

30. Lesbian and Heterosexual Parents and their Children: Division of Labor, Couple Satisfaction and Child Adjustment

Chan, R. W., Brooks, R. C., Raboy, B., & Patterson, C. J. (1998). Division of labor among lesbian and heterosexual parents: Associations with children's adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology, 12*, 402-419.

This study investigated division of labor and relationship satisfaction among 30 lesbian and 16 heterosexual couples who had at least one child via donor insemination. All couples similarly divided paid employment hours, decision-making tasks, and household chores. However, lesbian couples divided childcare more equally than heterosexual couples. Lesbian mothers who were more satisfied with division of labor were also more satisfied in their relationships and had children with fewer externalizing behavior problems.

Heterosexual mothers were more responsible for childcare than fathers, which was the reported preference of fathers. Mothers, however, reported their preference would be to share childcare evenly. Lesbian mothers indicated both a preference and practice of sharing childcare more evenly. There were no significant differences related to children's age or gender. Interestingly, regardless of how childcare was actually divided, couples reported relative satisfaction with the division of family labor.

All parents were generally satisfied in their relationships with their partner, reporting low to moderate levels of conflict and high levels of love in their relationships. Overall, children were well-adjusted. There were no differences regarding sexual orientation of parents.

The majority of parents were employed part-time or more, in a long-term relationship with a partner, and well-educated. However, lesbian mothers were more educated than heterosexual parents. All families were relatively affluent, with incomes above national averages. There were 30 male and 16 female children represented. Children were 7.4 years on average, ranging from 5 to 11 years. Mothers were 40.9 years on average, ranging from 33 to 47 years.