

Norms for lesbian and gay parenthood as a function of gender and sexual orientation

Doyle P. Tate

B.A., University of South Carolina, Columbia, 2014

M.A., University of Virginia, Charlottesville, 2016

University of Virginia

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Dissertation Committee:

Charlotte J. Patterson, Ph.D., Chair

Karen Schmidt, Ph.D.

Joseph P. Allen, Ph.D.

Nicholas Winter, Ph.D.

Abstract

Decisions about whether or not to become a parent are significant parts of normative human development. Many studies have shown that married heterosexual couples are expected to become parents, and that many social pressures enforce this norm. For same-sex couples, however, much less is known about social norms and attitudes surrounding parenthood. This study examined current injunctive norms (i.e. how much people think that others should perform an action) and descriptive norms (i.e. the degree to which people think that others do perform an action) for parenthood as a function of age, gender, and sexual orientation.

Now that marriage has been legally recognized for same-sex as well as opposite-sex couples in the United States (U.S.), the question of whether same-sex attracted individuals are expected to get married and pursue parenthood has new urgency. The existence of a norm for parenthood was still an unknown for same-sex married couples. However, researchers have found that many heterosexual individuals see same-sex parents as less capable than heterosexual parents and report that children of lesbian and gay couples would experience worse outcomes compared to those of heterosexual couples, even after changes in marriage laws. In addition, there has been a dearth of research investigating how lesbian and gay individuals feel about the parenthood decisions of other lesbian and gay people. This study investigated the current state of norms for family formation among lesbian and gay married couples.

The study employed a 2 (heterosexual, lesbian/gay participants) x 2 (male, female) x 4 (early adult, young adult, early middle adult, and older adult age groups) design with 3 repeated measures (lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couple conditions). Participants in an internet survey included 1020 people (522 heterosexual, 498 lesbian/gay) from across the U.S. This study sought to address three main questions: 1) How do norms for parenthood differ depending on the sexual

orientation of hypothetical couples pursuing parenthood? 2) How do these normative beliefs depend on the sexual orientation, gender, and age of participants? 3) What do these results indicate about the norms for the pursuit of parenthood among married lesbian and gay couples?

Findings showed that norms, especially descriptive norms, for heterosexual parenthood were much stronger than norms for lesbian and gay parenthood, and that norms for lesbian parenthood were stronger than those for gay male parenthood. These differences were much more pronounced for older, heterosexual, and male participants. However, lesbian and gay participants, especially gay men, reported that married lesbian and gay couples ought to become parents to the same extent as married heterosexual couples. Overall, the results indicated that participants, regardless of sexual orientation, reported that lesbian and gay individuals ought to become parents, but that only a minority of these couples would actually pursue parenthood.

This research provided a glimpse into how Americans are envisioning family formation among same-sex couples today. It also provided some evidence that norms for lesbian and gay parenthood are present, especially among lesbian, gay, and younger heterosexual Americans. In all, somewhat strong injunctive norms for lesbian and gay family formation were found, but descriptive norms were much weaker. The findings add to the understanding of norms for family formation among lesbian and gay married couples.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction 6

Normative Social Influence 8

Normative Social Influence and Same-Sex Parenthood 11

The Evolution of Normative Social Influence 15

Summary 17

The Present Study 17

Chapter 2: Method..... 19

Participants..... 19

Design 21

Sample size and Power Analyses 21

Materials..... 22

Demographics..... 22

Injunctive Norms for Parenthood 23

Perceived Descriptive Norms for Parenthood 25

Procedure 25

Plan of Analyses..... 26

Preliminary Analyses 28

Chapter 3: Results..... 30

Injunctive Norms..... 30

Differences by type of married couple. 30

Differences by participant sexual orientation, gender, and age. 30

Interaction Effects..... 31

Comparing values to a neutral point..... 33

Perceived Descriptive Norms 34

Differences by type of married couple. 34

Differences by participant sexual orientation, gender, and age. 34

Interactions Effects. 35

Comparing values to a neutral point..... 36

Chapter 4: Discussion 37

Social Normative Influence Framework..... 41

Contributions and Implications..... 44

Strengths and Limitations..... 46

Future Directions..... 48

Conclusions 52

References 54

Tables 66

Figures..... 78

Appendix A: Injunctive Norms for Parenthood Measure..... 84

Appendix B: Example Copy of Survey 85

Norms for lesbian and gay parenthood as a function of gender and sexual orientation

Chapter 1: Introduction

Decisions about whether or not to become a parent are important parts of normative human development (Hoffman, 1975; Jaffe & Diamond, 2011; Langdridge, Sheeran, & Connolly, 2005). Married heterosexual couples are expected to become parents, and many social pressures serve to enforce this process (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; DeJean, McGeorge, & Carlson, 2012; Jamison, Franzini, & Kaplan, 1979; Kopper & Smith 2001, Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). For same-sex married couples, however, less is known about the social processes and norms involved in the pursuit of parenthood. However, there have been well-documented disparities within parenting intentions, desires, and achievement for lesbian and gay individuals compared to heterosexual individuals (Gates, Badgett, Macomber, & Chambers, 2007; Patterson & Riskind, 2010; Riskind & Patterson, 2010, Riskind & Tornello, 2017; Tate & Patterson, 2019; Tate, Patterson, Levy, 2019). More and more lesbian and gay people are choosing to parent within same-sex relationships after coming out, and this trend is expected to increase with changing social climates (Bauermeister, 2014; Goldberg, Downing, & Moyer, 2012; Rabun & Oswald, 2009; Riskind & Patterson, 2010). This study investigated norms for parenthood as a function of age, gender, and sexual orientation.

Parenthood is often an important part of adult life, and it may be connected with well-being. For instance, Ashton-James and colleagues (2013) found that parents who value the wellbeing of their children over their own wellbeing showed more positive affect, less negative affect, and greater meaning in life while engaged in activities related to childcare than those who did not. However, research on parenthood has been mixed, finding that parenthood also harms wellbeing for a substantial period after children are born (Galatzer-Levy, Mazursky, Mancini, &

Bonanno, 2011). Overall, evidence has suggested heterogeneity in life satisfaction among parents, and research has found that parents who react positively to their child being born report higher wellbeing than those who did not (Galatzer-Levy et al., 2011). Nelson and colleagues (2013) further examined the possible benefits of parenthood, evaluating whether parents viewed their lives more positively than do nonparents, felt relatively better than do nonparents on a day-to-day basis, and derived more positive feelings from caring for their children than from other daily activities. In contrast to negative findings about parenthood, they found that parents, especially fathers, reported more meaning in life, higher levels of happiness, and more positive emotion than did nonparents (Nelson et al., 2013). In all, decisions about parenthood are significant in adult development and have important ramifications for life outcomes.

Much of what is known about fertility and decision-making processes regarding fertility has been based on studies of heterosexual people (Gato, Santos, & Fontaine, 2017, Ashburn-Nardo, 2017). By the time that they are 45 years of age, a vast majority of women in the United States have become mothers (Gato et al., 2017, Livingston, 2018). In addition, the majority of adolescents and young adults have reported that achieving parenthood is important to them (Ashton-James, Kushlev & Dunn, 2013; Riskind & Patterson, 2010), and most desire parenthood (Ashton-James et al., 2013; Hagewen & Morgan, 2005; Riskind & Tornello, 2017). A significant normative assumption for the framework of this study was that adults will become parents in the context of a long-lasting romantic partnership or marriage (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; Gato et al., 2017; Langdridge, Sheeran, & Connolly, 2005; Tate et al., 2019). However, many people do become parents while single or otherwise outside of marriage. The value of achieving parenthood for the majority of the population made the mechanisms of voluntary fertility decision-making important to understand.

It has become clear that lesbian and gay individuals intend to become parents less often than do their heterosexual peers. (Patterson & Riskind 2010; Riskind & Tornello, 2017; Tate et al., 2019). Working with a nationally representative sample, Riskind and Patterson (2010) studied data from childless adults and reported that 54% of gay men compared to 75% of heterosexual men stated a desire to achieve fatherhood, while 37% of lesbian women compared to 68% of heterosexual women stated a desire to achieve motherhood. In other words, lesbian and gay individuals were less likely than their heterosexual peers to express a desire or intention to become parents. Why do lesbian and gay adults report lower desires and intentions for parenthood? Many studies have investigated possible reasons as to why differences exist (Allen & Demo, 1995; Brown et al., 2009; Gato et al., 2017, Rabun & Oswald, 2009; Riskind et al., 2013, Tate et al., 2019), but none have examined differences in the norms surrounding parenthood. Differences in parenthood aspirations as a function of sexual orientation may stem from differences in norms surrounding parenthood for lesbian and gay individuals in comparison to heterosexual individuals.

Normative Social Influence

Normative social influence encourages individuals to conform to norms and the behavior of others in order to be liked and accepted (Asch, 1956; Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991; Rimal & Real, 2003). Two significant aspects of normative influence are perceived descriptive norms and injunctive norms. Perceived descriptive norms are the degree to which people think that others perform or partake in a behavior (Cialdini et al., 1991; Rimal & Real, 2003), whereas injunctive norms are how much individuals think that others *should* perform or partake in a behavior (Cialdini et al., 1991; Rimal & Real, 2003). This could be connected to family formation in that many social normative pressures act on heterosexual individuals regarding

family formation (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; DeJean et al., 2012; Jamison et al., 1979; Kopper & Smith 2001; Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). In other words, people tend to believe that parenthood will be and should be achieved by “normal” married heterosexual couples.

The normative social aspects of family formation have been found to begin early in life within reproductive stories that start in childhood (Jaffe & Diamond, 2011). During this time, children develop the ideals which will structure their life course decisions and their perceptions of life events as being either “on-time” or “off-time” (Jaffe & Diamond, 2011; Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). For many, the sequence described in the nursery rhyme “first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby in a baby carriage” became ingrained early in life (Jaffe & Diamond, 2011; Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). In fact, breaking from this sequence could have negative effects. For example, findings have shown that single parents are judged harshly compared to married parents (DeJean et al., 2012; Kopper & Smith, 2001, Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). Thus, following the social script for how to achieve parenthood could be seen as a process starting early in life.

These social normative processes continue into adulthood. For instance, married heterosexual men and women are viewed negatively when they choose not to become parents, and they may face societal backlash (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; Calhoun & Selby, 1980; Jamison et al., 1979). For example, Jamison and colleagues (1979) studied perceptions of women and men who are voluntarily childless. They found that voluntarily childless women were viewed as less sensitive, less loving, and less typical of an American woman than those who were mothers. In addition, these childless women were rated as less happy, less well-adjusted, and less likely to be content at age 65. Voluntarily childless men were also viewed negatively, being regarded as

more selfish and less typical, less well-adjusted, less sensitive, less loving, and less fulfilled than were fathers (Jamison et al., 1979). Also, Calhoun and Selby (1980) found that voluntarily childless married men were perceived as less psychologically healthy than married men with children, and voluntarily childless women were also viewed more negatively than married women with children. More recent studies have reported similar findings (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017). For instance, Ashburn-Nardo (2017) conducted an experiment in which participants were given a vignette describing a married couple who planned to parent two children versus a vignette describing a married couple who voluntarily decided to not become parents. Ashburn-Nardo (2017) found that the couples who decided not to become parents elicited more reported moral outrage than those who intended to become parents. Greater moral outrage toward voluntary childlessness partially explained why participants reported that married couples who had chosen not to become parents would be less fulfilled in life. Thus, the existence of norms for parenthood in adulthood has a profound impact on the attitudes held about others.

Married heterosexual couples also face social pressures from family, friends, and significant others to become parents (Hoffman, 1975; Langdrige et al., 2005; Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). Langdrige and colleagues (2005) compiled a list of 35 reasons for and against having children obtained from parenthood intentions research over time (e.g. Gerson, 1983; Hoffman, 1975; Langdrige, Connolly, & Sheeran, 2000; Vinokur-Kaplan, 1977). Out of these 35 reasons, 20 were in favor of having children. The three most relevant in this context were “pleasing family”, “pleasing partner”, and “most people wanting a child”, but only “pleasing partner” was found to be important within the fertility decision-making process of participants (Langdrige et al., 2005). However, their findings were based solely on white heterosexual married couples from ages 18-40 within the United Kingdom, so their applicability

to others is unknown (Balbo and Barban, 2014; Langdrige et al., 2005; Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999, Starrels & Holm, 2000; Tate et al., 2019). Balbo and Barban (2014), working with a large representative sample within the United States, found that the likelihood of childbearing increases after a friend's childbearing, reaches its peak approximately two years later, and then decreases. Thus, fertility behavior does seem to spread among friends, at least temporarily. Moreover, socialization from parents in adolescence and parental relationship quality in adulthood has also been associated with the parenthood intentions of adults (Starrels & Holm, 2000; Tate et al., 2019). In all, social influence from family, friends, and significant others seems to be influential in the decision-making process about parenthood for many heterosexual adults.

Normative Social Influence and Same-Sex Parenthood

As mentioned above, lesbian and gay individuals are less likely than heterosexual individuals to intend to become parents (Patterson & Riskind 2010; Riskind & Tornello, 2017; Tate et al., 2019). Yet, little is known about how normative influence is involved in the parenthood decisions of lesbian and gay individuals. Social contexts are important in lesbian and gay family formation. Contextual factors, such as having a partner who wants children, and social support from family, friends, and LGBT networks, have been associated with higher parenthood intentions among lesbian and gay individuals (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; DeMino, Appleby, & Fisk, 2007; Gianino, 2008; Goldberg, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2012). Conversely, negative contextual factors, such as legal, medical, and social barriers to parenthood, have been associated with a lower likelihood to parent for lesbian and gay individuals (Allen & Demo, 1995; Brown et al., 2009; Rabun & Oswald, 2009; Riskind et al., 2013). Thus, many contextual factors may influence parenthood intentions among lesbian and gay individuals.

In addition, contextual factors have been found to influence parenthood intention in similar ways regardless of gender or sexual orientation. A recent study, using a large national dataset from the U.S., found that all of the demographic, personal, and social contextual variables examined that were associated with parenthood intentions of heterosexual adults were also similarly associated with parenthood intentions of lesbian and gay adults (Tate et al., 2019). Having more close friends, closer relationships with parents, and greater reported relationship permanence was associated with a greater likelihood of parenthood intention regardless of sexual orientation. Differences in these factors also explained part of the disparity in parenthood intention for lesbian and gay adults and their heterosexual counterparts, especially for lesbian women. Lower reported relationship permanence among gay men and lower parental closeness among lesbian and gay individuals compared to their heterosexual counterparts explained part of the disparity in parenthood intention as a function of sexual orientation (Tate et al., 2019). Little is known, however, about the social norms for parenthood among lesbian and gay individuals.

Historically, lesbian and gay individuals were not able to undertake legal marriage or become parents within a same-sex context. However, a movement for LGBT rights has made this possible for sexual minority individuals within the United States (D'Augelli, Rendina, Sinclair & Grossman, 2007; Tankard & Paluck, 2017). In fact, it has been found that many contemporary lesbian and gay youth envision a seemingly “normative” future that involves getting married and becoming parents within a same-sex relationship (D'Augelli et al., 2007). Because of recent changes in marriage equality and family laws, younger cohorts of lesbian and gay individuals may be experiencing more favorable environments for parenthood than those experienced by older cohorts (Baiocco & Laghi, 2013; Costa & Bidell, 2017; Riskind & Patterson, 2010; Tornello & Patterson, 2015). Yet, societal expectations about whether married same-sex couples

ought to pursue parenthood have not been studied.

Now that marriage is legally recognized for same-sex as well as opposite-sex couples in the United States, the question of whether lesbian and gay individuals are expected to marry and pursue parenthood has a new relevance. Tankard and Paluck (2017) found that perceived norms about same-sex marriage have changed rapidly, but that personal attitudes toward same-sex couples have not changed as quickly. Societal expectations about parenthood have not been studied. However, researchers have found that same-sex parents are rated as less competent than heterosexual parents (Costa, Almeida, Anselmo, Ferreira, Pereira, & Leal, 2014; McCutcheon & Morrison, 2015; Robitaille & Saint-Jacques, 2009), even after marriage law changes (Costa et al., 2014; McCutcheon & Morrison, 2015). For example, in Canada, even after a decade of marriage equality, heterosexual individuals rated lesbian and gay couples attempting to adopt less favorably and expected less favorable outcomes for children adopted by same-sex couples compared to those adopted by heterosexual couples (McCutcheon & Morrison, 2015).

In spite of some negative views, however, it has been well-established that children of lesbian and gay parents are similar to children of heterosexual couples in their adjustment, well-being, and mental health (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2009; Tasker, 2005, Tasker & Patterson, 2007). Overall, children of same-sex couples adjust as favorably as children of heterosexual couples (Miller, Kors, Macfie, 2017). In addition, lesbian and gay adults have appeared as capable as heterosexual adults in parental roles (Goldberg, 2009; Patterson, 2017; Tasker & Patterson, 2007). Many studies have compared children of heterosexual parents to those of lesbian and gay parents. No significant differences have been found for important child outcomes, including behavioral adjustment, cognitive functioning, intelligence, peer relationships, and romantic relationship quality (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Goldberg, 2009; Tasker

& Patterson, 2007). Overall, research has shown that family processes, such as couple relationship quality, parenting stress, and parent-child relationship quality, are more associated with child outcomes than parental sexual orientation (Erich, Kanenberg, Case, Allen, & Bogdanos, 2009; Lansford, Ceballo, Abbey, & Stewart, 2001). Thus, negative perceptions of same-sex parents in comparison to their heterosexual counterparts have lacked an empirical foundation.

Why might this difference between perception and reality exist? A possible reason could be that humans tend to have negative judgments and a fear of the unknown (Carleton, 2016a; Carleton, 2016b). Heterosexual individuals often have little exposure to same-sex households, and as such, the heterosexual population may have little knowledge about married same-sex couples pursuing parenthood (Costa, Pereira, & Leal, 2015). Heterosexual individuals with greater exposure to same-sex couples and families tend to be more accepting (Costa et al., 2015). Despite the evidence about social norms for gay marriage, changes in attitudes about lesbian and gay couples are not progressing at the same rate (Tankard & Paluck, 2017), and this could be due to lack of exposure. Moreover, normative ideals regarding parenthood for lesbian and gay couples remain unclear.

Findings from one recent study suggest that gay men in Germany report lower subjective norms to pursue parenthood than do heterosexual men (Kranz, Busch, & Niepel, 2018). Subjective norms are views about the degree to which individuals believe that other people want them to perform a certain behavior (Kranz et al., 2018). In this case, heterosexual men felt that other people in their lives wanted them to pursue parenthood more than did gay men (Kranz et al., 2018). However, only subjective norms for pursuing parenthood have been examined from the perspective of gay men, and relatively little is known about norms for lesbian women. Thus,

exploring other normative attitudes as a function of gender and sexual orientation is needed to fill these empirical gaps.

The Evolution of Normative Social Influence

Norms and normative social influence may change over time. For instance, interracial marriage has been legalized throughout the United States only since 1967. Since then, interracial marriage has become more socially acceptable, and this trend is expected to increase over time (Garcia, Lewis, & Ford-Robertson, 2015). Similarly, there have been recent legal changes for same-sex marriage and parenthood that may have an impact on normative influence and behavior.

As mentioned above, norms about same-sex marriage changed after marriage equality legislation (Tankard & Paluck, 2017), and many sexual minority youths have been found to envision marriage and parenthood within a same-sex context (D'Augelli et al., 2007). It would also be important to consider differences in historical and generational contexts that may be influencing how people of different ages perceive parenthood among same-sex couples. For instance, it has only been since 2003 that sexual activity between consenting same-sex partners of legal age has been legal nationwide (*Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003), and same-sex marriage has only been legal nationwide since 2015 (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015). Not only laws but also attitudes toward lesbian and gay people throughout the United States have rapidly become more favorable (Avery et al., 2007, Pew Research Center, 2017). Public opinion toward same-sex couples has become progressively more positive since 1977, and this trend is expected to continue into the future (Avery et al., 2007). Because of differences in historical and generational contexts, it is important to examine normative social influence among people of different ages.

There has also been data suggesting that views about lesbian and gay parenthood may be

more positive among younger than among older Americans. For instance, in a poll conducted by the Pew Research Center (2012), 67% of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 thought that gay and lesbian people should be allowed to (legally) adopt children. This percentage decreased as the age of the respondents increased; 56% of those between the ages of 30 and 49, 47% of those from 50 to 64 years old, and only 35% of those who were older than 65 thought that gay and lesbian individuals should be allowed to adopt children (Pew Research Center, 2012). These findings helped support the idea that lesbian and gay parenthood may be more acceptable among younger Americans, but did not indicate the current state of injunctive or descriptive norms for lesbian and gay parenthood.

Moreover, it is important to consider that social norms and expectations around parenthood are changing for everyone. For instance, birthrates have been decreasing throughout much of the developed world, with more and more people choosing to be childfree (Tanaka & Johnson, 2016). With the advent of more effective birth control methods, parenthood has become more of a choice and an optional pathway for a fulfilling life for heterosexual people (Peterson, 2015). However, choosing not to pursue parenthood in cultural settings where parenthood is socially expected and encouraged could be detrimental to well-being and life outcomes (Tanaka & Johnson, 2016). Moreover, many younger people within the United States lack economic resources and even have overwhelming debts that prevent the pursuit of parenthood, and this issue has loomed larger for contemporary younger adults than in past generations (Nau, Dwyer, & Hodson, 2015). Thus, younger people in the United States may view parenthood as something that *some* people should do, but also acknowledge that not every couple can expect to become parents.

Summary

Social normative influence permeates the parenthood decisions of heterosexual individuals. However, very little is known about the normative social context in which lesbian and gay individuals decide whether or not to pursue parenthood. The social climate surrounding same-sex relationships has been shifting (Tankard & Paluck, 2017), and such shifts may have an influence in the area of lesbian and gay prospective parenthood. This study explored current perceived descriptive and injunctive norms for parenthood as a function of participants' gender, age, and sexual orientation.

The Present Study

This study examined norms for parenthood among lesbian and gay married couples across multiple age groups. The existence of a norm for parenthood is still an unknown for same-sex married couples. However, as mentioned above, researchers have found that same-sex parents are seen as less fit for parenthood than heterosexual parents (Costa et al., 2014; McCutcheon & Morrison, 2015). It is also known that at least some lesbian and gay youth envision getting married and having children one day (D'Augelli et al., 2007), and that younger lesbian and gay people are experiencing more favorable environments in which to pursue parenthood than did their elders (Costa & Bidell, 2017). This study aimed to assess the perceived descriptive and injunctive norms for lesbian, gay, and heterosexual parenthood as a function of participants' sexual orientation, gender, and age. Amazon TurkPrime was utilized to acquire data from individuals across the United States. For the purposes of this study, only self-identified gay, lesbian, and heterosexual participants were eligible. There were 3 main research questions: 1) How do norms for parenthood differ depending on the type of couple pursuing parenthood? 2) How do these differences depend on the sexual orientation, gender, and age of those responding

to the norm measures? 3) What do these results indicate about the norms for the pursuit of parenthood among married lesbian and gay couples?

For the first question, it was expected that norms for heterosexual parenthood would be stronger than those for lesbian and gay parenthood and that norms for lesbian parenthood would be stronger than those for gay parenthood among all participants. This hypothesis is based on the fact that lesbian and gay parenthood is usually viewed less favorably compared to heterosexual parenthood (Gato et al., 2017; McCutcheon & Morrison, 2015), but that lesbian parenthood has been rated more favorably than gay parenthood (McCutcheon & Morrison, 2015). For the second research question, it was expected that lesbian and gay individuals would endorse stronger norms for same-sex parenthood than would heterosexual individuals. It was also expected that women would rate stronger norms for lesbian and gay parenthood than would men, and that younger participants would endorse stronger norms for lesbian and gay parenthood than would older participants. These hypotheses were based on findings from the Pew Research Center (2012) suggesting that women and younger people are more in favor of lesbian and gay parenthood than are men and older people. Finally, for the third research question, it was expected that participants, especially those who are younger, would rate parenthood as something that married lesbian and gay couples should do, but also something that not that many lesbian and gay couples would actually do.

Chapter 2: Method

Participants

Participants included 1020 lesbian, gay, and heterosexual individuals within the United States who were above the age of 18 (267 lesbian women, 231 gay men, 260 heterosexual women, 262 heterosexual men). Both childless individuals and those who were parents were eligible for inclusion. Participants identified as cisgender male or female. Age was categorized into four groups defined as Early Adults = 18 to 24 years, Young Adults = 25 to 34 years, Younger Middle Adults = 35 to 44 years, Older adults = 45+ years (Costa & Bidell, 2017). Middle adulthood was split into two groups because of the biological and social factors surrounding parenthood that differ within this period (Costa & Bidell, 2017).

Participants were recruited online using TurkPrime. This system gathered individuals from participant panels made up of heterosexual, gay, and lesbian individuals living across the United States in order to recruit the demographics needed for the study (Litman, Robinson, & Abberbock, 2017). Age quotas were also utilized in data collection in order to achieve relatively equal samples of participants within the aforementioned age categories.

Despite the sample being large and diverse, it was not representative of the U.S. population (see Table 1). Compared to the U.S. population, a greater proportion of heterosexual participants and lesbian/gay participants were white, $z = 4.20, p < .001$, $z = 2.73, p = .006$, respectively. A greater proportion of lesbian and gay participants had a bachelor's degree or above compared to the U.S. population, $z = 8.61, p < .001$. Heterosexual participants did not significantly differ from the overall population of the U.S. in terms of education, $z = 0.98, p = .327$. Lesbian and gay participants were less conservative and moderate compared to the U.S. population, $z = 7.79, p < .001$, $z = 5.45, p < .001$, respectively. Heterosexual participants were

just as conservative and moderate as the U.S. population, $z = 1.00, p = .319, z = 0.93, p = .353$.

However, a greater proportion of lesbian/gay and heterosexual participants were liberal compared to the U.S. population, $z = 17.24, p < .001, z = 2.68, p = .008$.

Due to the effort to control sample sizes across age categories, heterosexual and lesbian/gay participants were much younger than the U.S. population (see Table 1). Compared to the U.S. population, more heterosexual participants were ages 18-25, 26-36, and 35-54, $z = 14.37, p < .001, z = 7.73, p < .001, z = 5.21, p < .001$, respectively. Likewise, a greater proportion of lesbian and gay participants were ages 18-25, 26-36, and 35-54 compared to the U.S. population, $z = 14.04, p < .001, z = 9.61, p < .001, z = 4.58, p < .001$, respectively. Moreover, fewer heterosexual participants and lesbian/gay participants were older than 55 compared to the U.S. population, $z = 7.55, p < .001, z = 8.36, p < .001$. With these age differences in mind, a greater proportion of the U.S. population was married than were lesbian/gay and heterosexual participants, $z = 11.60, p < .001, z = 5.03, p < .001$. Moreover, a greater proportion of the U.S. population reported being a parent than did the lesbian/gay and heterosexual participants in this sample, $z = 14.64, p < .001, z = 5.62, p < .001$. Overall, the recruited sample was not representative of the U.S. population.

There were also differences within this sample as a function of sexual orientation (see Table 1). More lesbian and gay participants had a bachelor's degree or above than did heterosexual participants, $\chi^2 = 26.79, p < .001$. A greater proportion of heterosexual participants were conservative and moderate compared to lesbian/gay participants, $\chi^2 = 46.28, p < .001, \chi^2 = 11.33, p = .001$, respectively. In addition, more lesbian and gay participants were liberal than were heterosexual participants, $\chi^2 = 81.60, p < .001$. Moreover, a greater proportion of heterosexual participants reported being married and/or being a parent than did lesbian and gay

participants, $\chi^2 = 26.47, p < .001, \chi^2 = 42.72, p < .001$, respectively. In all, there were many differences within the sample based on participant sexual orientation.

Design

The study employed a 2 (heterosexual, lesbian/gay) x 2 (male, female) x 4 (early adult, young adult, early middle adult, and older adult age groups) design with 3 repeated measures (lesbian, gay, and heterosexual married couple conditions). The study had two dependent measures: injunctive norms and perceived descriptive norms for parenthood. Levels of the repeated measures were manipulated by adjusting the wording of the questions asked to include norms for lesbian couples, gay couples, and heterosexual couples to pursue parenthood (see Appendix A & B). The measurement of these variables is described below in the Materials section.

Sample Size and Power Analyses

A priori power analyses assuming 80% power were conducted for 2 mixed analyses of variances (ANOVAs) with R statistical software to calculate sample sizes. The first analysis was for a mixed 2 (heterosexual, lesbian/gay) x 2 (male, female) x 4 (early adult, young adult, early middle adult, and older adult age groups) ANOVA with 3 repeated measures (lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couple conditions).

Assuming a medium effect size and 80% power, 404 participants were needed to detect interaction effects between within- and between-subjects' factors for the 2 x 2 x 4 ANOVA with 3 repeated measures. There were 16 groups, and 404 divided by 16 is 25.25. Thus, 26 people were needed for each group. This translated into 104 people per age group (26 gay men, 26 lesbian women, 26 heterosexual men, and 26 heterosexual women). Thus, the aim was to collect data from at least 416 participants.

This minimum value was far exceeded with 1020 participants overall. Participants included 240 Early Adults (63 lesbian women, 53 gay men, 65 heterosexual women, 59 heterosexual men), 281 Young Adults (75 lesbian women, 71 gay men, 66 heterosexual women, 69 heterosexual men), 256 Younger Middle Adults (77 lesbian women, 50 gay men, 64 heterosexual women, 65 heterosexual men), and 243 Older Adults (52 lesbian women, 57 gay men, 65 heterosexual women, 69 heterosexual men). In all, more than the minimum number needed per group was achieved, and the analyses had over 99% power to detect medium size effects.

Materials

Demographics. Demographic variables measured in the study included sexual orientation, gender, race/ethnicity, age, education level, marriage status, parenthood status. Sexual orientation was assessed by asking participants, “Which best describes your sexual orientation?” with “Heterosexual(“straight”),” “Lesbian/Gay,” “Bisexual,” “Pansexual,” “Asexual”, and “These do not describe me. (Please specify how you identify).” Only those who select “Heterosexual(“straight”)” and “Lesbian/Gay” were eligible to participate in this study. Gender identity was assessed using the question, “What best describes your gender?” Participants had the option to select, “Male”, “Female”, “Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming”, or “These do not describe me. (Please specify how you identify).” Only those who select “Male” or “Female” were eligible to participate. Trans identity, for screening purposes, was assessed by asking the question, “Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person born into a male body, but who feels female or lives as a woman. Do you consider yourself to be transgender??” Participants had the option to select “Yes, transgender, male to female,” “Yes, transgender,

female to male,” “*Yes, transgender, gender nonconforming,*” or “*No.*” Those who select yes were not eligible for the study.

Race/Ethnicity was assessed by asking, “*Choose one or more racial and ethnic identities that best describes you*”. Participants had the option to respond with “*White,*” “*Black or African American,*” “*Latino/Latina/Latinx,*” “*American Indian or Alaska Native,*” “*Asian (including East Asian, South Asian, etc.),*” “*Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander,*” “*Middle Eastern,*” or “*These do not describe me. (Please specify how you identify).*” However, for this study, race was coded by collapsing these responses into three groups: “white”, “multiracial”, and “racial minority”. Age was assessed through the question, “*What is your age in years?*”. Participants were asked to type in their age as a whole number 18 or above. This was recoded into four age categories: Early Adults = 18 to 24 years, Young Adults = 25 to 34 years, Younger Middle Adults = 35 to 44 years, Older adults = 45+ years (Costa & Bidell, 2017). Age was not examined as a continuous variable as the findings from age were not linear. Education level was assessed using the question “*What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?*”. This had 7 levels ranging from “*Less than a high school degree*” to “*Doctoral or Professional Degree (Ph.D., JD, MD).*” These were then recoded into low (high school education or less), medium (some college or other higher education), and high (bachelor’s degree and above) categories, to create a measure of socioeconomic status (Sumontha, Tornello, & Patterson, 2018; Tate et al., 2019). Marriage and parenthood statuses were evaluated by asking, “*Are you currently married?*,” and “*Are you a parent or step-parent?*”, respectively. For both of these items, participants could answer “*Yes*” or “*No*”. Parental and marital status did not affect eligibility for the study.

Injunctive Norms for Parenthood. Individual injunctive norms for parenthood were

assessed. Individual injunctive norms indicate how much participants personally feel that individuals should do something (Cruwys, Haslam, Fox, & McMahon, 2015). In this case, the normative behavior is the pursuit of parenthood for each of three childless married couple types (gay, lesbian, and heterosexual). A 4-item measure from Cruwys et al. (2015) was adapted to assess these (see Appendix A for full measure). Participants were first given instructions that indicate that the couples asked about in this measure were in their 20s and 30s and within stable and loving marriages. One example of these items, across each within-group condition, is as follows: *“I think that lesbian couples should become parents,” “I think that gay male couples should become parents,” “I think that heterosexual (straight) couples should become parents.”* Each of the items was scored from 1 = *“Strongly agree”* to 5 = *“Strongly disagree”*.

A Rasch-based Partial Credit Model from Item Response Theory (IRT) was conducted using the “mirt” package in R statistics software to assess these scales, both overall and by the sexual orientation and gender of the participant (Chalmers, 2012; Embretson & Reise, 2000). When examining the scales for participants overall, the main findings were that the items overfit the model for each condition and values of “disagree” and “strongly disagree” were associated with higher theta levels whereas “strongly agree” were associated with theta levels of around 0. (see Table 2 and Figure 1). In essence, the items overfitting the model implied that all items were assessing the same concept in very similar ways and that there was very little predictive error. Moreover, the IRT models suggested that it was more difficult to respond negatively to these scales, regardless of the type of couple being examined. In addition, the threshold for the response of “disagree” was never most likely to occur. This indicated that participants who had any disagreement with the items most often would “strongly disagree”.

Differences by participant sexual orientation and gender were also assessed, but these

findings were not discussed as these analyses also showed the same pattern of results described above, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, or type of couple. For each couple condition, the items showed high internal reliability (Lesbian condition $\alpha = .97$, Gay condition $\alpha = .97$, Heterosexual condition $\alpha = .91$). The Cronbach's alphas when splitting the sample by sexual orientation were .90 and above for every identity in each condition.

Based on these findings, scores for the 4-items within each condition were averaged into a single scale measuring injunctive norms for parenthood that had three within-subject conditions, one for each type of couple. These items were also reverse coded such that scale scores ranged from 1 to 5 with higher numbers indicating stronger injunctive norms.

Perceived Descriptive Norms for Parenthood. Perceived descriptive norms for parenthood were assessed using a single item adapted from Cho, Chung, and Filippova (2015). First, participants were given instructions that clarified that the couples asked about in this item were in their 20s and 30s. The adapted item was, "*What percentage of (type of married couple) in the United States do you estimate will become parents during their marriage?*" with the couple types being gay, lesbian, and heterosexual couples. Respondents could answer from 1 = "0%" to 11 = "100%" with 10% intervals based on previous adaptations of the item (Cho et al., 2015). Higher responses represented stronger descriptive norms.

Procedure

Participants took part in an anonymous online survey; see Appendix B for example survey. Participants were told that the goal of this study was to evaluate what people thought as "normal" for couples in the U.S. today. First, to determine their eligibility, participants answered screening questions about age, gender, transgender status, sexual orientation, and whether they lived in the United States.

Participants then completed a block of questions that assess descriptive norms for parenthood. Next, participants completed three blocks of questions assessing injunctive norms for parenthood for the three types of couples (lesbian, gay, and heterosexual). The presentation of the injunctive norm question blocks was randomized. Items within each of the blocks were also randomly presented. The randomization of measures and items was done to reduce possible order-effects.

Finally, demographic and other variables of interests were collected at the end of the survey. Participants were then redirected to receive their reward. In addition, participants were debriefed about the nature of the study.

Plan of Analyses

Statistical analyses were conducted in SPSS 26. Demographic variables were evaluated as a function of gender and sexual orientation using analyses of variances (ANOVAs), chi-square analyses, and generalized linear models (GLMs) to identify possible covariates to use in further analyses (see Table 3).

Because the design had both within- and between-subject elements, analyses had to take both into account. Two linear mixed effect models (LMMs) using the Satterthwaite method of estimating degrees of freedom that controlled for covariates and repeated measures were conducted in lieu of mixed-effect ANOVAs for these analyses (Galecki & Burzykowski, 2013). One 2 (heterosexual, lesbian/gay) x 2 (male, female) x 4 (early adult, young adult, early middle adult, and older adult age groups) x 3 (lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couple within-subject conditions) LMM was conducted to assess the injunctive norms for parenthood (see Table 4). Another 2 x 2 x 4 x 3 LMM was conducted to assess perceived descriptive norms for parenthood (see Table 5). Interaction effects between main effects and condition types were also examined.

Only significant three and four-way interactions were included in the models. In addition, all lower-level interactions were also included for significant three-way interactions, and there were no significant four-way interactions. Post-hoc differences were evaluated using the Bonferroni correction, and only comparisons involving differences in type of married couple were examined to reduce the experiment-wise error rate and to be consistent with the hypotheses of this study.

Two indicators were used to interpret the normative attitudes for parenthood. The first indicator was based on using the heterosexual condition as the reference group. Participants rating the norms for married lesbian and gay couples to pursue parenthood similarly to norms for heterosexual married couples would be viewed as indicative of lesbian and gay parenthood being normative. Secondly, the injunctive and descriptive norm outcomes were used as indicators by comparing the norms reported for lesbian and gay parenthood to a neutral point on these measures. For injunctive norm scales, this reference point was 3, which represented a neutral value. This point was selected because injunctive norms are based on the degree to which people think others should or should not perform an action (Cialdini et al., 1991; Rimal & Real, 2003), and this point is operationalized as the point where people would not agree or disagree that people should pursue parenthood. Thus, results significantly above 3 were considered as evidence for parenthood norms, and results significantly below 3 were considered as evidence of norms against parenthood. For descriptive norm scales, 50%, i.e. a score of 5, was utilized as a reference point. This point was selected because descriptive norms are the degree to which people think that others perform a behavior (Cialdini et al., 1991; Rimal & Real, 2003), and 50% was operationalized as the neutral reference point for this study because that was the point where those encouraged to pursue parenthood would not be a minority or a majority. Thus, percentages significantly greater than 50% were considered as evidence of stronger parenthood norms, and

percentages less than 50% were considered as evidence of weak norms for parenthood.

Preliminary Analyses

There were differences in demographic variables as a function of gender and sexual orientation (see Table 3). Significant differences in racial/ethnicity proportions were found for gender and sexual orientation, $\chi^2(2) = 13.72, p = .001, \phi = .12, \chi^2(2) = 7.62, p = .022, \phi = .09$, respectively. A greater proportion of women (73%) in this sample were white compared to men (62%), $Z = 3.69, p < .001, h = .23$. A greater proportion of lesbian/gay adults (10%) in this sample were multiracial than were heterosexual individuals (6%), $Z = 2.77, p = .006, h = .17$. There were no differences in the proportion of people in each age grouping as a function of gender or sexual orientation due to the method of sampling.

Differences were also found in the amount of education as a function of sexual orientation, $F(1, 1016) = 27.27, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$ (see Table 3). Gay/lesbian adults reported more education than did heterosexual adults, $p < .001$. No significant effects were found for gender or the interaction of gender or sexual orientation in education level. There was a significant interaction effect between gender and sexual orientation for parenthood status, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 4.91, p = .027$. Heterosexual women (57%) were more likely to be parents than were heterosexual men (40%), $p < .001, h = .34$, and lesbian women (40%) were more likely to be parents than were gay men (15%), $p < .001, h = .57$. Based on Cohen's h , this difference was larger for lesbian/gay individuals than heterosexual individuals. The analyses also found differences as a function of sexual orientation for marriage status, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 26.92, p < .001$. Heterosexual participants (39%) were more likely to be married than were lesbian/gay participants (23%), $p < .001, h = .35$. No differences in marital status were found as a function of gender or the interaction between gender and sexual orientation. In the following results, race,

education, parenthood status, and marital status were included as covariates, but none of the covariates were significantly associated with either injunctive or perceived descriptive norms.

Chapter 3: Results

The results are presented in two sections. First, results for injunctive norms for parenthood are presented, and then, perceived descriptive norms for parenthood results are described.

Injunctive Norms

Differences by type of married couple. The LMM revealed that there was a significant difference in injunctive norms for married lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couple conditions, $F(2, 1006.17) = 95.20, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .16$. Participants reported that married heterosexual couples ($M = 4.46, SE = .02$) ought to become parents more than married lesbian ($M = 4.01, SE = 0.04$) and gay ($M = 3.91, SE = 0.04$) couples, $p < .001, d = .48, p < .001, d = .56$, respectively. Participants also reported that married lesbian couples ought to become parents more than married gay couples, $p < .001, d = .09$.

Differences by participant sexual orientation, gender, and age. There were also differences in how individuals reported injunctive norms, in general, as a function of participant sexual orientation, gender, and age, $F(1, 1039.28) = 116.28, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .10, F(1, 1032.90) = 5.85, p = .016, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01, F(3, 1032.52) = 10.58, p < .001, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .03$, respectively. Lesbian/gay participants ($M = 4.41, SE = .04$) reported higher injunctive norms averaged across all types of married couples than did heterosexual individuals ($M = 3.84, SE = .04$), $p < .001, g = .68$. Women ($M = 4.19, SE = .04$) reported higher injunctive norms averaged across all types of married couples than did men ($M = 4.07, SE = .04$), $p = .016, g = .15$. Older adults ($M = 3.89, SE = .05$) reported lower injunctive norms averaged across all types of married couples than did early adults ($M = 4.32, SE = .06$), young adults, ($M = 4.18, SE = .05$), and

Younger Middle Adults ($M = 4.13$, $SE = .05$), $p < .001$, $g = .51$, $p = .001$, $g = .35$, $p = .007$, $g = .29$, respectively. There were no other significant differences as a function of age.

Interaction Effects. The differences among injunctive norms were dependent upon the sexual orientation, gender, and age of the participants. First, results for the lower-level interactions are presented. This was solely for the purposes of interpreting higher-level interactions and should not be interpreted as results. Then, results for higher-level interactions are described, which should be interpreted as the main findings.

When considering gender, the differences reported between married heterosexual couples and married lesbian and gay couples were much more pronounced for men than women, $F(2, 1006.19) = 3.49$, $p = .031$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$. When examining different couple types by participant sexual orientation, heterosexual participants reported that married heterosexual married couples should become parents more than married gay couples and married lesbian couples, but lesbian/gay participants did not report differences between heterosexual married couples and lesbian married couples, $F(2, 1006.17) = 74.57$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$. However, lesbian/gay participants also reported that married heterosexual couples should become parents more than married gay couples, but this difference was smaller than the difference reported by heterosexual participants. Heterosexual and lesbian/gay individuals reported that married lesbian couples ought to become parents more than married gay couples.

However, the effects of sexual orientation on injunctive norms for parenthood of different types of married couples were also dependent on the gender of the participant, $F(2, 1006.19) = 19.13$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$ (Table 6 for statistics & Figure 2). As in the lower level interaction, heterosexual women reported that married heterosexual couples should become parents more than married gay and lesbian couples, $p < .001$, $d = .78$, $p < .001$, $d = .77$,

respectively, and heterosexual men also reported that married heterosexual couples should become parents more than married gay and lesbian couples, $p < .001$, $d = 1.28$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.15$, respectively. However, these differences were much more pronounced for heterosexual men than for heterosexual women. Heterosexual men also reported that lesbian couples should become parents more than gay couples, $p < .001$, $d = .14$, but heterosexual women did not report any significant differences between married lesbian and gay couples, $p > .999$, $d = .02$.

Also, as in the lower level interaction, lesbian women rated that married heterosexual couples should become parents more than married gay couples, $p = .026$, $d = .21$, no differences between married heterosexual and lesbian couples, $p > .999$, $d = .01$, and that married lesbian couples ought to become parents more than married gay couples, $p < .001$, $d = .19$. However, gay men reported no differences in how much they thought that married heterosexual couples ought to become parents compared to lesbian and gay couples, $p > .999$, $d = .01$, $p > .999$, $d = .02$, respectively. Gay men also reported no difference in how much they thought that married lesbian and gay couples ought to become parents, $p > .999$, $d = .01$.

In addition, the effects of the sexual orientation of participants on injunctive norms for parenthood of different types of married couples were also dependent on the age of the participant, $F(6, 1006.17) = 2.81$, $p = .010$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$ (see Table 7 for statistics & Figure 3). For heterosexual participants, the differences reported in how much they thought that married heterosexual couples and married lesbian and gay couples ought to become parents were more pronounced for those over the age of 44. In addition, Younger Middle Adults (ages 35-44) were the only age group where heterosexual participants responded that married lesbian couples ought to become parents more than married gay couples, $p = .005$, $d = .13$. However, lesbian/gay participants reported no differences in how much they thought married heterosexual couples

ought to become parents compared to married lesbian and gay couples for all age categories, except Younger Middle Adults (ages 35-44). For this age group, lesbian/gay participants reported that married heterosexual couples ought to become parents more than married gay couples, $p = .033$, $d = .29$. Younger Middle Adults were also the only age group in which lesbian/gay participants responded that married lesbian couples ought to become parents more than married gay couples, $p = .002$, $d = .14$. However, lesbian/gay participants in this age group reported no differences between married heterosexual and lesbian couples, $p = .663$, $d = .14$.

In all, participants reported that married heterosexual couples ought to pursue parenthood more than married lesbian and gay couples, and that married lesbian couples ought to become parents more than married gay male couples. However, these differences were dependent on participants' sexual orientation, gender, and age. Heterosexual men reported that married heterosexual couples ought to pursue parenthood more than married lesbian and gay couples, and that married lesbian couples ought to become parents more than married gay male couples. These differences were much less pronounced among heterosexual women. However, lesbian and gay participants, especially gay men, reported almost no differences in how much couples ought to pursue parenthood. Finally, older heterosexual adults reported greater differences in how much couples ought to pursue parenthood as a function of couple sexual orientation than did younger heterosexual adult, whereas lesbian and gay adults, regardless of age, reported little to no differences in how much they thought different types of couples ought to pursue parenthood.

Comparing values to a neutral point. On the scale measuring injunctive norms, the neutral reference point was three. Any value above three represented that couples “ought to” become parents and any value below three represented that couples “should not” become parents. When comparing the mean values from the analyses to three (see Tables 5 & 6 for means and

95% confidence intervals), it was clear that the vast majority of the means were well above three. This implied that the majority of respondents thought that married lesbian and gay couples ought to become parents, despite differences as a function of personal characteristics. Only two mean values were not significantly above three. Heterosexual adults over the age of 44 reported mean values for married gay couples ($M = 3.03$, 95% CI [2.83, 3.23]) and married lesbian couples ($M = 3.10$, 95% CI [2.91, 3.29]) that had 95% confidence intervals that contained three. While both means were slightly over three, this suggested that older heterosexual adults do not feel strongly either way, on average, about whether or not married lesbian and gay couples ought to become parents. All others, however, responded in favor of parenthood.

Perceived Descriptive Norms

Differences by type of married couple. The LMM revealed that there was a significant difference in perceived descriptive norms for married lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples, $F(2, 1012) = 866.67$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .63$. Participants reported that they thought more married heterosexual couples ($M = 6.96$, $SE = .06$) would become parents than would married lesbian ($M = 4.19$, $SE = 0.07$) and gay ($M = 3.60$, $SE = 0.06$) couples, $p < .001$, $d = 1.37$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.71$, respectively. Participants also reported that more married lesbian couples would become parents than married gay couples, $p < .001$, $d = .28$.

Differences by participant sexual orientation, gender, and age. There were also differences in how individuals reported perceived descriptive norms, in general, as a function of participant sexual orientation, gender, and age, $F(1, 1020.27) = 4.46$, $p = .035$, partial $\eta^2 < .01$, $F(1, 1018.27) = 15.32$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, $F(3, 1018.08) = 5.58$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$, respectively. Lesbian/gay participants ($M = 5.02$, $SE = .07$) reported stronger perceived descriptive norms averaged across all types of married couples than did heterosexual individuals

($M = 4.81$, $SE = .07$), $p = .036$, $g = .13$. Women ($M = 5.11$, $SE = .07$) reported higher perceived descriptive norms averaged across all types of married couples than did men ($M = 4.72$, $SE = .07$), $p < .001$, $g = .25$. Older adults ($M = 4.61$, $SE = .10$) reported weaker perceived descriptive norms averaged across all types of married couples than did Early Adults ($M = 5.15$, $SE = .11$) and Young Adults, ($M = 5.08$, $SE = .09$), $p = .002$, $g = .34$, $p = .004$, $g = .30$, respectively. There were no other significant differences as a function of age. In all, lesbian and gay adults, women, and younger adults reported stronger descriptive norms (averaged across all types of married couples) than did heterosexual adults, men, and older adults, respectively.

Interactions Effects. The differences among perceived descriptive norms were dependent upon the sexual orientation and age of the participants $F(2, 1012) = 4.72$, $p = .009$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$, $F(6, 1012) = 5.23$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, respectively (see Tables 7 and 8 for statistics). When examining perceived descriptive norms for different couples to become parents by sexual orientation, both heterosexual and lesbian/gay participants reported that more married heterosexual couples would become parents than married lesbian and gay couples and that more married lesbian couples would become parents than married gay couples, $p < .001$ for all differences. However, lesbian/gay participants reported a less extreme difference in how many married heterosexual couples would have children compared to married lesbian, $d = 1.24$, and gay couples, $d = 1.62$, especially married lesbian couples, than did heterosexual participants, $d = 1.46$ and $d = 1.75$, respectively (See Table 8 and Figure 4). However, lesbian/gay participants reported a more extreme difference between married lesbian and gay couples, $d = .32$, than did heterosexual participants, $d = .23$.

When considering differences among perceived descriptive norms by age, every age category reported that more married heterosexual couples would become parents than married

lesbian and gay couples and that more married lesbian couples would become parents than married gay couples, $p < .001$ for all differences. However, differences in perceptions of how many married lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples become parents were more extreme among older participants (See Table 9 and Figure 5). This included differences between married heterosexual couples and married lesbian and gay couples, as well as differences between married lesbian and gay couples.

In all, participants reported that married heterosexual couples would pursue parenthood more than married lesbian and gay couples, and that married lesbian couples would become parents more than married gay male couples. These differences were more pronounced for heterosexual participants and older participants compared to lesbian/gay and younger participants, respectively. Women reported stronger descriptive norms regardless of the type of married couple pursuing parenthood.

Comparing values to a neutral point. On the scale measuring descriptive norms, the neutral reference point was five. Any value above five represented that the majority of couples become parents and any value below five represented that only a minority of couples become parents. When comparing the mean values from the analyses to five (see Tables 7 & 8 for means and 95% confidence intervals), it was apparent that participants, regardless of sexual orientation, gender, or age, responded that the majority of heterosexual married couples would become parents together, while only a minority of married lesbian and gay couples would actually do so.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Parenthood is a common experience in the course of human development (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; DeJean et al., 2012; Jamison et al., 1979; Kopper & Smith 2001, Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). However, most prior research on normative aspects of parenthood has been done with heterosexual people. Now that lesbian and gay individuals can pursue marriages in same-sex relationships, it is important to examine the norms for parenthood among married lesbian and gay couples. This study examined injunctive and perceived descriptive norms for parenthood as a function of gender and sexual orientation over multiple age groups, and sought to answer three questions: 1) How do norms for parenthood differ depending on the type of couple pursuing parenthood? 2) How do these differences depend on the sexual orientation, gender, and age of those responding to the norm measures? 3) What do these results indicate about the norms to pursue parenthood among married lesbian and gay couples? This section will be presented in sections. First, the results of the study will be described in the context of the hypotheses. Then, a conceptualization of how results fit within a social normative framework will be provided, followed by an account of the study implications. Finally, the strengths and limitations of the study, future research directions, and overall conclusions will be presented.

When considering the first question, the findings of this study completely coincided with expectations. Results showed that, for both injunctive and perceived descriptive norms, participants described norms for married heterosexual couples to pursue parenthood that were stronger than norms for married lesbian and gay couples. Also as expected, both types of norms for parenthood were stronger for married lesbian couples than for married gay couples. This implies that adults tend to endorse parenthood among heterosexual couples to a greater extent

than among lesbian and gay couples and parenthood among lesbian couples more than among gay male couples.

Many of the hypotheses for the second question were also supported by these findings for both injunctive and perceived descriptive norms. Lesbian and gay individuals endorsed stronger norms for same-sex parenthood than did heterosexual individuals, women endorsed stronger norms for lesbian and gay parenthood than did men, and younger participants generally endorsed stronger norms for lesbian and gay parenthood than did older participants. In all, this meant that lesbian and gay adults, women, and younger adults were more in favor of parenthood among married lesbian and gay couples than were heterosexual adults, men, and older adults, respectively.

However, there were some unexpected findings on how participant age, gender, and sexual orientation were associated with differences in norms. One of the most unanticipated findings was that gay men reported no differences in how much they thought married gay, lesbian, and heterosexual couples ought to become parents. However, despite the fact that both lesbian and gay adults endorsed surprisingly strong norms for all types of married couples, lesbian women saw parenthood for married gay couples less favorably than parenthood among married heterosexual and lesbian couples. This finding supports the idea that lesbian women are ascribing to gender norms in parenthood, (e.g., “women should be involved in childcare more than men” or that “women ‘should be’ mothers”) (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; DeJean et al., 2012; Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). In essence, gender and attitudes about parenthood are explicitly tied together, and thus, combining lesbian and gay individuals into a unified group for the purposes of understanding prospective parenthood may not be the best practice (Gato et al., 2017; Tate et al., 2019).

In addition, participants between the ages of 35-44 acted differently than expected. Lesbian and gay individuals in this age group endorsed more extreme differences between married gay couples and married heterosexual and lesbian couples compared to both younger and older lesbian and gay participants. Heterosexual participants in this age group also reported more differences between married lesbian and gay couples in how much they ought to become parents than did other age groups of heterosexual adults. This further supports the idea that the age group from 35-44 years old is a distinct group in Middle Adulthood (Costa & Bidell, 2017).

Likewise, differences in norms by age were not linear for injunctive norms, but they were linear for descriptive norms. Heterosexual participants in age groups under the age of 45 reported similar findings for how much they thought that married lesbian and gay couples ought to pursue parenthood. However, after the age of 45, heterosexual participants reported much more negative responses for how much they thought that married lesbian and gay couples ought to pursue parenthood than did all younger age groups. Thus, the association between age and injunctive norms for lesbian and gay parenthood in heterosexual participants was curvilinear in that age was only associated with these norms after the age of 45. On the other hand, the perception of how many married lesbian and gay couples would actually become parents steadily decreased as age increased. Therefore, the association between age and descriptive norms for lesbian and gay parenthood was linear. These both supported the hypothesis that younger participants would endorse stronger norms for lesbian and gay parenthood than would older participants, but there was more nuance with this finding concerning injunctive norms than was expected.

Finally, for the third research question, it was expected that participants would endorse parenthood as something that some married lesbian and gay couples should do, but also something that not that many lesbian and gay people would do. The findings of this study

supported this hypothesis. Despite differences as a function of sexual orientation, gender, and age, most people reported that parenthood was an aspect of life that married lesbian and gay couples ought to pursue. Only older heterosexual participants felt differently. Moreover, these results showed that parenthood was also something that most participants believed that only a minority of married lesbian and gay couples would achieve during their marriage, regardless of participants' sexual orientation, gender, and age.

Based on these results, it was clear that injunctive normative beliefs did not underlie the view that only a minority of married lesbian and gay couples will become parents together. Overwhelmingly, individuals responded positively to the idea of lesbian and gay parenthood. Thus, it may be possible that perceptions of how many married lesbian and gay couples will actually become parents together (i.e. descriptive norms) may be derived from other aspects of people's lives, such as a lack of exposure to parents raising children in same-sex couples (Costa et al., 2015), an acknowledgment of the difficulties experienced by same-sex couples in the pursuit of parenthood (Allen & Demo, 1995; Blake et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2009; Rabun & Oswald, 2009; Riskind et al., 2013), and/or an understanding that achieving parenthood, at least biological parenthood, is more accessible for lesbian women than for gay men (Blake et al., 2017; Gato et al., 2017).

Overall, the results of this study were generally consistent with expectations. Norms for the pursuit of parenthood were stronger for married heterosexual couples than for married lesbian and gay couples, and these norms were also stronger for married lesbian couples than married gay couples. Differences as a function of couple sexual orientation were much more pronounced for participants who were older, heterosexual, and male. Finally, most participants reported that married lesbian and gay couples ought to pursue parenthood, but that only a

minority of these couples would actually become parents together. These results have implications for understanding prospective parenthood among lesbian and gay populations.

Social Normative Influence Framework

Social normative influence pervades the parenthood decisions and aspirations of heterosexual individuals. However, the normative social context in which lesbian and gay individuals decide whether or not to pursue parenthood was relatively unremarked prior to this study. One study did find that gay men reported lower subjective norms (i.e. the degree to which individuals believe that other people want them to perform a certain behavior) than did heterosexual men (Kranz et al., 2018), but these are based on perceptions of what gay men thought that others felt about their own pursuit of parenthood and not about the pursuit of parenthood by gay men in general. As mentioned above, marriage status plays a large role in normative influence about parenthood (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017), and gay men tend to report either not expecting to get married or not expecting to be in a permanent relationship (Tate & Patterson, 2019; Tate et al., 2019). Thus, the current study garnered information about parenthood within the normative marriage setting, and lesbian/gay adults in this study remarkably equated lesbian, gay, and heterosexual couples in terms of how much they thought these couples (if married) ought to become parents.

Thus, using the framework of social normative influence seems to be valuable in understanding the mechanisms of prospective parenthood for lesbian and gay individuals. Overall, the literature has found differences in parenthood aspirations as a function of sexual orientation (Gato et al., 2017; Jeffries, Marsiglio, Tunalilar, & Berkowitz, 2019; Tate et al., 2019, Tate & Patterson, 2019). Issues of discrimination, accessibility, and a lack of social support have been raised as possible mechanisms for lack of parenthood aspirations among

lesbian and gay adults (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; DeMino et al., 2007; Gianino, 2008; Goldberg, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2012). Lesbian and gay adults are also less likely to expect to get married in the U.S. compared to heterosexual adults (Tate & Patterson, 2019). The current study couched parenthood within marriage, and lesbian and gay adults felt strongly that married lesbian and gay couples ought to pursue parenthood. Thus, using this normative theoretical framework has drawn attention to disparities in expectations for marriage as a possible factor underlying inequities in parenthood aspirations as a function of sexual orientation.

However, when discussing the idea of parenthood being normative for same-sex married couples, it is helpful to acknowledge conflicting views. Among some lesbian and gay people, marriage and parenthood may be viewed as heteronormative and against the interests of LGBTQ people. Assimilating into the parts of society that have systematically oppressed LGBTQ voices may be viewed as wrong from the perspectives of some gay and lesbian individuals (Bernstein, 2018). Moreover, gay and lesbian people must overcome personal beliefs, usually stemming from their social environment, that their sexual identity and parenthood were simply incompatible (Brown, Smalling, Groza, & Ryan, 2009; Chabot & Ames, 2004; Tourni & Coyle, 2002). Findings from this study were, however, very different from these views. These results suggest that the anti-marriage and anti-parenthood positions may only be the views of a minority of lesbian and gay people today. In fact, the results of this study revealed that lesbian and gay adults view parenthood as something that married couples “ought to” do.

These findings are consistent with the results of qualitative work that has found that gay fathers uphold and expand upon traditional norms surrounding parenthood (Rabun & Oswald, 2009). As an example of this expansion, gay and lesbian parents, especially lesbian parents, are more likely than heterosexual parents to have an egalitarian division of labor (Sumontha, Farr, &

Patterson, 2017). In many ways, parenthood could be a way for sexual minority people to achieve individual ideals and desires surrounding parenthood, possibly shaped by social normative influence, while, at the same time, bring their LGBTQ identities into parenthood experiences. Whether or not this type “augmented assimilation” occurs among other groups of LGBT people is a question for future research.

Moreover, it is important to discuss the possible role of contact with lesbian and gay parents in shaping norms for parenthood. It is well known that many heterosexual individuals have a lack of contact with lesbian and gay individuals, especially lesbian and gay parents (Costa et al., 2015). Those who do have more contact tend to have more favorable views of same-sex parenthood (Costa et al., 2015). The current study found that adults, regardless of sexual orientation, reported thinking that only a minority of lesbian and gay couples would become parents. However, one could hypothesize that having more contact with lesbian and gay adults who are parents would alter the perception of how many of them become parents. This possibility is an important area for future study because norms help shape individual attitudes and beliefs (Tankard & Paluck, 2017). The role of exposure and norms could even potentially play a role in shaping the parenthood aspirations of lesbian and gay adults. One could hypothesize that more contact with same-sex parents would be associated with norms that favor the pursuit of parenthood among same-sex couples and, in turn, with higher parenthood aspirations among lesbian and gay adults. Future work should investigate the role of exposure to lesbian and gay parents in shaping norms for the pursuit of parenthood by same-sex couples.

In all, using a social normative framework to examine lesbian and gay prospective parenthood may be useful. How will norms and social normative influence evolve into the future? Moreover, how will they work among different groups? This framework may be useful

within the context of future research on lesbian and gay prospective parenthood.

Contributions and Implications

This work has implications for understanding the changing American family. Families have been changing rapidly, and same-sex couples are expected to pursue parenthood in increasing numbers (Riskind & Tornello, 2017; Tate et al., 2019). This research provided a glimpse into how adults in the U.S. are envisioning family formation among same-sex married couples today. Results are also informative regarding the viewpoints of lesbian and gay adults about same-sex prospective parenthood.

This study sheds new light on the perspectives of lesbian and gay adults on same-sex parenthood. Before this study, little to no research had asked lesbian and gay adults about their thoughts about the pursuit of parenthood by other lesbian and gay people. Most of the research has focused on how lesbian and gay adults think about their own parenthood (Gato et al., 2017). As a whole, this literature has found that lesbian and gay adults are far less likely than heterosexual adults to desire, expect, or intend to pursue parenthood (Gato et al., 2017; Tate et al., 2019, Tate & Patterson, 2019). Results of this study showed that most lesbian and gay adults thought that married same-sex couples ought to become parents. More work needs to be done to explain the apparent discrepancy between lesbian and gay adults thinking that other lesbian and gay people should become parents, but also thinking that they themselves should not be parents. Maybe lesbian and gay people think “if someone is married, they should become a parent”, but do not believe that they themselves will ever get married (Tate & Patterson, 2019)? Based on findings within this study, this discrepancy may derive from the fact that heterosexual adults are more likely to be married than lesbian and gay adults.

This study also has implications for the mechanisms of disparities in parenthood aspirations as a function of sexual orientation. Many studies have found that lesbian and gay adults have lower aspirations for parenthood in comparison to heterosexual adults (Riskind & Tornello, 2017; Tate et al., 2019, Tate & Patterson, 2019). Many reasons have been put forth as possible sources of this disparity such as issues of discrimination, accessibility, and a lack of social support (Berkowitz & Marsiglio, 2007; DeMino et al., 2007; Gianino, 2008; Goldberg, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2012). However, recent work has shown that lesbian and gay adults are also less likely to expect to get married in the U.S. compared to heterosexual adults (Tate & Patterson, 2019). The current study found that lesbian and gay individuals reported that married people who are like them should become parents. If a norm for parenthood exists within a married context, then lesbian and gay adults who get married or plan to be married would theoretically experience normative pressures to pursue parenthood (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; DeJean et al., 2012). Thus, using this normative theoretical framework, disparities in expectations for marriage may underlie disparities in parenthood aspirations.

This work introduces a social normative framework for investigating lesbian and gay parenthood. A social normative framework for parenthood has not been heavily utilized in the study of lesbian and gay populations, especially for those who are lesbian (Kranz et al., 2018). The current study found that gay and lesbian adults may be assimilating to the existing normative structure surrounding parenthood. When examining minority populations, assimilation is often regarded as a way of gaining power, status, and belonging within a culture designed by the majority to sustain these “normative” systems (Bowleg, 2012). In this case, it could be that lesbian and gay adults support these norms for married couples as a way of navigating these systems to gain power, status, and/or belonging. However, as mentioned above, lesbian and gay

populations tend to expand on the norms for parenthood that they are also upholding (Rabun & Oswald, 2009, Sumontha et al., 2017), a process that might be termed “augmented assimilation”. Current results show that lesbian and gay adults are assimilating to norms of parenthood and also augmenting the concept by incorporating new people and new behavioral patterns into it. More work should be done to examine other ways in which lesbian and gay adults both ascribe to norms, but also expand upon them.

Overall, this study has made significant contributions to the literature on prospective parenthood among lesbian and gay populations. Findings from this study provided new information on the viewpoints that lesbian and gay adults hold toward same-sex prospective parenthood. This work also provided further information about the mechanisms of parenthood aspiration disparities as a function of sexual orientation. Finally, this research produced more evidence that lesbian and gay adults are assimilating to norms for parenthood that have historically only been applicable to heterosexual populations.

Strengths and Limitations

This study had a number of strengths. The sample size was substantial, especially considering its use of repeated measures. The results also replicated work on norms for heterosexual parenthood in a novel way, and provided new findings on the norms for lesbian and gay parenthood (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; DeJean et al., 2012; Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). The sample was also quite diverse in terms of age, race, education, and location, with participants from all states, except Alaska, represented in the data.

In addition, the use of IRT analyses to evaluate the items assessing injunctive norms provided strong evidence of their reliability. The analyses found that the items fit together extremely well, resulting in overfit statistics (Embretson & Reise, 2000). Thus, IRT findings

justified both the decision to average the four items together for this study and the use of the items to measure injunctive norms in general. Future work should examine whether these items are reliable over time and across a variety of samples.

Moreover, this study laid the foundation for future work. Because these issues have not been heavily researched for lesbian and gay populations (Kranz et al., 2018), the findings provided insights into the norms for the pursuit of parenthood in the U.S. as a function of sexual orientation, gender, and age. Based on the current study, new work can examine the nuances within the U.S. and norms within other countries using the U.S. as a comparison. In this way, the results can provide a useful basis for future research.

Despite these strengths, this research also had limitations. The study did not include data from plurisexual and transgender individuals. Therefore, their experiences and voices were not heard. In addition, the sample cannot be regarded as representative of any population. However, the research design allowed for oversampling of older lesbian and gay adults. Moreover, there was no measure of implicit bias that individuals may have about lesbian and gay people. Thus, it was not possible to evaluate the possible role of implicit bias in these results.

In addition, the method utilized to assess norms was based on the use of written materials. In other words, participants were asked how they felt about “hypothetical” couples with a “hypothetical” description. However, this method may have weaknesses (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). For instance, utilizing pictures or videos and conjoint analysis, where all conditions are presented at the same time and participants make active comparisons, may have resulted in different findings because the couples go from being “paper people” to being more concrete and “real” (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014). Future work should examine the generality of these findings utilizing other methods.

This study was able to highlight, in general, how age, gender, and sexual orientation are associated with norms about the pursuit of parenthood by married heterosexual, lesbian, and gay couples. However, it should be noted that there are additional possible confounds related to norms that should be examined in the future, such as characteristics related to interdependence including religiosity, conservatism, and rurality (Markus & Connor, 2014). This study has laid the foundation to examine those potential confounds through the lenses of age, gender, and sexual orientation in future work.

Future Directions

This study has provided the basis to investigate many additional concepts and to address many new questions. As mentioned above, there are a multitude of confounding factors to consider in these norm differences, such as location, religiosity, conservatism, and adherence to traditional gender roles (Markus & Connor, 2014). These concepts should be examined more thoroughly going forward. However, this section will describe three different possible directions for future research in this area: 1) How are norms for lesbian and gay parenthood associated with parenthood aspirations among lesbian and gay adults? 2) How are norms studied here associated with the stigmatization of parenthood decisions by lesbian and gay individuals or of homosexuality more generally? 3) What are the norms surrounding the different pathways to parenthood that lesbian and gay adults pursue?

The norms that lesbian and gay individuals hold about married lesbian and gay couples pursuing parenthood should also be associated with their own parenthood decisions (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; DeJean et al., 2012; Jamison et al., 1979; Kopper & Smith 2001, Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). This association has been well documented and this framework has been utilized to examine the pursuit of parenthood for heterosexual individuals, particularly

for married heterosexual couples (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; Jamison et al., 1979; Kopper & Smith 2001, Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). It has been found higher subjective norms (i.e. the perceived approval or disapproval of their own parenthood by other people in their lives) are associated with greater fathering desires and intentions for gay men in Germany (Kranz et al., 2018). However, norms that lesbian and gay individuals hold about parenthood among other lesbian and gay people have not been examined within research on prospective parenthood.

This study also raises questions about whether or not the normative assumption of parenthood happening within marriage plays the same role in shaping lesbian and gay adults' parenthood aspirations as it does for heterosexual individuals. Lesbian and gay individuals are more likely to be single parents than are heterosexual individuals (Gates, 2013), and are less likely to expect to achieve marriage (Tate & Patterson, 2019). Thus, one could hypothesize that the normative assumption that parenthood is “supposed to” occur within marriage may be weaker for lesbian and gay adults. The role of normative systems surrounding parenthood in shaping the parenthood aspirations of lesbian and gay adults should be examined in future work.

The framework of social normative influence may also be valuable for examining stigmatization of lesbian and gay individuals based on their parenthood decisions. It is well-known that married heterosexual men and women are viewed negatively for choosing not to become parents and face societal backlash for voluntarily choosing not to pursue parenthood (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; Calhoun & Selby, 1980; Jamison et al., 1979). This study provided the foundation for future work on the possible stigmatization of lesbian and gay individuals based on the violation of norms. Norms for gay and lesbian parenthood do exist, at least in terms of injunctive norms, and this may mean that stigmatization toward gay and lesbian couples who do

not want to pursue parenthood may exist. For instance, could younger people who have these stronger normative views treat voluntarily childless gay and lesbian married couples in a negative way for not choosing to pursue parenthood? The experiences of stigmatization by voluntarily childless lesbian and gay people remains understudied.

However, much of the research has found that lesbian and gay adults experience stigmatization from choosing parenthood (Costa et al., 2014; McCutcheon & Morrison, 2015; Robitaille & Saint-Jacques, 2009). The results of this study found that lesbian and gay parenthood was also described as being something that only a minority of married lesbian and gay couples would achieve. Thus, the stigmatization experienced by same-sex parents may be rooted in the widely-held view that lesbian and gay people are not parents. In other words, some individuals may stigmatize same-sex parents because they are perceived as being different from most other lesbian and gay adults. This idea has been supported from work examining exposure to same-sex parents (Costa et al., 2015). Heterosexual individuals who have a greater amount of exposure to same-sex parents tend to be more accepting of same-sex parenthood than those with less exposure (Costa et al., 2015). Thus, greater perceptions of descriptive norms may be associated with lower stigmatization of same-sex parents. The role of these perceptions on the stigmatization of lesbian and gay parents should be examined in future work.

Moreover, if adults, especially those under 45, believe that married same-sex couples ought to become parents, through what pathways do they believe that these couples should become parents? There are many options that married lesbian and gay couples can take to pursue parenthood. The use of assisted reproductive technology by lesbian women and surrogacy by gay men are two biological pathways to parenthood (Blake et al., 2017; Chabot & Ames, 2004; Touroni & Coyle, 2002). However, women within same-sex relationships are often met with

discrimination within the fertility industry, especially women of color (Blanchfield & Patterson, 2015). In addition, some biological pathways to parenthood can also be very expensive, which limits their availability (Blake et al., 2017; Blanchfield & Patterson, 2015). Adoption is also an important route to parenthood that many heterosexual, lesbian, and gay adults consider (Goldberg, 2010; Goldberg et al., 2012). However, little to no research has been done comparing normative attitudes about different pathways to parenthood as a function of gender and sexual orientation.

While little work has examined norms for pathways to parenthood, there has been considerable research about why gay and lesbian people choose certain paths to parenthood. It is known that certain pathways to parenthood are viewed negatively by many people; for example, surrogacy is controversial and remains illegal throughout much of the world (Blake et al., 2017). Conversely, lesbian and gay adults often give altruistic reasons for choosing adoption (Goldberg et al., 2012). Some lesbian and gay individuals offer moral reasons for choosing not to pursue parenthood using assisted reproductive technology or surrogacy, arguing that those methods are selfish and/or “wrong” (Jennings et al., 2014). Altruistic reasons, as well as the other reasons described, could be indicators of societal norms and fear of moral backlash (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017). However, the normative aspects of pathways to parenthood for gay and lesbian parents remain understudied.

In all, there are many potential future directions to take from this research. The role of norms in shaping lesbian and gay parenthood aspirations should be examined. Whether or not norms are associated with the stigmatization of lesbian and gay adults based on parenthood decisions remains understudied. Finally, norms for pathways to parenthood for lesbian and gay adults should also be considered in future work.

Conclusions

Parenthood decisions are some of the most consequential choices that people make (Hoffman, 1975; Jaffe & Diamond, 2011; Langdridge et al., 2005). Normative social influence plays a large role in shaping the parenthood decisions that heterosexual people make (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; DeJean et al., 2012; Jamison et al., 1979; Kopper & Smith 2001, Mueller & Yoder, 1997; Mueller & Yoder, 1999). It has also been found that many lesbian and gay individuals choose not to become parents, and that they even aspire to parenthood less than their heterosexual counterparts (Riskind & Tornello, 2017; Tate et al., 2019). However, norms for parenthood among same-sex couples have not been the focus of most research. This study set out to answer three main questions: 1) How do norms for parenthood differ depending on the type of couple pursuing parenthood? 2) How do these differences depend on the sexual orientation, gender, and age of those responding to the norm measures? 3) What do these results indicate about the norms to pursue parenthood among married lesbian and gay couples?

Results revealed that adults believe that married heterosexual couples both ought to and will become parents more than married lesbian and gay couples, and that married lesbian couples both ought to and will become parents more than married gay couples. However, these findings were dependent to some extent on the sexual orientation, gender, and age of the who were answering these questions. Most people thought that parenthood was something that married lesbian and gay couples ought to do, despite differences as a function of sexual orientation, gender, and age, but that only a minority of these couples would actually do it. This was indicative of overwhelming positive injunctive norms for same-sex parenthood, but a relatively low perception of how many married same-sex couples would pursue parenthood together.

In all, this research provided a glimpse into how Americans are envisioning family formation among same-sex couples today and gave some reasons to believe that norms for lesbian and gay parenthood are present, especially among young Americans. Adults tended to respond positively to same-sex parenthood, which may be an indication that bias against lesbian and gay people is not the best explanation for the relatively low perception of how many married lesbian and gay couples would eventually become parents. This study contributed to the literature on lesbian and gay prospective parenthood and provided a foundation for future research. Overall, at least in the U.S., the normative context for family formation in married same-sex couples seems to be overwhelmingly positive.

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Tables

Table 1.

Sample statistics compared to U.S. population statistics

Demographic Variable	U.S. Population Statistic	Heterosexual Participants (n = 522, 51%)	Lesbian/Gay Participants (n = 498, 49%)	Population Comparisons	Within-Sample Comparisons
<i>Race</i>					
% White alone (not Hispanic or Latino)	60% ¹	69%	66%	P < H**** P < LG**	H ≈ LG
<i>Gender</i>					
% Female	51% ¹	50%	54%	P ≈ H P ≈ LG	H ≈ LG
<i>Education</i>					
% Bachelor's Degree or Above	32% ¹	34%	50%	P ≈ H P < LG****	H < LG****
<i>Political Affiliation</i>					
Somewhat Conservative-Very Conservative	30% ²	32%	14%	P ≈ H P > LG****	H > LG****
Moderate	41% ²	39%	29%	P ≈ H P > LG****	H > LG****
Somewhat Liberal-Very Liberal	24% ²	29%	57%	P < H** P < LG****	H < LG****
<i>Family</i>					
Is a parent	61% ³	49%	29%	P > H**** P > LG****	H > LG****
Is married	50% ⁴	39%	24%	P > H**** P > LG****	H > LG****
<i>Age</i>					
18-25	9% ⁵	27%	27%	P < H**** P < LG****	H ≈ LG
26-34	12% ⁵	23%	26%	P < H**** P < LG****	H ≈ LG
35-54	26% ⁵	36%	35%	P < H**** P < LG****	H ≈ LG
55+	29% ⁵	14%	12%	P > H**** P > LG****	H ≈ LG

Note: P represents U.S. population, H represents Heterosexual Participants, and LG represents Lesbian/Gay participants.¹(U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States, 2019). ²(Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel Poll, 2018). ³(Pew Research Center for the People & the Press Poll, 2013). ⁴(Geiger & Livingston, 2019). ⁵(Population Distribution by Age, 2019).
p < .01, *p < .001

Table 2.

Findings from Item Response Theory analyses

Item	M (SD)	a	b1	b2	b3	b4	Infit	ZInfit	Outfit	ZOutfit
<u>Heterosexual Couple Condition</u>										
Heterosexual (“Straight”) couples pursuing parenthood is a good idea	1.51 (0.79)	1	1.35	3.05	6.36	6.10	.44	-13.78	.41	-14.04
I approve heterosexual (“Straight”) couples becoming parents	1.38 (0.71)	1	2.11	3.77	6.34	6.01	.53	-9.39	.37	-11.03
I think that heterosexual (“Straight”) couples should become parents	1.76 (0.95)	1	0.54	1.71	5.46	5.56	.72	-6.85	.70	-7.26
I believe that heterosexual (“Straight”) couples becoming parents is a good thing	1.50 (0.78)	1	1.45	3.06	6.57	5.93	.41	-14.65	.36	-14.73
<u>Lesbian Couple Condition</u>										
Lesbian couples pursuing parenthood is a good idea	1.99 (1.26)	1	-.04	1.55	4.38	3.48	.35	-16.70	.35	-15.81
I approve of lesbian couples becoming parents	1.87 (1.26)	1	0.61	2.21	4.03	3.63	.38	-14.09	.35	-12.94
I think that lesbian couples should become parents	2.15 (1.27)	1	-.54	.67	3.98	3.83	.56	-10.97	.54	-11.05
I believe that lesbian couples becoming parents is a good thing	1.99 (1.26)	1	-.10	1.67	4.13	3.67	.32	-18.15	.33	-17.13
<u>Gay Couple Condition</u>										
Gay male couples pursuing parenthood is a good idea	2.09 (1.31)	1	-0.18	1.09	3.85	3.63	.38	-16.18	.36	-15.06
I approve of gay male couples becoming parents	1.97 (1.33)	1	0.49	1.62	3.68	3.61	.39	-14.12	.32	-13.16
I think that gay male couples should become parents	2.25 (1.32)	1	-0.78	0.39	3.67	3.51	.59	-10.19	.57	-10.19
I believe that gay male couples becoming parents is a good thing	2.09 (1.32)	1	-0.21	1.26	3.83	3.45	.33	-17.63	.32	-16.72

Note: Items are scaled from 1 = “Strongly agree” to 5 = “Strongly disagree”.

Table 3.

Differences in demographic variables as a function of gender and sexual orientation

Variable n =	<u>Men</u>		<u>Women</u>		Test Statistic _{CGender}	Test Statistic _{Sexual Orientation}	Test Statistic _{GXS.}	Differences	Effect Size
	Hetero. 262	Gay 231	Hetero. 260	Lesbian 267					
Education	2.12 (.05)	2.32 (.05)	2.06 (.05)	2.35 (.05)	F = .09	F = 27.27***	F = .80	LG > H***	g = .32
Parenthood Status	.40 (.03)	.15 (.02)	.57 (.03)	.40 (.03)	$\chi^2 = 61.26***$	$\chi^2 = 50.60***$	$\chi^2 = 4.91*$	HW > HM*** HW > G*** HW > L*** HM > G*** L > G***	h = .34 h = .91 h = .34 h = .57 h = .57
Marriage Status	.36 (.03)	.22 (.03)	.42 (.03)	.25 (.03)	$\chi^2 = 1.87$	$\chi^2 = 26.92***$	$\chi^2 = .12$	H > LG***	h = .35

Note: Degrees of freedom for F values are (1, 1016). Values for χ^2 are Wald χ^2 . The differences in the proportions for race and the number of each people in each age groups can be found in-text. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 4.

Fixed effects for injunctive norms

Predictor	df	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Race	(1, 1001.61)	1.41	.235	< .01
Education	(1, 1002.48)	1.43	.233	< .01
Parenthood Status	(1, 1001.63)	2.62	.106	< .01
Marriage Status	(1, 1002.10)	0.03	.856	< .01
Age	(3, 1032.52)	10.58*	< .001	.03
Gender	(1, 1032.90)	5.85*	.016	.01
Couple Condition (CC)	(2, 1006.17)	95.20*	< .001	.16
Participant Sexual Orientation (PSO)	(1, 1039.28)	116.28*	< .001	.10
CC X Age	(6, 1006.17)	1.45	.192	<.01
CC X Gender	(2, 1006.19)	3.49*	.031	.01
CC X PSO	(2, 1006.17)	74.57*	< .001	.13
PSO X Gender	(1, 1001.11)	4.05*	.045	< .01
PSO X Age	(3, 1007.93)	1.54	.201	< .01
CC X PSO X Gender	(2, 1006.19)	19.13*	< .001	.04
CC X PSO X Age	(6, 1006.17)	2.81*	.010	.02

Note: Couple condition was the type of couple presented within the repeated measure items, i.e. heterosexual couples, lesbian couples, or gay couples. F statistics with p values less than .05 were flagged using an asterisk (*)

Table 5.

Fixed effects for perceived descriptive norms

Predictor	df	F	p-value	Partial η^2
Race	(1, 1008)	2.73	.099	< .01
Education	(1, 1008)	0.25	.617	< .01
Parenthood Status	(1, 1008)	< 0.01	.989	< .01
Marriage Status	(1, 1008)	3.09	.079	< .01
Age	(3, 1018.08)	5.58*	.001	.02
Gender	(1, 1018.27)	15.32*	< .001	.01
Couple Condition (CC)	(2, 1012)	866.67*	< .001	.63
Participant Sexual Orientation (PSO)	(1, 1020.27)	4.46*	.035	< .01
CC X Age	(6, 1012)	5.23*	< .001	.03
CCX Gender	(2, 1012)	0.10	.907	< .01
CC X PSO	(2, 1012)	4.72*	.009	.01

Note: Couple condition was the type of couple presented within the repeated measure items, i.e. heterosexual couples, lesbian couples, or gay couples. F statistics with *p* values less than .05 were flagged using an asterisk (*)

Table 6.

Differences in injunctive norms as a function of gender, sexual orientation, and couple condition

Gender		Heterosexual Couple Condition	Lesbian Couple Condition	Gay Couple Condition	F Statistic (df)	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2	Differences ^a	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>Heterosexual Participants</i>										
Men	M	4.50	3.42	3.26	125.78*	< .001	.20	HCC > LCC*	< .001	1.15
	[95% CI]	[4.41, 4.59]	[3.29, 3.56]	[3.12, 3.40]	(2, 1006)			HCC > GCC*	< .001	1.28
	(SE)	(.04)	(.07)	(.07)				LCC > GCC*	< .001	.14
Women	M	4.46	3.72	3.70	50.57*	< .001	.09	HCC > LCC*	< .001	.77
	[95% CI]	[4.37, 4.55]	[3.59, 3.86]	[3.55, 3.84]	(2, 1005.73)			HCC > GCC*	< .001	.78
	(SE)	(.05)	(.07)	(.07)				LCC ≈ GCC	> .999	.02
<i>Lesbian/Gay Participants</i>										
Men	M	4.39	4.40	4.42	.10	.903	< .01	HCC ≈ LCC	> .999	.01
	[95% CI]	[4.30, 4.49]	[4.25, 4.55]	[4.26, 4.57]	(2, 1004.74)			HCC ≈ GCC	> .999	.02
	(SE)	(.05)	(.08)	(.08)				LCC ≈ GCC	> .999	.01
Women	M	4.49	4.50	4.29	22.53*	< .001	.04	HCC ≈ LCC	> .999	.01
	[95% CI]	[4.40, 4.58]	[4.37, 4.64]	[4.14, 4.43]	(2, 1004.74)			HCC > GCC*	.026	.21
	(SE)	(.04)	(.07)	(.07)				LCC > GCC*	< .001	.19

Note: ^aHCC represents the “Heterosexual Couple Condition”, LCC represents the “Lesbian Couple Condition”, and GCC represents the “Gay Couple Condition”. F statistics and pairwise comparison differences with *p* < .05 were flagged using an asterisk (*). Pairwise comparisons were corrected using the Bonferroni correction. Values for *d* represent Cohen’s *d*. For reference, injunctive norms were

measured from 1 to 5 with numbers less than 3 representing that couples should not to become parents and values greater than three representing that couples ought to become parents.

Table 7.

Differences in injunctive norms as a function of age, sexual orientation, and couple condition

Age ¹		Heterosexual Couple Condition	Lesbian Couple Condition	Gay Couple Condition	F Statistic (df)	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2	Differences	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
<i>Heterosexual Participants</i>										
Early Adults (18-24)	M [95% CI] (SE)	4.61 [4.48, 4.74] (.07)	3.84 [3.64, 4.03] (.10)	3.74 [3.53, 3.95] (.11)	29.61* (2, 1004.74)	< .001	.06	HCC > LCC* HCC > GCC* LCC ≈ GCC	< .001 < .001 .121	.81 .88 .08
Young Adults (25-34)	M [95% CI] (SE)	4.50 [4.38, 4.62] (.06)	3.70 [3.51, 3.89] (.10)	3.63 [3.43, 3.82] (.10)	32.94* (2, 1004.74)	< .001	.06	HCC > LCC* HCC > GCC* LCC ≈ GCC	< .001 < .001 .281	.86 .90 .07
Younger Middle Adults (35-44)	M [95% CI] (SE)	4.41 [4.28, 4.53] (.06)	3.66 [3.47, 3.86] (.10)	3.52 [3.31, 3.72] (.10)	32.11* (2, 1004.74)	< .001	.06	HCC > LCC* HCC > GCC* LCC > GCC*	< .001 < .001 .005	.78 .91 .13
Older Adults (45+)	M [95% CI] (SE)	4.41 [4.28, 4.53] (.06)	3.10 [2.91, 3.29] (.10)	3.03 [2.83, 3.23] (.10)	82.75* (2, 1009.27)	< .001	.14	HCC > LCC* HCC > GCC* LCC ≈ GCC	< .001 < .001 .376	1.35 1.39 .06

Lesbian/Gay Participants

Early Adults (18-24)	M	4.58	4.60	4.56	.38	.683	< .01	HCC ≈ LCC	> .999	.02
	[95% CI]	[4.45, 4.71]	[4.39, 4.80]	[4.34, 4.77]	(2, 1004.74)			HCC ≈ GCC	> .999	.02
	(SE)	(.07)	(.11)	(.11)				LCC ≈ GCC	> .999	.03
Young Adults (25-34)	M	4.42	4.45	4.36	2.02	.134	< .01	HCC ≈ LCC	> .999	.02
	[95% CI]	[4.31, 4.54]	[4.26, 4.63]	[4.17, 4.55]	(2, 1004.74)			HCC ≈ GCC	> .999	.07
	(SE)	(.06)	(.09)	(.10)				LCC ≈ GCC	.135	.02
Younger Middle Adults (35-44)	M	4.54	4.41	4.25	6.79*	.001	.01	HCC ≈ LCC	.663	.14
	[95% CI]	[4.42, 4.67]	[4.21, 4.61]	[4.05, 4.46]	(2, 1004.74)			HCC > GCC*	.033	.29
	(SE)	(.06)	(.10)	(.11)				LCC > GCC*	.002	.14
Older Adults (45+)	M	4.23	4.35	4.23	3.09*	.046	.01	HCC ≈ LCC	.834	.13
	[95% CI]	[4.09, 4.36]	[4.14, 4.56]	[4.01, 4.45]	(2, 1004.74)			HCC ≈ GCC	> .999	.01
	(SE)	(.07)	(.11)	(.11)				LCC ≈ GCC	.063	.10

Note: ¹Ages included within operationalized age group are shown within parentheses. F statistics and pairwise comparison differences with $p < .05$ were flagged using an asterisk (*). Pairwise comparisons were corrected using the Bonferroni correction. For reference, injunctive norms were measured from 1 to 5 with numbers less than 3 representing that couples should not to become parents and values greater than three representing that couples ought to become parents.

Table 8.

Differences in perceived descriptive norms as a function of sexual orientation and couple condition

Participant		Heterosexual	Lesbian	Gay	F	<i>p</i>	Partial	Differences	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>		
Sexual		Couple	Couple	Couple	Statistic		η^2					
Orientation		Condition	Condition	Condition	(df)							
Heterosexual	M	6.97	3.97	3.49	479.88 (2, 1012)	< .001	.49	HCC > LCC*	< .001	1.46		
	[95% CI]	[6.80, 7.13]	[3.79, 4.16]	[3.31, 3.66]				HCC > GCC*			< .001	1.75
	(SE)	(.09)	(.09)	(.09)				LCC > GCC*			< .001	.23
Lesbian/Gay	M	6.95	4.40	3.71	394.25 (2, 1012)	< .001	.44	HCC > LCC*	< .001	1.24		
	[95% CI]	[6.78, 7.12]	[4.21, 4.59]	[3.53, 3.89]				HCC > GCC*			< .001	1.62
	(SE)	(.09)	(.10)	(.09)				LCC > GCC*			< .001	.32

Note: F statistics and pairwise comparison differences with *p* < .05 were flagged using an asterisk (*). Pairwise comparisons were corrected using the Bonferroni correction. For reference, perceived descriptive norms were measured from 0 to 10 with 10% intervals such that 0 = “0%”, 5 = “50%”, 10 = “100%”.

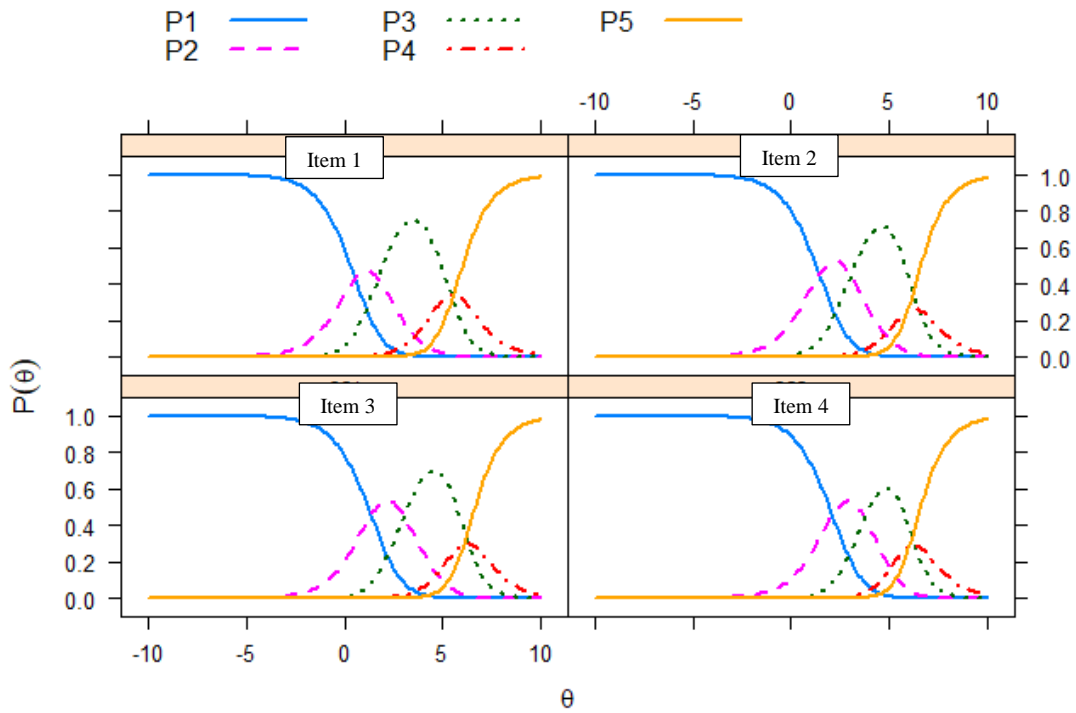
Table 9.

Differences in perceived descriptive norms as a function of age and couple condition

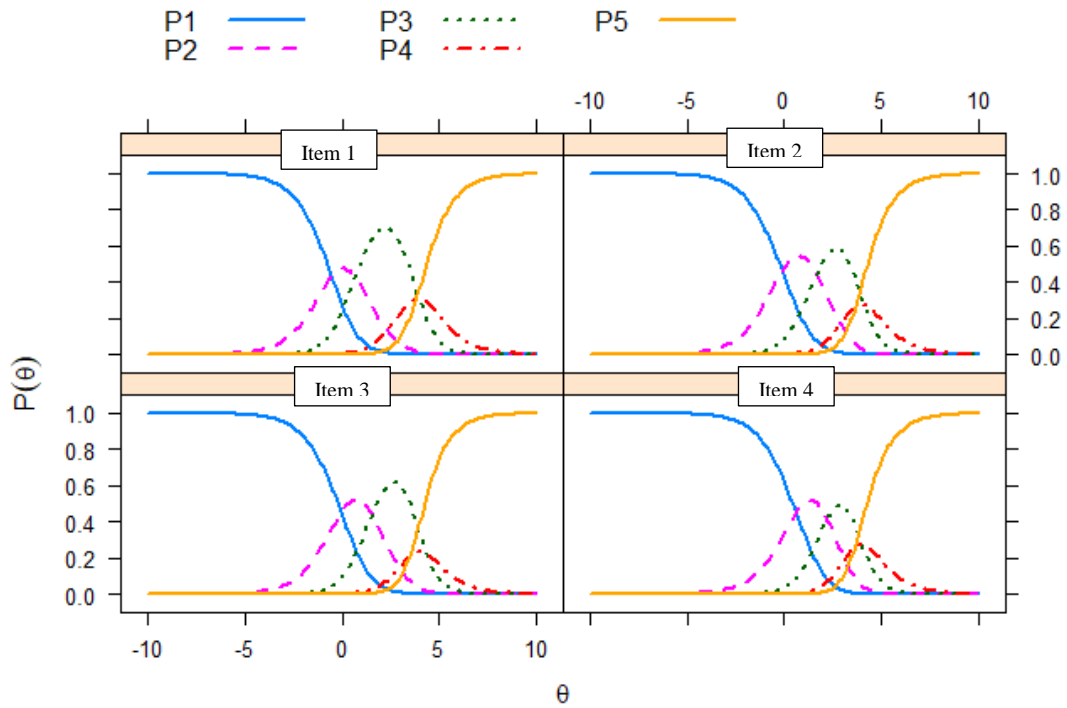
Age ¹		Heterosexual Couple Condition	Lesbian Couple Condition	Gay Couple Condition	F Statistic (df)	<i>p</i>	Partial η^2	Differences	<i>P</i>	<i>d</i>
Early Adults (18-24)	M [95% CI] (SE)	6.90 [6.64, 7.15] (.13)	4.50 [4.22, 4.77] (.14)	4.05 [3.79, 4.32] (.14)	146.54*	< .001	.22	HCC > LCC* HCC > GCC* LCC > GCC*	< .001 < .001 < .001	1.14 1.39 .21
Young Adults (25-34)	M [95% CI] (SE)	7.00 [6.77, 7.22] (.12)	4.39 [4.13, 4.64] (.13)	3.85 [3.61, 4.09] (.12)	209.52*	< .001	.29	HCC > LCC* HCC > GCC* LCC > GCC*	< .001 < .001 < .001	1.28 1.59 .25
Younger Middle Adults (35-44)	M [95% CI] (SE)	6.87 [6.63, 7.11] (.12)	4.12 [3.86, 4.39] (.14)	3.49 [3.24, 3.74] (.13)	221.05*	< .001	.30	HCC > LCC* HCC > GCC* LCC > GCC*	< .001 < .001 < .001	1.34 1.70 .29
Older Adults (45+)	M [95% CI] (SE)	7.08 [6.83, 7.32] (.12)	3.74 [3.47, 4.01] (.14)	3.00 [2.45, 3.26] (.13)	305.36*	< .001	.38	HCC > LCC* HCC > GCC* LCC > GCC*	< .001 < .001 < .001	1.63 2.05 .35

Note: ¹Ages included within operationalized age group are shown within parentheses. F statistics and pairwise comparison differences with *p* < .05 were flagged using an asterisk (*). Pairwise comparisons were corrected using the Bonferroni correction. For reference, perceived descriptive norms were measured from 0 to 10 with 10% intervals such that 0 = “0%”, 5 = “50%”, 10 = “100%”.

Figures
Heterosexual Condition



Lesbian Condition



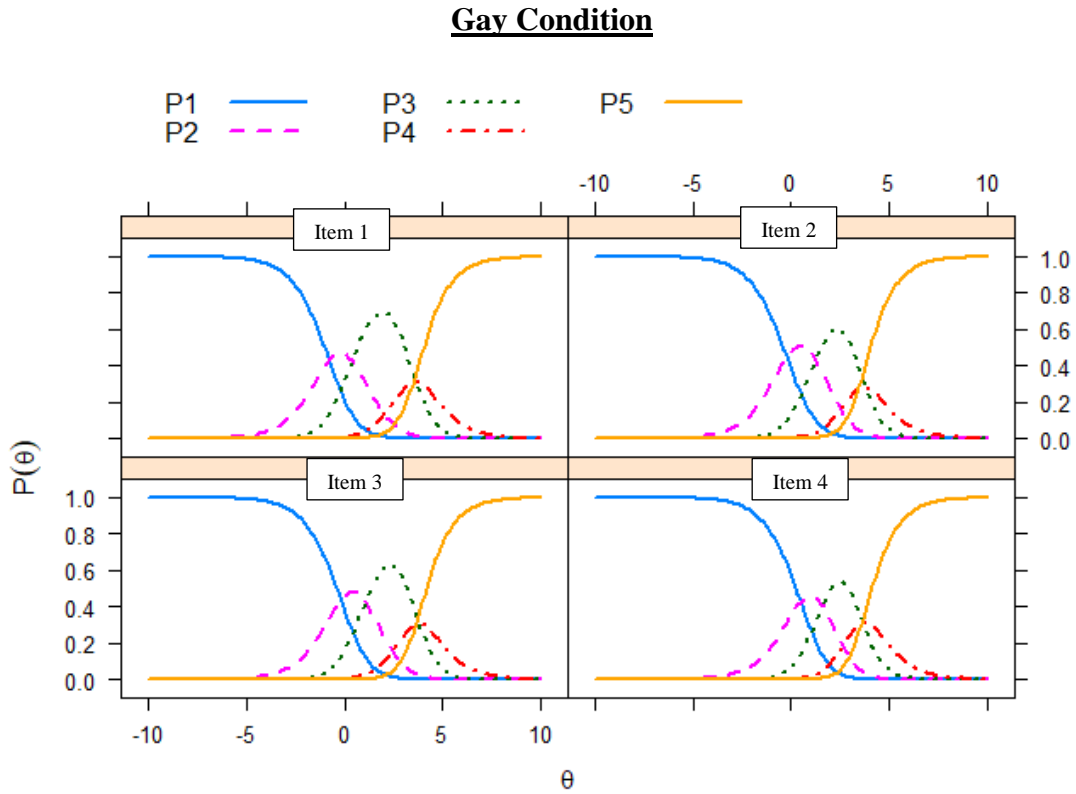


Figure 1. Item Characteristic Curves (ICCs) split by couple condition. P1 = “Strongly Agree”, P3 = “Neither Agree nor Disagree” and P5 = “Strongly Disagree”. Item 1 = “I think that (Insert type of couple) should become parents”, Item 2 = “I believe that (Insert type of couple) becoming parents is a good thing”, Item 3 = “(Insert type of couple) pursuing parenthood is a good idea”, Item 4 = “I approve of (Insert type of couple) becoming parents”

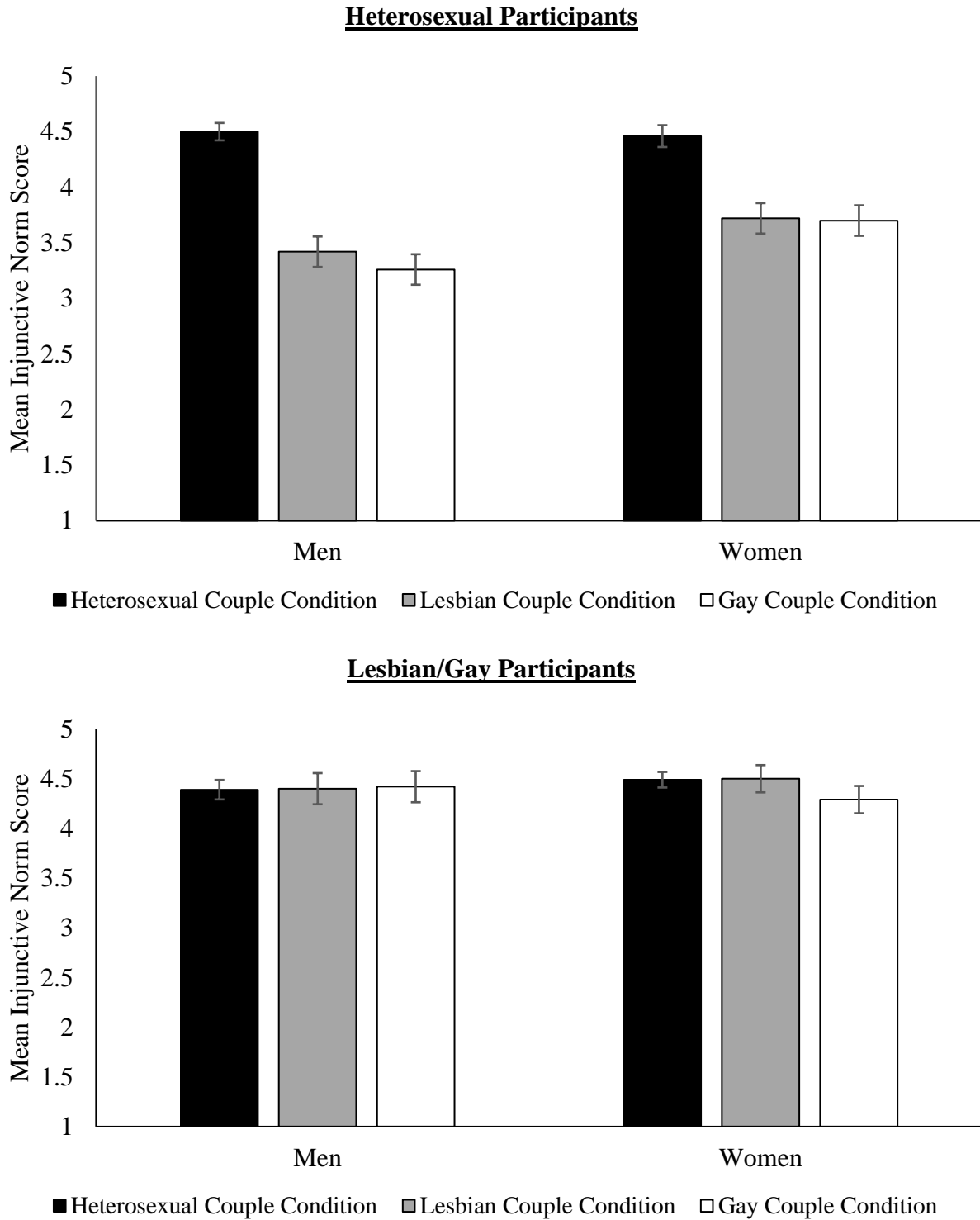


Figure 2. Injunctive norms as a function of gender, sexual orientation, and couple condition. Bars represent 95% CIs.

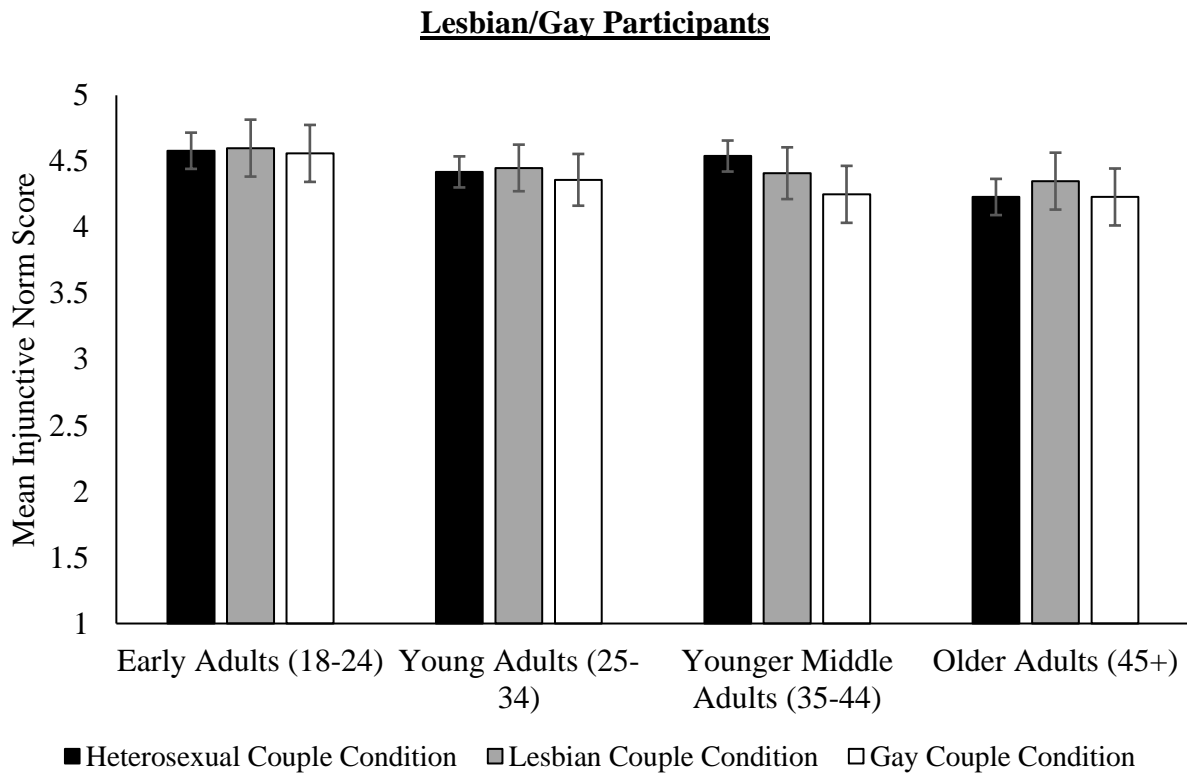
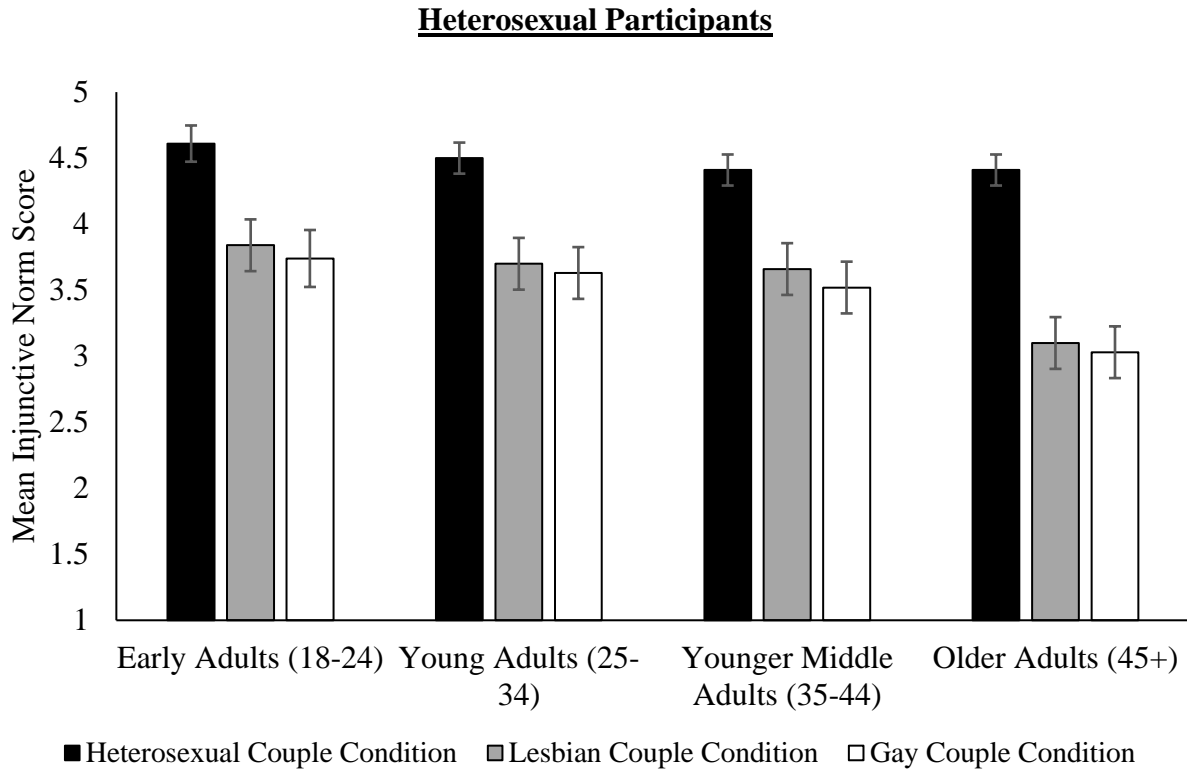


Figure 3. Injunctive norms as a function of age, sexual orientation, and couple condition. Bars represent 95% CIs.

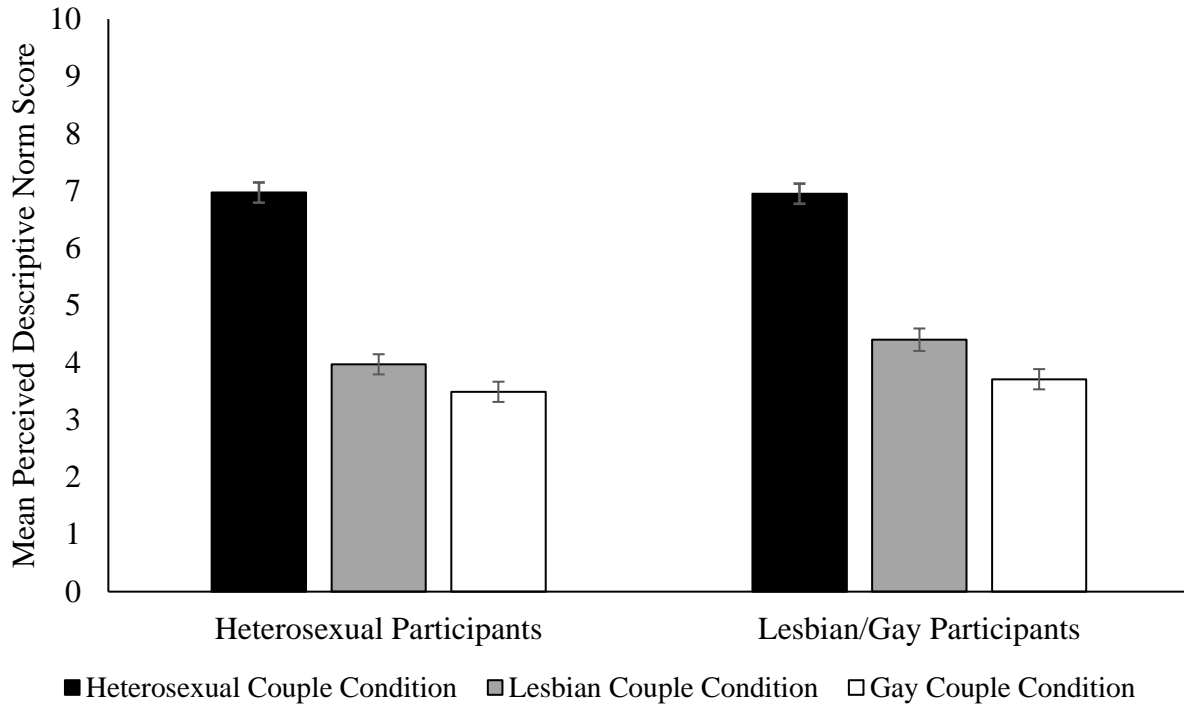


Figure 4. Perceived descriptive norms as a function of sexual orientation and couple condition. Bars represent 95% CIs.

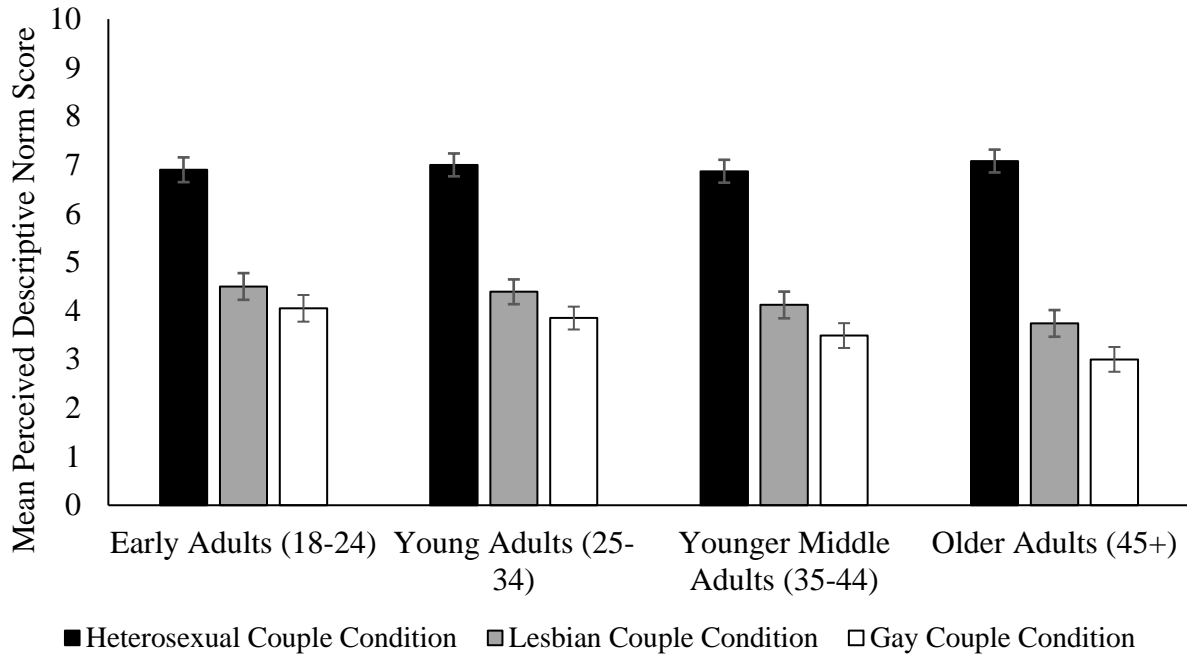


Figure 5. Perceived descriptive norms as a function of age and couple condition. Bars represent 95% CIs.

Appendix A: Injunctive Norms for Parenthood Measure

Please answer the following questions about **childless married couples in their 20s and 30s who are in stable and long-lasting marriages**. These questions ask about the pursuit of parenthood **at some point** during their marriage. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer how you honestly feel.

1. (Heterosexual “Straight”/Gay male/Lesbian) couples pursuing parenthood is a good idea.
2. I approve of (heterosexual “straight”/gay male/lesbian) couples becoming parents.
3. I think that (heterosexual “straight”/gay male/lesbian) couples should become parents.
4. I believe that (heterosexual “straight”/gay male/lesbian) couples becoming parents is a good thing.

Items will be scored from -2 = “*Strongly disagree*” to 2 = “*Strongly agree*”. These items will be averaged to create one scale ranging from -2 to 2 with three within group conditions (heterosexual, gay, and lesbian couples). Higher scores will indicate greater injunctive norm attitudes.

Appendix B: Example Copy of Survey

Start of Block: Screening Block

Q1 What is your age in years?

Q2 Are you living within the United States of America?

Yes

No

Q3 What is your gender?

Male

Female

Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming

These do not describe me. (Please specify how you identify)

Q4 Some people describe themselves as transgender when they experience a different gender identity from their sex at birth. For example, a person born into a male body, but who feels female or lives as a woman. Do you consider yourself to be transgender?

Yes, transgender, male to female

Yes, transgender, male to female

Yes, transgender, gender non-conforming

No

Q5 Which best describes your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual ("Straight")
- Lesbian/Gay
- Bisexual
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- These do not describe me. (Please specify how you identify)
-

End of Block: Screening/Demographic Block

Start of Block: Descriptive parenthood items (Randomly presented after Q6)

Q6 Please answer the following questions regarding the pursuit of parenthood by married couples in their 20s and 30s who are in stable and long-lasting marriages. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer how you honestly feel.

Q7 What percentage of heterosexual married ("straight") couples in the United States do you estimate will become parents during their marriage?

▼ 0% ... 100%

Q8 What percentage of gay male married couples in the United States do you estimate will become parents during their marriage?

▼ 0% ... 100%

Q9 What percentage of lesbian married couples in the United States do you estimate will become parents during their marriage?

▼ 0% ... 100%

End of Block: Descriptive parenthood**RANDOMIZATION OF BLOCKS BEGINS****Start of Block: Gay Parenthood Norms (Randomly presented after Q10)**

Q10 Please answer the following questions about **childless married couples in their 20s to 30s who are in stable and long-lasting marriages**. These questions ask about the pursuit of parenthood **at some point** during their marriage. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer how you honestly feel.

Q11 Gay male couples pursuing parenthood is a good idea.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q12 I approve of gay male couples becoming parents.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q13 I think that gay male couples should become parents.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q14 I believe that gay male couples becoming parents is a good thing.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

End of Block: Gay Parenthood Norms

Start of Block: Lesbian Parenthood Norms (Randomly presented after Q15)

Q15 Please answer the following questions about **childless married couples in their 20s to 30s who are in stable and long-lasting marriages**. These questions ask about the pursuit of parenthood **at some point** during their marriage. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer how you honestly feel.

Q16 Lesbian couples pursuing parenthood is a good idea.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q17 I approve of lesbian couples becoming parents.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q18 I think that lesbian couples should become parents.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q19 I believe that lesbian couples becoming parents is a good thing.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

End of Block: Lesbian Parenthood Norms

Start of Block: Heterosexual Parenthood Norms (Randomly presented after Q20)

Q20 Please answer the following questions about **childless married couples in their 20s to 30s who are in stable and long-lasting marriages**. These questions ask about the pursuit of parenthood **at some point** during their marriage. There are no right or wrong answers. Answer how you honestly feel.

Q21 Heterosexual ("straight") couples pursuing parenthood is a good idea.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q22 I approve of heterosexual ("straight") couples becoming parents.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q23 I think that heterosexual ("straight") couples should become parents.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q24 I believe that heterosexual ("straight") couples becoming parents is a good thing.

- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

End of Block: Heterosexual Parenthood Norms (END RANDOMIZATION)**Start of Block: Final Questions**

Q25 How would you describe your political views?

- Very liberal
- Liberal
- Somewhat liberal
- Moderate
- Somewhat conservative
- Conservative
- Very conservative

Q26 Do you think new civil rights laws are needed to reduce discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, or not? (Gallup Poll Item)

- Yes, new laws needed
- No, not needed
- No opinion

Q27 Do you personally know one or more LGBTQ persons?

- No
- Yes- one
- Yes- a few
- Yes- many

Q28 Have you personally ever met a lesbian or gay person who is a parent?

Yes

No

Q29 Are you a parent or step-parent?

Yes

No

Display This Question:

If Are you a parent or step-parent? = Yes

Q30 Which of the following describes you best?

Biological Parent

Adoptive/Foster Parent

Step-Parent

Co-parent

These do not describe me (please describe)

Q31 Including any children you may already have, how many children, in total, do you intend to have? (Including those through adoption, foster care, IVF/surrogacy, etc.)

▼ 0 ... 10 or more

Q32 Are you currently involved in a romantic relationship?

Yes

No

Q33 Are you currently married?

Yes

No

Q34 What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

Less than high school degree

High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)

Some college but no degree

Associate degree in college (2-year)

Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)

Master's degree

Doctoral degree or Professional Degree (PhD, JD, MD)

Q35 How would you characterize the area where you live?

- Large City
- Medium-sized City
- Small City or Town
- Suburban area
- Rural Area/Farm or Ranch

Q36 Choose one or more racial and ethnic identities that describe you best:

- White
 - Black or African American
 - Latino/Latina/Latinx
 - American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 - Middle Eastern
 - Asian (including East Asian, South Asian, etc.)
 - These do not describe me (please describe)
-

Q37 What is your current ZIP code of where you live?

End of Block: Final Questions