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The Other **Colours** **of the** **Rainbow**

Struggles and Joys
of Same-Sex Parenting



ENRICO DAMIANI EDITORE

Excerpt from

Gli altri colori dell'arcobaleno. Fatiche e gioie dell'omogenitorialità
by Federico Lupo Trevisan.

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Disclaimer

This book is not intended in any way to push, propose, encourage, or promote a path toward parenthood. It is a descriptive, narrative, and positive book, which encourages people to live situations as they are, observing reality without ideological lenses, but with a perspective shaped by a psychological, and at times psychoanalytic, filter focused on everyday life, in an attempt to grasp the deeper dynamics that lead a person or a couple to embark on a difficult journey, sometimes at the very edges of culture. Above all, it is a book about children, about girls and boys, about adolescents, and, of course, about their families. Families that may be same-sex-parent families or not, that may belong to other cultures or not, families that are happy or unhappy. In short: families.

Contents

INTRODUCTION by Elena Rosci	9
Part One: INSIDE THE RAINBOW	14
1 What Is Same-Sex Parenting	20
2 How People Become Same-Sex Parents	32
Part Two: LIKE A PRISM	38
3 Internal Perspective: Same-Sex Parenting as Seen by One's Own Family	
1. The Parents	40
2. The Children	73
3. The Grandparents	111
4 External Perspective: Same-Sex Parenting as Seen by Other Families	
1. The Parents	142
2. The Children	160
3. Families from Other Cultures	174

Part Three: BEYOND THE RAINBOW	191
1. School	198
2. Health and Social Services	207
3. Other Services	216
4. Religious Institutions	223
5. Psychologists	229
6. The LGBTQIA+ Community	239
The Other Colours of the Rainbow	245
 Bibliography	 251
Acknowledgements	253

Part One
INSIDE THE RAINBOW



One of the reasons that led to the creation of this book is the current context: the era we live in is not an easy one for minorities in general, and in particular for same-sex-parent families, which I wanted to focus on. My aim is to describe a phenomenon that, despite its limited size (in Italy, same-sex-parent families are estimated to number in the low thousands, although because of regulatory gaps it is impossible to state precise figures with certainty), is often in the media crosshairs. For a long time, I asked myself why. What do these families stir in the rest of society? Why do we keep coming back to talk about them? Who talks about them, and how? Too often, unfortunately, it is politics that talks about them, and almost always inappropriately. However, there are also positions of genuine interest expressed by ordinary people and by professionals working in the field: a large part of this book is dedicated to them.

My curiosity as a psychotherapist led me, many years ago, to work with parents and families. Practice has taught me that parenthood, as an abstract construct, does not exist: what exists are parents who commit themselves, facing challenges their own parents

and grandparents would not even have imagined. Parents who come from countries near and far and struggle to integrate into the city where they live. Parents who separate, trying to manage as best they can a relationship that has broken down, or who are sometimes overwhelmed by resentments that make the role of father or mother even more complex. Parents who face financial hardship, personal bereavements, or problems of physical or mental health. Among all these people are same-sex parents, who share the same challenges as other parents. They are not many, as already mentioned, but over the years I have been fortunate to meet quite a few, thanks to clinical work, curiosity, and other reasons that led me to take an interest in these families, to observe how they live, what they do, and above all to ask myself questions: are they different from others? Do they experience different problems or joys? And if so, what specific features emerge? How are they perceived?

Much has already been written about same-sex-parent families as existing entities that deserve to be heard, even though large areas of invisibility remain. My sense is that these families come into society's view mainly

when they are attacked, especially on issues related to rights. It was therefore interesting to understand how they are seen by key institutions – schools, healthcare, and social services – and by other families, in contexts that are more or less welcoming, as well as to explore how these realities interact and how these encounters reveal the lights and shadows of a complex phenomenon.

I imagine all this as a prism: a phenomenon, white light, that breaks down into the different colours of the rainbow. In this way, we can carefully examine the many facets of these families, maintaining a serious yet accessible perspective, in the most positive sense of the word “informative”.

Same-sex-parent families exist and, often through associations, seek recognition. Despite their specificity, they remain families like any other: they have happy times and difficult ones, parents who separate or die, and a need for professional support. In the end, telling their stories means telling the story of what it is to be a family in general.

For this reason, the title of the book refers to “the other colours of the rainbow”. A symbol of hope and discov-

ery, the rainbow represents how the LGBTQ+ community and same-sex-parent families want to be seen, first and foremost by themselves. Yet beyond the colours of hope, we cannot overlook those that belong to suffering, to obstacles, and to the often uphill path that people in these families face every day.

The difficulties common to all families become more acute for those who belong to a minority, to the point of dimming the joy of being parents, especially when one feels alone. The issue of loneliness is often invisible: same-sex-parent families are skilled at creating networks and support groups, yet in the psychologist's office this loneliness emerges clearly, particularly in times of crisis, such as separations or challenges linked to the lack of rights and a clear legal framework. The verticality of tradition, which in difficult times offers us the reassurance of knowing how others before us have acted, is missing. In such cases, we must put into practice the maxim, "of oneself one must decide by oneself," as recalled in Miyazaki's film *Howl's Moving Castle*.

This book aims, even if only in part, to show that it is not necessary to feel alone: help and comfort from oth-

ers are possible even for those who belong to minorities. This book is addressed to anyone who wishes to become a parent, regardless of their sexual or affective orientation, to all those who belong to same-sex-parent families in any form, but also to grandparents, aunts and uncles, friends, teachers, classmates, and to those who observe these families with distance or hostility, in the hope of opening up a space for reflection in the round.

Finally, I would like to thank the many people who shared their lived experience. Without them, this book would not exist. They also helped me understand how same-sex-parent families find their place in the social world. A world that is, all in all, a rainbow too: every family, regardless of its make-up or orientation, has bright, shining colours and darker, shadowy ones it would gladly do without.

Welcome to those who want to look inside this prism.