

LGBTQ Families - Research Article Summaries**6. Lesbian Couples Who Become Parents:  
Study Deals with Changes in Relationship Quality Across the Transition to Parenthood**

Goldberg, A. E., & Sayer, A. (2006). Lesbian couples' relationship quality across the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 87-100.

This study explores how becoming a parent impacts relationship quality in 29 lesbian couples in which one member was the biological mother of their child. Overall, lesbian couples' love decreased and conflict increased across the transition to parenthood. This is consistent with prior research involving heterosexual couples. Stress related to parenting and having less time alone may explain the results.

Decreased feelings of love and increased feelings of conflict were related to certain personality traits like neuroticism for both biological and non-biological mothers across the transition. Couple characteristics, such as maintenance behaviors<sup>1</sup>, were related to decreased feelings in love, towards their partner, for biological mothers only. However, for non-biological mothers, maintenance behaviors and satisfaction with the couples' division of labor were related to greater feelings of love towards their partner.

Level of relational conflict was related to expected social support (emotional, financial or practical). Both mothers expected a high level of support from their partner's family. However, biological mothers experienced less conflict post-birth, while non-biological mothers experienced more. This result may reflect that non-biological mothers felt their expectations were not met following their child's birth. Aspects of work were not significantly related to change in conflict or love.

Data were collected through interview questions regarding the status of and change within couples' relationships one month before and three months after their child was born. The majority of participants were White, highly educated, and financially secure. Couples had been together on average six years.

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<sup>1</sup> "Maintenance behaviors" include how often you tell your partner what you want and need in the relationship.