

### **35. Gay and Heterosexual Fathers: Attitudes Regarding the Value of Children**

Bigner, J. J. & Jacobsen, R. B. (1989a). The value of children to gay and heterosexual fathers. In F. W. Bozett (Ed.), *Homosexuality and the family*, pp. 163-172. New York: Harrington Park Press.

In this study, 33 gay fathers' and 33 heterosexual fathers' responses were compared on the Value of Children scale (VOC), which measures reasons for wanting to become a parent. For the most part, the reasons for gay and heterosexual fathers to become parents did not differ. There were two key differences between the groups of fathers.

Gay and heterosexual fathers were not different regarding parental satisfaction, parenting role motivation, happiness and affection, and goals and incentives. Both groups of fathers tended to hold negative attitudes about children and child rearing, as related to their income level. Individuals with higher levels of income and education often gave higher priority to self-actualization than child-rearing.

Gay fathers were less likely than heterosexual fathers to believe that having children improves a marriage relationship and that parenting enhances the morality of one's behavior. Gay fathers were more likely to believe that parenthood enhances one's masculinity and eases acceptance in the adult community (including heterosexual adults).

Participants were all Euro-American fathers with an average age of 40 years. All had at least two children who were between the ages of 3 and 24 years (mean of 11 years). Self-identified gay fathers were recruited from an organized support group in Denver, Colorado, while heterosexual fathers were randomly selected from a subject pool of participants for a previous research project. Of the 66 participants, 48 were divorced, 8 separated, 6 married, 4 never married. The average income level was \$27,000 and the average education was high school graduation.