

LGBTQ Families - Research Article Summaries**8. Gay Dads:****Study Explores Gay Men's Experiences with Parenthood**

Schacher, J. S., Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2005). Gay fathers expanding the possibilities for us all. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies, 1*, 31-52.

This qualitative study of 21 openly gay fathers, with children between 17 months and 12 years, explored the parenting experiences of these men and how these experiences are changing the image of traditional cultural norms of fatherhood, masculinity, and families. The participants, who were well-educated, upper-middle class and an average age of 39, were interviewed as part of focus groups run in four metropolitan areas in the U.S.

Most participants initially felt that being "gay" and being a "father" were conflicting identities. Since gay dads deal with the cultural bias of women (rather than men) as ideal primary caretakers, many felt they had to be a "super parent." Of the adoptive fathers, many experienced discrimination, having less of a chance to adopt a healthy infant than a heterosexual man. Some gay fathers felt conflicted about spending more time in a caretaking rather than breadwinning role. Many participants mentioned how they had redefined and blended traditional mother and father roles. Men who were partnered often shared childcare and household tasks equally. Gay dads emphasized that "love makes a family." Participants stressed that biological ties have little to do with creating lasting bonds, especially in adoptive and interracial families. Many participants had strong social support systems, from gay parenting groups or extended family and friend networks. Gay dads placed high importance on creating supportive and tolerant environments for their children. All participants spoke of the rewards they felt from being a parent, whether from personal growth and fulfillment or from being a role model for other families.