

29. Lesbian and Heterosexual Mothers: Comparing Motivation and Values Involved in Parenting Children

Siegenthaler, A. L., & Bigner, J. J. (2000). The value of children to lesbian and non-lesbian mothers. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 39, 73-93.

This study explores the responses of 25 lesbian and 26 heterosexual mothers to questions on the Value of Children (VOC) scale. This questionnaire investigates possible reasons that adults become parents and the values and functions of children in the parents' lives. Results demonstrate that there are more similarities between lesbian and heterosexual mothers than differences, indicating that sexual orientation is not a distinguishing criterion between groups of adults regarding reasons and values involved in parenting children.

There were no differences between mothers regarding parental satisfaction, parental identity, sense of family, affection, and social status. These similarities may be explained in part by the similar socialization that women experienced with regard to parenthood.

One significant difference was found regarding incentives and goals for having children, such that heterosexual mothers reported more frequently than lesbian mothers that "having children gives a person a special incentive to succeed in life" and "one of the highest purposes in life is to have children." This difference may reflect different world-views of lesbian and heterosexual mothers. Instead of feeling pressure and social expectation to have children from family and friends, lesbian mothers may parent children due to more personal motivations.

Participants in the study were predominantly White, middle class, approximately 35 years old, and college-educated. The majority of mothers were in committed long-term relationships (72% of lesbian mothers, 96% of heterosexual mothers). Mothers had an average of 1.86 children. There were 38 female and 55 male children represented in this sample, with an average age of 6.7 years.