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Longitudinal Associations Between Coparenting and Child Adjustment Among Lesbian, Gay, and Heterosexual Adoptive Parent Families

Rachel H. Farr and Samuel T. Bruun
University of Kentucky

Charlotte J. Patterson
University of Virginia

This longitudinal study examined coparenting and child adjustment during early and middle childhood (*M*s = 3 and 8 years, respectively) among 106 lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent adoptive families. When children were in middle childhood, no differences emerged as a function of parental sexual orientation in observations or self-reports of coparenting; in addition, parents and teachers described children as well-adjusted overall. After controlling covariates, including couple relationship adjustment, more supportive coparenting in early childhood predicted fewer parent-reported child internalizing and externalizing problems in middle childhood. Within middle childhood, stronger parenting alliance was associated with fewer parent-reported child externalizing problems. These findings indicate the value of considering family processes among diverse families in contributing to child outcomes over time.

Keywords: child adjustment, coparenting, division of labor, family observations, lesbian and gay parents

Supplemental materials: http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/dev0000828.supp

Although sexual minority parent families are increasingly visible and many lesbian and gay (LG) parents have adopted children (Goldberg & Conron, 2018), few studies focused on children in these families have examined coparenting dynamics as an important context for development (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Coparenting refers to parents' ability to unify their efforts as a dyad to achieve their parental goals and the ways in which they accomplish child rearing tasks together (Feinberg, 2003). In families with heterosexual parents and biologically related children, effective coparenting has wide-reaching effects during the preschool years and beyond on children's outcomes, including lower internalizing and externalizing behaviors—even when controlling for couple relationship quality (Schoppe, Mangelsdorf, & Frosch, 2001; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Internalizing problems include anxious, depressive, or withdrawn symptoms, and externalizing problems are commonly characterized as *acting out*, including temper tantrums, disobedience, and other aggressive or disruptive issues (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001).

Studies about coparenting among heterosexual couples across childhood and adolescence have uncovered different trajectories related to parental gender (Cowan, Cowan, & Kerig, 1993; Riina & Feinberg, 2018). Thus, research investigating coparenting and children's development in families diverse in parental gender and sexual orientation (i.e., those with same- and different-sex parents) could broaden understanding regarding effects of coparenting on children, yet no such studies are available in families diverse in parental sexual orientation beyond the preschool years (Farr & Patterson, 2013). In the current study, which represents data from the first and second waves of a longitudinal study of lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent families who adopted children as infants (Farr, 2017), we used multiple methods to examine how coparenting behaviors, including divisions of household and childcare labor, perceptions of parenting alliance, and observations of supportive and undermining interactions (Feinberg, 2003), were longitudinally associated with children's adjustment from early to middle childhood.

Family Systems Theory, Coparenting, and Associations With Child Adjustment

Family systems theory states that one must consider the network of relationships within a family system to understand how children develop within that system (Cox & Paley, 1997; Feinberg, 2003; Minuchin, 1988). As one subsystem within the broader family system, coparenting is characterized as distinct from the couple or marital subsystem (Abidin & Brunner, 1995; Feinberg, 2003). Feinberg (2003) theorized four components of coparenting: agreement (or disagreement) on child rearing issues, joint management

Rachel H. Farr and Samuel T. Bruun, Department of Psychology, University of Kentucky; Charlotte J. Patterson, Department of Psychology, University of Virginia.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Rachel H. Farr, Department of Psychology, University of Kentucky, 171 Funkhouser Drive, 012-B Kastle Hall, Lexington, KY 40506-0044. E-mail: rachel.farr@uky.edu

of family interactions, division of family labor, and support and undermining of the coparent. For this study, we combined the first two components regarding management of family interactions and agreement in child rearing to be a construct of parenting alliance (Abidin & Brunner, 1995). Scholars have theorized and empirically demonstrated that coparenting has both direct and indirect effects on child adjustment, with indirect effects often through mediating associations between couple relationship and child outcomes (Feinberg, 2003). Indeed, coparenting has been demonstrated as having unique predictive power relative to children's internalizing and externalizing behavior across developmental stages (Schoppe et al., 2001; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010).

Numerous studies have uncovered associations distinct from other aspects of couple relationships between supportive coparenting and well-adjusted behavior among children from early to middle childhood (Murphy, Jacobvitz, & Hazen, 2016; Schoppe et al., 2001; Schoppe-Sullivan, Weldon, Cook, Davis, & Buckley, 2009), yet research has been relatively lacking about coparenting and child adjustment among LG and adoptive parent families. Among heterosexual couples, research has underscored distinct coparenting roles of mothers versus fathers, such as greater associations between contextual influences (e.g., work hours and satisfaction) and coparenting quality among mothers versus fathers, or gender differences in associations between parenting roles and children's behavioral adjustment (e.g., unique links between maternal sensitivity and daughters' adjustment as well as between paternal sensitivity and sons' adjustment; Cowan et al., 1993; Riina & Feinberg, 2018; Zvara, Sheppard, & Cox, 2018). Moreover, associations between coparenting and child adjustment have been demonstrated among families in which at least one parent is not biologically related to the child (i.e., stepparent families; Favez, Widmer, Frascarolo, & Doan, 2019). Thus, new information about two critical areas relevant to coparenting and child development could be yielded from longitudinal studies including LG and adoptive parent family samples, respectively: (a) the relative role of parental gender and sexual orientation over time in families with parents diverse in sexual orientation (i.e., lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents), and (b) whether associations between coparenting and child adjustment uncovered previously are also apparent over time among adoptive families (i.e., in the absence of any parent–child biological ties).

Developmental Context of Middle Childhood and Adoption

In this study, we focused on both internalizing and externalizing behaviors, consistent with other studies examining children's behavioral outcomes and family functioning in middle childhood (Murphy et al., 2016; Umemura, Christopher, Mann, Jacobvitz, & Hazen, 2015). Internalizing and externalizing behaviors are of interest for several reasons, including that symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as aggression in early childhood are predictive of greater depression, anxiety, and aggression in later childhood (Zvara et al., 2018). Many studies have focused on coparenting styles to understand what factors—such as supportive coparenting—may be most protective against these problem behaviors (Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2009; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Given the degree of closeness and time spent with parents during early and middle childhood, and the dominant roles that parents have in shaping children's behavior at early ages, coparenting may also be particularly important to children's adjustment at these times. Indeed, numerous studies show strong associations between coparenting and problem behaviors during children's early development (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010; Zvara et al., 2018). In addition, as middle childhood includes the transition to elementary school, increased demands on children can relate to more pronounced behavioral challenges at this time (Murphy et al., 2016).

Across early to middle childhood, as a result of advances in cognitive and socioemotional development, adopted children begin to understand the reality of adoption-related loss (i.e., being born to one family and adopted by another), which may relate to the onset of increased adjustment challenges at this time in development (Brodzinsky, 2011). Although some studies regarding adopted children's development have uncovered associations between their adjustment and adoption-related family variables, such as satisfaction with birth family communication and externalizing behaviors among adolescent to young adult adoptees (e.g., Grotevant, Rueter, Von Korff, & Gonzalez, 2011), no studies to our knowledge have directly addressed how coparenting dynamics may influence preadolescent adopted children's behavioral problems. At the first wave of data collection in the current study, children were preschool-age and thus too young to have been fully capable of understanding their adoption. By age seven, however, children are able to comprehend the meaning of adoption and its implications (Brodzinsky, 2011). Thus, from developmental and family systems perspectives, examining adopted children's development during middle childhood may be a particularly pivotal time to understand possible connections between behavioral adjustment and coparenting behaviors.

Moreover, some research has documented differences in qualities of parenting as a function of mode of conception (e.g., adoption, "natural" conception, and assisted conception via reproductive technologies) among heterosexual parent families (e.g., Golombok, Cook, Bish, & Murray, 1995), highlighting the possibility of unique findings related to coparenting and child outcomes among adoptive families. Given the potential importance of associations between coparenting and children's adjustment among heterosexual parent families with young biologically related children, it is crucial to understand how coparenting is employed among adoptive and LG parent families—families in which parental gender and sexual orientation vary (i.e., male and female same-sex parent families) and parent–child relationships are not characterized by biological linkages. In addition, these are family groups whose numbers are increasing across the United States (Goldberg & Conron, 2018), but are underrepresented in the family systems literature (e.g., Hock & Mooradian, 2012; Patterson & Farr, 2011).

Coparenting Among Lesbian and Gay Parents

A large literature indicates the comparably effective parenting practices of LG parents compared with heterosexual parents, including those who adopt children (Farr & Patterson, 2013; Golombok et al., 2014, 2018; Patterson, 2017). Research specifically about LG coparenting has largely focused on divisions of family labor (Goldberg, Smith, & Perry-Jenkins, 2012; Patterson & Farr, 2011). LG parents typically share household and childcare labor in a more egalitarian manner and are less likely than heterosexual

parents to participate in gender-typical division of household chores (Goldberg et al., 2012; Patterson, Sutfin, & Fulcher, 2004). Some studies have suggested that egalitarian sharing, as well as satisfaction with divisions of family labor, are associated with fewer behavioral problems in early to middle childhood among youngsters both born to and adopted by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents (Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Farr & Patterson, 2013; Patterson, 1995). Another similar study, however, specifically among gay fathers, did not uncover such associations (Tornello, Sonnenberg, & Patterson, 2015). Although the average age of children in Tornello and colleagues' (2015) study was 7 years, representing middle childhood, the range of ages spanned newborn to 18 years. Considering this small body of literature about divisions of labor and child adjustment among LG parent families, it is difficult to determine whether factors such as pathway to parenthood (e.g., assisted reproductive technologies, adoption) or age of children played specific roles in influencing results.

To understand what drives divisions of family labor and determine the impact on children's outcomes, recent theoretical work has encouraged the field to include more diverse samples of couples and families, including those with same-sex parents, and with attention to changes across the life course (Geist & Ruppanner, 2018; Goldberg, 2013). Actual arrangements of how couples divide family labor and satisfaction with those arrangements may be relevant to children's adjustment, but no studies to our knowledge have examined patterns of labor divisions and child adjustment longitudinally among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent families. The current study allows for such an examination among families with preadolescent children and who had become parents through one particular pathway (i.e., domestic private infant adoption).

Beyond divisions of family labor, self-report and observational data have also provided useful information on how LG parents feel about one another's contributions to the family. For example, recent research incorporating self-reports of coparenting behaviors has revealed that LG parenting couples in nonadoptive families often demonstrate positive interaction styles with each other, including experiencing relatively high relationship satisfaction and levels of agreement on disciplinary strategies with their children (Carone, Baiocco, Ioverno, Chirumbolo, & Lingiardi, 2017). The few observational studies of parent–child interaction among LG adoptive and nonadoptive parent families have reported parenting styles characterized by warmth and support, as well as positive child outcomes, such as low levels of parent- and teacher-reported internalizing and externalizing problems (Bos, van Balen, & van den Boom, 2007; Carone, Lingiardi, Chirumbolo, & Baiocco, 2018; Golombok et al., 2014, 2018). These studies did not, however, specifically target coparenting behaviors, and they generally included only cross-sectional data.

Observational data are particularly warranted in assessments of dyadic or triadic relationships, such as in the case of evaluating the quality of coparenting interaction through systematic coding; such procedures have yielded data revealing distinct linkages between overt coparenting and child outcomes among heterosexual parent families (Favez et al., 2019; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). In addition, studies among heterosexual parent families have indicated the importance of examining coparenting quality over children's development from early to middle childhood (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998; Martin, Ryan, Riina, & Brooks-Gunn, 2017; Umemura et al., 2015), and frequently include a combination of observational and self-report data (Brown, Schoppe-Sullivan, Mangelsdorf, & Neff, 2010; McHale, Kuersten-Hogan, Lauretti, & Rasmussen, 2000). Thus, longitudinal research is needed among adoptive and LG parent families to examine coparenting dynamics (i.e., self-reported divisions of labor, perceptions of parenting alliance, observed behaviors), and possible associations with child development over time.

The Current Study

The current study sought to explore coparenting behaviors, both reported and observed, among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent couples and to evaluate their possible associations with adopted children's behavioral adjustment over time. We included consideration of couple relationship adjustment to explore unique predictive relationships between coparenting and child adjustment. To overcome challenges of self-report bias, we assessed coparenting in terms of individual- and family-level variables (e.g., Favez et al., 2019)—specifically, we included observations of coparenting behaviors, self-reported divisions of family labor, and perceptions of parenting alliance. We also included reports of child internalizing and externalizing behaviors from multiple informants (i.e., parents and teachers).

Specifically, we had the following research questions and hypotheses:

1. Do observed coparenting behaviors or self-reported divisions of family labor differ by family type (i.e., lesbian, gay, or heterosexual parent couples) when children are in middle childhood? We queried whether differences would emerge in coparenting as a function of parental sexual orientation, given that our previous research indicated differences in these dynamics among couple types when children were in early childhood (i.e., lesbian couples were most supportive, heterosexual couples were intermediate, and gay couples were least supportive; LG couples were less undermining than heterosexual couples; Farr & Patterson, 2013). These differences could be associated with varying dynamics among couples based on parental gender. Existing research regarding coparenting and divisions of labor among LG couples has generally not been longitudinal, although research among heterosexual couples has revealed differences in coparenting dynamics for mothers and fathers across children's development (Riina & Feinberg, 2018). In terms of our hypotheses, we expected to find similarities among couples in terms of satisfaction with division of family labor, yet differences among couples in specialization such that LG couples would be more likely to share than heterosexual couples. Similar patterns of results emerged from our sample at an earlier time point (Farr & Patterson, 2013) as well as in other studies of division of labor among LG and heterosexual couples (Goldberg et al., 2012; Patterson & Farr, 2011). We were reluctant to generate specific hypotheses related to observations of supportive and undermining coparenting, as these behaviors have not yet (to our knowledge) been followed

longitudinally among a sample diverse in parental sexual orientation.

2. How are aspects of coparenting associated within and across time points? Specifically, are divisions of family labor, observations of coparenting, and self-reported parenting alliance associated with each other concurrently and longitudinally? Some earlier studies indicate that positive (e.g., supportive) coparenting and negative (e.g., undermining) coparenting variables are negatively associated with each other longitudinally (Kuo, Volling, & Gonzalez, 2017). Thus, we hypothesized that coparenting variables would generally be associated, such that more undermining coparenting would be associated with less supportive coparenting, both across and within time points. We also expected patterns of divisions of labor (e.g., sharing vs. specialization), and satisfaction with them, to be significantly associated over time (e.g., Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Kurdek, 2007). As few studies of LG parenting couples have tracked divisions of labor over time, however, this hypothesis was exploratory. Finally, given previous theoretical and empirical considerations (Feinberg, 2003; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010), we expected that couple relationship adjustment would be significantly associated with coparenting observations and division of labor variables at both time points.

3. How is children's adjustment in middle childhood predicted by coparenting variables concurrently and over time? We anticipated that supportive coparenting behaviors would be predictive of fewer internalizing and externalizing behaviors both concurrently and longitudinally, because there is research demonstrating cross-sectional and longitudinal associations between supportive coparenting and child adjustment among heterosexual parent families (e.g., Murphy et al., 2016; Schoppe et al., 2001; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). To address mixed findings from cross-sectional studies within the LG parenting literature (e.g., Chan et al., 1998; Patterson, 1995; Tornello et al., 2015), we also explored whether internalizing and externalizing behaviors would be associated with division of labor variables. Furthermore, among these families five years earlier, observed coparenting behaviors and satisfaction with divisions of childcare labor were found to be associated with children's externalizing behavior problems in early childhood (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Thus, we expected observations and reports about coparenting at both time points to be associated with child behavior problems (as reported by parents and teachers) during middle childhood among all family types. We also expected these associations over and above couple relationship adjustment (Feinberg, 2003; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). As research with samples of adoptive families headed by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents is limited, we treated this as a broad exploratory hypothesis.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants were initially recruited as part of a longitudinal study of families in the United States with children adopted by lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents (Farr, Forssell, & Patterson, 2010). The sample included 106 families who adopted children through one of five private domestic infant adoption agencies in the United States, all of which worked with lesbian, gay, and heterosexual prospective parents. All target children in this sample were the eldest adopted child between 1 and 5 years old in participating families at the time of Wave 1 (W1). All families were initially contacted through their adoption agency. Families generally represented high educational attainment (90% of parents had a college degree or more) and relatively high household income (see Farr et al., 2010 for more about initial participant recruitment). Upon agreeing to participate, families were visited in their homes where all observational measures and paper copies of surveys were completed for W1. Approximately five years later, all families were contacted again about participation in Wave 2 (W2). Families were visited again in their homes; observational data were collected and survey measures were completed online (via Qualtrics). At both waves, parents shared materials with their children's teachers to complete by mail at W1 and online at W2. Parents and teachers provided informed consent (children provided assent) prior to participating and received debriefing information afterward. No financial compensation was provided. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Boards of the University of Virginia, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the University of Kentucky (#44886, "Diverse Family Systems: Longitudinal Predictors of Parent and Child Health").

At W1, 106 children (53 girls, 53 boys) averaging 3 years old (range, 1–5 years) were involved: 11 boys, 16 girls from lesbian mother families; 18 boys, 11 girls from gay father families; and 24 boys, 26 girls from heterosexual parent families. The W1 sample also included 212 parents (106 couples)—specifically 54 lesbian mothers (27 couples), 58 gay fathers (29 couples), and 100 heterosexual parents (50 couples). Parents were in their early 40s, predominantly White, and upper-middle class. About half of families completed transracial adoptions (see Farr et al., 2010 for more about the W1 sample).

At W2, 96 children (in 96 families) averaging 8 years old (range, 5–12 years) were included: 16 girls, 10 boys from lesbian mother families; 11 girls, 18 boys from gay father families; and 22 girls, 19 boys from heterosexual parent families. W2 also involved 187 parents (in 96 families) who participated in some way, including 49 lesbian, 56 gay, and 82 heterosexual parents (smaller or different sample sizes are reflected in some of the results, given occasional missing data). The retention rate from W1 to W2 was 91% for all families, with 96% of lesbian, 100% of gay, and 82% of heterosexual parent families returning for W2 involvement. LG parent families were more likely than heterosexual parent families to participate (Farr, 2017). It is unclear why these participation rates were discrepant across family types, as nonparticipating families generally could not be located or cited a lack of time rather than actively withdrawing from the study. Otherwise, no differences in likelihood of participating at W2 were found by parent age, race, work status, income, child age, race, gender,

number of children, or couple relationship length. Among participating families at W2, 37% had one child and the remaining 63% had two or more children. Thirteen of the 96 families at W2 experienced couple separation or divorce between W1 and W2 (Farr, 2017). Parents responded to the same questionnaires and study tasks, regardless of couple status; analyses included data from all who provided it.

Children's teachers were asked at both waves to evaluate children's behavioral adjustment; these reports were completed for 76 (of 106) children at W1 and 88 (of 96) at W2. Most teachers were women (W1: 93%, W2: 86%). At W1, 90% had attended at least some college, and at W2, all had at least a college degree (100%). The average number of years of childcare and teaching experience was 11 years ($SD = 8$) at W1, and 13 years ($SD = 9$) at W2.

Measures

Division of family labor. The Who Does What? (WDW; Cowan & Cowan, 1990) was used in both waves as a measure of division of family labor and of parental satisfaction with divisions of labor. Using a one to nine scale (1 being *my partner or spouse does it all*, 5 being *We both do this about equally*, and 9 being *I do it all*), parents individually rate how often they currently perform each of 13 housework or 20 childcare tasks (*real* involvement), and how often they would like to be performing these tasks (*ideal* involvement). Items from the housework domain include *Planning and preparing meals*, *Looking after the car*, and *Paying bills*. Items from the childcare domain include *Dressing our child*, *Getting our child to and from school*, and *Disciplining our child*. Responses were averaged between the 13 household and 20 childcare items into one *real* and one *ideal* involvement score for each parent for each domain of family labor. The discrepancies between these averaged scores represented the degree to which individual parents were satisfied with the division of household and childcare labor, with lower numbers for each indicating greater satisfaction (Cowan & Cowan, 1990). Reliability for housework items (*real* and *ideal*) averaged across waves and subscales was acceptable (.69) using Guttman's λ^2 (e.g., which is less likely to violate assumptions and underestimate reliability than is Cronbach's alpha; Osburn, 2000); childcare items averaged across waves and subscales demonstrated strong reliability (.95). We created continuous couple-level variables to represent specialization in housework and childcare, calculated by taking the absolute value of the difference between the two parents' reports on each item and then calculating the mean of those differences (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Higher values reflect greater specialization; lower values indicate greater sharing. Descriptive information and other analyses related to childcare specialization at W2 were originally reported in Sumontha, Farr, and Patterson (2017).

Coparenting observations. Observations of coparenting in both waves were assessed using the Coparenting Behavior Coding Scale (Schoppe et al., 2001). This scale was intended for use during triadic interactions between two parents and a target child. Coders were trained to observe these interactions and code them for eight variables associated with either supportive or undermining coparenting. The supportive dimension comprises the mean of four subscales: pleasure (i.e., the degree to which parents appeared to be playful or happy with one another), cooperation (i.e., the degree to which parents worked together to support their child), warmth (i.e., displays of physical or emotional intimacy), and interactiveness (i.e., amount of coparenting interaction overall). The undermining dimension represents the mean of four additional subscales: displeasure (i.e., displays of disapproval of the partner's parenting style), competition (i.e., attempts to vie for the child's affection, triangulation), coldness (i.e., the degree of distance or active rejection of intimacy between parents), and anger (i.e., general irritation between parents). Items are rated from 1–5, with higher numbers indicating more extreme displays of the variable in question. For both waves, each family interaction was rated by at least two coders. All coders received at least 20 hr of training in the coding system, including time discussing items among themselves, and arriving at consensus scores. Values for reliability statistics across all W1 and W2 coparenting variables were above .80 (Farr & Patterson, 2013).

Across the two waves of the study, the observed task differed. In W1, the parents were observed taking part in an unstructured play session with their child (Farr & Patterson, 2013). The families were provided with toys and blanket, asked to play together, and videos of their interactions were recorded. Two sets of toys were used for this task, one intended for toddlers (ages 1–2½ years old) and the other intended for preschoolers (ages 3–5 years old). The families were invited to play for 10 min with the toys however they wished. At W2, the families (now with children between 5 and 12 years old) participated in a vacation planning task, in which the family was given approximately 20 min to plan an ideal 2-week vacation, assuming infinite funds. This task was adapted from other studies of family interaction observed in families' homes. In addition to being used among other adoptive family samples, the task was chosen for its use in eliciting and coordinating the perspectives of participating family members, and for facilitating power *sharing* versus *wielding* dynamics typical in interaction tasks designed around family discussions (e.g., Favez et al., 2019; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985).

Perceptions of coparenting alliance. Individual parents reported their perceptions of coparenting with their partner using the Parenting Alliance Inventory (PAI; Abidin & Brunner, 1995), developed to assess couple relationship dynamics pertaining to parenting roles. This measure was only administered at W2 and thus data are not available from W1. The 20 items on the PAI evaluate the degree of cooperation and commitment between the couple members related to parenting. We made one minor wording revision for use with adoptive parents, adjusting phrasing of "during pregnancy" to "before adoption" (although items generally focus on the present). Participants rated their agreement with each item on a five-point Likert Scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree); a total score is obtained from summing all items. Example items include: *Talking to my child's other parent about our child is something I look forward to* and *My child's other parent and I are a good team*. Scores range from 20–100; higher scores denote stronger coparenting alliance perceptions. Sample reliability was excellent (.95). Descriptive information and other analyses related to the PAI are reported in Sumontha, Farr, and Patterson (2016).

Couple relationship adjustment. Couple adjustment was assessed at both waves using the 32-item Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976), which includes a sum score of 4 subscales: satisfaction, consensus, cohesion, and affection. Items (e.g., "Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?" and "In general, how often do you think things between you and your partner are going

well?") are rated from 0 (*never*) to 5 (*all the time/always agree*). Higher scores indicate more favorable adjustment. Reliability at both waves averaged .91. Descriptive information and other analyses related to the DAS are found in Farr (2017).

Child adjustment. Child adjustment was assessed at both waves using the Child Behavioral Checklist and Teacher Report Form for parents and teachers, respectively (W1: CBCL/1½-5, TRF/1½-5, each with 100 items; W2: CBCL/6–18, TRF/6–18, each with 113 items; Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000, 2001). These measures assess problem behaviors with a total score, as well as internalizing and externalizing subscale scores, which were the focus here. Items are scored from 0 to 2 regarding how true the statement is for the child (0 = *not true*, 1 = *somewhat or sometimes true*, and 2 = *very true or often true*). Internalizing items comprise withdrawn/depressed, anxious/depressed, and somatic complaint domains (e.g., *Cries a lot*, *Fears going to school*). Externalizing items comprise the rule-breaking and aggressive behavior domains (e.g., *Hits others*, *Lying or cheating*). Subscale items are summed and converted to standardized *t* scores adjusted for child gender and age; higher values indicate greater behavior problems. The population average *t* score is approximately 50, with a standard deviation of 10 for all CBCL and TRF subscales; scores of 65 and above represent clinical levels of behavior problems (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000, 2001). Guttman's λ^2 for CBCL internalizing items across waves averaged .88, while CBCL externalizing items averaged .90. For the TRF, these were .82 and .91, respectively.

Data Analytic Plan

A series of bivariate correlations, paired samples *t* tests, univariate and multivariate analysis of variance (ANOVA, MANOVA), hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002), and regression were employed, depending on the specific research question and hypothesis. HLM was incorporated to account for shared variance and interdependent responses within families (often two parents reporting from the same family; see the online supplemental materials for specific analytic plan details regarding HLM). ANOVA and MANOVA were conducted using both traditional null-hypothesis significance testing (NHST) and Bayesian analyses, as the latter allow for a more robust examination of the null hypothesis than NHST (Dienes, 2011). A Bayes Factor (BF_{01}) of 3–10 indicates substantial evidence for the null hypothesis (i.e., the data are 3–10 times more likely to support the null vs. alternative hypothesis); a BF_{01} of 1–3 indicates anecdotal evidence (Dienes, 2011). In utilizing these two different statistical frameworks, we could offer a more complete understanding of our data, especially as related to possible lack of differences among family types. Analyses were adequately powered overall to detect medium to large effects and missingness in the data (low to moderate levels) was assumed to be at random (see the online supplemental materials for more details about power and missing data).

Results

Family Type Differences in Coparenting

To evaluate our first hypothesis regarding possible differences in coparenting reports (i.e., division of labor variables) and observations (i.e., supportive and undermining behaviors) when children were in middle childhood (W2) as a function of parental sexual orientation, we conducted a series of ANOVA and MANOVA tests. First, we present results related to division of labor variables at W2, with all descriptive information in Table 1. In general, parents across family types reported relatively egalitarian divisions of housework and childcare labor (i.e., *real* mean scores near 5, representing equal labor divisions), as well as being satisfied with these arrangements, at W2. ANOVA revealed no significant differences in housework or childcare satisfaction as a function of family type at W2. In general, parents across family groups were relatively satisfied with their divisions of labor as discrepancies between *real* and *ideal* subscales were low for housework (M = .50, SD = .58) and for childcare (M = .43, SD = .48). Also no differences emerged by family type at W2 in housework or childcare specialization.

Next, MANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in observed coparenting (i.e., supportive and undermining behavior) across family types in W2 (see Table 2). We found no significant differences among family types in any observed coparenting variables. Bayes factors indicated substantially greater likelihood of the null over alternative hypothesis, consistent with the MANOVA results (see Table 2).

Associations Among Coparenting and Couple Variables

To test our second hypothesis about possible associations among coparenting variables within and across time (see Table 3), we conducted a series of correlations and paired *t* tests. Division of labor variables, observations of coparenting, perceptions of parenting alliance, and couple relationship adjustment were found to share some associations within and across waves. For instance, although division of labor dissatisfaction was significantly positively correlated with specialization at W1, the only significant association among these variables at W2 was between childcare dissatisfaction and greater childcare specialization. Parenting alliance was significantly correlated with division of housework dissatisfaction at both time points and with childcare dissatisfaction at W2 (i.e., greater dissatisfaction, less alliance). Parenting alliance was correlated only with supportive coparenting at W1, but not with any other observed coparenting variable at either wave. Coparenting observations were generally unrelated to division of labor variables except that greater undermining was linked with greater childcare specialization at W2. Finally, although coparenting observations were not linked with couple relationship adjustment, division of labor dissatisfaction and perceptions of parenting alliance were both significantly correlated with couple adjustment (e.g., greater dissatisfaction, lower couple adjustment; greater alliance, greater couple adjustment).

Next, we examined each coparenting variable across time using paired sample *t* tests with a Bonferroni correction applied to control for Type I error and inflation of alpha levels (alpha set to p = .01). There were no group (i.e., lesbian, gay, heterosexual) or whole sample differences from W1 to W2 in division of housework or childcare labor satisfaction and specialization scores nor in supportive and undermining coparenting. Across the sample, paired sample *t* tests showed no differences in level of satisfaction between housework and childcare at W2, but specialization was more likely for housework (M = 3.38, SD = 1.15) than childcare

Table 1
Descriptive Information: Divisions of Family Labor (W2)[a]

Measure	Lesbian mothers	Gay fathers	Heterosexual parents	ANOVA
"Real" scores	$n = 32$	$n = 52$	$n = 77$	$F(2, 158)$
Housework W2 (range: 1.62–8.69)	A: 5.20 (.79)	A: 5.22 (.96)	A: 4.96 (.79)	<1 *ns*
	B: 5.37 (1.01)	B: 5.20 (.91)	B: 5.33 (1.03)	
	$n = 38$	$n = 52$	$n = 76$	$F(2, 163)$
Childcare W2 (range: 1.90–8.00)	A: 5.43 (.75)	A: 5.49 (.91)	A: 5.78 (.89)	1.69 *ns*
	B: 5.04 (1.10)	B: 5.28 (.86)	B: 4.31 (.98)	
"Ideal" scores	$n = 31$	$n = 50$	$n = 76$	$F(2, 154)$
Housework W2 (range: 1.62–7.15)	A: 4.93 (.45)	A: 5.08 (.79)	A: 4.63 (.61)	<1 *ns*
	B: 4.99 (.43)	B: 5.00 (.82)	B: 5.13 (.94)	
	$n = 37$	$n = 51$	$n = 75$	$F(2, 160)$
Childcare W2 (range: 2.20–7.90)	A: 5.11 (.50)	A: 5.23 (.77)	A: 5.44 (.55)	<1 *ns*
	B: 4.93 (.69)	B: 4.99 (.60)	B: 4.49 (.83)	
Satisfaction				
Housework W2 (range: 0–3.17)	$n = 31$; .36 (.35)	$n = 50$; .49 (.59)	$n = 76$; .56 (.65)	$F(2, 154)$ 1.27 *ns*
Childcare W2 (range: 0–3.20)	$n = 37$; .37 (.37)	$n = 51$; .41 (.48)	$n = 75$; .47 (.53)	$F(2, 160) < 1$ *ns*
	Lesbian couples	Gay couples	Heterosexual couples	
Specialization				
Housework W2 (range: .92–6.62)	$n = 14$; 2.93 (.74)	$n = 25$; 3.43 (1.39)	$n = 36$; 3.52 (1.07)	$F(2, 72)$ 1.39 *ns*
Childcare W2[b] (range: .60–5.50)	$n = 16$; 1.92 (.88)	$n = 24$; 2.30 (.97)	$n = 37$; 2.62 (1.02)	$F(2, 74)$ 2.96 *ns*

Note. Means are presented (standard deviations in parentheses). Among heterosexual couples, parent A was female and B was male; among LG couples, parent A was the first person to contact the researchers. No significant differences were found by parental sexual orientation (i.e., lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parent families) in these variables.
[a] W1 results are published in Farr and Patterson (2013). [b] W2 childcare specialization was originally reported in Sumontha, Farr, and Patterson (2017).

($M = 2.37$, $SD = .98$) at W2: $t(72) = 8.65$, $p < .001$. In addition, supportive coparenting was observed more frequently across all families than was undermining coparenting at W2, $t(82) = 12.50$, $p < .001$.

Associations Between Coparenting Variables and Child Adjustment Across Family Types

Descriptive analyses. Descriptive information regarding children's behavioral adjustment appears in Table 2. In general, children were reported to have few behavior problems across informants and domain (i.e., internalizing, externalizing); scores were comparable with population averages and below clinical cutoffs (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001). There were no significant differences in parent- or teacher-reported scores for internalizing or externalizing behaviors, as supported by ANOVA results and Bayes factors (see Table 2), but parents and teachers agreed that children had more externalizing than internalizing problems in middle childhood (parents: $t[94] = 3.85$, $p < .001$; teachers:

Table 2
Observations of Coparenting and Child Adjustment at W2

Measure	Lesbian couples ($n = 17$) *M* (*SD*)	Gay couples ($n = 27$) *M* (*SD*)	Heterosexual couples ($n = 39$) *M* (*SD*)	Sample average ($N = 83$) *M* (*SD*)	ANOVA $F(2, 80)$	Bayes factors (BF_{01})[a]
Supportive	3.10 (.56)	2.86 (.60)	3.06 (.58)	3.01 (.58)	1.27 *ns*	3.35
Pleasure (range: 2–5)	3.06 (.66)	2.89 (.70)	3.28 (.89)	3.11 (.80)	2.04 *ns*	1.74
Warmth (range: 2–5)	3.06 (.75)	2.78 (.64)	2.87 (.86)	2.88 (.77)	<1 *ns*	5.37
Interactiveness (range: 1–4)	3.12 (.86)	2.78 (.70)	3.23 (.87)	3.06 (.83)	2.51 *ns*	1.22
Cooperation (range: 1–4)	3.18 (.73)	3.00 (.78)	2.87 (.66)	2.97 (.72)	1.10 *ns*	3.85
Undermining (range: 1–4)	1.59 (.41)	1.66 (.65)	1.66 (.59)	1.64 (.57)	<1 *ns*	8.26
Displeasure	1.47 (.62)	1.44 (.64)	1.41 (.79)	1.44 (.70)	<1 *ns*	8.54
Coldness	1.59 (.71)	1.85 (.91)	1.71 (.80)	1.71 (.80)	<1 *ns*	5.39
Anger	1.41 (.51)	1.56 (.80)	1.59 (.79)	1.54 (.74)	<1 *ns*	6.89
Competition	1.88 (.60)	1.78 (.75)	1.97 (.87)	1.89 (.78)	<1 *ns*	5.95
Parent reports[b]	$n = 25$	$n = 29$	$n = 41$	$N = 95$	$F(2, 92)$	
Child internalizing (range: 33–70, all)	47.80 (8.96)	46.78 (10.31)	46.29 (9.21)	46.84 (9.41)	<1 *ns*	8.75
Child externalizing (range: 33–70, all)	50.10 (11.15)	50.02 (10.04)	49.50 (9.18)	49.82 (9.88)	<1 *ns*	9.93
Teacher reports	$n = 23$	$n = 26$	$n = 39$	$N = 88$	$F(2, 85)$	
Child internalizing (range: 37–74)	48.65 (7.67)	48.54 (8.89)	46.03 (7.39)	47.45 (7.94)	1.14 *ns*	3.84
Child externalizing (range: 34–69)	50.61 (7.67)	52.46 (7.57)	49.56 (6.99)	50.69 (7.36)	1.22 *ns*	3.65

[a] Bayes factors are shown as likelihood of obtaining null model over the alternate. [b] These results reflect averages of parent scores within families; externalizing results are originally reported in Farr, Bruun, and Simon (2019).

Table 3
Pearson Correlations Among Coparenting Variables

Variables	1a	1b	2a	2b	3a	3b	4	5a	5b	6a	6b	7a	7b	8
						Wave 1								
1. Dissatisfaction														
a. Housework	1													
b. Childcare	.26***	1												
2. Specialization														
a. Housework	.21**	.21**	1											
b. Childcare	.16*	.37***	.67***	1										
3. Observations														
a. Supportive	.01	.02	.04	.04	1									
b. Undermining	.09	.02	.08	.06	−.16	1								
4. Couple adjust	−.38***	−.27***	−.25***	−.27***	.13	−.04	1							
						Wave 2								
5. Dissatisfaction														
a. Housework	.54***	.11	−.01	.08	−.03	.16*	−.30***	1						
b. Childcare	.15	.36***	.09	.19*	−.09	.18*	−.24**	.25**	1					
6. Specialization														
a. Housework	.02	.09	.52***	.32***	−.08	.18*	.05	.09	−.01	1				
b. Childcare	.10	.10	.35***	.50***	−.16*	.17*	−.05	.14	.21**	.57***	1			
7. Observations														
a. Supportive	−.003	.01	−.09	−.02	.32***	−.11	.13	−.10	.09	−.14	−.07	1		
b. Undermining	.10	.09	.14	.11	.10	.15	.01	.11	.07	.13	.20*	−.48***	1	
8. Parent alliance	−.25**	−.08	−.04	.04	.15*	−.08	.46***	−.26**	−.33***	.13	.07	.12	−.14	1
9. Couple adjust	−.10	−.03	−.07	−.16*	.09	−.14	.53***	−.28**	−.37***	.04	−.09	.14	−.04	.57***

Note. Specialization scores and observational variables reflect one score per family, and the other variables reflect individual parent scores (within families).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

$t[87] = 3.90$, $p < .001$). Correlations between parent and teacher scores reports were low to moderate for internalizing (W1: .18, $p = .027$; W2: .21, $p = .006$) and externalizing scores (W1: .19, $p = .017$; W2: .40, $p < .001$).

HLM and linear regression. To test our third hypothesis regarding associations of coparenting behaviors at each wave with parent- and teacher-reported child internalizing and externalizing behavioral outcomes, we used HLM and multiple linear regression. First, we examined W1 variables as longitudinal predictors of parent-reported children's adjustment at W2, controlling for children's adjustment at W1 (with separate HLM analyses for each time point and for internalizing and externalizing problems as the outcome variable; Tables 4 and 5). Thus, predictors included W1 child behavior scores, supportive and undermining coparenting observations, division of housework and childcare labor satisfaction and specialization, and couple relationship adjustment. We also included parental sexual orientation as a predictor at Level 2, as significant associations were found between coparenting and parent-reported child behavioral adjustment at W1, and coparenting dynamics varied as a function of parental sexual orientation at W1 (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Finally, in the model with W2 internalizing problems as the dependent variable, we included whether siblings were present at W1 as a covariate at Level 1 (given preliminary analyses to determine covariates described in the online supplemental materials).

In no case were associations between W1 predictors and W2 parent-reported behavioral adjustment found to differ as a function of parental sexual orientation (see Table 4). Rather, fewer W2 internalizing problems were predicted by fewer W1 internalizing problems and greater W1 supportive coparenting observations. A similar pattern was found in predicting fewer W2 externalizing behaviors (fewer W1 externalizing behaviors and greater W1 supportive coparenting observations were significant predictors).

Our second set of HLM models examined W2 coparenting variables and concurrent associations with parent-reported children's internalizing and externalizing behaviors (respectively) at W2 (see Table 5). Specifically, these models consisted of parenting alliance perceptions, supportive and undermining coparenting observations, parent reports of division of labor satisfaction and specialization at W2, and couple adjustment as predictors (given that coparenting variables were not found to differ by parental sexual orientation at W2, this variable was not included at Level 2). Although no W2 predictors emerged as significant in the model with W2 internalizing behaviors, perceptions of stronger parenting alliance at W2 were significantly associated with fewer externalizing behaviors at the same time point.

Four multiple linear regression analyses were also conducted to examine teacher-reported internalizing and externalizing behaviors as the outcome variables and using the same W1 and W2 coparenting predictors as with the HLM analyses above (child gender and age were included as covariates in the model for teacher-reported externalizing behaviors; see preliminary analyses in online supplemental materials). None of the regression models predicting teacher-reported child adjustment from coparenting variables at W1 or W2 were significant.

Discussion

Previous research about coparenting and child outcomes among heterosexual couples with biologically related children has estab-

Table 4
HLM: W2 Internalizing and Externalizing Problems (Parent Reports) From W1 Variables

W1 internalizing model	Coefficient	*SE*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Intercept β_{0j}					
Intercept γ_{00}	47.75	1.11	42.83	88	<.001
Lesbian γ_{01}	.79	2.55	.31	88	.758
Gay γ_{02}	−.60	2.34	−.25	88	.800
W1 internalizing behaviors β_{1j}					
Intercept γ_{10}	.34	.16	2.15	54	**.036**
Lesbian γ_{11}	.02	.22	.08	54	.940
Gay γ_{12}	.25	.20	1.23	54	.225
W1 siblings β_{2j}					
Intercept γ_{20}	−1.10	2.12	−.52	54	.605
Lesbian γ_{21}	−2.24	4.45	−.50	54	.617
Gay γ_{22}	−1.81	3.43	−.53	54	.600
W1 supportive coparenting β_{3j}					
Intercept γ_{30}	−6.22	2.13	−2.93	54	**.005**
Lesbian γ_{31}	6.52	3.97	1.64	54	.106
Gay γ_{32}	6.09	4.01	1.52	54	.134
W1 undermining coparenting β_{4j}					
Intercept γ_{40}	1.99	2.13	.94	54	.353
Lesbian γ_{41}	1.21	5.70	.21	54	.833
Gay γ_{42}	−2.87	3.79	−.76	54	.453
W1 housework satisfaction β_{5j}					
Intercept γ_{50}	−3.09	2.59	−1.19	54	.238
Lesbian γ_{51}	6.14	5.15	1.19	54	.238
Gay γ_{52}	1.47	3.87	.33	54	.705
W1 childcare satisfaction β_{6j}					
Intercept γ_{60}	2.10	2.48	.85	54	.400
Lesbian γ_{61}	1.01	3.31	.31	54	.761
Gay γ_{62}	1.14	3.47	.33	54	.743
W1 housework specialization β_{7j}					
Intercept γ_{70}	−1.87	1.28	−1.46	54	.150
Lesbian γ_{71}	1.97	2.34	.84	54	.404
Gay γ_{72}	−.23	2.02	−.12	54	.908
W1 childcare specialization β_{8j}					
Intercept γ_{80}	−1.71	1.28	−1.46	54	.085
Lesbian γ_{81}	−1.04	2.64	−.40	54	.694
Gay γ_{82}	3.57	2.24	1.59	54	.117
W1 couple adjustment β_{9j}					
Intercept γ_{90}	−.12	.12	−1.00	54	.325
Lesbian γ_{91}	.004	.18	.03	54	.979
Gay γ_{92}	.20	.14	1.39	54	.170

W1 externalizing model	Coefficient	*SE*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Intercept β_{0j}					
Intercept γ_{00}	50.31	1.18	42.80	88	<.001
Lesbian γ_{01}	.15	2.88	.05	88	.957
Gay γ_{02}	−.32	2.17	−.15	88	.885
W1 externalizing behaviors β_{1j}					
Intercept γ_{10}	.36	.11	3.40	57	**.001**
Lesbian γ_{11}	.05	.23	.22	57	.829
Gay γ_{12}	.22	.16	1.36	57	.179
W1 supportive coparenting β_{2j}					
Intercept γ_{20}	−4.20	1.96	−2.15	57	**.036**
Lesbian γ_{21}	2.08	5.71	.37	57	.717
Gay γ_{22}	3.29	3.42	.96	57	.340
W1 undermining coparenting β_{3j}					
Intercept γ_{30}	4.14	2.57	1.61	57	.113
Lesbian γ_{31}	−10.48	7.18	−1.46	57	.150
Gay γ_{32}	−3.61	3.89	−.93	57	.357
W1 housework satisfaction β_{4j}					
Intercept γ_{40}	1.00	1.79	.56	57	.578
Lesbian γ_{41}	1.09	4.03	.27	57	.787
Gay γ_{42}	.42	2.25	.19	57	.852
W1 childcare satisfaction β_{5j}					
Intercept γ_{50}	−.45	1.41	−.32	57	.754
Lesbian γ_{51}	3.06	3.11	.98	57	.330
Gay γ_{52}	2.72	2.61	1.04	57	.302
W1 housework specialization β_{6j}					
Intercept γ_{60}	−2.56	1.28	−2.01	57	.050
Lesbian γ_{61}	3.91	3.06	1.28	57	.206
Gay γ_{62}	2.35	1.79	1.31	57	.194
W1 childcare specialization β_{7j}					
Intercept γ_{70}	.26	.84	.31	57	.755
Lesbian γ_{71}	−2.90	4.09	−.71	57	.482
Gay γ_{72}	−.13	2.10	−.06	57	.950
W1 couple adjustment β_{8j}					
Intercept γ_{80}	.07	.09	.81	57	.422
Lesbian γ_{81}	−.08	.19	−.40	57	.688
Gay γ_{82}	.06	.10	.59	57	.560

Note. Bold values are used for *p* values below .05.

lished parental gender as important (Mack & Gee, 2018; Riina & Feinberg, 2018), yet our findings counter this among adoptive and LG parent families. Regardless of the constellation of parental gender and sexual orientation in same- and different-sex parent families, and in the absence of parent–child biological ties, we found that supportive coparenting across children's early development is important to their adjustment. To our knowledge, this is the first longitudinal study to uncover this pattern of findings among such a sample. Using data from multiple informants (i.e., parents, teachers) and sources (i.e., observations, self-reports), our findings indicate that parental sexual orientation is not strongly tied to coparenting dynamics (observed and reported) or child outcomes. Parents showed more supportive than undermining coparenting behavior and generally were satisfied with divisions of labor. School-age children were described by parents and teachers as having few internalizing and externalizing problems, on average. Earlier supportive coparenting and concurrent parenting alliance were significantly associated with fewer behavior problems in middle childhood—even after controlling for couple adjustment and earlier behavior problems. These results align with expectations from family systems theory that children's development is best understood with consideration of broader family relationships (Cox & Paley, 1997; Minuchin, 1988). As coparenting represents one way that parents may influence children, our findings point to well-adjusted children adopted by LG parents, informing questions raised in debates about these families (Patterson, 2017).

Our first hypothesis was partially supported; we uncovered no significant differences as a function of parental sexual orientation in coparenting dynamics when children were in middle childhood. Results of both NHST and Bayesian analyses demonstrated that couples did not differ in their satisfaction with divisions of labor, specialization in housework or childcare, nor supportive or undermining coparenting behavior. Our findings contrast somewhat with previous results among this sample indicating that heterosexual couples were more likely than LG couples to specialize in childcare tasks when children were in early childhood (Farr & Patterson, 2013). Although few studies of adoptive or LG parents have tracked divisions of labor longitudinally, Kurdek (2007) found that LG couples sometimes become more fixed or specialized in their divisions of labor over time. Research among heterosexual couples

Table 5
HLM: W2 Internalizing and Externalizing Problems (Parent Reports) From W2 Variables

Variable	Coefficient	*SE*	*t*	*df*	*p*
W2 internalizing model					
Intercept β_{0j}	47.21	1.04	45.39	69	<.001
W2 siblings β_{1j}	3.21	2.26	1.42	57	.161
W2 parenting alliance β_{2j}	−.14	.09	−1.46	57	.150
W2 Siblings × Parenting Alliance β_{3j}	.05	.14	.34	57	.733
W2 supportive coparenting β_{4j}	.19	2.35	.08	57	.935
W2 undermining coparenting β_{5j}	−1.29	2.00	−.64	57	.522
W2 housework satisfaction β_{6j}	−.32	1.72	−.19	57	.854
W2 childcare satisfaction β_{7j}	.27	2.78	.10	57	.922
W2 housework specialization β_{8j}	−.68	1.02	−.67	57	.505
W2 childcare specialization β_{9j}	−.76	1.48	−.51	57	.609
W2 couple adjustment β_{10j}	−.07	.08	−.92	57	.363
W2 externalizing model					
Intercept β_{0j}	50.98	1.06	47.96	69	<.001
W2 siblings β_{1j}	.44	2.33	.19	57	.852
W2 parenting alliance β_{2j}	−.18	.08	−2.39	57	**.020**
W2 Siblings × Parenting Alliance β_{3j}	.02	.12	.20	57	.842
W2 supportive coparenting β_{4j}	−.62	2.26	−.28	57	.785
W2 undermining coparenting β_{5j}	−1.72	1.91	−.90	57	.371
W2 housework satisfaction β_{6j}	−.65	.88	−.74	57	.465
W2 childcare satisfaction β_{7j}	1.77	1.65	1.08	57	.287
W2 housework specialization β_{8j}	.68	1.01	.68	57	.501
W2 childcare specialization β_{9j}	−.68	1.39	−.49	57	.627
W2 couple adjustment β_{10j}	.05	.07	.66	67	.514

Note. Bold values are used for p values below .05.

consistently shows this pattern of increasing specialization in divisions of labor across the transition to parenthood that continues throughout children's development (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998). Our finding may indicate similar patterns for LG parenting couples, because regardless of parental sexual orientation, all families tended toward more specialization by W2. As children begin formal schooling during middle childhood, their parents may develop even more regimented childcare routines than those that existed prior to this transition (e.g., who makes lunches, who shuttles children to school or activities, etc.; Zvara et al., 2018). These routines often reflect less joint decision-making as children become older and are dictated by parents' work schedules or other practical considerations rather than parental sexual orientation; (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998; Goldberg et al., 2012; Riina & Feinberg, 2018). More research following LG and heterosexual adoptive parents over time would clarify division of labor dynamics across different life stages (Patterson, 2017).

Interestingly, differences uncovered across family types in observations of supportive and undermining coparenting in W1 (Farr & Patterson, 2013) were not found in W2. Children's different developmental levels (i.e., reflecting less hands-on parenting demands in middle childhood when children attend formal schooling) or the increased experience of working as a coparenting team over time could underlie this finding (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998; Riina & Feinberg, 2018). An alternative is that different coparenting behaviors were more readily observable in the distinct tasks at each wave (Feinberg, 2003). The family interaction was based around play at W1 and discussion at W2. These different tasks could have cultivated different coparenting behaviors. More purposeful longitudinal research among similar samples is necessary to understand these dynamics among families diverse in parental sexual orientation over time.

Our second hypothesis found support in that several coparenting variables were associated across time. As expected from several studies indicating some stability in division of labor patterns over time among LG couples (e.g., Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Kurdek, 2007), satisfaction with divisions of household and childcare labor were associated within and across waves. Research with heterosexual couples has often found that satisfaction with division of labor is linked with overall marital satisfaction (e.g., Coltrane, 2000); similar results have also been found among sexual minority couples (Chan et al., 1998). Our results extend this literature in demonstrating associations between greater dissatisfaction with divisions of family labor and lower couple relationship adjustment among lesbian, gay, and heterosexual adoptive parent couples across two developmental periods. Moreover, greater couple adjustment at an earlier time point was associated with less dissatisfaction with division of family labor five years later, but the reverse pattern was not found (earlier dissatisfaction was not associated with later couple relationship adjustment). Thus, overall couple relationship satisfaction may be an important driver of satisfaction with divisions of household and childcare labor among LG parenting couples, as has been found among childfree LG couples (Kurdek, 2007).

Relatedly, greater specialization in divisions of labor was significantly associated with greater dissatisfaction, as well as with lower couple adjustment within and across time points. More egalitarian patterns of sharing family labor have been associated with greater satisfaction among heterosexual couples with biologically related children (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998; Coltrane, 2000); our findings indicate support for similar associations over time, regardless of parental gender and sexual orientation, among adoptive LG and heterosexual couples. This pattern of results may also indicate that divisions of family labor are not necessarily driven by

factors set in motion by biological parenthood (e.g., pregnancy, breastfeeding), nor by differences in parental gender among couples (i.e., two women, two men, one woman and one man), as have sometimes been suggested in earlier research (Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Goldberg et al., 2012).

Within W2, undermining and supportive coparenting were negatively associated, similar to previous results among heterosexual couples (e.g., Kuo et al., 2017), but these variables were not linked in W1. Perceptions of parenting alliance were only associated with supportive coparenting observations at W1, but not at W2, and not with undermining behaviors at either wave. Variations in such associations have also been reported by other investigators (McHale et al., 2000). For example, in using the same observational coding system and self-report measure, Brown and colleagues (2010) found no significant associations between supportive coparenting observations and parenting alliance perceptions among heterosexual parent families. Finally, observations of coparenting were not significantly correlated with couple relationship adjustment within or across time points, which provides further evidence that coparenting behaviors are distinct from other qualities comprising couples' romantic relationships (Feinberg, 2003; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Although some other studies have found coparenting to mediate the relationship between couple adjustment and child outcomes, couple relationship dynamics have often been examined in terms of interparental conflict rather than overall relationship satisfaction (Feinberg, 2003). It is possible that other couple relationship behaviors, such as conflict, would be relevant to coparenting among this sample or that the variables we assessed here (i.e., couple adjustment, observed coparenting) would have been associated among other samples with more extreme scores. Regardless, our results underscore the importance of studying coparenting as distinct from the couple's romantic relationship. Coparenting perceptions and actual behaviors should also be assessed as distinct constructs (Favez et al., 2019; Feinberg, 2003).

Our third hypothesis was partially supported in that coparenting did share several significant associations with parent-reported child adjustment within and across waves. Observed supportive coparenting when children were in early childhood was linked with fewer child internalizing and externalizing problems approximately five years later, even after controlling covariates such as couple adjustment and children's earlier behavior problems. Stronger self-reported parenting alliance when children were in middle childhood was associated with children's fewer externalizing behaviors at the same time point. This specific finding may reflect those from meta-analytic data indicating larger effect sizes for associations between coparenting and externalizing problems as compared to those between coparenting and internalizing problems (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Our overall results align with previous research among heterosexual parent families with preadolescent children that also controlled for couple relationship adjustment and earlier behavior problems (McConnell & Kerig, 2002; Schoppe et al., 2001; Teubert & Pinquart, 2010; Umemura et al., 2015). The findings provide further evidence that coparenting behaviors are critical to children's development over time, even in the absence of biological ties and regardless of parental sexual orientation.

Given slight differences in the specific coparenting factors (supportive coparenting observations, perceptions of parenting alliance) that were associated with child adjustment across early to middle childhood, the results may also indicate a differential impact of coparenting behaviors and perceptions based on children's developmental level. Indeed, disparities in coparenting from early to middle childhood are supported by some previous research, with cooperative (i.e., supportive) coparenting found to be particularly important to preschool-age children's outcomes and coparenting alliances found to be especially relevant to preadolescent children's outcomes (Martin et al., 2017; Murphy et al., 2016; Umemura et al., 2015).

These differences in associations between coparenting and child adjustment may also relate to changes in child development and family life. Parenting during the early years of children's lives is particularly demanding (Belsky & Hsieh, 1998; Riina & Feinberg, 2018). Over time, children become increasingly autonomous and are shaped by other influences outside of their parents. As children begin formal schooling across the transition from early to middle childhood, their network of social relationships expands to include peers, teachers, coaches, and others (Riina & Feinberg, 2018; Zvara et al., 2018). Thus, early supportive coparenting may be particularly influential to children's later adjustment, as is supported by meta-analytic research (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). Unique to our study, findings may also highlight the importance of supportive coparenting among adoptive families in facilitating children's positive development, especially given that middle childhood is a time when adoptees have increased understanding about adoption as well as heightened curiosity or worries (Brodzinsky, 2011). Future studies could investigate whether varied associations between coparenting and child development reflect differences in constructs, measurement, developmental period, or other factors.

Division of labor variables were not associated with parent-reported child internalizing or externalizing behaviors. Although some studies of lesbian mother families have revealed associations between divisions of labor and young children's externalizing problems (Chan et al., 1998), the samples comprised families formed via donor insemination and some effects were indirect (i.e., mediated through couple satisfaction; Patterson, 1995). Also, in at least one study of gay fathers, no significant associations were found between division of labor (satisfaction and specialization) and child adjustment (Tornello et al., 2015). It is possible that these discrepant results reflect different modes of conception across families (e.g., assisted reproduction, adoption) that may set in motion variant family dynamics, including divisions of labor that are sometimes more egalitarian among adoptive couples and more specialized among couples in which one parent (but not the other) is biologically related to their child (Goldberg, 2013; Goldberg & Perry-Jenkins, 2007; Goldberg et al., 2012). Because it is not clear why no associations emerged between these variables in this study, more research is warranted to explore nuances of possible associations between division of labor and child outcomes among diverse families.

Despite significant associations between coparenting and parent-reported child outcomes, children's behavioral adjustment as reported by teachers was not found to be associated with coparenting variables. Thus, it cannot be ruled out that our findings reflect informant effects. It is also important, however, to consider that parents and teachers provide reports about children reflecting different contexts; from a family systems perspective, it may be that coparenting dynamics are more closely associated with child

behaviors observed at home, within the family, rather than at school (Schoppe et al., 2001). Some studies have also reported differential results regarding children's adjustment and coparenting depending on whether teachers or parents reported (Schoppe et al., 2001; Umemura et al., 2015); in general, agreement between parent and teacher reports has been low to moderate, as it was in our study, likely as a result of observing children in different settings (e.g., Mangelsdorf, Schoppe, & Buur, 2000; Rescorla et al., 2014). Indeed, other data from this sample have consistently revealed that parent (not teacher) reports about child behavioral adjustment are linked with coparenting and family functioning (Farr, 2017; Farr et al., 2010). Regardless, because children were described as having few behavior problems, our results add to conclusions from previous studies with parent and teacher data that children are comparably well adjusted in LG and heterosexual parent families (e.g., Carone et al., 2018; Chan et al., 1998; Golombok et al., 2003, 2014, 2018).

Strengths and Limitations

There are several notable strengths of the current study. The inclusion of observational, survey, and longitudinal data serve to create a much more detailed picture of how parents engage with each other and how these interactions may affect their children. The lack of longitudinal data on coparenting has made it difficult to assess how coparenting may change as children and parents grow older, and difficult also to determine what influence changes may have on children (Teubert & Pinquart, 2010). The current study sheds light on some of these effects, as well as on LG and adoptive parents who have been largely underrepresented in the literature on family dynamics and coparenting (Hock & Mooradian, 2012; Patterson & Farr, 2011).

Some limitations, however, must also be noted. We lack self-reported parental alliance data at W1, which means that we could not track its influence over time. Our sample represents one pathway to parenthood, namely, private domestic infant adoption, and thus, results may generalize only to other similar adoptive families. It is possible that families formed via other pathways, including public adoption or reproductive technologies, and who represent more diversity (e.g., socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity) would demonstrate different coparenting dynamics and child adjustment outcomes than described here. Moreover, the overall sample size is small, especially in considering comparisons among family groups (i.e., LG and heterosexual). Thus, larger, demographically diverse groups of families, including those who are nationally representative and followed longitudinally could yield more robust information.

Conclusion

In this study, we found that different elements of coparenting were associated with children's behavioral adjustment over time, revealing some complexities in assessing coparenting longitudinally. Specifically, supportive coparenting in early childhood was linked with fewer parent-reported internalizing and externalizing problems in middle childhood. Stronger parental alliance within middle childhood was associated with fewer parent-reported externalizing problems. In addition, by middle childhood, many of the coparenting differences that had existed among families with lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parents had disappeared. Across the sample, parents generally were supportive and satisfied in their coparenting roles. As reported by parents and teachers, and regardless of family type, children generally showed few behavior problems. Our findings are thus consistent with the view that family processes are more important than parental sexual orientation for child outcomes, and that aspects of coparenting distinct from couple relationship satisfaction play significant roles in facilitating children's healthy behavioral adjustment from early to middle childhood. In this way, our results could be informative to policy and law affecting adoptive LG parent families. Despite marriage equality for same-sex couples, legal and practical obstacles to adoption and foster care persist for sexual minority parents in the United States (Patterson, 2017). Our findings provide no empirical support for such barriers as the LG parents in this sample provide high quality parenting and have well-adjusted children.

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