

LGBTQ+ Parents Raise Resilient Children

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Despite inequalities and stigma, research shows queer parents raise resilient and prosperous children. Specifically, LGBTQ+ parents help their children build stigma-related resilience by equipping them with specific coping strategies. These include teaching self-talk strategies, practicing assertive behaviors, and surrounding themselves with a supportive community (Farr et al., 2022, p. 528). Further, parents establish positive self-views through role models, affirming communication, and emphasis on diversity. This creates unity and an honest, open child-parent relationship that breaks the social norms of ‘family’.

By resisting cultural expectations for how to ‘do family’, queer parents establish an egalitarian division of household and child-care labor (Farr et al., 2022, p. 528). This style of labor division is based on the idea that all people deserve equal rights and opportunities which breeds innovation and creativity for task division. Without traditional gender, biological, and heteronormative familial norms, gender and sexual minority parents divide their roles in a more equitable way. In cases of separation or divorce, for queer women specifically, there is evidence of improved co-parenting due to cordiality, creative collaboration, and an egalitarian style (Farr et al., 2022, p. 529). Furthermore, since children of LGBTQ+ parents have increased resilience, they are more likely to positively cope with parental separation. By straying from familial norms children of LGBTQ+ parents are, in most cases, surrounded by an accepting and equitable family structure.

Since same-sex parents cannot typically have biological children without additional resources, their decision to become a parent is highly intentional and planned. This creates a positive narrative of how their children came into the family and cultivates a positive familial dynamic (Farr et al., 2022, p. 531). As a result, queer parents instill openness, creativity, and flexibility in their children with foundations of acceptance, inclusivity, and pride. Queer parents

of adopted or multiracial children also establish stronger communication as they are more likely to start an identity dialogue (Farr et al., 2022, p. 529). In addition to talking with their children about issues regarding their racial identity, diversity, and racism, these parents often seek affirming community that reflects their child's or family's identities.

Surprisingly, parents of sexual and gender minorities show high rates of engagement with religion and/or spirituality (Farr et al., 2022, p. 531). This provides children with community, pride, and belongingness in an affirming and supportive group. These spiritual and religious dialogues promote critical thinking and information-based decision-making in their children. To proactively avoid confrontation or disagreement, these parents go a step further by acknowledging potential LGBTQ+ stigma and discrimination that may be prevalent within specific religious communities.

Although intuitive, children with LGBTQ+ parents are more likely to explore their gender and sexual identity autonomously. Although some see this exploration as a negative outcome, this allows for a child-led developmental approach that avoids the rigidity created by social norms (Farr et al., 2022, p. 527). By entitling their children to both agency and choice over their identity, LGBTQ+ parents help their children develop a positive relationship with their identity. Outside of different approaches to parenting styles and familial structure, LGBTQ+ parents and their children face intolerance.

Queer parents face inequalities at both the interpersonal and institutional levels which include barriers to healthcare, a lack of legal protection, and microaggressions. This is evident in discrimination against both parents and children leading to psychosocial and health disparities that impact this community disproportionately (Farr et al., 2022, p. 526). Despite these barriers, children of queer parents do not report negative experiences or bullying due to having sexual or

gender minority parents. Another massive challenge is the many health and socioeconomic status disparities faced by LGBTQ+ people which are passed to their children. For example, queer-parent families in the United States have proportionately lower incomes, are more likely to be people of color, and reside in the South and Midwest (Farr et al., 2022, p. 528). The intersectionality of these disparities creates new barriers for queer parents to navigate when raising children.

A unique challenge this group faces is the underlying assumption that cisgender heterosexual parents are the ideal and ‘normal’ to which LGBTQ+ parents should be compared. This assumption often makes it appear that queer parents are breaking social norms to make a political statement or challenge other familial structures. The core of this issue, however, is that one family structure is not right or wrong, instead, LGBTQ+ families are simply different due to the numerous factors outlined above.

Hundreds of resources and groups are dedicated to helping the LGBTQ+ community in the transition to parenting. Outside of social support systems, there are a number of magazines, forums, and blogs. Gay Parent Magazine is a parenting resource specifically tailored to the LGBTQ+ community. Starting in 1998, they release bimonthly digital issues and post to their website and several social media accounts. Their latest issue, for January and February 2023, contains stories, child-care resources, and advice. These include compiling LGBTQ+-friendly camps across the country and queer-friendly advertising on topics such as fertility and surrogates, schooling programs, and opportunities for child development (Gay Parent Magazine, 2023, p. 7). There are also affirming parent stories about successful LGBTQ+ families as well as the challenges of co-parenting and advice on navigating several children (Gay Parent Magazine, 2023, p. 14-24). One story describes two fathers of an adopted child and how they turned their

story into a children's book. The book depicts the struggles of how the two fought to be parents and ended up with their 'perfect' family. By reading to their child to explain their origin and sharing the story with others, these fathers are helping other future parents stay hopeful and strong throughout the adoption process (Gay Parent Magazine, 2023, p. 34-36). Because of stigma, LGBTQ+ parents are typically rooted in the community and attend events like Pride, engage in social-justice activism, and seek out affirming media.

As a member of the LGBTQ+ and a future parent, I worry about the challenges I may face conceiving children and how my children will be impacted by not having a traditional father figure. This reflection opened my eyes to the significant positive impact having queer parents can have on children. As I continue to stay involved in my community and society crawls forward each day, I am hopeful that my future children will be thankful to have two moms.

References

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