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Brandeis study on keeping children of same-sex parents Jewish

By Sara Brown
Advocate staff



Dr. Jonathan Krasner

WALTHAM – According to a study on LGBT parents raising their children Jewish, couples tend to feel more accepted in Reform congregations than in other denominations, and in urban congregations rather than in suburban congregations.

For his recent study on gay Jewish parents, “We All Still Have to Potty Train,” Brandeis University professor Jonathan Krasner interviewed 40 couples to see if they felt accepted in their Jewish community as they raise their children Jewish.

“In regards to who we spoke with, it was diverse geographically and in population,” Krasner said. “Some of the couples were both Jewish, and some only had one parent that was Jewish, but they were still raising their child Jewish.”

One of the more interesting findings of the study, Krasner said, is that, in general, gay couples are dealing with the same parenting struggles as straight couples.

“Their day-to-day problems are very similar,” he said. “Like straight couples, if gay couples feel like they have support from their Jewish community, they are much more likely to raise their children Jewish.”

“If couples are members of a synagogue, they are also more likely to seek Jewish education for their children,” he said.

Krasner, the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Associate Professor on Jewish Education Research at Brandeis, is the author of “The Benderly Boys and American Jewish Education,” which won the 2011 National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish Studies.

Brookline’s Temple Sinai Rainbow Committee presented Krasner’s talk, “Going Mainstream? The New Jewish LGBT Family,” at Friday night services earlier this month.

According to Krasner, gay couples are feeling increasingly more welcomed in Reform congregations and liberal areas.

Simchah-Celebration

Sharing your Simchahs – Celebrations with the Community

Calendars

Community Calendar
Singles Calendar

Candle Lighting Times

Parshat Mikeitz

BOSTON	4:03
FALL RIVER	4:05
LOWELL	4:03
SPRINGFIELD	4:10
WORCESTER	4:06
PORTLAND, MAINE	3:55
MANCHESTER, N.H.	4:02

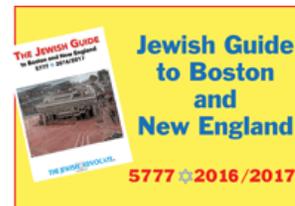


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"However, it has been a little more challenging for gay couples belonging to Conservative or Orthodox communities," he said. "That is not true for all Conservative or Orthodox communities, but it has been a process for many couples."

One couple told Krasner that their Orthodox community told them they would have to lie to the congregation and say one of them is their child's uncle, instead of father, if they wanted to be accepted.

Another couple shared a story about their Conservative congregation not giving *aliyahs* to gay couples.

However, unlike gay couples in decades past, most couples today do not see a conflict with their sexual orientation and their Jewish faith.

"In almost all the cases, the couples expressed that it is up to the community to accept them and not the other way around," Krasner said. "In the past, you might have seen more couples conflicted about this, but that doesn't seem to be the case."

"We found the bigger the city the couple lives in, the more they feel accepted," he said. "If a couple lives in a suburban or rural area, they can be met with resistance."

Krasner lives with his husband Frank and their two children, whom they are raising as Jews, in [Lexington](#). He said a study like this is important because it helps the Jewish community understand a certain segment of its population.

"According to a CJP study, 7 percent of the Jewish population in [Boston](#) is LGBT," he said. "We want to be sensitive to various segments of our population. A large number of gay couples want to have a relationship with the Jewish community."

"If we want to be inclusive like we say we do, this study will help us find out what this population needs," Krasner added. "Hopefully, all congregations can install policies that benefit everyone, including gay couples."