

# The Medicalization of the Queer Experience

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## Abstract

While the acceptance of various 2SLGBTQQIA+ identities within Western societies has improved from years past, members of this community still suffer from the harmful effects of medical terminology and philosophy. Reflecting on 2SLGBTQQIA+ history is imperative to understanding the current issues for the community, and how their rights can be further expanded. Terms such as homosexuality and bisexuality are tied to a long history of healthcare practitioners treating same-sex attraction as a “disease” that requires medical and psychotherapeutic intervention in order to “cure” individuals. Medicalization has a deeply rooted history with colonial and religious institutions. In this presentation, I will outline findings from a systemic review of medical, psychological, psychiatric, and social work literature that focuses on how queer sexuality has been interpreted by and alongside the mental health system since the 19th century, and how these interpretations are affected by the public (and vice versa). I seek to clarify the historical normalization of heterosexuality within this literature, and the queer identity being understood through the lens of the medical model of help (which is demonstrated through the evolution of accepted labels used for and within the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community). I will also outline actionable objectives for non-queer healthcare professionals—such as physicians, psychiatrists, and social workers—to take when providing general allyship and queer-affirming care to clients using the biopsychosocial model of helping.

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