

Division of Labor Among Gay Fathers: Associations With Parent, Couple, and Child Adjustment

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The present study examined division of labor among gay fathers, tested 3 major theories of division of labor (relative resource theory, time constraint theory, and life course theory), and evaluated associations between discrepancies among current and ideal divisions of labor, on the one hand, and parent well-being, couple functioning, and child adjustment, on the other. The sample consisted of 335 self-described gay fathers who took part in Wave 1 and 176 of those men who took part in Wave 2 of an Internet-based study. All of the participants identified themselves as gay fathers who currently had male partners and at least 1 child under 18 years of age residing in their home. Results showed that gay fathers reported having and desiring egalitarian divisions of labor and that time constraint theory and an aspect of life course theory were supported. Lastly, discrepancies between actual and ideal division of labor were associated with parental well-being and couple functioning but not children's adjustment. The results add to understanding of the role that division of labor plays in parent, couple, and child adjustment among gay father families.

Keywords: division of labor, gay fathers, sexual orientation, well-being, couple functioning

Division of labor, or how a couple allocates various tasks in the household, is an important aspect of coparenting. Division of labor among heterosexual couples and families has been studied in depth (reviewed in Coltrane, 2000; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010) but the division of labor within gay father families has not received as much attention (Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002). Part of coparenting involves decisions about which member of the couple will complete specific tasks. Problems stemming from an unsatisfactory division of labor not only have a negative impact on the functioning of the couple, but may also affect both individual parents, their children, and the family system in its entirety (Coltrane, 2000; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010).

How do gay male couples with children divide labor? There are prescribed, heteronormative expectations about division of labor for heterosexual but not for gay couples. Among heterosexual couples, childcare is often seen mainly as the mother's (i.e., feminine) role, with paid employment outside the home being seen as mainly the father's (i.e., masculine) role. Silverstein, Auerbach, and Levant (2002) described gay men as

needing to “degender parenting.” In other words, gay fathers negotiate division of labor without a clear script that is available to heterosexual couples (Goldberg, 2013). Whether they adapt this script, rewrite it, or ignore it altogether are questions for research.

The majority of research on division of labor has found that, on average, heterosexual couples report more specialized patterns of dividing labor than do lesbian and gay couples, who generally report that they divide labor in a more egalitarian or less specialized way (Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg et al., 2012; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; Patterson, Sutphin, & Fulcher, 2004). Much of the research on division of labor in same-sex families has focused on lesbian mothers, but a few studies have recently begun to examine the experiences of gay fathers (e.g., Farr & Patterson, 2013). There seem to be differences in the ways different types of couples divide labor but much less is known about why such differences may exist.

Relative resource theory attributes division of labor in a household to the difference in resources within the couple (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). According to relative resource theory, assignment of childcare and household tasks in the family is dependent on each partner's resources. In this view, the individual in the couple with fewer resources (e.g., lower individual income, lower level of education, or lower occupational prestige) should do more of the unpaid household and childcare labor. While there has been some support for the relative resource theory among heterosexual couples, support for this perspective among gay and lesbian couples has been limited (Carrington, 1999; Goldberg et al., 2012; Patterson et al., 2004; Sutphin, 2010).

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Kurdek (1993) found that for childless heterosexual couples—but not for lesbian or gay couples—lower income seemed to be tied to greater participation in household labor for both men and women. Patterson and colleagues (2004) reported that income was not associated with the division of labor among lesbian couples who had young children. They did, however, find that when a discrepancy in education existed between partners, the partner with less education performed more childcare. Goldberg et al. (2012) also reported that, among a sample of heterosexual, lesbian, and gay new adoptive parents, greater inequalities in income were associated with more specialized division of labor. Thus, some support for the relative resource theory among same-sex couples has emerged. On this basis, we expect to find support for relative resource theory for childcare but not household division of labor among gay father couples.

According to time-constraint theory, time spent in paid employment and other activities outside the home creates a greater demand on the other partner and greater participation by that partner in household related tasks (Artis & Pavalko, 2003). Support for this theory has been reported for gay and lesbian parent families, all of the results reported here are consistent. In a study exploring the experiences of gay fathers, Goldberg (2012) found that, in families in which one man spent more time than the other in paid employment, specialized divisions of unpaid household labor were more common. Goldberg and colleagues (2012) examined the experiences of same-sex couples with young children and found that when there were inequalities in paid employment the partner who worked more hours participated less in childcare and some household labor tasks. Similarly, Downing and Goldberg (2011) found that, among lesbian mothers of toddlers, there was often one parent who worked less outside the home and performed more childcare.

Time-constraint theory is based on the idea that there are only a finite number of hours in the day to perform unpaid and paid labor. If one partner is working more outside the home, that partner has less time to participate in unpaid labor in the home. We hypothesize that for gay fathers, the partner who is working more outside the home will perform less of the household and childcare labor inside the home.

Life course theory is based in part on the idea that experiences at one point during the life course can have an impact on development during later periods. Life course theory frequently examines associations among variables such as age, family structure, living arrangements, and life transitions in the context of cultural and historical environments (Elder, 1998). Research has evaluated the association between these variables and the division of labor in both heterosexual and families headed by same-sex couples.

Miller and Sassler (2010) examined the experiences of 30 cohabiting heterosexual couples and found that although some cohabiters expressed a desire for an egalitarian relationship, many of the couples became more traditional in their approach to the relationship over time. There is little research on the association between the relationship status of lesbian and gay couples and the couples' division of labor. In a review of the literature on the division of labor among lesbian and gay couples, Kurdek (2005) proposed that the longer couples are together, the greater their specialization of unpaid labor. More research is needed to understand the role of these factors in the lives of same-sex couples.

Very limited research has focused on the role of family structure on division of labor patterns. Ishii-Kuntz and Coltrane (1992) compared first-married couples with biological children, remarried couples with only stepchildren, remarried couples with biological children and stepchildren, and remarried couples with stepchildren. Husbands in the remarried group were found to contribute significantly more to household labor than husbands in all other family types. This finding was particularly true for fathers in the remarried biological child group (Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992). In contrast, Demo and Acock (1993) compared the divisions of labor reported by a nationally representative sample of heterosexual women who were married for the first time, divorced, remarried (stepfamilies), or never married. They found that regardless of family type, the women reported completing two to three times more household labor than their male partners.

Research on the division of labor among lesbian and gay parents has typically examined primary-parented families and not stepparent families. In a qualitative study of black lesbian stepfamilies, however, researchers found that biological mothers were responsible for substantially more unpaid labor than stepmothers (Moore, 2008). Most of the research in this area has been descriptive in nature, has been based on relatively small samples, and has not compared gay-fathered primary parent couples to stepparent families. More research is needed to understand the role that family structure plays in the division of labor in these families. In sum, understanding associations among length of relationship and family structure and division of labor are the first steps toward understanding how these variables influence family lives. For gay fathers, it is expected that the length of relationship and family type will be associated with gay fathers' division of unpaid labor.

Issues arising from disagreement about assignment of unpaid labor have been found to be related to an array of issues for couples. When division of labor is viewed as unfair, this has been found to have a negative impact on parents, on children, and on the family system (reviewed in Coltrane, 2000; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). Much of the research in this area has focused on three major areas in which difficulties in division of labor have had a negative impact on the family system, namely individual well-being, relationship between the parents, and child adjustment.

Multiple studies have found that participating in more unpaid labor or having an unequal division of this labor among partners is associated with less positive individual well-being (Coltrane, 2000; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004; Kurdek, 1993). To date, only one study has examined the association between perceived unfairness regarding division of labor and well-being among same-sex couples. In a study of lesbian mothers conducted by Goldberg and Smith (2008), perceived unfairness regarding household labor, but not childcare, was negatively associated with maternal well-being. Perceiving inequities in division of this labor has consistently been associated with decreased feelings of individual well-being among heterosexual couples (Coltrane, 2000; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004). Thus, in the current study, we expect that greater discrepancies in both childcare and household division of labor will be associated with reduced well-being among gay fathers.

An additional factor that has been examined in relation to division of labor is the relationship between parents. Research has

repeatedly reported associations between greater satisfaction with the division of labor and more positive couple relationships for both heterosexual (Coltrane, 2000; Cowan & Cowan, 1992) and same-sex couples (Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Sutphin, 2010). Parenting alliance, or how parents work together in their roles as parents, is an important aspect of the parental relationship that should be differentiated from relationship satisfaction (Abidin & Brunner, 1995). Parenting alliance has not been studied directly in relation to household division of labor, but some researchers have examined the role of parenting alliance in childcare labor among heterosexual parents.

Some research has reported that parenting alliance is related to involvement in child rearing activities among heterosexual fathers (Downer & Mendez, 2005; McBride & Rane, 1998). McBride and Rane (1998) found that, among heterosexual parent families, there was a significant association between fathers' involvement in childcare labor and both mothers' and fathers' parenting alliance scores. Other researchers have also reported that greater father involvement in childcare activities was related to a stronger alliance between the parents (Downer & Mendez, 2005). Thinking about coparenting more generally, it is clear that division of labor is an important aspects of coparenting and that negotiation of division of labor is related to how the couple works as a team. Some researchers have discussed the importance that satisfaction with division of labor can play in the quality of the coparenting relationship among couples (Patterson & Farr, 2011) but there has been little empirical work in this area. Based on research about coparenting relationships in general, we expected that perceptions of unfair divisions of labor would be associated with less effective parental alliances.

Research examining the association between parental division of labor and child adjustment is also extremely limited. There have been only two research studies to date that examine these associations (Chan et al., 1998; Patterson, 1995). Patterson (1995) measured satisfaction with childcare division of labor among 26 lesbian mothers and found that when the nonbiological mother was more satisfied with the division of childcare labor the children reported greater well-being. Chan and colleagues (1998) found that, among nonbiological lesbian mothers, greater satisfaction with decision making (not childcare or household division of labor) was associated with child adjustment. For the current study, it is hypothesized that greater discrepancies between actual and ideal division of labor will be associated with child behavior problems.

In short, the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the division of household and childcare labor among gay fathers and to explore associations of this division of labor with other family processes and outcomes. The first aim is to replicate and extend past findings by examining the current and ideal division of labor among gay parenting couples. The second aim is to examine division of labor in terms of three major theories—relative resource theory, time constraint theory, and life course theory—to understand which variables are associated with division of household and childcare labor among gay fathers. The third main aim is to evaluate the implications of discrepancies among current and ideal divisions of labor on the one hand, and parental well-being, parental functioning, and child adjustment on the other.

Method

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 335 (Wave 1) and 176 (Wave 2) self-described gay fathers recruited from across the United States and drawn from a larger study of gay/bisexual fathers (Patterson & Tornello, 2011; Tornello & Patterson, 2015). To be eligible to participate in this study, a man had to identify himself as a gay father, had to report a male partner residing in the same household at least half of the time, and had to report having a child 18 years of age or younger residing in the household. To maintain independence of data points, only one member of each couple participated in the study.

Participants' ages ranged from 25 to 63 years of age ($M = 42.54$, $SD = 6.33$), and their partners' ages ranged from 22 to 67 years of age ($M = 42.73$, $SD = 7.30$). The participants reported that they and their partners were, on average, well educated, earned above-average incomes, and worked full-time. The majority of participants reported that they and their partners were White/Caucasian, 89.6% and 83.0%, respectively, with a minority identifying as Latino, African American/Black, Asian, Biracial/Multiracial or some other ethnicity/race. About one third of the men identified as Protestant (32.5%) or reported no religious affiliation (28.7%), and the others described their religious affiliations as being Catholic (11.3%), Jewish (10.4%), or something else (17.1%). Participants reported residing in 39 different states and the District of Columbia. Less than one third of respondents reported that they resided in any one region of the country.

Gay fathers reported that their families were created through an array of different methods. The most common pathway described was adoption (67.8%), followed by the use of surrogacy (15.2%), having children in the context of a former heterosexual relationship (13.4%), or coparenting or donor arrangements (3.6%). Participants reported approximately two children per family ($M = 1.62$, $SD = .72$), with a sample total of 573 children. Children's ages were reported as ranging from newborn to 18 years with the average child's age being about seven years ($SD = 5.02$). These children were more likely to be male (70.6%) than female. The children were racially diverse with half identifying as White/Caucasian (50.2%) and a minority as Biracial/Multiracial (20.6%), Latino(a) (12.8%), Black/African American (8.1%), Asian (5.4%) or some other race/ethnicity (3.0%). All demographic information is listed in Table 1.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through advertisements for a "Gay/Bisexual Dads Study" which were sent in e-mails, published in newsletters, and placed on websites of relevant gay/bisexual family friendly organizations. The ads described the study and its eligibility criteria, and gave the researcher's email address. To express interest in participation, prospective participants were asked to contact the researcher via e-mail.

After a prospective participant expressed interest in the study, a researcher contacted him to describe the study and review the eligibility criteria. If the man was eligible and willing to participate, the researcher provided a link and password that allowed the participant to access the online survey. Each link included a code

Table 1
Demographic Information of Gay Fathers, Their Partners, and Eldest Child

Variable	Participant		Partner		Child 1	
	Wave 1 <i>M (SD)</i>	Wave 2 <i>M (SD)</i>	Wave 1 <i>M (SD)</i>	Wave 2 <i>M (SD)</i>	Wave 1 <i>M (SD)</i>	Wave 2 <i>M (SD)</i>
Age	42.54 (6.33)	43.90 (6.44)	42.73 (7.30)	44.13 (6.91)	7.11 (5.02)	7.95 (5.10)
Household income (K)	191 (123)	196 (136)				
Hours worked per week	38.23 (15.21)	37.95 (16.20)	38.12 (15.57)	38.57 (16.30)		
Length of relationship	12.02 (7.00)	13.77 (7.19)				
Total number of children	1.62 (.72)	1.63 (.69)				
Work full-time (%) ^a	84.1	81.7	81.2	80.5		
Gender (male %)	100	100	100	100	70.7	74.4
Family type (% step-families)	13.4	11.4				
Race (%)						
White/Caucasian	89.6	89.2	83.0	83.5	50.2	49.4
Black/African American	.9	.6	3.9	4.5	8.1	10.2
Latino	4.5	3.4	6.3	6.8	12.8	13.6
Biracial/Multiracial	1.8	2.8	2.1	1.1	20.6	17.6
Asian	2.1	2.3	3.0	2.3	5.4	5.7
Other	1.2	1.8	1.8	1.8	3.0	3.5
Education (%)						
High school/GED	.6	.6	6.3	4.5		
Some college	14.7	10.9	17.4	14.2		
Bachelor's degree	31.5	31.0	32.0	33.5		
Graduate degree	53.3	57.5	44.5	47.7		
Religion (%)						
Catholic	11.3	9.1	12.6	9.1		
Protestant	32.5	30.7	30.2	29.7		
Jewish	10.4	11.4	8.1	8.6		
Other affiliation	17.1	17.1	17.4	17.9		
No religious affiliation	28.7	31.8	31.7	34.9		

Note. Not all numbers will total to 100 due to rounding.

^a Full-time work was defined as working an average of 30 hours or more per week.

that identified an individual participant and also members of couples. If the participant did not respond within one month of the initial contact, follow-up e-mails were sent to encourage participation.

Participation was completely voluntary, and no financial incentives were offered. On average, the survey took about 30 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, participants were asked if they would like to participate in any follow-up studies and, if so, contact information was obtained. After completing the survey, participants were directed to a debriefing page that provided information about how to contact the researcher and how to access gay-friendly resources. Wave 1 of data collection occurred between January 2009 and August 2009.

Those willing to be contacted for follow-up studies were invited by e-mail to participate approximately one year ($M = 382.61$ days, $SD = 82.88$) after initial survey completion. The e-mail described the goals of the follow-up study and provided a link with a password to access the survey. Each link included the personalized participant code that identified an individual participant and also members of couples from the prior data collection. The follow-up survey was similar to the original in length and design and was completed by about half (52.5%; $n = 176$) of the participants from the original sample. There were no significant differences in age, income, education, age of oldest child, or number of children between participants who completed the Wave 1 survey only and those who participated in both Wave 1 and Wave 2. Wave 2 took place from April 2010

to October 2010. Both phases of data collection were approved by the University of Virginia Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Materials

Demographic information. At Wave 1, participants were asked to provide demographic information, including age, gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, zip code, religious affiliation, relationship status, length of current relationship, education, employment, and income. If a participant described himself as currently in a relationship, he was also asked to answer demographic questions about his partner. In addition, participants were asked to provide demographic information for their child or children, including age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Pathway to parenthood. At Wave 1, participants were asked a series of questions about how their child or children joined their family. Participants and/or their partners were asked if they were biologically related to the child, if the child was adopted, or if the child had come to the family from the foster care system. Based on responses to questions about family formation, participants were directed to a second set of questions relevant to their particular family type. If none of the options applied, participants were prompted to describe their particular situation in their own words.

Division of labor. The Who Does What? is a self-report survey, designed to assess the couple's actual and ideal division of labor (Cowan & Cowan, 1990). This instrument was used during

both Wave 1 and Wave 2 and consists of three scales, two of which—childcare (e.g., feeding the child) and household (e.g., cleaning the house)—were used for this study. Each item was scored on a scale of 1 to 9, in which 1 = *partner does it all* to 9 = *I do it all*, with 5 = *we both do this equally*. Participants rated their current division of labor (referred to as *actual*) and how they would like unpaid labor to be divided (referred to as *ideal*). Every participant completed the same household task scale (13 items). There were six different childcare scales in which the number of items varied widely based on the age of the child (using a range of 12 to 20 items) (Cowan & Cowan, 1990). Although some couples may have outside paid assistance with one or more of these tasks (e.g., housekeeper) the measure is designed to capture which individual in the couple is completing each task in relation to their partner.

Aggregating the information on the scales, six different scores were calculated, with three scores regarding childcare and three regarding household tasks. First, a score reflecting the current division of labor was calculated by taking the average of the *actual* responses on each subscale. Higher values on that score indicate that the participant does more compared to the partner. Second, a score reflecting the participant's *ideal* division of labor was calculated by taking the average of the ideal responses on each subscale. A score closer to 5 indicated a greater *desire* for egalitarian division of labor. Third, to gain an understanding of the discrepancy between the couple's actual and ideal division of labor, a discrepancy score was calculated by taking the absolute difference between the actual and ideal scores and averaging those scores. A total discrepancy score closer to zero indicated less discrepancy or greater satisfaction with the current division of labor. The same procedure was applied for division of childcare labor.

Depressive symptoms. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale (CES-D scale) is a 20-item self-report survey designed to measure current depressive symptomology (Radloff, 1977). This scale was used only at Wave 2. Participants were instructed to answer the items while thinking about the past week. Items were scored on a four-point Likert scale in which 0 = *Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)*, 1 = *Some or a little of the time (1–2 days)*, 2 = *Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3–4 days)*, and 3 = *Most or all of the time (5–7 days)*. Sample items included, "I was bothered by things that usually do not bother me," and "I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing." A total CES-D score was calculated by summing scores for all 20 items. Scores ranged from 0 to 60, with higher scores indicating greater depressive symptoms, and scores above 16 indicating probable depression (Radloff, 1977). Cronbach's alpha for the total CES-D scale was .91.

Satisfaction with life. The Satisfaction With Life scale (SWLS) is a five-item self-report scale designed to give a global impression of a person's overall satisfaction with his or her life (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). This scale was used only at Wave 2. Items were scored on a seven-point Likert scale which ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 7 = *Strongly agree*. Sample items included, "In most ways, my life is close to ideal," and "So far I have gotten the important things I want in life." A total score was calculated by adding the scores for all five items. Scores ranged from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction (Table 2). Scores from 30 to 35 = *Highly satisfied*,

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Division of Labor and Outcome Measures

Measures	Wave 1	Wave 2
	<i>M (SD)</i> (<i>n</i> = 335)	<i>M (SD)</i> (<i>n</i> = 176)
Current household labor ^a	5.29 (.74)	5.32 (.84)
Ideal household labor ^a	4.96 (.61)	4.96 (.62)
Current childcare labor ^a	5.42 (1.02)	5.37 (1.16)
Ideal childcare labor ^a	5.15 (.68)	5.05 (.82)
Household discrepancies ^b	.77 (.65)	.87 (.68)
Childcare discrepancies ^b	.63 (.56)	.66 (.66)
Depressive symptomology ^c		7.66 (8.10)
Satisfaction with life ^d		27.18 (5.69)
Parenting alliance ^e		87.49 (11.33)
Child behavior ^f		95.70 (10.42)

^a 1 = *partner does it all* to 9 = *I do it all*. ^b Higher values indicate greater discrepancy between actual and ideal division of labor. ^c Scores range from 0 to 60, higher values indicate greater depressive symptoms; scores of 16 or greater indicate probable depression. ^d Scores from 30 to 35 = *Highly satisfied*, 26–29 = *Satisfied*, 21–25 = *Slightly satisfied*, 20 = *Neutral*, 15–19 = *Slightly dissatisfied*, 10–14 = *Dissatisfied*, 5–9 = *Extremely dissatisfied*. ^e Scores ranged from 20 to 100, higher values indicate greater alliance between the parents. ^f Scores ranged from 85 to 145 (*M* = 100, *SD* = 15), with higher scores indicating more behavioral problems.

26–29 = *Satisfied*, 21–25 = *Slightly satisfied*, 20 = *Neutral*, 15–19 = *Slightly dissatisfied*, 10–14 = *Dissatisfied*, 5–9 = *Extremely dissatisfied*. Cronbach's alpha for the total SWLS was .80.

Parenting alliance. The Parenting Alliance Inventory (PAI) is a 20-item self-report scale designed to measure the quality of the working parental relationship between coparents (Abidin & Brunner, 1995). This scale was used only at Wave 2. Items were scored on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from 1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly agree*. Items included, "My child's other parent and I are a good team" and "My child's other parent tells me I am a good parent." A total score was calculated by summing scores on all 20 items. Scores ranged from 20 to 100, with higher scores indicating a stronger alliance between the parents. Cronbach's alpha for the total PAI was .95.

Child adjustment. The problem behavior scale of the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS) was used to measure total behavioral problems in children (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). This scale was used only at Wave 2. Each item had a three-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 to 2 with 0 = *never*, 1 = *sometimes*, and 2 = *very often*. There were three different age-based scales: preschool (3 years of age through kindergarten), elementary (kindergarten through Grade 6), and secondary (Grades 7 through 12). Fathers with children under the age of 3 did not complete the survey (*n* = 34). Items included statements such as "gets angry easily" and "appears lonely." Raw scores were calculated by summing all items of the age appropriate scale. These scores were then converted to standardized scores based on age and gender (see Gresham & Elliott, 1990). Standardized scores ranged from 85 to 145 (*M* = 100, *SD* = 15), with higher scores indicating more behavioral problems (see Table 2). Cronbach's alpha for the SSRS scales ranged from .74 to .89.

Variable Creation

In order to investigate the role of relative resources and relative time constraints three variables were created by combining information available for the respondents and their partners. First, we created a variable indicating the respondent's relative contribution to the household income by calculating the proportion that his personal income contributed to the overall household income. Higher values indicate greater discrepancies in income. Second, relative educational resources were operationalized by subtracting the partner's years of education from the respondent's education in years. Higher values indicate that the respondent had more years of education than his partner. Third, relative time constraints were operationalized by subtracting the partner's hours of work from respondent's hours of work. Again, higher values indicate that the respondent spends more time in paid employment than his partner.

Results

The results represented with regard to three major aims. First, we examined patterns of household and childcare division of labor among gay fathers. Second, we tested major theories associated with division of labor patterns among couples. Lastly, we explored the associations between discrepancies in the division of labor, on the one hand, and parent well-being, couple functioning, and child adjustment, on the other.

The first aim of this study was to examine patterns of household and childcare division of labor among gay fathers. Gay fathers reported currently having a relatively equal division of household, $M = 5.29$, $SD = 0.74$, and childcare labor, $M = 5.42$, $SD = 1.02$ at Wave 1 and household, $M = 5.32$, $SD = .84$, and childcare labor, 5.37 , $SD = 1.16$, at Wave 2. In addition, in both waves, gay fathers reported wanting a relatively equal division of household, $M = 4.96$, $SD = .61$ (Wave 1), $M = 4.96$, $SD = 0.62$ (Wave 2), and childcare labor, $M = 5.15$, $SD = 0.68$ (Wave 1), $M = 5.05$, $SD = 0.82$ (Wave 2). The discrepancy scores (a score closer to zero indicated less discrepancy between actual and ideal division of labor) for household labor were $M = 0.77$, $SD = 0.65$ (Wave 1), $M = 0.87$, $SD = 0.68$ (Wave 2), and for childcare labor were $M = 0.63$, $SD = 0.56$ (Wave 1), $M = 0.66$, $SD = 0.66$ (Wave 2). In sum, gay fathers reported that they want to—and actually do—divide their household and childcare labor in an equal fashion and they reported few discrepancies in actual and expected division of labor (see Table 2).

In addition to the average discrepancy score, we explored the discrepancy score of each individual household task to examine the variation across each task (Table 3). We found that, overall, most household tasks had low discrepancy scores (a score closer to zero indicated less discrepancy between actual and ideal division of labor). The highest discrepancy score was found to be the task of providing income for the family, $M = .98$, $SD = 1.31$ (Wave 1), $M = 1.19$, $SD = 1.45$ (Wave 2), with the lowest being discrepancy being the task of vehicle maintenance, $M = .53$, $SD = 1.04$ (Wave 1), $M = .58$, $SD = 1.08$ (Wave 2). Overall, discrepancies between each household task were relatively small across tasks.

Variables from all three theories were entered into regressions using full information maximum likelihood (FIML) methods to explore which variables were the best predictors of household and childcare division of labor (separately) among gay fathers. These regressions included relative resource theory variables (relative

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Individual Household Division of Labor Discrepancy Scores

Measures	Wave 1	Wave 2
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) (<i>n</i> = 335)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>) (<i>n</i> = 176)
Planning and preparing meals	.67 (1.07)	.95 (1.21)
Cleaning up after meals	.73 (1.16)	.91 (1.35)
Repairs around the home	.80 (1.25)	.82 (1.22)
House cleaning	.91 (1.27)	.90 (1.22)
Taking out the garbage	.72 (1.31)	.82 (1.35)
Buying groceries, household needs	.75 (1.22)	.70 (1.19)
Paying bills	.74 (1.32)	.67 (1.27)
Laundry: washing, folding, ironing	.91 (1.32)	.99 (1.33)
Writing letters/making calls to family, friends	.82 (1.17)	.89 (1.28)
Looking after the car	.53 (1.04)	.58 (1.08)
Providing income for our family	.98 (1.31)	1.19 (1.45)
Caring for plants, garden, yard	.80 (1.21)	.88 (1.19)
Working outside family	.53 (1.14)	1.02 (1.37)

Note. Discrepancy scores were calculated by taking the absolute difference between the actual and ideal scores for each item. Higher values indicate greater discrepancy between actual and ideal division of labor.

income and education), the time availability theory variable (relative hours worked per week in paid employment), and the life course theory variables (length of relationship and family structure [stepfamily or planned gay fathered families]), while controlling for demographic variables (age of participant, age of child, & number of children).

The results for predictors of household and childcare division of labor are shown in Table 4. For actual division of household labor, spending more hours in paid employment compared with the partner was significantly associated with performing less household labor, $\chi^2_{8,327} = 17.51$, $p = .03$; $R^2 = .06$. For division of childcare labor, relative time constraints, relative educational attainment, and family type were all significant predictors of the actual division of childcare labor, $\chi^2_{8,327} = 92.52$, $p < .001$; $R^2 = .30$. In sum, fathers who reported working fewer hours in paid employment relative to their partner also reported performing more of the household and childcare labor in their homes. In addition, biological fathers in stepfamilies and those who had higher educational attainment reported that they were performing more of the childcare labor.

For the third aim of this study, associations between differences in actual and ideal division of household labor and childcare labor and parent well-being, couple functioning, and child adjustment were explored. A series of regressions using FIML methods were conducted to predict individual functioning, couple functioning, and child adjustment. Each regression included demographic variables (father's age, total number of children, and age of eldest child), variables that were theoretically relevant to the division of labor (income, education, hours worked per week in paid employment, length of relationship, and family type), actual division of labor score (household and childcare in separate models), and the division of labor discrepancy score (household and childcare in separate models; Tables 5 and 6).

Parental well-being was explored by examining two dimensions: depressive symptoms and satisfaction with life. First, discrepancies between their actual and ideal division of labor

Table 4
Multiple Regression Predicting Household and Childcare Division of Labor (N = 335)

Variable	Household division of labor ^a			Childcare division of labor ^a		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Participant age	.01	.01	.07	.01	.01	.09
Number of children	.01	.06	.01	.03	.08	.02
Eldest child age	.01	.01	.08	.01	.01	.03
Length of current relationship	-.01	.01	-.07	-.01	.01	-.08
Family type ^b	.10	.15	.05	.76	.22	.26***
Relative education	.01	.02	.02	.07	.02	.16**
Relative income	.40	.25	.14	-.40	.29	-.10
Relative hours worked in paid employment	-.01	.00	-.27**	-.02	.00	-.40***
R ²		.06			.30	
χ ² (df)			17.51 (8, 327)*			92.52 (8, 327)***

^a 1 = partner does it all to 9 = I do it all. ^b 0 = Primary-parent families, 1 = Step-parent families.
* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

and depressive symptoms were examined. For the first model, differences between household actual and ideal division of labor predicted depressive symptoms among gay fathers although the overall model was not significant, $\chi^2_{(10,166)} = 16.75, p = .08, R^2 = .13$ (see Table 5). For childcare division of labor the overall model was significant, $\chi^2_{(10,166)} = 20.62, p = .02, R^2 = .16$, but no individual variable was a significant predictor of depressive symptomology. In sum, discrepancies between gay fathers' actual and ideal household and childcare division of labor were not significant predictors of depressive symptomology among these fathers (see Table 5).

Next, models were constructed to explore whether the difference between actual and ideal division of household and childcare labor was predictive of gay fathers' reported satisfaction with life. In the model exploring household division of labor, the household actual and ideal difference was the only significant predictor of the gay fathers' reported satisfaction with life, $\chi^2_{(10,166)} = 25.11, p = .005, R^2 = .15$ (see Table 5).

Similarly in the model exploring childcare division of labor, the childcare actual and ideal difference was the only significant predictor of the gay fathers' reported satisfaction with life, $\chi^2_{(10,166)} = 44.87, p < .001, R^2 = .26$ (see Table 6). In sum, fathers who reported fewer discrepancies between their actual and ideal division of household and childcare labor reported greater satisfaction with their lives.

Next, the association between parenting alliance and division of labor among these gay fathers was explored. Models were constructed to determine whether the difference between actual and ideal divisions of household and childcare labor was predictive of the alliance between the parents. In the model exploring household division of labor, age of eldest child and household actual-ideal difference were significant predictors of the gay fathers' reported parenting alliance, $\chi^2_{(10,166)} = 46.92, p < .001, R^2 = .29$ (see Table 5). Similarly with childcare division of labor, age of eldest child and childcare actual-ideal difference were significant predictors of the gay fathers' reported parenting alliance, $\chi^2_{(10,166)} = 68.37, p <$

Table 5
Actual and Ideal Difference in Household Division of Labor Predicting Individual Well-Being, Couple Well-Being, and Child Behavior (N = 176)

Variable	Depressive symptomology ^a			Satisfaction with life ^b			Parenting alliance ^c			Child behavior ^d		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Participant age	-.16	.14	-.13	-.07	.08	-.08	-.17	.15	-.10	-.11	.18	-.07
Number of children	-.19	1.06	-.02	.97	.69	.12	1.71	1.27	.10	1.34	1.35	.09
Eldest child age	.06	.13	.04	-.09	.10	-.08	-.66	.21	-.30**	.12	.23	.06
Length of current relationship	.12	.14	.10	-.11	.09	-.13	.16	.18	.10	.13	.14	.09
Family type ^e	-.21	2.54	-.01	-1.68	1.80	-.10	-5.50	4.04	-.16	2.55	3.29	.08
Relative education	-.14	.32	-.04	-.08	.22	-.03	-.49	.32	-.09	.10	.40	.02
Relative income	-1.02	3.14	-.03	1.29	2.51	.06	6.79	3.80	.16	-3.83	4.13	-.10
Relative hours worked in paid employment	.01	.03	.02	-.02	.02	-.08	-.07	.04	-.15	.07	.05	.17
Actual household labor ^f	-.86	1.04	-.09	-.29	.53	-.04	-.48	.96	-.04	-1.59	1.32	-.13
Actual and ideal difference ^g	4.06	1.42	.34**	-2.02	.80	-.24*	-4.89	1.48	-.29**	2.15	1.55	.14
R ²		.13			.15			.29			.07	
χ ² (df)			16.75 (10, 166) ⁺			25.11 (10, 166)**			46.92 (10, 166)***			7.75 (10, 166)

^a Higher values indicate greater depressive symptoms. ^b Higher values indicate higher satisfaction with life. ^c Higher values indicate greater alliance between the parents. ^d Higher values indicate greater child behavior problems. ^e 0 = Primary-parent families, 1 = Step-parent families. ^f 1 = partner does it all to 9 = I do it all. ^g Higher values indicate greater discrepancy between actual and ideal division of labor.
⁺ p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Table 6

Actual and Ideal Difference in Childcare Division of Labor Predicting Individual Well-Being, Couple Well-Being, and Child Behavior (N = 176)

Variable	Depressive symptomology ^a			Satisfaction with life ^b			Parenting alliance ^c			Child behavior ^d		
	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β	B	SE B	β
Participant age	-.25	.14	-.20 ⁺	-.03	.08	-.03	-.11	.13	-.06	-.17	.19	-.11
Number of children	-.16	.98	-.01	.72	.66	.09	.73	1.14	.04	1.33	1.32	.09
Eldest child age	.07	.14	.05	-.10	.10	-.09	-.52	.20	-.23*	.14	.25	.07
Length of current relationship	.13	.14	.11	-.08	.09	-.10	.19	.17	.12	.13	.17	.09
Family type ^e	-1.30	2.23	-.05	-.77	1.52	-.05	-4.40	3.76	-.13	1.37	3.39	.04
Relative education	-.12	.32	-.03	-.05	.22	-.02	-.29	.30	-.05	.11	.40	.02
Relative income	.77	3.00	.03	-.45	2.47	-.02	2.29	3.64	.05	-3.24	3.99	-.08
Relative hours worked in paid employment	.01	.04	.02	-.01	.02	-.05	-.06	.05	-.13	.08	.05	.20
Actual childcare labor ^f	.93	.92	.13	-.64	.40	-.13	-1.92	1.12	-.20	.94	1.10	.11
Actual and ideal difference ^g	3.59	2.09	.29 ⁺	-3.13	.95	-.36**	-7.01	1.68	-.41****	1.06	1.69	.07
R ²		.16			.26			.43			.07	
χ ² (df)	20.62 (10, 166)*			44.87 (10, 166)***			68.37 (10, 166)***			8.06 (10, 166)		

^a Higher values indicate greater depressive symptoms. ^b Higher values indicate higher satisfaction with life. ^c Higher values indicate greater alliance between the parents. ^d Higher values indicate greater child behavior problems. ^e 0 = Primary-parent families, 1 = Step-parent families. ^f 1 = partner does it all to 9 = I do it all. ^g Higher values indicate greater discrepancy between actual and ideal division of labor.

⁺ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

.001, $R^2 = .43$ (see Table 6). Fathers who reported fewer discrepancies between their actual and ideal division of household and childcare labor and had younger children reported a stronger sense of parenting alliance.

Lastly, the association between division of labor and reports about children's behavior was explored using the problem behavior scale of the SSRS. Models were constructed to explore whether the difference between actual and ideal division of household and childcare labor was predictive of child behavioral problems reported by gay fathers. For both discrepancies between their actual and ideal household labor, $\chi^2_{10,166} = 7.75$, $p = .65$, $R^2 = .07$, and childcare, $\chi^2_{10,166} = 8.06$, $p = .62$, $R^2 = .07$, no variables were significant predictors of children's behavior (see Tables 5 and 6).

To summarize, gay fathers reported dividing their household and childcare labor in a generally egalitarian manner and they reported wanting to divide their labor that way. The findings were consistent with time-constraint theory and with one aspect of life course and relative resource theory. Lastly, greater differences between actual and ideal division of labor were associated with lower satisfaction with life and more negative couple functioning but not with depressive symptoms or children's behavior.

Discussion

This study explored gay fathers' division of labor, factors associated with how labor is divided, and associations of this division of labor with individual, couple, and child functioning. We found that gay fathers reported dividing unpaid household and childcare labor in a fairly egalitarian fashion and that they reported wanting to divide unpaid labor in this way. In attempting to explain these patterns, we found strong support for the time-constraint theory and life course theory with limited support for the relative resource theory. Lastly, greater discrepancies in actual and ideal division of labor were associated with lower satisfaction with life and poorer couple functioning among these fathers. These data provide new information about the dynamics of families headed by gay fathers.

Prior research has consistently found that compared to heterosexual couples, lesbian and gay couples report that they divide unpaid labor in a relatively egalitarian manner (Farr & Patterson, 2013; Goldberg et al., 2012; Johnson & O'Connor, 2002). The gay fathers in this study also, on average, reported dividing their household and childcare labor in an egalitarian manner and preferring to divide their labor in this way. In addition, the discrepancy between how they did divide labor and how they would ideally want to divide labor was relatively small among these fathers. As with prior research, the gay fathers reported that they divide their unpaid labor in an egalitarian fashion and that they preferred to do it this way.

The second aim of the study was to explore three major theories about division of labor patterns among couples: the relative resource theory, the time-constraint theory, and the life course theory (Coltrane, 2000; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). Relative resource theory states that the division of household and childcare labor within a couple is determined by the relative resources of each partner (Blood & Wolfe, 1960). For the gay fathers in this study, results showed that providing more of the household income was not correlated with the amount of household labor that men performed. This result is consistent with the limited research on relative resource theory as it relates to division of labor among lesbian and gay couples (Chan et al., 1998; Patterson et al., 2004; Sutphin, 2010). In contrast, for childcare division of labor having greater educational attainment was associated with performing more childcare labor. This may be due to the sample being highly educated, with nearly 89.6% of the participants and 83% of their partners having obtained a bachelor's degree or higher. When comparing educational attainment among partners in heterosexual couples, these couples tend to have greater discrepancies in educational attainment seem to have been reported. This interesting finding requires greater investigation. In sum, consistent with findings from earlier research, gay fathers' income and educational attainment were not associated with their household division of

labor, although education was associated with childcare division of labor.

In contrast to relative resource theory, time-constraint theory predicted both household and childcare division of labor patterns among these gay fathers. Time-constraint theory is based on the idea that the individual in the couple who works fewer hours in paid employment outside the home will perform more of the unpaid labor in the home (Artis & Pavalko, 2003). Research investigating this theory has had mixed results for both heterosexual and same-sex couples (Chan et al., 1998; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Kurdek, 1993) but we could explain more specialized patterns of division of labor among these gay fathers using the time-constraint theory. Specifically, we found that fathers who worked fewer hours in paid employment reported participating in more household and childcare labor at home. As with other couples, the individual who spends more time at home reported performing more of the household and childcare labor.

The last theory examined was life course theory. Life course theory suggests that experiences across the life course can influence individuals differently at different points in the life course (Elder, 1998). There is little research examining division of labor patterns of same-sex couples as a function of the length of their romantic relationship. Research on heterosexual couples has found that the longer a couple has been together, the greater the specialization of their division of labor (Miller & Sassler, 2010). For heterosexual couples, gender roles become more traditional over the course of the relationship. Due to gay fathers' division of labor not involving the same heteronormative expectations, this type of change over the course of the relationship was not present among these fathers. In the present study, specialization of household and childcare labor was not associated with the length of fathers' relationships.

Lastly, division of labor patterns among men who had children in the context of a prior heterosexual relationship and were subsequently in a same-sex relationship (de facto stepfamilies) were compared with those of men who had children after coming out. Gay fathers in same-sex de facto stepfamilies reported being less egalitarian in their childcare but not household tasks compared to fathers who had children in the context of a same-sex relationship. A limited amount of research has examined stepfamilies and division of labor, but from this limited work it seems clear that family structure is important among both heterosexual (Demo & Acock, 1993; Ishii-Kuntz & Coltrane, 1992) and same-sex couples (Crosbie-Burnett & Helmbrecht, 1993; Moore, 2008). The biological father who brings a child into his new relationship may feel that the child's care is more his responsibility than his partner's. Even so, he may still expect the household labor to be divided in an egalitarian fashion. As with other families, the gay male step-parents in the current study reported performing less childcare but not household labor.

The third aim of the study was to explore the degree to which discrepancies among the current and ideal division of labor were associated with parental well-being, couple functioning, and children's adjustment. Prior research with heterosexual parents has found an association between division of labor inequalities and negative individual well-being, poor relationship functioning, and children's behavior (reviewed in Coltrane, 2000; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). Contrary to expectations, discrepancies between actual and ideal household and childcare division of labor

did not predict children's adjustment. Future research should explore in greater detail how couples see their own roles and expectations in relation to their family and the norms of society.

We did find support for some additional hypotheses. Research has found an association between more unequal division of labor and more negative individual well-being among heterosexual couples (Coltrane, 2000; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2004). Findings among same-sex couples have, however, been mixed (Goldberg & Smith, 2008; Kurdek, 1993). Kurdek (1993) found no association between well-being and the division of labor among childless gay male couples. Goldberg and Smith (2008) found that perceived unfairness surrounding household—but not childcare—labor was associated with a diminished sense of well-being among lesbian couples. For the fathers in the current study, discrepancies in the actual and ideal division of household and childcare labor were predictive of the fathers' reported satisfaction with life but not their depressive symptoms. When fathers' preferences about who should perform which tasks in their household did not match the reality, they were likely to be unhappy and dissatisfied but not to report depressive symptoms. In other words, fathers were more satisfied when they felt able to organize their household and childcare labor in ways that corresponded to their preferences.

Next, we explored the association between division of labor inequalities and levels of couple functioning, specifically parenting alliance. For the fathers in this study, smaller discrepancies between actual and ideal division of unpaid labor were associated with stronger parenting alliance. Prior research among heterosexual couples has found that parental involvement, particularly fathers', was associated with a stronger alliance between the parents (Downer & Mendez, 2005; McBride & Rane, 1998) but these studies did not examine same-sex couples, household division of labor, or satisfaction with division of labor. Negotiating who will perform household and childcare tasks is an important aspect of coparenting relationships. If one member of the parenting team sees himself or herself as performing more or less than he or she would ideally like to do, this can have a negative impact. In order to gain a greater understanding of the family system, more attention should be focused on the role that expectations play in couple and coparenting dynamics.

This study provides valuable information about division of labor and coparenting dynamics of gay father families. Many gay men are fathers, and many more want to become parents in the future (Gates, 2013; Riskind & Patterson, 2010). Learning more about their allocations of unpaid labor is an important aspect of understanding how gay father families function. Same-sex couples are surrounded by a heteronormative society but need to negotiate their unpaid labor without relying on these norms. Learning more about division of labor among gay fathers is not only valuable in itself, but it can also inform social and political debates regarding sexual orientation, gender roles, and fatherhood.

Some limitations of the current study should be acknowledged. First, this study used self-report survey methodology to collect information. Carrington (1999) has argued that couples would show less egalitarian divisions of labor if they were being directly observed rather than asked to describe their behavior. Some researchers have, however, found that couples' self-reports of their division of labor are consistent with observed behavior (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Future research in this area would benefit from employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies along

with both self-report and observational measures. A second limitation was that data were collected from only one of the fathers in each couple. Therefore, only the experiences of the partners surveyed are reported here, and their experiences may not reflect with equal accuracy the experiences of both members of the couple. While most of the research on division of labor has found moderate agreement between members of a couple (Farr & Patterson, 2013; Patterson et al., 2004) it would be informative to collect data from multiple respondents in the family.

This study also had a number of strengths. First, this was one of the largest studies, to date, exploring division of labor and family functioning of families headed by gay couples. The large sample size allowed for the use of several statistical controls in the models, and this enhanced understanding of these results. A second strength of this study was the diversity of the sample. The use of Internet data collection allowed for recruitment of participants from across the United States. In addition, these fathers showed great demographic diversity. This variation across the sample allowed for important variables to be controlled and provided a more complete picture of the experience of gay fathers and their families.

This study is the first to explore division of household and childcare labor patterns among gay fathers along with associations among division of labor and individual, couple, and child outcomes. We found that gay fathers reported having and desiring an egalitarian division of unpaid labor. There was little support for relative resource theory, but the results were consistent with the time-availability theory along with some aspects of the life course theory. Discrepancies among the actual and ideal division of household and childcare labor were associated with fathers' satisfaction with life and couples' relationship functioning, but were not associated with children's adjustment. In all, our results shed new light on division of labor among gay father families, and in this way, illuminate family processes among these contemporary families.

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