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GAYS AND LESBIANS MAKE BAD PARENTS
“THERE IS NO BASIS IN THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE FOR THIS PERCEPTION”
-- CANADIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

OTTAWA, AUGUST 6, 2003 – There is a popular misconception that gay and lesbian parents, because of their sexual orientation, compromise the psychological and sexual development of their children. A well-publicized statement of this point of view is found in a document recently released by the Vatican entitled “Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons”.

This Vatican document states, in part: “As experience has shown, the absence of sexual complementarity in these (homosexual) unions creates obstacles in the normal development of children who would be placed in the care of such persons. They would be deprived of the experience of either fatherhood or motherhood. Allowing children to be adopted by persons living in such unions would actually mean doing violence to these children, in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development.” (Section III.7)

Commenting on this statement, Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) President, Dr. Patrick O’Neill, said: “Psychosocial research into lesbian and gay parenting indicates that there is no basis in the scientific literature for this perception. With the legalization of same-sex unions in Canada, the public and various interest groups

are revisiting their views on this issue and CPA is concerned that publicly stated beliefs, which impact upon legislation and social policy, are not always based on scientific evidence.

"According to CPA, the psychosocial research into lesbian and gay parenting indicates that there are essentially no differences in the psychosocial development, gender identity or sexual orientation between the children of gay or lesbian parents and the children of heterosexual parents.

These research findings lead the CPA to conclude:

1. Available evidence indicates that the children of gay and lesbian parents do not differ significantly from the children of heterosexual parents with regard to psychosocial and gender development and identity.
2. Statements that children of gay and lesbian parents have more and significant problems in the areas of psychosocial or gender development and identity than do the children of heterosexual parents have no support from the scientific literature.
3. If gay and lesbian parents encounter unique stress as parents, it is more likely the result of the public's beliefs and perceptions about their fitness to parent and obstacles created by social systems (such as the courts) than it is the result of any deficiencies in their actual fitness to parent.

The American Psychological Association provides an annotated bibliography of research into lesbian and gay parenting at www.apa.org.

The recent Vatican document also argues against legalization of gay and lesbian unions. Dr. O'Neill restated the Canadian Psychological Association opposition to discrimination against lesbians, gay men, their relationships and their families.

In 1996, the Canadian Psychological Association adopted a policy that stated:

“ The Canadian Psychological Association supports the inclusion of sexual orientation as a protected ground of discrimination against lesbians, gay men, their relationships and their families in all human rights legislation, public policy, regulation, procedure and practice. The Canadian Psychological Association strongly opposes prejudice, bias and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in all areas including spousal and family relationships, benefits and privileges, employment, goods, services, facilities, housing and accommodation.”

The Canadian Psychological Association is the national organization that represents the science, education and training, and practice of psychology in Canada. CPA has a membership of 5 200 psychologists and students in psychology from all Canadian Provinces and Territories. Its objectives are to lead, advance and promote psychology as a science and as a profession for the benefit of humanity; to provide leadership in psychology in Canada; to promote a sense of identity among psychologists; to promote the advancement, dissemination, and practical application of psychological knowledge; to develop standards and ethical principles for education, training, science and practice in psychology.