



An American Psychological Association Statement on Homosexuality

The research on homosexuality is very clear. Homosexuality is neither mental illness nor moral depravity. It is simply the way a minority of our population expresses human love and sexuality. Study after study documents the mental health of gay men and lesbians. Studies of judgment, stability, reliability, and social and vocational adaptiveness all show that gay men and lesbians function every bit as well as heterosexuals.

Nor is homosexuality a matter of individual choice. Research suggests that the homosexual orientation is in place very early in the life cycle, possibly even before birth. It is found in about ten percent of the population, a figure which is surprisingly constant across cultures, irrespective of the different moral values and standards of a particular culture. Contrary to what some imply, the incidence of homosexuality in a population does not appear to change with new moral codes or social mores. Research findings suggest that efforts to "repair" homosexuals are nothing more than social prejudice garbed in psychological accoutrements.

All targets of discrimination, be they blacks, women, handicapped, or religious sects, have a uniquely horrible dimension to their suffering. This is true for gay men and lesbians as well. Psychologically, sexuality and sexual orientation represent life forces which form the most sensitive bedrock of our being. They not only shape our attitudes and our passions, but they are so fundamental to our personality structure that they, in large part, determine our sense of personal cohesiveness and our level of comfort in the world. They are the driving force with which we love, work, and create.

For patients [in psychotherapy], the societal assumption that homosexuality [is] sick and/or immoral creates an emotional, sensual, and spiritual prison where self-expression, love, and the deepest forms of human conceitedness [are] stultified though anguishing guilt and self-loathing. For those of us in psychology who have had this kind of experience working with gay men and lesbians, the impact has been quite profound. For over two decades now, the American Psychological Association has advocated the elimination of discrimination against gay men and lesbians

Finally, if one thinks about the vast real problems confronting our society and attacking our family structure--problems such as family violence, divorce, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, homelessness, and isolation, it becomes clear that individuals who are obsessed with how a minority of our citizens express love and sexuality have, indeed, established a most peculiar set of priorities, both for themselves and for others.

Healthy and secure heterosexuals do not feel threatened by homosexuality. Healthy heterosexuals don't need to oppress homosexuals. Healthy heterosexuals don't need to "repair" homosexuals.

The real issue confronting our society today is not why people seek love and understanding as they do, but why some seem so unable to love and understand.

From a statement published January 26, 1990, by Bryant Welch, J.D., Ph.D., Executive Director for Professional Practice, American Psychological Association.