

34. Gay and Heterosexual Fathers: Parenting Attitudes and Responses to Child Behavior

Bigner, J. J., & Jacobsen, R. B. (1992). Adult responses to child behavior and attitudes toward fathering: Gay and nongay fathers. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 23, 99-112.

In this study, 24 gay and 29 heterosexual fathers were compared in their responses to questions regarding parenting styles and their roles as fathers. Results showed that the two groups of fathers were more similar than different in their parenting styles and attitudes toward being fathers. Overall, the results of this study support that sexual orientation of fathers is not a significant variable affecting attitudes toward fathering nor responses to child behavior. The results suggest that there is no reason to suspect that gay fathers are vastly different from heterosexual fathers.

Gay and heterosexual fathers were not different in regards to degree of intimacy in their relationship or involvement with children, to encouraging autonomy, handling problems and problem solving, and providing recreation for children. Both groups had a developmental orientation toward their role as fathers, meaning they all placed more emphasis on a child-oriented, rather than adult-oriented, approach to parenting.

Participants were all Euro-American fathers with an average age of 43 years. All had one to two children who were an average age of 16 years. Self-identified gay fathers and heterosexual fathers were recruited from two different organized support groups in Denver, Colorado. The vast majority of participants were divorced after being married an average of 14 years. The majority had a high level of income and lived in an urban area. The two instruments used in the study were the Adult Responses to Child Behavior scale and the Attitudes Toward Fathering scale.