

Gaybe-Boom TV: Reading Homonormative Fatherhood on Israeli Television

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Abstract : Over the past decade, LGBT figures have become increasingly visible on Israeli television in its various channels and genres. In recent years, however, the representation of gays on Israeli television has undergone an interesting shift, whereby many television texts feature gay people as fathers. These texts, mostly news items and documentaries, usually present gay parenthood as a positive phenomenon. The question in paper is whether LGBT parenting (in reality and as representation) fated to be part of the homonormativity that characterizes the LGBT community in Israel, or can it be an alternative to the hegemonic discourse? This paper embraces a dialectical position and explores the tension between mainstream and radical, or homonormativity and queer politics in the specific Israeli Jewish context through a textual and discursive reading of a selection of television programs that revolve principally around gay parenting in Israel. The first part of this lecture addresses the cultural and social context that generated these representations, dealing with three key Israeli areas: The fertility cult, the evolution of the LGBT community, and the evolution of local television. The second part offers a queer reading of these 'positive' representations (mainly in special reports on the news and programs labeled as 'documentaries' by broadcasters) and highlight the possible price of the 'bear hug' given by Israeli media to gay parents. The last part focuses on a single case study, the TV serial drama Ima Veabaz, and suggests that this drama exposes the performative aspect of parenting and the connection between ethnicity and fertility, and offers an alternative to normative displays of gay parenting.

Keywords : fatherhood, heteronormativity, Israel, queer theory, television

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