

LGBTQ Families - Research Article Summaries**7. Division of Labor in Lesbian and Heterosexual Couples:  
Study Deals with How Co-parents Divide Household and Childcare Tasks in Families with  
Young Children**

Patterson, C. J., Sutfin, E. L., & Fulcher, M. (2004). Division of labor among lesbian and heterosexual parenting couples: Correlates of specialized versus shared patterns. *Journal of Adult Development, 11*, 179-189.

This study explored the division of labor in 66 families with adopted or biological children four to six years old. 33 of the families had heterosexual parents and 33 had lesbian parents. Information on parents' attitudes, relationship satisfaction, demographics, and division of labor was gathered. Lesbian couples divided labor evenly, while heterosexual couples had specialized patterns of labor. Specialized patterns indicate that one partner did more childcare and household tasks while the other did more paid employment. There was no relation between the couples' relationship satisfaction, child's race or adoptive status and parents' division of labor.

In the study, all couples split household tasks fairly evenly. All parents felt relatively competent caring for their children. However, lesbian couples shared childcare tasks equally, while heterosexual mothers did more childcare than heterosexual fathers. Heterosexual fathers spent more time in paid employment than lesbian and heterosexual mothers, which resulted in fathers spending less time doing childcare. Lesbian mothers more often held the ideal of wanting to participate equally in childcare, which resulted in a greater involvement in childcare tasks in comparison with heterosexual fathers.

Household incomes and level of education were similar for all couples. Jobs pursued by lesbian mothers were just as prestigious as those pursued by heterosexual fathers, but heterosexual mothers held jobs that were less prestigious in comparison to the two. All couples spent the same total amount of time in paid work, but heterosexual fathers worked and earned more per week than lesbian mothers, and lesbian mothers worked and earned more per week than heterosexual mothers. Lesbian mothers were older than heterosexual mothers (an average of 42 years to 39 years, respectively).