



Resolution on Marriage Equality for Same-Sex Couples

Adopted by the APA Council of Representatives on August 3-5, 2011.

Whereas people benefit by sharing their lives with and receiving support from their family, friends, and other people who are important to them (Cohen & Wills, 1985);

Whereas a person's sexual orientation defines the universe of persons with whom he or she is likely to find the satisfying and fulfilling romantic and intimate relationships that, for many individuals, comprise an essential component of personal identity (D'Augelli, 2000; Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991; Herek, 2001, 2006; Peplau & Garnets, 2000);

Whereas homosexuality is a normal expression of human sexual orientation that poses no inherent obstacle to leading a happy, healthy, and productive life, including the capacity to form healthy and mutually satisfying intimate relationships with another person of the same sex and to raise healthy and well-adjusted children, as documented by several professional organizations (American Psychiatric Association, 1974; American Psychological Association, 2004a, 2004b; Conger, 1975; National Association of Social Workers, 2003);

Whereas many gay men and lesbians, like their heterosexual counterparts, desire to form stable, long-lasting, and committed intimate relationships and are successful in doing so (Gates, 2006; Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001; Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims 2010; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007; Simmons & O'Connell, 2003);

Whereas the consideration of policies to provide or deny same-sex couples full access to civil marriage and other legal forms of family formation in all branches of both the federal and state governments in the United States has frequently subjected the human rights of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people to public debate and resulted in wide variation among jurisdictions in access to these rights (Gates, Badgett, & Ho, 2008; Hatzenbuehler, McLaughlin, Keyes, & Hasin, 2010; Herek, 2006; National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2010; Rostosky, Riggle, & Horne 2009; Russell, 2000);

Whereas emerging evidence suggests that statewide campaigns to deny same-sex couples legal access to civil marriage are a significant source of stress to the lesbian, gay, and bisexual residents of those states and may have negative effects on their psychological well-being (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2010; Rostosky et al., 2009);

Whereas the denial of civil marriage, including the creation of legal statuses such as civil unions and domestic partnerships, stigmatizes same-sex relationships, perpetuates the stigma historically attached to homosexuality, and reinforces prejudice against lesbian, gay, and bisexual people (Badgett, 2009; Herek, 2006; Hull, 2006);

Whereas many gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults who are in a committed same-sex relationship have taken advantage of the right to marriage, either in their home jurisdictions or in other jurisdictions, even though many jurisdictions that do not permit marriage of same-sex couples do not recognize these valid marriages (Badgett, 2009; Gates et al., 2008; Herel, Marech, & Lelchuk, 2004; Marech, 2004);

Whereas many other adults who are in a committed same-sex relationship wish to marry, but are prevented by state law from being married in their home jurisdiction or from receiving recognition of their marriages performed elsewhere (Herek et al., 2010);

Whereas empirical research demonstrates that the psychological and social aspects of committed relationships between same-sex partners closely resemble those of heterosexual partnerships, and an emerging research literature suggests that legally recognized same-sex relationships may also be similar to heterosexual marriages in these psychological and social aspects (Balsam, Beauchaine, Rothblum, & Solomon, 2008; Kurdek, 2004, 2005; Peplau & Fingerhut, 2007);

Whereas married individuals generally receive social, economic, health, and psychological benefits from their marital status, including numerous rights and benefits provided by private employers and by state and federal governments (Badgett, 2001; Brown, 2000; Chauncey 2005; Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983; Gove, Style, &

Hughes, 1990; Kiecolt-Glaser, 2001; Murray, 2000; Ross, Mirowsky, Goldsteen, 1990; Stack & Eshleman, 1998; Williams, 2003;

Whereas all people can be adversely affected by high levels of stress and the link between experiencing stress and manifesting symptoms of psychological or physical illness is well established in human beings and other species (Cohen, Doyle, & Skoner, 1999; Dohrenwend, 2000); Kiecolt-Glaser, McGuire, Robles, & Glaser, 2002);

Whereas individuals with a homosexual or bisexual orientation are often subjected to minority stress, that is, additional stress beyond what is normally experienced by the heterosexual population, as a consequence of stigma, discrimination, and violence (Badgett, 2001; Berrill, 1992; Herek, 2009; Herek, Gillis, Cogan, 1999; Mays & Cochran, 2001; Meyer, 1995; 2003; Meyer, Schwartz, & Frost, 2008);

Whereas the experience of minority stress may create somewhat higher levels of illness or psychological distress in the sexual minority population, compared to the heterosexual population (Herek & Garnets, 2007; Mays & Cochran, 2001; Meyer, 1995; 2003);

Whereas minority stress is common to all minority groups that experience stressors due to prejudice and discrimination based on their minority status (Meyer, 2003);

Whereas lesbian, gay, and bisexuals with multiple minority statuses (e.g., people of color, persons with disabilities) often experience a dual minority stress that may negatively impact their mental health (Crawford, Allison, Zamboni, & Soto, 2002; Green, 1994; Harley, Nowak, Gassaway, & Savag, 2002).

Whereas policies supportive of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's human rights may have positive effects on their psychological well-being (Blake, Ledsky, Lehman, Goodenow, Sawyer, Hack, 2001; Goodenow, Szalacha, & Westheimer, 2006; Hatzenbuehler, Keyes, Hasin, 2009);

Therefore be it resolved that the American Psychological Association supports full marriage equality for same-sex couples;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association reiterates its opposition to ballot measures, statutes, constitutional amendments, and other forms of discriminatory policy aimed at limiting lesbian, gay, and bisexual people's access to legal protections for their human rights, including such measures as those that deny same-sex couples the right to marry (Conger, 1975, APA 2007);

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association calls on state governments to repeal all measures that deny same-sex couples the right to civil marriage and to enact laws to provide full marriage equality to same-sex couples;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association calls on the federal government to extend full recognition to legally married same-sex couples, and to accord them all of the rights, benefits, and responsibilities that it provides to legally married different-sex couples;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association encourages psychologists and other behavioral scientists to conduct quality research that extends our understanding of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual population, including the role of close relationships and family formation on the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults and youths;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association encourages psychologists and other professionals with appropriate knowledge to take the lead in developing interventions and in educating the public to reduce prejudice and discrimination and to help ameliorate the negative effects of stigma;

Be it further resolved that the American Psychological Association will work with government and private funding agencies to promote such research and interventions to improve the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people.

References

- Adams, J. M. & Jones, W. H. (1997). The conceptualization of marital commitment: An integrative analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*[®], 72(5), 1177-1196.
- American Psychiatric Association. (1974). Position statement on homosexuality and civil rights. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 131, 497.

American Psychological Association. (2007). *Resolution on opposing discriminatory legislation & initiatives aimed at lesbian, gay, & bisexual persons* (/about/governance/council/policy/discriminatory-legislation.aspx) . Retrieved from the American Psychological Association website

Resolution on sexual orientation and marriage (/about/governance/council/policy/marriage.aspx) . Retrieved from the American Psychological Association website

Resolution on sexual orientation, parents and children (/about/governance/council/policy/parenting.aspx) . Retrieved from the American Psychological Association website

Badgett, M. V. L. (2001). The economic penalty for being gay. In Money, myths, and change: The economic lives of lesbians and gay men. (pp. 20-50). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Badgett, M. V. L. (2001). *Money, myths, and change: The economic lives of lesbians and gay men*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Badgett, M. V. L. (2009). *When gay people get married*. New York: New York University Press.

Balsam, K. F., Beauchaine, T. P., Rothblum, E. D. & Solomon, S. E. (2008). Three-year follow-up of same-sex couples who had civil unions in Vermont, same-sex couples not in civil unions, and heterosexual married couples. *Developmental Psychology*[®], *44*(1), 102-116.

Berrill, K. T. (1992). Anti-gay violence and victimization in the United States: An overview. In G. M. Herek & K. T. Berrill (Eds.), *Hate crimes: Confronting violence against lesbians and gay men* (pp. 19-24). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Blake, S. M., Ledsky, R., Lehman, T., Goodenow, C., Sawyer, R., & Hack, T. (2001). Preventing sexual risk behaviors among gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents: The benefits of gay-sensitive HIV instruction in schools. *American Journal of Public Health*, *91*(6), 940-946.

Blumstein, P. & Schwartz, P. (1983). *American couples: Money, work, sex*. New York, NY: William Morrow & Company.

Brown, S. L. (2000). The effect of union type on psychological well-being: Depression among cohabitators versus marrieds. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *41*(3), 241-255.

Burton, R. P. D. (1998). Global integrative meaning as a mediating factor in the relationship between social roles and psychological distress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, *39*(3), 201-215.

California Opinion Index. (2006, March). A digest on how the public views gay and lesbian rights issues (<http://field.com/fieldpollonline/subscribers/COI-06-Mar-Gay-Rights.pdf>) (PDF, 45KB). The Field Poll.

Chauncey, G. (2005). *Why marriage?: The history shaping today's debate over gay equality*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Cochran, S., Sullivan, J. G., & Mays, V. M. (2003). Prevalence of mental disorders, psychological distress, and mental services use among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults in the United States. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*[®], *71*(1), 53-61.

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin*[®], *98*(2), 310-357.

Cohen, S., Doyle, W. J., & Skoner, D. P. (1999). Psychological stress, cytokine production, and severity of upper respiratory illness. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, *61*(2), 175-180.

Conger, J. J. (1975). Proceedings of the American Psychological Association, Incorporated, for the year 1974: Minutes of the annual meeting of the Council of Representatives. *American Psychologist*[®], *30*(6), 620-651.

Crawford, I., Allison, K. W., Zamboni, B. D., & Soto, T. (2002). The influence of dual-identity development on the psychosocial functioning of African-American gay and bisexual men. *The Journal of Sex Research*, *39*(3), 179-189.

Dasgupta, N. & Rivera, L. M., (2006). From automatic antigay prejudice to behavior: The moderating role of conscious beliefs about gender and behavioral control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *91*(2), 268-280.

D'Augelli, A. R. (2000). Sexual orientation. In A. E. Kazdin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of psychology* (pp. 225-247). New York, NY: Plenum.

- Dohrenwend, B. P. (2000). The role of adversity and stress in psychopathology: some evidence and its implications for theory and research. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 41*(1), 1-19.
- Garnets, L. D., Herek, G. M., & Levy, B. (1990). Violence and victimization of lesbians and gay men: Mental health consequences. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 5*(3), 366-383.
- Same-sex couples and the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population: New estimates from the American Community Survey* (<http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/SameSexCouplesandGLBpopACS.pdf>) (PDF, 2.08MB). Retrieved from UCLA School of Law Williams Institute website
- Gates, G. J., Badgett, M. V. L., & Ho, D. (2008). *Marriage, registration and dissolution by same-sex couples in the U.S.* (<http://www.law.ucla.edu/Pages/default.aspx>) (Williams Institute Census 2000 and Demographic Studies). Retrieved from UCLA School of Law Williams Institute website
- Gonsiorek, J. C., & Weinrich, J. D. (1991). The definition and scope of sexual orientation. In J.C. Gonsiorek & J.D. Weinrich (Eds.) *Homosexuality: Research implications for public policy*, (pp. 1-12). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Goodenow, C., Szalacha, L., & Westheimer, K. (2006). School support groups, other school factors, and the safety of sexual minority adolescents. *Psychology in the Schools, 43*(5), 573-589.
- Gove, W. R., Hughes, M., & Style, C. B. (1983). Does marriage have positive effects on the psychological well-being of the individual? *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 24*(2), 122-131.
- Gove, W. R., Style, C. B., & Hughes, M., (1990). The effect of marriage on the well-being of adults: A theoretical analysis. *Journal of Family Issues, 11*(1), 4-35.
- Green, B. (1994). Ethnic minority lesbians and gay men: Mental health and treatment issues. *Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology, 62*, 243-251.
- Harley, D. A., Nowak, T. M., Gassaway, L. J., & Savag, T. A. (2002). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students with disabilities: A look at multiple cultural minorities. *Psychology in the Schools, 39*(5), 525-538.
- Hatzenbuehler, M. L., Keyes, K. M., & Hasin, D. S. (2009). State-level policies and psychiatric morbidity in LGB populations. *American Journal of Public Health, 99*(12), 2275-2281.
- Hatzenbuehler, M. L., McLaughlin, K. A., Keyes, K. M., & Hasin, D. S. (2010). The impact of institutional discrimination on psychiatric disorders in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: A prospective study. *American Journal of Public Health, 100*(3), 452-459.
- Heaton, T. B., & Albrecht, S.L. (1991). *Stable unhappy marriages*. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 53*(3), 747-758.
- Inside-OUT: A report on the experiences of lesbians, gays and bisexuals in America and the public's views on issues and policies related to sexual orientation* (<http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/upload/New-Surveys-on-Experiences-of-Lesbians-Gays-and-Bisexuals-and-the-Public-s-Views-Related-to-Sexual-Orientation-Report.pdf>) (PDF, 661KB). Washington, DC: Author.
- Herek, G. M. (2001). Homosexuality. In W.E. Craighead & C.B. Nemeroff (Eds.) *The Corsini encyclopedia of psychology and behavioral science*, (3rd ed., Vol. 2, pp. 683-688). New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons.
- Herek, G. M. (2006). Legal recognition of same-sex relationships in the United States: A social science perspective. *American Psychologist, 61*(6), 607-621.
- Herek, G. M. (2009). Hate crimes and stigma-related experiences among sexual minority adults in the United States: Prevalence estimates from a national probability sample. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 24*, 54-74.
- Herek, G. M., & Garnets, L. D. (2007). *Sexual orientation and mental health*. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 3*, 353-375.
- Herek, G. M., Gillis, J. R., Cogan, J. C. (1999) Psychological sequelae of hate-crime victimization among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 67*(6), 945-951.
- Herek, G. M., Norton, A. T., Allen, T. J., & Sims, C. L. (2010). Demographic, psychological, and social characteristics of self-identified lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults in a U.S. probability sample. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, in press.
- Herel, S., Marech, R., & Lelchuk, I. (2004, March 18). Numbers put face on a phenomena; Most who married are middle-aged, have college degrees. *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. A1.

- Hull, K. (2006). *Same-sex marriage: The cultural politics of love and law*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jellison, W.A., McConnell, A. R., & Gabriel, S. (2004). Implicit and explicit measures of sexual orientation attitudes: Ingroup preferences and related behaviors and beliefs among gay and straight men. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(5), 629-642.
- Kiecolt-Glaser, J.K. & Newton T.L. (2001). Marriage and Health: His and Hers. *Psychological Bulletin* 127(4) 472-503.
- Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., McGuire, L., Robles, T. F. & Glaser, R. (2002). Psychoneuroimmunology: Psychological Influences on Immune Function and Health. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 70(3), 537-547.
- Kurdek, L. A. (1995). Lesbian and Gay Couples. In D'Augelli, A. R., Patterson, C. J. (Eds.) *Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identities Over the Lifespan* (pp. 243-261) New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Kurdek, L. A., (1998). Relationship Outcomes and their Predictors: Longitudinal Evidence from Heterosexual Married, Gay Cohabiting, and Lesbian Cohabiting Couples. *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 60(3), 553-568.
- Kurdek, L. A., (2001). Differences Between Heterosexual-Nonparent Couples and Gay, Lesbian and Heterosexual-Parent Couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, Vol 22(6), 727-754.
- Kurdek, L. A., (2004). Are Gay and Lesbian Cohabiting Couples Really Different from Heterosexual Married Couples? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol 66(4), 880-900.
- Kurdek, L. A., (2005). What do we know about gay and lesbian couples? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14(5), 251-254.
- Levinger, G. (1965). Marital Cohesiveness and Dissolution: An Integrative Review. *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, 27(1), 19-28.
- Mackey, R. A., Diemer, M. A., & O'Brien, B. A. (2000). Psychological intimacy in the lasting relationships of heterosexual and same-gender couples. *Sex Roles*, 43(3-4), 201-227.
- Marech, R. (2004, September 20). Gays cautious about new partners law: Some opt out, fearing legal or financial troubles. *The San Francisco Chronicle* (<http://www.sfgate.com/>) .
- Marech, R. (2004, March 9). Same-sex couples flock to gay-friendly Canada. *The San Francisco Chronicle*, pp. A1.
- Mays, V. M., & Cochran, S. D. (2001). Mental health correlates of perceived discrimination among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults in the United States. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(11), 1869-1876.
- Meyer, I. H. (1995). Minority stress and mental health in gay men. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 36(1), 38-56.
- Meyer, I. H. (2003). Prejudice, social stress, and mental health in lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations: Conceptual issues and research evidence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129(5), 674-697.
- Meyer, I. H., Schwartz, S., & Frost, D. M. (2008). Social patterning of stress and coping: Does disadvantaged status confer excess exposure and fewer coping resources? *Social Science & Medicine*, 67, 368-379.
- Mills, T. C., Stall, R., Pollack, L., Paul, J. P., Binson, D., Canchola, J., & Catania, J. A. (2001). Health-related characteristics of men who have sex with men: A comparison of those living in "gay ghettos" with those living elsewhere. *American Journal of Public Health*, 91(6), 980-983.
- Murray, J. E. (2000). Marital protection and marital selection: Evidence from a historical-prospective sample of American men. *Demography*, 37(4), 511-521.
- Nardi, P. M. (1997). Friends, lovers, and families: The impact of AIDS on gay and lesbian relationships. In M. P. Levine & P. M. Nardi (Eds.), *In changing times: Gay men and lesbians encounter HIV/AIDS* (pp. 55-82). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- National Association of Social Workers. (2003). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual issues. *Social Work Speaks: National Association of Social Workers Policy Statements 2003-2006* (6th ed., pp. 224-235). Washington, DC: NASW Press.
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. (2010). *Relationship recognition map for same-sex couples in the United States* (http://www.thetaskforce.org/reports_and_research/relationship_recognition) . Retrieved from the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force website

- Nock, S. L. (1995). A comparison of marriages and cohabiting relationships. *Journal of Family Issues*, 16(1), 53-76.
- Peplau, L. A. & Fingerhut, A. W. (2007). The close relationships of lesbians and gay men. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, 405-424.
- Peplau, L. A., & Garnets, L. D. (2000). A new paradigm for understanding women's sexuality and sexual orientation. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(2), 329-350.
- Pragmatic Americans liberal and conservative on social issues* (<http://people-press.org/reports/pdf/283.pdf>) (PDF, 125KB). Washington, DC: Author.
- Previti, D., & Amato, P. R. (2003). Why stay married? Rewards, barriers, and marital stability. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 65(3), 561-573.
- Ross, C. E., Mirowsky, J., & Goldsteen, K. (1990). The impact of the family on health: The decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52(4), 1059-1078.
- Ross, C. E. (1995). Reconceptualizing marital status as a continuum of social attachment. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57(1), 129-140.
- Rostosky, S. S., Riggle, E. D. B., & Horne, S. G. (2009). Marriage amendments and psychological distress in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) adults. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 56, 56-66.
- Russell, G. M. (2000). *Voted out: The psychological consequences of anti-gay politics*. New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Sherrill, K. & Yang, A. S. (2000). From outlaws to in-laws: Anti-gay attitudes thaw. *Public Perspective*, 11, 20-23.
- Simmons, T. & O'Connell, M. (2003). *Married-couple and unmarried-partner households: 2000* (<http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/censr-5.pdf>) (PDF, 503KB). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau.
- Stack, S. & Eshleman, J. R. (1998). Marital status and happiness: A 17-nation study. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 60(2), 527-536.
- Tsang, J. A., & Rowatt, W. C. (2007). The relationship between religious orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, and implicit sexual prejudice. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 17(2), 99-120.
- White, L. K., & Booth, A. (1991). Divorce over the life course: The role of marital happiness. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12(1), 5-21.
- Williams, K. (2003). Has the future of marriage arrived? A contemporary examination of gender, marriage, and psychological well-being. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 44(4), 470-487.



Find this article at:

<http://www.apa.org/about/governance/council/policy/same-sex.aspx>