



# Some Ideas for Further Research Relating to Children with LGBTQ Parents

While some aspects of our lives have been over-analyzed, other aspects have been ignored. COLAGE has identified some areas where we think more research (or in some cases better research) should be done.

- 1. Study the Impact of Homophobia on Our Lives.** Many, many people have studied the impact our LGBTQ parents have had on our lives. However, very few people have researched the impact of homophobia on our lives. When schools debate how old students have to be before they can be “exposed” to gay people, how does this affect those of us who had LGBTQ parents when we were very young? When states deny our families legal protections, how does this shape our access to resources we need to grow up strong, healthy, and safe? If our teachers and classmates create hostile environments for us in school, how does this impact our educational achievement? When society only recognizes biological ties as legitimate, how does this impact our relationships with non-biological parents? There are hundreds of questions like this that have either not been asked at all, or not answered sufficiently. Research on this subject will support COLAGE and other advocacy organizations by demonstrating the social harm of homophobia, thus adding incentives everyday people, as well as policy-makers, to step up and take the necessary steps for reducing this harm and protecting all members of society equally.
- 2. Quantitative Analysis.** As awareness of diverse families spreads, more and more official agencies are expanding how they permit people to define their identities and family structures. Up to now, there has been little quantifiable knowledge of children from LGBTQ families. How many of us are there? What are the demographics of our community, especially around race, income, gender, and geography? COLAGE is often asked questions like this, and unfortunately the answer is often that we just don't know. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's ground-breaking analysis of the 2000 census is a model for this type of research. However, further advocacy is needed to make the census even more representative of our families, and there may be other methods that can answer some of these questions as well. Quantitative analysis helps reporters, policy-makers, and ordinary people understand the diversity of our community. It is easier to estimate the harm of local anti-gay initiatives if one is able to find out the number of LGBTQ people or families living locally. Homophobic leaders cannot claim that our families don't exist, or that we only exist in cities like San Francisco. Practically speaking, quantitative research would be incredibly useful “on the ground” for COLAGE and our partner organizations.
- 3. Needs Assessment.** To our knowledge, there has never been a comprehensive needs assessment of children with LGBTQ parents or our families. Researchers could help us determine the “big picture” of the challenges we face and the impact different factors have on our lives. This in turn will allow grassroots organizations like COLAGE make more informed decisions when developing new programs, prioritizing legislative or court battles, or improving on existing services.

4. **Public Opinion.** We live at a time when public opinion regarding LGBTQ people and families is changing constantly. On the one hand there is a clear increase in acceptance and awareness of our families. On the other hand, there is a clear backlash, both politically and culturally, against our families. At a time when nearly every state in the union (and many localities, not to mention the federal government) are making decisions about our families, we could use some strong analysis of public opinion: what is it, what makes it, how it has changed, and where it might be heading. In communities or areas that seem to be very homophobic, what is the glue that holds this in place? In areas that are very open, what efforts are made to create and maintain this kind of atmosphere? In areas that have seen change, what events or messages fueled that change?
  
5. **Standing up to the Right.** Unfortunately, much of the political right-wing is united against LGBTQ families. They often pursue their anti-family agenda in the name of 'family values.' Right-wing organizations sponsor their own research—and they have “proven” many myths and stereotypes about children from LGBTQ families, as well as LGBTQ more generally. Furthermore, the messages of the right are often successful against a backdrop of misinformation and manipulation. We need scholars who are able and dedicated to holding these homophobic “scholars” and activists accountable. Scrutinize their research premises, methodologies, and conclusions. If conservative scholars are successful because they put out misinformation as truth, we need other scholars to step up and publicly challenge these ideas, and correct the misinformation. If scholarly journals are publishing inaccurate and methodologically flawed “studies”, they need to feel the weight of their professional peers denouncing such practices. This is not necessarily a research project, but it is something that will take a community effort, and will significantly ease the burden of grassroots organizations and individuals who are working to interrupt homophobia. It could conceivably be a subject of research if one wanted to take on an in-depth, historical analysis of conservative lies in the guise of academia.
  
6. **Make your Work Accessible and Available.** Your study could be ground-breaking. It could shatter homophobic myths, and change how we think about sexuality and families forever. But if it is only published in an academic journal, or written in specialized language that someone without a degree in your field wouldn't understand, it may not translate on the ground. Please take the time to let people outside of the academy know about your work. Send it to community organizations. Write a less technical version that could work as a press release or letter to the editor. Offer free copies of your book to non-profits working to end homophobia. You have spent time and expertise increasing knowledge of a particular subject—make sure other folks can benefit from and use your work.

Thanks for taking the time to consider these ideas. We hope that they provide inspiration for your future research. Whatever questions you decide to pursue, COLAGE appreciates your efforts to increase understanding and awareness of our diverse communities. Feel free to get in touch with our office—our staff is on hand to help answer your questions and connect you to the information and people you will need for your work.

**We value your feedback! Please direct all questions and comments to [colage@colage.org](mailto:colage@colage.org).**

COLAGE is a national organization representing millions of children, youth, and adults with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer parents. We build community and work toward social justice through youth empowerment, leadership development, education, and advocacy.

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