

Can the kids be all right if they are gay too?

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New research on the children of LGBTQ people (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) has unequivocally revealed that they are not only psychologically healthy, but often appear to exhibit better social and academic adjustment and a significantly lower incidence of social problems than their peers. A new article published in the journal *Family Process* critically examines this research, and how it impacts LGBTQ families.

According to Family Therapist and Social Work professor, Arlene Istar Lev these excellent outcomes might be masking another sort of bias. Lev has been working with LGBTQ families for nearly three decades, and suggests that "The underlying assumption of research on LGBTQ families has been premised on the idea that the children of gay and lesbian people will have unique challenges because of their parent's [sexual orientation](#). LGBTQ people have had to establish that they are good parents by raising children who are heterosexual and gender-normative, i.e., not like them."

Lev says, "There is an assumption that the optimal outcome is to produce heterosexual children. I am questioning the heterosexism that pressures LGBTQ parents to prove their success as parents by producing heterosexual (read: normal) children. The research, steeped in heterosexist and heteronormative beliefs, assumes that if the children of LGBTQ people are gay or transgender themselves, it is a problem, a 'failure' revealing the ongoing [bias](#) against LGBTQ people."

Although most children of LGBTQ parents are heterosexual, some are

not - just like the children of heterosexual parents. Lev suggests that social pressure to raise heterosexual and gender typical children can put stress on LGBTQ families and oddly enough make it harder for gay kids with gay parents to get the support they need. Lev says, "Gay parents (just like heterosexual parents) may struggle with having gay or transgender children, in a part because they identify with the obstacles their children will face, and in part because of the societal pressure they feel to raise "normal" (read: straight) children. Lev suggests that LGBTQ parents, as a minority that have been oppressed and marginalized, have a unique ability to accept and nurture their children's emerging selves, if they see their own identity as an advantage, instead of something to be overcome. Lev says, "If it is okay to be gay than it has to be okay for the children of gay people to gay also."

Being reared in LGBTQ families creates certain "differences," for example same-sex parented families have unique social dynamics because there are two moms and two dads, and because the families are commonly formed differently than most heterosexual families (donor insemination, adoption, surrogacy). Lev encourages researchers, family therapists, and society in general to celebrate the unique qualities that gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgender parents bring to child-rearing. Instead of pressuring [gay](#) parents to be "just like" straight [parents](#), why not acknowledge and honour the differences? Lev quips, "We need to stop saying that being LGBTQ has no influence on children's identities; of course, it does. Maybe whatever it is that we are doing 'differently' is the reason our [children](#) are doing so well."

More information: "How Queer!—The Development of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation in LGBTQ-Headed Families." Arlene Lev. Family Process; Published Online: September 10, 2010. [DOI: 10.1111/j.1545-5300.2010.01323.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1545-5300.2010.01323.x)

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