whereas in America and Denmark homosexuality was decriminalized significantly longer beforehand, longer than fifty years ago, and activists had shifted their discussions primarily to working towards equal rights and security for the LGBT communities (Russia 1). Though earlier discussions by lawyers over the topic did occur secretly since 1973, it took until 1987 for the subject to be actively addressed through most channels of communication, allowing Russian homosexuals to feel connected to a community for the first time instead of only different, alone, and needing to conform to the rest (Russia.1). Needless to say, these publications were controversial as a majority of society held to their historical position against homosexuals. After the breakup of the anti-sexual Soviet Union in 1991, some previously Soviet republics, such as Ukraine, made the decisions to repeal their laws against homosexual behavior, though homosexuals remained a severely unaccepted, minority community in Russia itself. Sexuality was utilized as a symbol of rebellion against the Soviet leadership before its dismantlement, but the democracy that replaced it has only made minimal advancement in the field of sexual freedoms. A 1992 survey with “the question “How ought we to act with homosexuals?” produced the following spread of answers: 33% favored exterminating homosexuals, 30% favored isolating them from society, and 10% said leave them alone. Only 6% favored helping homosexuals” (Russia 1). This survey, taken only a decade

ago, truly portrays the denial of respect towards homosexual behavior in Russia through the 1990's and start of the 2000's. Russian health experts continued to consider and spread ideas of homosexuality as a disease through the 90's, providing justification for much of society to turn itself away from homosexuals. Children exhibiting homoerotic behavior were discouraged, true sexualities were closeted for risk of job, housing and physical security (Russia 1).

In any case, the situation did begin to turn up around that time, as early as 1989, when members of the LGBT community began to reveal themselves, their perspectives, and their stories to the public through various media sources. In the early 90's, multiple LGBT organizations were established across the nation and utilized their combined resistance to bring about AIDS prevention work, acceptance to gay themes in media, and the inclusion of gay bars to Russia (Russia 1). One of their greatest accomplishments was the decriminalization of homosexual relationships in 1993 (The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia 1). This period of time was Russia's own "sexual revolution," with sexuality entering the arena as an important aspect of individual life, and tolerance, acceptance and a demand for public services growing and being encouraged among younger, better educated, and city dwelling citizens. With the aid of Western funds, information was spread regarding sexual knowledge and safe-sex practices, primarily through a Russian Planned Parenthood Association and a few other centers for sex education that appeared at roughly the same time, but because sex education was still too taboo to be taught in schools, it did not reach a good portion of the public. In 1997, even the transgender community won a battle against oppression and gained the right to change their legal gender on identity documents, though through a difficult and traumatic process (The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia 1). This was a great success for them considering they were largely invisible before the 1990's (Russia 1).

Many Russian politicians and activists brought up this liberalization within the government as a problem, but had little ability to influence society, especially younger generations, over the media (Russia 1). One disadvantage

of the LGBT community for gaining rights in Russia is the assumed correlation between the ideas of homosexuality and of pedophilia and rape. Sodomy was once used in Russian prisons to exert power and encourage cooperation. Church leaders still tend to compare homosexuality to pedophiles, but the Russian Orthodox Church tends to not play a major role in control of most ethnic Russian's lives thanks to the pro-atheist campaigns of the Soviet Union. Tatiana Mikhailova, a senior instructor of Russian Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, however, has observed that "the church is taking a more and more prominent place in Russia, and Putin and his government constantly talk about spiritual values... "Traditional" values are portrayed as what makes Russia strong" (Pappas 1).

As recently as June 2013, the Russian duma, or government, passed a law banning homosexual propaganda towards minors for their own protection, setting fines for conviction as high as 5,000 rubles, or \$150, for individuals, and up to a million rubles, or \$30,000, for organized groups. Language used within the written legislation emphasized "non-traditional" relationships, rather than blatantly stating homosexual relationships, in order to combat United Nations LGBT human rights officials by supporting their claim that they were simply defending the "traditional family" (The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia 1). Furthermore, any intimate, not necessarily sexual, act between two members of the same sex in a public place or posted online could result in prosecution of both actors, even if children were not present or targeted, simply because the act could potentially have been or could have ended up seen by a child. LGBT citizens, activists and allies face a growing threat of fines and prosecutions as the attitudes towards homosexuality in Russia resist change and remain primarily negative. Many activists have already been detained under this law for simple actions such as expressing public support for the LGBT community or participating in rallies and holding signs that said, "Gay is Normal" (The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia 1). The Russian parliament passed another law that could also be utilized alongside the anti-propaganda law in order to silence LGBT activists across the country through fines just a bit earlier, in 2012. This



“foreign agents” law dictated that require non-governmental organizations to register with Russia if they received foreign funding and participated politically, however vaguely defined. This law has already been utilized to charge major fines to LGBT civil society organizations through a highly questionable process. Even more laws have been proposed that would influence the ability of those in nontraditional relationships to have parental rights on the grounds that they can commit propaganda within the family itself (The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia 1).

According to a very recent Pew survey, “only 9 percent of Russians say homosexuality is acceptable... Another 9 percent say homosexuality is not a moral issue, and 72 percent say being gay is unacceptable. In comparison, 69 percent of Russians say extramarital affairs are unacceptable, 62 percent disapprove of gambling, and 44 percent say abortion is immoral” (Pappas 1). Russian authorities have followed suit, preventing expressions of gay pride and activism (The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia 1). Hate crimes remain a significant yet very common problem for the Russian LGBT community. The issue of violent anti-LGBT skinheads committing horrendous acts on the homosexual community, and the lack of authority response when they occur, clearly illustrates the discrimination based on sexual orientation that still goes on today in Russia. This nationally homophobic society even provided support for use of violence and arrests to put an end to the Moscow LGBT Pride parade and surrounding events (The Facts on LGBT Rights in Russia 1). Of course, the sexual values within the nation are not universal, as age, gender, social standing, and multiple other factors influence a person’s individual beliefs, for example, younger and better-educated people within the Russian society tend to be more accepting of non-traditional relationships.

Findings and Implications

Denmark has established itself as a leader in the application of LGBT rights into society whereas the United States has proven itself to be progressing but still faces a great deal of inner conflict over the issue, even though they



both started in the same sort of situation and had the same attitudes toward LGBT rights fifty years previous. Both have legally set more protections for LGBT rights in that time period than Russia, which has drifted in a different direction, continuing to place dominating oppressions on their own LGBT population despite minor progressions. Though each nation had an active LGBT activist population, the countries' general situations and perspectives in regards to politics, economics, general societal values, religion, and geography over the past fifty years clearly expose the predictability of and justification of the establishment of more human rights protections in Denmark than in the United States, and more in both of these nation-states than Russia due to their different attitudes in regards to these national characteristics.

In the political sphere, the United States is established as a capitalist democracy superpower, and therefore the general political philosophy encourages maintaining economic and military superiority with intended (but often overlooked in order to maintain economic security) respect paid to the demands and contentedness of the people. Because the LGBT community in America was so successful both in business and in mobilization to put pressure on politicians, many successes were able to be made on their part, especially within states, but because they remained such a minority and regionally based group, they weren't as effective federally. Denmark's social democratic system of values would conversely guide it towards working toward societal cooperation, tolerance (rather than respect), equal representation and integration (rather than acceptance for who they are) as a productive member of society before attempting to profit off of someone else's rights. They've welcomed discussions with LGBT representatives, as long as those LGBT representatives come dressed professionally and look and act as homogenous with normal society as possible, resulting in a great deal of legislation protecting homosexual behavior having been passed, despite a great deal of the Danish society having not come to fully respect the members of the LGBT community at large. Russia, or the Russian Federation, is a semi-presidential republic federation ran primarily by the President, Prime Minister, and



government. It is not incredibly stable system and is said to be a very corrupt nation-state. This sort of republic doesn't allow for the influence of the people like the democracy in America, revealing an additional strife of the Russians that is not shared with the other nations' LGBT groups.

According to another study, the top predictors for high national levels of equality, respect, and acceptance of the LGBT community are high economic development levels and low levels of income inequality, which is consistent with the findings from the Denmark, United States, and Russia comparison. Using social class as the variable for predicting individual's acceptance levels, people in "economic distress" are less likely than those who are financially secure to be tolerant of homosexuality, and Denmark's strong welfare system is likely to keep most of its citizens out of economic distress, a treatment they wouldn't necessarily receive in America where there is less financial security due to the capitalist organization of economy (Anderson 944). Russia has contributed a great deal over the years economically, however, it is important to remember that after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, due to instability in oil prices, Russia went into a major economic crisis that severely impacted the nation, widening the income gap within the population and only recovering very gradually. Though this post-Soviet period saw some of the most improvements for the well being of the LGBT community, they still weren't nearly as effective of improvements as within Denmark or the U.S., and Russia has always had a significant division between the powerful and poor. These nations' histories definitely support the thesis that high economic development levels and low levels of income inequality are high level predictors for nations respecting the LGBT community.

There is also a much larger power and wealth gap in American society than in Denmark due to its capitalist structure, and even more in Russia due to its corruption, which suggests an even larger amount of social injustice and inequality in those countries. Cross-national research suggests that high levels of inequality in society are an indicator of lower levels of societal trust across all members of a society (Anderson 944). This is evidently reflected in Denmark,



as the high level of social equality seems to create high levels of societal trust. Higher levels of social equality also provide more equal opportunity and encouragement towards education, and higher levels of education appears to be another factor that increases the likelihood of a group coming to accept LGBT equality, as seen as levels of acceptance of homosexuality in the United States increased as the education levels of the American demographic increased between 1973 and 1998. Lower levels of societal trust and/or the perception that an outside group might pose a real or imaginary social or economic threat lead to lower levels of respect towards LGBT peoples (Anderson 944). Russians have experienced both low levels of societal trust as well as low levels of respects towards the LGBT population, also following the trend.

Religion also appears to be a significant influential predicting factor. The separation of church and state in the United States is used to keep the strong conservative views held by very right wing members of the church from ruling over the democratic nation, but the church continues to be very powerful and right wing in influencing or partnering with the government by being very involved in and aware of government business as well as contributing either economically or politically. In Denmark, the church and state are not separate and the church does not support homosexuality, but the general perspective of the nation is pragmatic and secular, and so many bishops and pastors would still perform ceremonies for desirous LGBT couples without interfering in state legislation (Registered Partnership 1). Russia became primarily nonreligious during the anti-sexual Soviet period, but with the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Russian Orthodox Church has restarted exerting its influences against the rights of the LGBT population as “traditional” ideas are encouraged.

Denmark’s smaller size and population also likely made the spread of respectful and equality centered ideas a bit faster and easier, although with modern technology, art, and music, activism from LGBT populations and allies now reach across the globe. The larger sizes and populations of the United States and Russia make the situations, issues, and solutions very different as

the large countries face greater inner conflict over their problems. Denmark is also a more traditionally feminine idolizing nation and so Danish men and women are freer to fill whatever roles they feel like they would like, whereas America and Russia encourage more strict stereotypes on what masculinity and femininity are defined as. These factors, considered together, provide reasoning for why Denmark predictably had a more directed philosophical movement towards accepting and integrating LGBT populations compared to the United States of America and both over Russia over the last fifty years.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this comparison that should be stated. For one, the size of Denmark is quite different from the United States and Russia to begin with, and their locations are literally all over the place. This could make for a great random survey comparison or could make the this essay very much three specific case studies whose differences are not guaranteed to carry over to any other relevant situation in other nation-states, despite perspectives on sexuality having started about the same in the 1960's. Denmark's size or location could be an influential variable that gave them an advantage in achieving a higher level of equality and tolerance in society.

Another limitation would be the fact that there is still minimal research on homosexuality and justice, and the research that is out there typically considers nations on their own without reference to larger, global political forces that underlie attitudes. A great majority of the available research about homosexuality comes from the United States, but the U.S. researchers may impose its own bias as hasn't been following the trends of recognizing same-sex partnerships and instead is stuck in a globally unpopular position of restricting lesbian and gay rights due to conflicts within the democratic society (Anderson 945). Russia especially tends to restrict publications with topics related to LGBT behavior, making it difficult to uncover a non-Western perspective on human rights for homosexuals.



Globalization and the spread of ideas between nations is not something that was discussed in the articles I researched, but I feel as though it and international reputations highly contributed to the attitudes of nation-states towards their own LGBT populations. Global perspectives are bound to become more prevalent in society because actions are taking place more and more on an international scale. Also, fifty years was a long time period to attempt to compare, as there was simply too much information of happenings during the time period to be able to create a clear and concise timeline, so a general summary for each nation was used, which was also useful as the general histories allowed for more obvious comparisons and contrasts between the nations. There was also a great deal more scholarly information on years prior to 2005 than afterwards, so it was difficult to obtain relevant, up to date information, especially regarding legislation.

Recommendations

Globalization and the increasing connectedness of the world has put us in the unique position of being able to develop international strategies to promote sexual health and tolerance for all people. My findings support a connection between increasing social and economic equality and through this, by default, raising potential for respect among the members of the community. Therefore, in order to achieve higher respect levels, lower gaps of inequality should be a goal, but not with “sameness” as a goal as this can lower reports of general life satisfaction.

Each of the international documents that have been put forth on the subject of LGBT acceptance attempts to “clarify the definition of sexual health and sexual responsibility and they call for leadership of the health sector to create better climates for discussion of sexuality, prevention strategies to include community-based interventions, access to care for sexually related concerns, and more research in human sexuality and evaluation of programs designed to promote sexual health and responsible sexual behavior,” all which methods would contribute to greater sexual knowledge, health and well-being in



society (Coleman 3-5). More sexual education would contribute greatly to the entire society, but potentially even more effective would be an attempt to increase financial support to students receiving any sort of education in the United States and Russia to a level closer to that provided to students in Denmark by the government in order help equal out levels of opportunity for becoming educated and gaining the power and social standing that comes with it. Especially in a large nation, education is important because an ignorant portion of the population has the power to affect the rest.

Supporters of sexual rights and health work in varied sectors besides the LGBT community can be involved to create a larger, more pro-active activist group with a further reach. Greater transparency of interactions between the church and state would be appropriate in some of these nations if their separation in policy is desired. Lastly, an increase in available forms of therapy, guidance and support groups for the individuals currently facing the social injustice first-hand could assist this resilient, disadvantaged population regain their self-love and self-acceptance, which truly effects the human psyche and ability to survive, and could lead to someone realizing their full potential and possibilities to come in the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there were certain factors that were able to predict the differences in development of LGBT rights between the Russian Federation, the United States, Denmark, including politics, economics, general societal values, religion, and geography. Denmark is not a utopian society that is fully accepting of all peoples, but it has been able to make great strides in securing some sort of safety and representation for the LGBT population thanks to its cooperative and socially equal nature. The United States started out on the same path as Denmark about fifty years ago, and is not as far behind as it may appear to be, and even offers a few rights to LGBT peoples that are not yet available in Denmark, but there are clear economic, political, and societal values that prevent it from reaching the same level of respect. Russia is a



distinct contrast to the U.S. and Denmark in many of these national characteristics and followed a completely different method in order to reach their position on homosexuality today. Though in Russia, the LGBT population still faces a great amount of violence and political inequality, there is great potential for all socially oppressed groups to gain acceptance despite a preliminary push-back by society through organization if the right efforts are made.

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