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What are the Economic Barriers for a more Efficient Adoption Equilibrium? Analyzing the Perceived Challenges LGBTQ+ Persons Face in the Adoption Process

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by

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Literature Review

Introduction

From an economic and policy lens, it is the children of an economy that offer the most insight. Children being born represent the consequences of policy choices a society has chosen. Children being brought up by the proverbial 'village it takes' also represent the future potential output of society. Children's experiences in the most early, formative years of life offer the greatest 'return on investment' when it comes to policy interventions as well. With the stakes of childhood being so important from an economic (not to mention personal) perspective, ensuring that every child has a stable, empowering, and equitable childhood is crucial.

In economies of choices and tradeoffs, adoptions are often the answer to the choice of whether or not children have healthy childhoods. From an economic mobility lens, adoptions serve as the link between children growing up in potentially harmful situations to a childhood of growth, safety, and development. On one end of this link, adoptions serve as great cost savers to an economy by pulling children from challenging and expensive circumstances. On the other hand, adoptions serve as economic engines that push children to a completely new lifestyle which promotes greater economic freedom later in life.

Adoptions clearly matter to an economy, but how exactly are they so pivotal? Beginning with an emotional and psychological perspective, adoptions represent a new beginning for "families embarking on a new journey together," (Children's Bureau). While there may be challenges revolving on identity, rejection, and intimacy, overall adoptions are by-and-large positive emotional, personal experiences for parents and children alike. In a philanthropic and policy sense, adoptions and early childhood interventions offer the 'most bang for your buck,' (Center for High Impact Philanthropy). Daycare alone has "substantial, life changing" results for a child personally, with each dollar invested yielding a four-to-nine-dollar return depending on how this return is calculated (Center for High Impact Philanthropy).

With all of this under consideration, it is concretely evident that adoptions not only matter, but that they are engines of so many positive drivers in an economy. However, realizing what adoption can do and creating policy to make adoptions work are two very different tasks for policy makers and society at large.

Equilibrium - Current State of Adoptions in America

In modern America, the equilibrium (or reality) of the state of adoptions leaves much room for improvement, innovation, and change. The current state of adoption is shaped by the incentives of different sectors of society. Parents are incentivized to adopt for a plethora of reasons: being unable to have children physically, not wanting to go through childbirth, wanting to adopt a stepson or daughter, and basic human instinct to name a few (Regis College). Children, although bound legally and emotionally, yearn for a sense of home and belonging. The public at large (i.e., the government) is incentivized to remove children from harmful environments to promote the general welfare. All of these incentives are playing out in an economy characterized by polarization and extreme social tension, high public deficits, and a dire outlook for low-income families. The result of all these incentives results in a simple supply and demand model of adoptions, with a plethora of factors impacting both sides.

The most relevant piece of policy that has shaped adoptions in recent history is the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. This bill aimed to boost demand for adoptions through

an income tax credit, subsidized medical care, and support payments for less affluent adoptive parents (Zill). Following the passage of this bill there was "an initial jump in the annual number of children adopted from foster care," (Zill). In 1997, the average adoption rate hovered around 28,000 children (Zill). By 2000, that number had climbed to roughly 55,000 children adopted per year -- which is where adoption rates have hovered for the past two decades with no "clear sustained upward trend" (Zill). If the Adoption and Safe Families Act proves anything, it is evidence of how policy impacts practice. Additionally, it suggests that the financial weights behind a decision to adopt are paramount. The current adoption rate is very much so a consequence of financial incentives and societal practices.

In 2016, there were 117,794 children waiting for adoption and 273,539 children entered the foster care system (Regis College). Meanwhile, in the same year, there were just 56,542 adoptions (Children's Bureau). Comparing these basic numbers points to a clear problem: the supply of children that need to find homes is far greater than the demand for these children. What is not so clear is just how large this problem is and the ramifications it has for the broader economy over time.

Costs of the Current Adoption System

Having children in the foster care system and/or up for adoption is very costly for the overall economy. Consider, for example, just one extension of this basic problem: the foster care system. Implementing Title-IV-E of the Social Security Act alone (i.e., the bare bones of the foster care system) costs nine billion dollars alone in annual state and federal expenditures (Zill). But the costs don't stop there. While children in long-term foster care represent a small portion of the overall population, they represent a larger portion of students who cause disciplinary problems in schools, drop out of high school, become unemployed, bear children as unmarried teenagers, and commit crimes (Zill). Thus, it comes as no surprise that in America roughly five billion dollars each year goes towards incarcerating former foster care kids (Zill).

Yet mountains of hidden, long-term costs are not unique to the foster care system alone -- and go far deeper into the economy. The adoption and foster care processes disproportionately impact Black and Native children, pulling these communities deeper into a relatively onerous process and limiting outcomes for these groups over time (Zill). Additionally, adoptions and raising children alike require hours of intense labor from government workers, parents, and other caregivers. These costs of all types are experienced not only at the aggregate level but also the micro level. Mention of adoption in everyday conversation will undoubtedly spark talk about the exuberant costs of adopting a child. It cannot be forgotten just how personal adoptions are for children, families, and everyone involved with each adoption. Behind each adoption and foster care statistic and cost is a child deserving of equal opportunity and economic justice.

All things considered, the policy options and restraints that shape the American adoption process are simply not efficient and have costly ramifications for all of society. There simply needs to be a decrease in supply (less children needing new families) or an increase in demand (more parents wanting to adopt).

Solutions to the Inefficient Equilibrium of Adoptions

Economically, decreasing the supply for adoption (i.e., reducing the number of children up for adoption) would take a long time. Preventative measures include reducing poverty, reducing crime, and other macro-level policies that can take generations to make any progress

on. Thus, a 'low-hanging fruit' policy option to improve the adoption process is found on the demand side. Naturally, in order to improve the equilibrium and efficiency of adoptions, the economy needs to increase the number of parents willing to adopt. Luckily, one demographic is a prime example of a missing piece to this economic puzzle.

The gay male demographic is uniquely situated in the American economy to help make the adoption process more efficient and increase utility across the board. While gay men have historically earned less than straight men, this trend has been upended in recent years. Today, gay men experience on average a ten percent income premium compared to straight men with similar education, experience, and job profiles (Carpenter). These high incomes should mean more willingness for gay men to adopt children, not to mention a consumption based better quality of life for adopted children. (It must be noted that these higher incomes may be due to a lack of children, however.) Moreover, same sex couples have been found to raise children that perform better on standardized tests. Research from European economists saw that children in families with a same sex couple had "higher test scores in elementary and secondary school" and "were about seven percent more likely to graduate from high school" as opposed to children raised by different sex couples (Long). Despite advances in technology that have resulted in practices like surrogacy and gestational carriers, fostering children and adoptions remain the relatively cheapest option for gay couples to have children. Looking at the numbers only, same sex couples should be raising the best children and should be the most eager to adopt. But while some numbers point same sex male couples being prime adoption candidates, other statistics paint a very different picture.

One statistic that points at the story of same sex male adoptions is perhaps the most indicative of all: forty eight percent of LGBT women under age 50 are raising a child, while only twenty percent of LGBT men under age fifty are raising a child (Williams Institute). The knee-jerk reaction to this statistic is, put simply, 'Why the gap?'

Previous Studies on Same Sex Adoption Preferences

The gap in child-raising rates could be explained by a plethora of different factors. For example, perhaps women in same sex relationships are raising children from previous marriages (artificially inflating the gap). Another factor at play could be the legacy of the 'Lesbian Baby Boom' of the past 40 years; lesbian couples having children together may make raising children more of a cultural norm (Population 1).

One study, shared by the Population Association of America, aimed to see if there were differences in child-raising preferences amongst heterosexual and homosexual persons, in unions and not in unions. It was found that there are "differences in childbearing intentions and attitudes towards children between sexual minority men and women compared to heterosexuals. The results also suggest differences by union type, but the limited sample sizes will not allow for more examination of this issue," (Population 3).

Table 1. Childbearing Intentions and Attitudes Towards Children by Gender, Sexual Orientation, and Union Type

	N	%	Childbearing Intentions and Certainty				Children are Rewarding					Salience of Children			
			Definitely No	Probably No	Probably Yes	Definitely Yes	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not At All Salient	A Little Salient	Somewhat Salient	Very Salient
Females															
Heterosexual															
In Union	674	33%	8.0%	11.3%	27.2%	**53.6%**	1.2%	4.7%	4.3%	39.6%	**50.1%**	12.9%	12.3%	30.0%	**44.8%**
Single	1191	59%	1.1%	3.9%	39.5%	**55.5%**	0.4%	2.0%	2.9%	45.6%	**49.1%**	6.8%	12.5%	32.7%	**47.9%**
Sexual Minority															
In Union	42	2%	7.1%	16.7%	31.0%	**45.2%**	2.4%	4.8%	2.4%	**52.4%**	38.1%	14.3%	19.0%	21.4%	**45.2%**
Single	107	5%	0.9%	6.5%	**53.3%**	39.3%	0.0%	3.7%	7.5%	**48.6%**	40.2%	16.8%	21.5%	**32.7%**	29.0%
Males															
Heterosexual															
In Union	410	16%	12.4%	9.2%	24.4%	**54.0%**	0.6%	4.4%	4.4%	41.6%	**48.9%**	20.6%	15.9%	**31.7%**	**31.7%**
Single	1820	72%	0.2%	3.1%	30.7%	**65.9%**	0.8%	4.1%	2.9%	**51.6%**	40.6%	14.5%	15.8%	33.9%	**35.8%**
Sexual Minority															
In Union	29	1%	**34.8%**	13.0%	17.4%	**34.8%**	0.0%	4.3%	0.0%	**56.5%**	39.1%	17.4%	**34.8%**	21.7%	26.1%
Single	258	10%	1.3%	9.8%	43.8%	**45.1%**	2.0%	4.6%	5.2%	**51.0%**	37.3%	24.2%	21.6%	**29.4%**	24.8%

N=4531

*Figure 1: Childbearing Intentions and Attitudes Towards Children Data Set (*Population 5*)*

Although limited in scope, the study found that "sexual minority men in unions appear to have fewer intentions to have children and less positive attitudes towards children than anyone else," (Population 3). This finding is in alignment with lower adoption rates among same-sex male couples compared to same-sex female couples. However, it does not address the underlying reasons, the 'why,' or the incentives that shape same-sex male couples adopting at lower rates – despite being a prime demographic for adoptive parents.

Demand Barriers for Adoption Among Same Sex Couples

Same sex male households not adopting children may be explained by a great deal of economic and societal barriers to adoption. To begin with, there is relatively no paid family leave for same sex male couples. According to an article in the Chicago Tribune, it has been found that forty-four of the country's largest employers provide little or no paid parental leave to dads and adoptive parents (Bowen). This headline can be seen in personal stories as well, with one man rationing an entire year's worth of vacation days to take off two weeks when having a surrogate daughter (Bowen). While America has no universal paid family leave programs, women typically experience more time off than men. A lack of paid leave may only partially explain the low rates of adoption amongst gay male couples, though.

Another barrier to same sex couple adoptions could be the assumption that children need a male and female parent while growing up. Yet a literature review of seventy-five studies on the matter formed an "overwhelmingly scholarly consensus" that based on decades of research same sex parents do not harm children (What We Know Project). Despite no evidence of supporting the claim, there are groups in America incentivized to block same sex couple adoptions using this belief as the foundation of their cause. This idea may even be stopping some same sex couples from trying to adopt in the first place.

Same sex couples face discrimination when applying to adopt from adoption agencies as well. In America, many adoptions occur through charities and private sector groups. While this may save the government money and perhaps provide more efficiency, this leaves same sex

couples trying to adopt at the mercy of religious biases and familial preservation advocates. A key, recent example of such discrimination made it all the way to the highest court in the land. In the case of *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia, No. 19-123*, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of a Roman Catholic adoption agency that argued it is entitled to "discriminate against potential foster parents on the bases of sexual orientation," (Higgins). With legal precedent protecting religious liberties to discriminate, same sex couples are simply blocked out of many opportunities of adoption. With religious agencies at the helm of a large portion of America's adoption ecosystem, children across the country that may have been adopted by a same sex couple sit in adoption agencies.

There are a whole host of other barriers gay men face with adoption: potential isolation from families due to coming out, an unpredictable adoption timeline, expenses in travel to visit birth mothers, and many more. By design, the adoption process is not as time friendly as a typical pregnancy or surrogacy. On-the-fly meetings with birthmothers, meetings with government workers, and other components of the adoption process are hard to plan for. Meanwhile, different sex couples can roughly plan ahead for the nine-month period of a pregnancy and the time off following the birth. Adding these barriers on top of each other, it is clear how policy and societal factors limit the incentives of same sex male couples to adopt. With incentives and choices knee-capped, it is no wonder on paper why gay men aren't adopting.

The Ultimate Question

From understanding why adoption matters to drilling down why same sex male couples are not adopting at high rates, more questions are raised than answers found. But all of the complexities and intricacies boil down to one umbrella question: How can the economy shift the equilibrium (i.e., current state of adoption in America) to be more equitable, empowering, and efficient for everyone? Specifically, how can policy choices help increase the demand of gay couples to adopt -- helping to close the gap between gay and lesbian adoption rates?

The "lowest hanging fruit" policy remedy for this problem is to alleviate the barriers for LGBT+ couples to adopt. How can policy choices help increase the demand of gay couples to adopt – helping close the gap between gay and lesbian adoption rates?

Methodology

To try to answer the primary question, ideally an experiment would be conducted testing different policy interventions on a control group – seeing which interventions change incentives most. To fit the scope of the Honors Thesis, a survey was conducted to identify the perceived barriers to adoption young, heterosexual persons face (the first step in identifying relevant policy interventions). While the scope of the ultimate question shared earlier is very broad, the scope of this survey was intended to be more focused: honing in on the perceived barriers young LGBT+ persons have when it comes to adopting a child.

Data Collection: Adoption Preferences Survey

The research conducted involved a simple survey, collecting participant demographic information followed by their responses to prompts on barriers to adoptions. Demographic data collected included:

- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Race
- Zip Code
- Socioeconomic position relative to community
- Stage of life financially
- Stage of life romantically

After completing demographic information, participants were asked to rate a number of barriers to adoption on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being no barrier at all and 10 being a very strong barrier to adoption:

- Affordability
- Unpredictable adoption timeline
- Lack of paid Leave
- Lack of access to adoption
- Discrimination
- Belief that LGBT+ persons should not raise children

How Data Was Analyzed

Data from survey participants was processed automatically via Google Forms, which generated a Google Sheets (i.e., Microsoft Excel) document. Data was then 'cleaned' in order to facilitate pivot table creation, breaking down results by various demographic responses. Pivot tables display the average response to perceived barriers of a certain group.

A number of simple regression analyses were also conducted. At a high level, demographic data served as independent variables while the dependent variables being the responses to barriers. Dummy variables were also constructed for qualitative data such as sexual orientation, race, etc. to be analyzed.

Constraints

Considering the scope and the limitations writing an Honors Thesis, there are a number of constraints that impact the survey and data collected:

Limited Sample Size (Under Coverage)
With 40 responses to the survey, the limited sample size is inherently not a true representation of the overall population. The averages of some subpopulations may be just one response, not representative of an entire demographic subset.

Voluntary Response Bias
With the survey being optional for participants, results may overly represent individuals who are fervent advocates or critics of LGBTQ+ adoptions.

Social Desirability Bias
With marriage equality being a historically political, religious, and cultural flash point, some respondents may have responded in a more peaceable, muffled manner.

Mindful of these constraints, the data may still point to some suggestions about perceived barriers to adoption.

Results

Survey Results

AVERAGE of You are unable to afford an adoption and/or raise a child (time, paperwork, expenses)	AVERAGE of You are unable to juggle the unpredictable adoption timeline	AVERAGE of You lack paid leave at work to adopt a child and/or raise a new-born	AVERAGE of You lack access to adoption services (discrimination, geography, etc.)	AVERAGE of You face discriminatino from your community (isolation from family, homophobia towards same sex couples/LGBTQ	AVERAGE of You believe that a child needs different sex parents for healthy development
7.425	**6.20**	**5.53**	**4.35**	**2.98**	**1.60**

Figure 2. Aggregate, Average Responses to Perceived Barriers to Adoption

Gender Identity	*Sexual Orientation*	AVERAGE of You are unable to afford an adoption and/or raise a child (time, paperwork, expenses)	AVERAGE of You are unable to juggle the unpredictable adoption timeline	AVERAGE of You lack paid leave at work to adopt a child and/or raise a new-born	AVERAGE of You lack access to adoption services (discrimination, geography, etc.)	AVERAGE of You face discriminatino from your community (isolation from	AVERAGE of You believe that a child needs different sex parents for healthy
− Female	Bisexual	7.57	5.43	3.57	3.57	3.57	1.86
	Heterosexual	7.21	5.50	5.86	2.50	2.14	1.36
	Lesbian	6.50	7.00	4.00	4.00	2.00	1.00
	Pansexual	9.00	9.00	9.00	5.00	2.00	1.00
	Queer	10.00	7.00	10.00	10.00	2.00	1.00
Female Total		**7.44**	**5.80**	**5.36**	**3.32**	**2.52**	**1.44**
− Male	Bisexual	7.50	8.50	3.00	6.00	1.50	1.00
	Gay	6.43	5.86	6.43	6.00	5.00	2.14
	Heterosexual	7.75	7.50	4.50	5.75	2.25	2.25
	Pansexual	10.00	6.00	8.00	6.00	1.00	1.00
Male Total		**7.21**	**6.71**	**5.50**	**5.93**	**3.43**	**1.93**
− Trans Man	Bisexual	10.00	9.00	10.00	8.00	8.00	1.00
Trans Man Total		**10.00**	**9.00**	**10.00**	**8.00**	**8.00**	**1.00**
Grand Total		**7.43**	**6.20**	**5.53**	**4.35**	**2.98**	**1.60**

Figure 3. Responses to Perceived Barriers to Adoption, Averaged and Itemized by Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

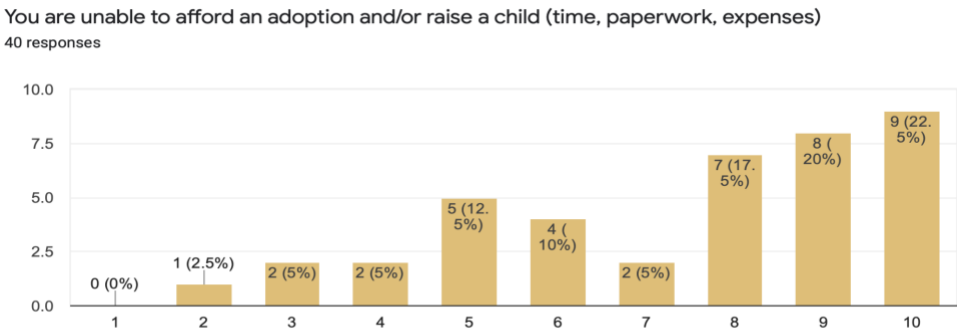

Figure 4. Aggregate Responses for the Affordability Barrier in Adoptions

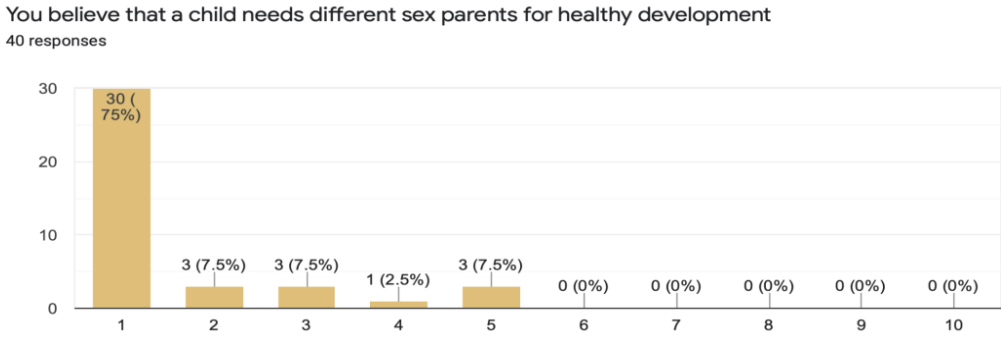

Figure 5. Aggregate Responses for the Belief that a Child Needs Different Sex Parents

Aggregate responses suggest that the high costs and tumultuous adoption timeline are the strongest barriers to adoptions. Discrimination and the belief that a child needs different sex parents were rated the weakest barriers to adoption.

Additional survey responses and graphics can be found in the appendix.

Regressions

SUMMARY OUTPUT			Independent Variable: Gender Identity Dummy I	Dependent Vairable: Paid Leave Barrier Responses				
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.06653645							
R Square	0.0044271							
Adjusted R Sc	-0.0217722							
Standard Err	3.27735452							
Observations	40							
ANOVA								
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*			
Regression	1	1.815	1.815	0.16897785	0.6833309			
Residual	38	408.16	10.7410526					
Total	39	409.975						
	Coefficients	*tandard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	5.8	0.8462093	6.85409628	3.8771E-08	4.08693884	7.51306116	4.08693884	7.51306116
Gender Dum	-0.44	1.0703795	-0.4110692	0.6833309	-2.60687	1.72687002	-2.60687	1.72687002

Figure 6. Summary Output for Gender Identity compared to Paid Leave Barrier Responses

SUMMARY OUTPUT			Independent: Sexual Orientation Dummy I Dependent Variable: Discrimination Vairable					
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.26924819							
R Square	0.07249459							
Adjusted R Sc	0.04808655							
Standard Err	2.68323699							
Observations	40							
ANOVA								
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*			
Regression	1	21.3840909	21.3840909	2.97011131	0.0929451			
Residual	38	273.590909	7.19976077					
Total	39	294.975						
	Coefficients	*tandard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	3.63636364	0.57206805	6.35652287	1.8483E-07	2.47827242	4.79445486	2.47827242	4.79445486
Sex Ortn. Du	-1.469697	0.8527887	-1.7234011	0.0929451	-3.1960774	0.25668349	-3.1960774	0.25668349

Figure 7. Summary Output for Sexual Orientation compared to Discrimination Barrier Responses

SUMMARY OUTPUT			Indpendent: Socioeconomic Dummy Variable I Dependent: Affordability Barrier					
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.16753321							
R Square	0.02806737							
Adjusted R Sc	0.0024902							
Standard Err	2.32736033							
Observations	40							
ANOVA								
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*			
Regression	1	5.94396832	5.94396832	1.09736027	0.30146365			
Residual	38	205.831032	5.4166061					
Total	39	211.775						
	Coefficients	*tandard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	7.12835093	0.4643363	15.3516985	7.0526E-18	6.18835123	8.06835064	6.18835123	8.06835064
Socioeconom	0.4394801	0.41953152	1.04754965	0.30146365	-0.4098171	1.28877726	-0.4098171	1.28877726

Figure 8. Summary Output for Socioeconomic Position compared to Adorability Barrier Responses

R Square values in Figures 6-8 range from roughly 0.004 to 0.07. This suggests that there is extremely low relationship between gender and paid leave ratings, sexual orientation and discrimination ratings, and socioeconomic position and affordability ratings.

SUMMARY OUTPUT		Barrier: Unable to Afford an Adoption (Money, Time, etc.)						
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.3411866							
R Square	0.1164083							
Adjusted R S	-0.0442448							
Standard Err	2.3812566							
Observations	40							
ANOVA								
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*			
Regression	6	24.652362	4.108727	0.7245943	0.6328748			
Residual	33	187.12264	5.670383					
Total	39	211.775						
	Coefficients	*tandard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	7.4166845	1.0286155	7.2103565	2.881E-08	5.3239505	9.5094184	5.3239505	9.5094184
Gender Dum	0.0989908	0.8787781	0.112646	0.9109937	-1.6888968	1.8868784	-1.6888968	1.8868784
S.O. Dummy	-0.0466253	0.8008059	-0.058223	0.9539221	-1.6758772	1.5826265	-1.6758772	1.5826265
Race Dummy	-0.2933911	0.25333	-1.158138	0.255121	-0.8087947	0.2220126	-0.8087947	0.2220126
Dummy Soci	0.4539441	0.4706466	0.9645115	0.3418049	-0.5035937	1.4114818	-0.5035937	1.4114818
Dummy Fina	0.3567492	0.4532553	0.7870822	0.4368503	-0.5654056	1.2789039	-0.5654056	1.2789039
Dummy Rom	-0.6166628	0.5432929	-1.1350467	0.264533	-1.7220006	0.488675	-1.7220006	0.488675

Figure 8. Summary Output for Demographic Variables compared to the Affordability Barrier for Adoptions

SUMMARY OUTPUT	Barrier: Belief that Children Need Different Sex Parents							
Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.3008247							
R Square	0.0904955							
Adjusted R S	-0.074869							
Standard Err	1.2599598							
Observations	40							
ANOVA								
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*			
Regression	6	5.2125406	0.8687568	0.5472488	0.7684215			
Residual	33	52.387459	1.5874988					
Total	39	57.6						
	Coefficients	*Standard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*
Intercept	2.114728	0.5442564	3.8855362	0.0004651	1.00743	3.2220261	1.00743	3.2220261
Gender Dum	-0.4315614	0.4649752	-0.9281386	0.360075	-1.3775605	0.5144377	-1.3775605	0.5144377
Sex Ortn. Du	0.0754719	0.4237188	0.1781179	0.8597193	-0.7865905	0.9375344	-0.7865905	0.9375344
Race Dummy	0.0224732	0.1340408	0.1676597	0.8678742	-0.2502348	0.2951813	-0.2502348	0.2951813
Socioeconom	-0.0048561	0.2490264	-0.0195005	0.9845592	-0.5115042	0.5017919	-0.5115042	0.5017919
Financial Dur	-0.0823164	0.2398244	-0.343236	0.733598	-0.5702428	0.40561	-0.5702428	0.40561
Romantic Du	-0.3984787	0.2874647	-1.3861828	0.1749867	-0.98333	0.1863727	-0.98333	0.1863727

Figure 9. Summary Output for Demographic Variables compared to the Belief that Children Need Different Sex Parents

The Affordability Barrier was the highest rated barrier in the aggregate and the Belief that a Child needs Different Sex Parents was the lowest rated barrier in the aggregate. With multiple independent variables compared to these barriers, the Adjusted R Square value was about -0.044 for Affordability and about -0.07 for the Belief in Different Sex Parenting. While this is still very close to 0 (suggesting no relation), the drop in significance may be explained by a number of variables with relatively little data.

More summary outputs can be found in the appendix.

Analysis

Aggregate Responses

Aggregate responses reveal that the heaviest burden people perceive when considering adoption is the affordability of adoptions. This is followed by an unpredictable adoption timeline. The lowest perceived burden is the belief that same sex couples cannot healthily raise a child. Drilling down results further, some nuances and more specific insight is revealed:

Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

The only notable difference across gender was in the lacking access to adoption services barrier. Men rated this at a 5.93 on average while women rated this at a 3.32 on average. The Trans Man and Pansexual average responses consist of one respondent, so responses are representative of a very specific experience.

Focusing on the gay male demographic, all barriers are fairly consistently rated in the 5-6 (medium) range, with the exception of the belief that a child needs a mother and a father at a 2.14 (one of two demographic groups to rate this as a 2 on average). Comparing the gay male demographic to the lesbian female demographic, lesbian ratings were slightly less for lack of paid leave, lack 0f access to adoption services, and discrimination in adoption services. Lesbian respondents rated the hectic adoption timeline as a heavier barrier by one point compared to gay males.

Socioeconomic Status

This category revealed some nuances. Consider, for example, the upper-class category which rated barriers higher than other groups when it came to lack of access to adoption, discrimination, and unpredictable adoption timelines but the lowest for affordability and lack of paid leave.

Financial State

Hourly employees, students, and salaried employees revealed overall fairly balanced responses across the board.

Romantic Status

Analyzing results through this lens failed to reveal major differences across single, dating, and married participants. Although perhaps not statistically concrete, dating respondents rated the lack of access to adoption as the heaviest barrier compared to other groups.

Race

The Native American and Indian responses are isolated, meaning that data is likely not representative of the demographic as a whole. Although statistically a stretch, one insight is that black and mixed-race participants (as well as the one Indian response) rated the belief that a child needs a mother and a father slightly higher than other groups. It must be noted that this barrier in particular is subject to great social desirability bias.

Regression Analysis

Regression analyses consistently yielded R Square and Adjusted R Square values close to 0, suggesting no clear statistical relationship between various demographic variables and barriers to adoption listed. This is likely explained by several variables at play with a limited number of responses.

While the restraints of the data cannot be overlooked, face-value results (as in no relation between demographics and barrier ratings) suggest that the barriers to adoption may not differ across sexual orientation, socioeconomic position, and other stages in life. With regression results failing to identify statistically correlated variables, aggregate responses may offer more insight for policy objectives.

Conclusion

When it comes to answering the question of how to make the equilibrium of adoptions more efficient and equitable, and closing the gap between gay and lesbian adoption rates, the survey conducted does not offer any statistically responsible answer due to a number of restraints.

However, aggregate results suggest that the heaviest barriers in the way of individuals adopting includes the high costs and unpredictable timeline. Regression analyses (which were very statistically limited) resulted in face value findings that suggest no demographic differences in barrier ratings. If the decision to adopt is considered as a function of variables, the survey implies that decreasing the financial and timeline costs would yield the greatest increase adoptions across all demographics. These results are in line with the uptick in adoptions following the Adoptions and Safe Families Act which made adoptions more financially available.

Findings do not suggest a clear answer that explains the gap in gay and lesbian adoption rates. In theory, the gap could be explained by the gay demographic perceiving higher expenses and a more hectic adoption timeline than the lesbian demographic. Per the survey results, however, the lesbian demographic rated higher perceived costs and a more hectic adoption timeline than the gay demographic. Meanwhile, the gay demographic rated the rest of the barriers higher. In reality, further data needs to be collected to explore this particular nuance in the adoption world.

Making adoptions more affordable and easier to execute requires a lot of change from the current equilibrium. Considering the incentives of adoption agencies, government regulation, and families is all of paramount importance when understanding the current adoption ecosystem. However, the “market failure” of adoptions, not to mention the personal and moral implications of these failures, begs the question of whether adoptions should be structured as a supply and demand model.

Policy Implications

Greater subsidies for adoptive parents, changes in adoption policy to decrease red tape, and perhaps changes in regulation of adoption agencies are knee-jerk policy reactions to increase adoption rates at the aggregate.

Homing in on same sex male couples and the gay male demographic, responses suggest a more holistic approach is needed. Every barrier (except the belief that a child needs a mother and a father) was averaged in the five to six 'weight' range.

A major policy implication suggested from this data involves the very low rating of the barrier regarding the belief that a child needs a mother and a father to have a healthy childhood. Even with accounting for some social desirability bias, this was considered practically no barrier at all for respondents. This is the polar opposite of religious adoption agencies (such as Catholic Charities in *Fulton v. City of Philadelphia*), which use this belief as justification to deny adoption services to same sex families. If the groups that are taking care of children up for adoption are the only ones that believe same sex couples should not adopt, that reveals a huge inefficiency for the adoption ecosystem.

Further Questions

A more robust survey that increases participants and reduces biases is the natural next step to get more statistically responsible data. Ideally, survey respondents would be representative of young America with an expanded study on the LGBTQ+ demographic in particular.

With the heaviest barriers in the aggregate being fiscal and the adoption timeline, further research can be conducted to see which policy options best resolve the financial strains of adoption. Additionally, discovering how to best adapt the adoption processes and regulations in place to be more 'user friendly' is also needed.

Qualitative research, interviewing adoptive parents and adopted children of same sex households could also be very fruitful in painting a clearer and more personal picture of the state of adoptions.

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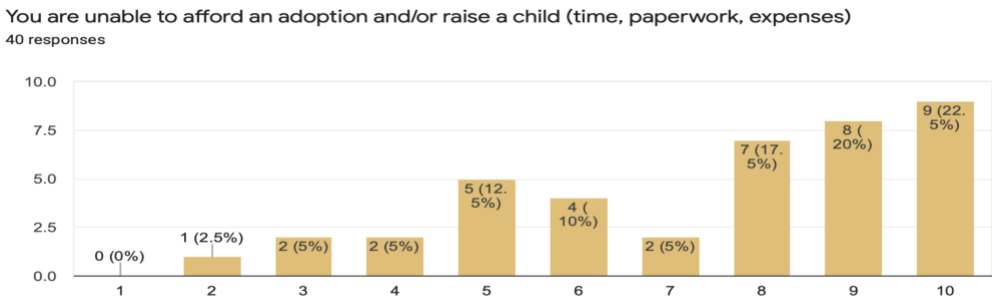
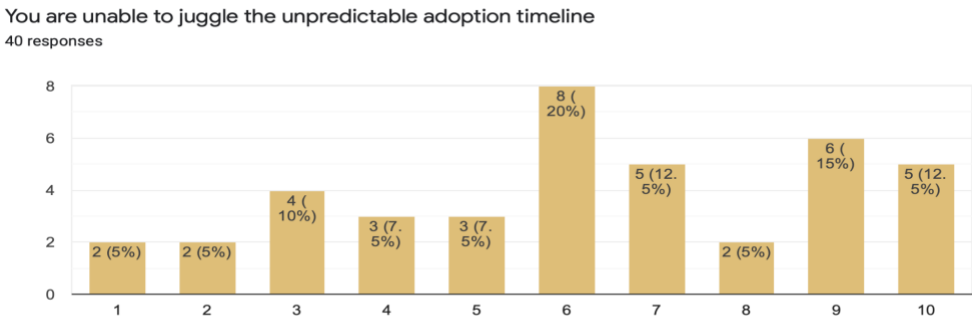
Appendix

Below are supplemental figures, further expanding on survey and regression results.

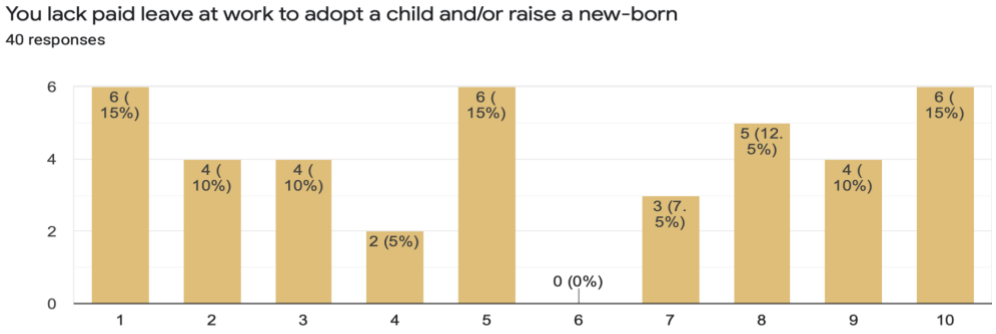
Histogram of Survey Results: Affordability Barrier



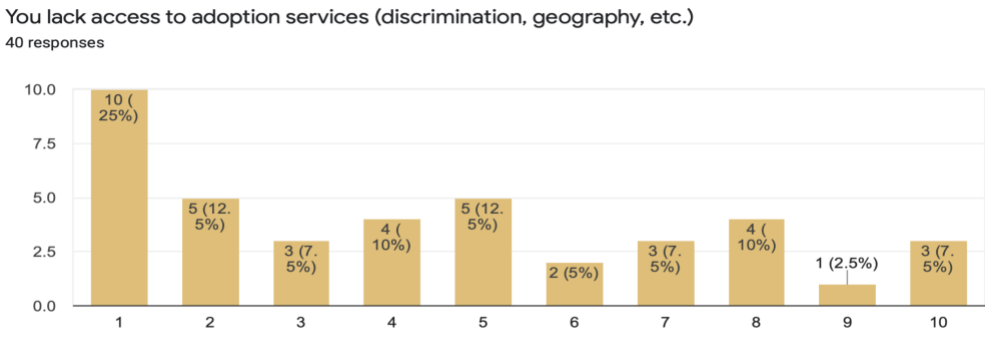
Histogram of Survey Results: Timeline Barrier



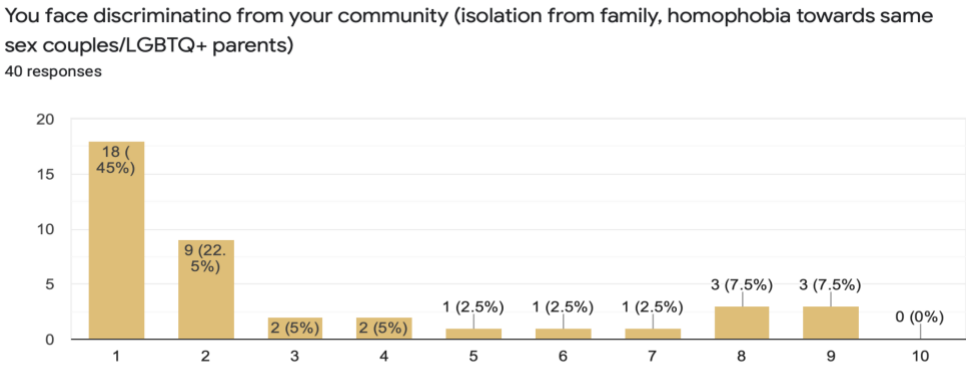
Histogram of Survey Results: Paid Leave Barrier



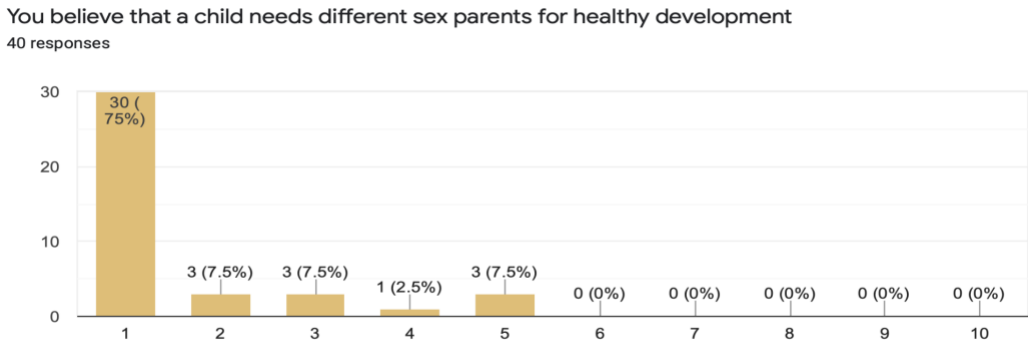
Histogram of Survey Results: Lack of Access Barrier



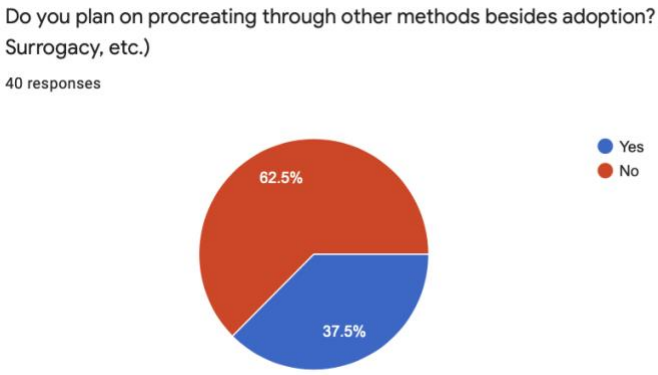
Histogram of Survey Results: Discrimination Barrier



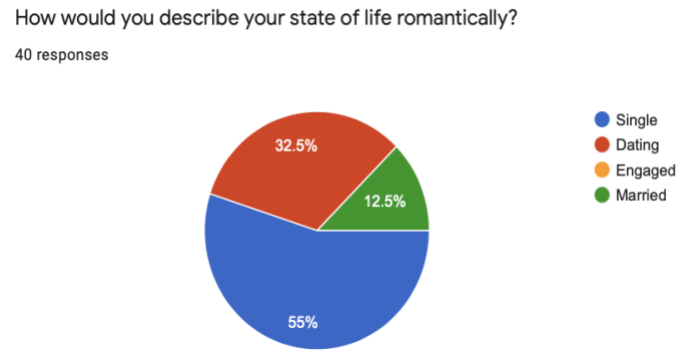
Histogram of Survey Results: Belief that a Child Needs Different Sex Parents Barrier



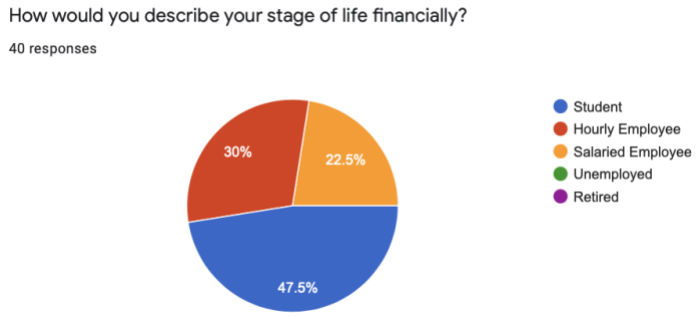
Pie Chart of Survey Results: Plans on Procreation other than Adoption



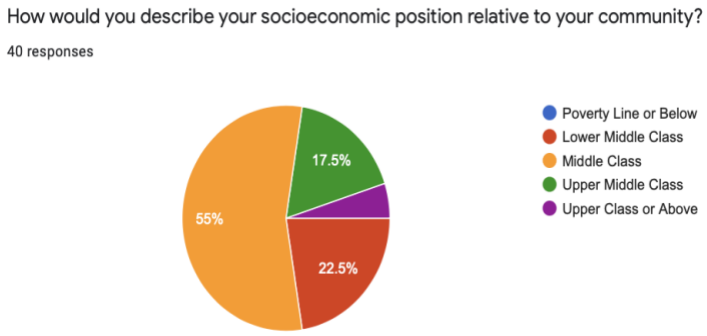
Pie Chart of Survey Results: State of Life Romantically



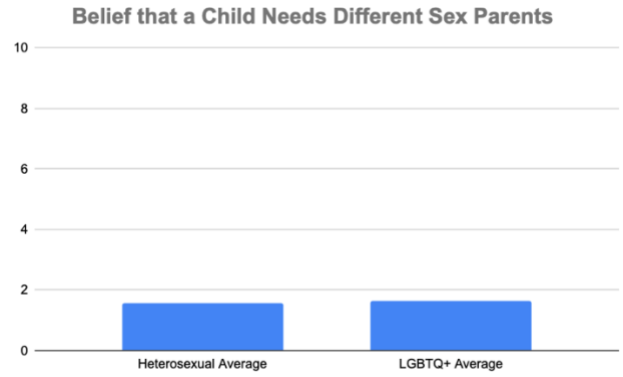
Pie Chart of Survey Results: Stage of Life Financially



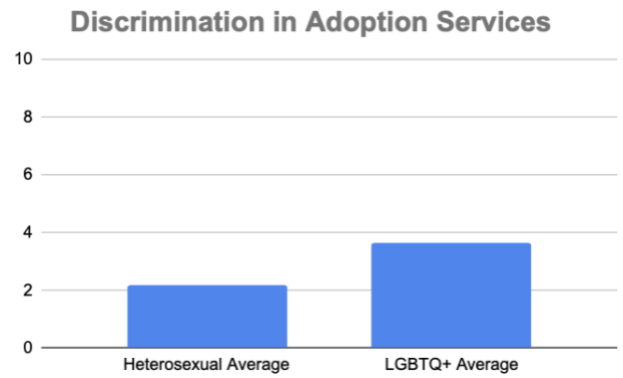
Pie Chart of Survey Results: Socioeconomic Position



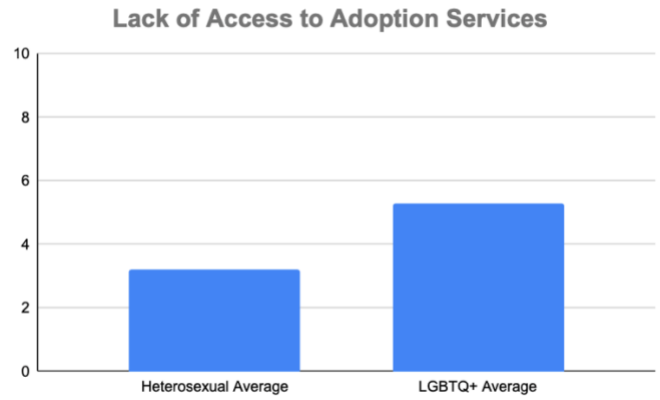
Bar Chart Comparison: LGBTQ+/Heterosexual Responses for the Different Sex Parents Barrier



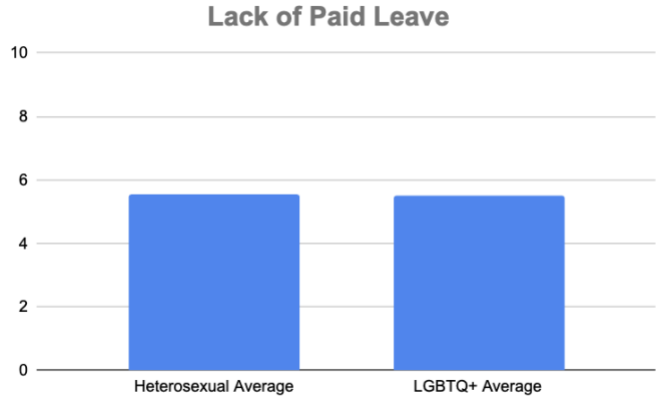
Bar Chart Comparison: LGBTQ+/Heterosexual Responses for the Discrimination Barrier



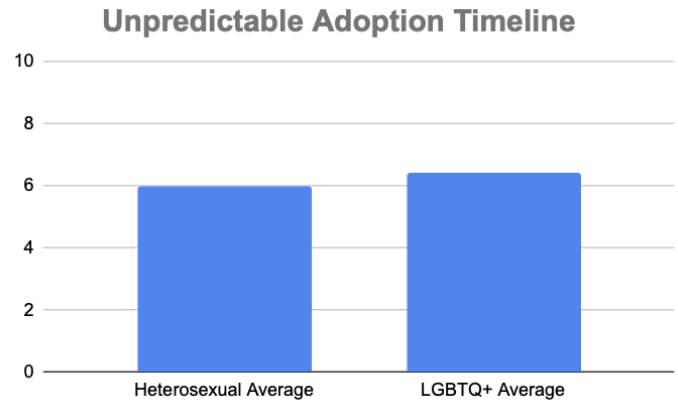
Bar Chart Comparison: LGBTQ+/Heterosexual Responses for the Lack of Access Barrier



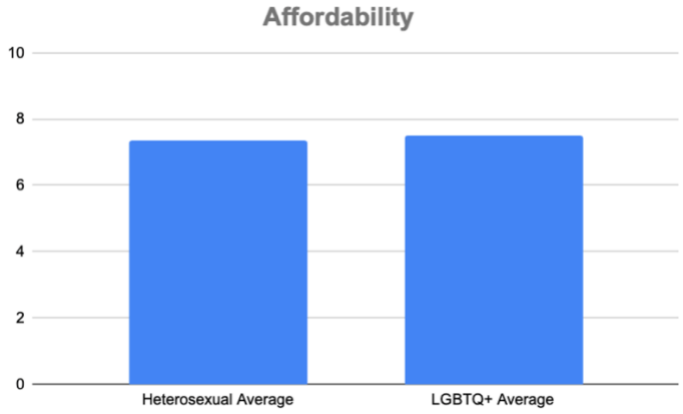
Bar Chart Comparison: LGBTQ+/Heterosexual Responses for the Lack of Paid Leave Barrier



Bar Chart Comparison: LGBTQ+/Heterosexual Responses for the Timeline Barrier



Bar Chart Comparison: LGBTQ+/Heterosexual Responses for the Affordability Barrier



Summary Output: Belief that a Child Needs Different Sex Parents compared to Demographic Responses

SUMMARY OUTPUT		Barrier: Belief that Children Need Different Sex Parents							
Regression Statistics									
Multiple R	0.3008247								
R Square	0.0904955								
Adjusted R S	-0.074869								
Standard Err	1.2599598								
Observations	40								
ANOVA									
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*				
Regression	6	5.2125406	0.8687568	0.5472488	0.7684215				
Residual	33	52.387459	1.5874988						
Total	39	57.6							
	Coefficients	*Standard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*	
Intercept	2.114728	0.5442564	3.8855362	0.0004651	1.00743	3.2220261	1.00743	3.2220261	
Gender Dum	-0.4315614	0.4649752	-0.9281386	0.360075	-1.3775605	0.5144377	-1.3775605	0.5144377	
Sex Ortn. Du	0.0754719	0.4237188	0.1781179	0.8597193	-0.7865905	0.9375344	-0.7865905	0.9375344	
Race Dummy	0.0224732	0.1340408	0.1676597	0.8678742	-0.2502348	0.2951813	-0.2502348	0.2951813	
Socioeconom	-0.0048561	0.2490264	-0.0195005	0.9845592	-0.5115042	0.5017919	-0.5115042	0.5017919	
Financial Dur	-0.0823164	0.2398244	-0.343236	0.733598	-0.5702428	0.40561	-0.5702428	0.40561	
Romantic Du	-0.3984787	0.2874647	-1.3861828	0.1749867	-0.98333	0.1863727	-0.98333	0.1863727	

Summary Output: Affordability Barrier compared to Demographic Responses

SUMMARY OUTPUT		Barrier: Unable to Afford an Adoption (Money, Time, etc.)							
Regression Statistics									
Multiple R	0.3411866								
R Square	0.1164083								
Adjusted R S	-0.0442448								
Standard Err	2.3812566								
Observations	40								
ANOVA									
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*				
Regression	6	24.652362	4.108727	0.7245943	0.6328748				
Residual	33	187.12264	5.670383						
Total	39	211.775							
	Coefficients	*Standard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*	
Intercept	7.4166845	1.0286155	7.2103565	2.881E-08	5.3239505	9.5094184	5.3239505	9.5094184	
Gender Dum	0.0989908	0.8787781	0.112646	0.9109937	-1.6888968	1.8868784	-1.6888968	1.8868784	
S.O. Dummy	-0.0466253	0.8008059	-0.058223	0.9539221	-1.6758772	1.5826265	-1.6758772	1.5826265	
Race Dummy	-0.2933911	0.25333	-1.158138	0.255121	-0.8087947	0.2220126	-0.8087947	0.2220126	
Dummy Soci	0.4539441	0.4706466	0.9645115	0.3418049	-0.5035937	1.4114818	-0.5035937	1.4114818	
Dummy Fina	0.3567492	0.4532553	0.7870822	0.4368503	-0.5654056	1.2789039	-0.5654056	1.2789039	
Dummy Rom	-0.6166628	0.5432929	-1.1350467	0.264533	-1.7220006	0.488675	-1.7220006	0.488675	

Summary Output: Timeline Barrier compared to Demographic Responses

SUMMARY OUTPUT		Barrier: Unable to Juggle the Adoption Timeline							
Regression Statistics									
Multiple R	0.2546583								
R Square	0.0648508								
Adjusted R S	-0.1051763								
Standard Err	2.8087824								
Observations	40								
ANOVA									
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*				
Regression	6	18.054473	3.0090788	0.3814147	0.8855638				
Residual	33	260.34553	7.8892584						
Total	39	278.4							
	Coefficients	*Standard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*	
Intercept	6.1119699	1.213291	5.0375138	1.652E-05	3.6435109	8.5804289	3.6435109	8.5804289	
Gender Dum	-0.7380922	1.0365521	-0.7120647	0.4814289	-2.8469733	1.370789	-2.8469733	1.370789	
Sex Ortn. Du	-0.2812618	0.9445809	-0.2977636	0.7677502	-2.2030261	1.6405025	-2.2030261	1.6405025	
Race Dummy	0.2085008	0.2988123	0.6977652	0.4902116	-0.3994374	0.816439	-0.3994374	0.816439	
Socioeconom	0.3994285	0.5551455	0.7195023	0.4768964	-0.7300236	1.5288805	-0.7300236	1.5288805	
Financial Dur	0.1913846	0.5346317	0.3579747	0.7226419	-0.8963318	1.2791011	-0.8963318	1.2791011	
Romantic Du	0.0875186	0.6408346	0.1365697	0.8922007	-1.2162692	1.3913064	-1.2162692	1.3913064	

Summary Output: Lack of Paid Leave Barrier compared to Demographic Responses

SUMMARY OUTPUT		Barrier: Lack of Paid Leave							
Regression Statistics									
Multiple R	0.1996642								
R Square	0.0398658								
Adjusted R S	-0.1347041								
Standard Err	3.4537245								
Observations	40								
ANOVA									
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*				
Regression	6	16.343979	2.7239964	0.2283658	0.9645034				
Residual	33	393.63102	11.928213						
Total	39	409.975							
	Coefficients	*Standard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*	
Intercept	6.0385753	1.4918823	4.0476218	0.0002939	3.0033179	9.0738326	3.0033179	9.0738326	
Gender Dum	-0.8949103	1.2745613	-0.702132	0.48752	-3.4880249	1.6982042	-3.4880249	1.6982042	
Sex Ortn. Du	0.1698173	1.161472	0.1462087	0.8846461	-2.1932153	2.53285	-2.1932153	2.53285	
Race Dummy	-0.1541791	0.3674244	-0.4196211	0.6774816	-0.9017097	0.5933516	-0.9017097	0.5933516	
Socioeconom	-0.4687457	0.682616	-0.6866903	0.4970753	-1.8575383	0.9200469	-1.8575383	0.9200469	
Financial Dur	0.2304554	0.6573919	0.3505602	0.7281463	-1.1070184	1.5679293	-1.1070184	1.5679293	
Romantic Du	0.4209976	0.7879807	0.534274	0.5967333	-1.1821611	2.0241563	-1.1821611	2.0241563	

Summary Output: Lack of Adoption Services Barrier compared to Demographic Responses

SUMMARY OUTPUT		Barrier: Lack of Access to Adoption Services							
Regression Statistics									
Multiple R	0.567315								
R Square	0.3218463								
Adjusted R S	0.1985457								
Standard Err	2.6630515								
Observations	40								
ANOVA									
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*				
Regression	6	111.06917	18.511528	2.6102561	0.0350421				
Residual	33	234.03083	7.0918434						
Total	39	345.1							
	Coefficients	*Standard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*	
Intercept	6.8840905	1.1503406	5.9843933	1.01E-06	4.543705	9.2244759	4.543705	9.2244759	
Gender Dum	-2.3330998	0.9827716	-2.3739999	0.0235695	-4.3325638	-0.3336358	-4.3325638	-0.3336358	
Sex Ortn. Du	-1.4845837	0.8955723	-1.6576928	0.1068574	-3.3066392	0.3374718	-3.3066392	0.3374718	
Race Dummy	0.2858124	0.2833087	1.0088375	0.3203929	-0.2905835	0.8622083	-0.2905835	0.8622083	
Socioeconom	-0.4761226	0.5263424	-0.9045872	0.372241	-1.5469741	0.594729	-1.5469741	0.594729	
Financial Dur	-0.5211506	0.5068929	-1.0281276	0.3113671	-1.552432	0.5101308	-1.552432	0.5101308	
Romantic Du	0.1251648	0.6075855	0.2060036	0.8380538	-1.1109773	1.3613069	-1.1109773	1.3613069	

Summary Output: Discrimination Barrier compared to Demographic Responses

SUMMARY OUTPUT		Barrier: Facing Discrimination							
Regression Statistics									
Multiple R	0.3480202								
R Square	0.1211181								
Adjusted R S	-0.0386786								
Standard Err	2.8028567								
Observations	40								
ANOVA									
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	*Significance F*				
Regression	6	35.726809	5.9544682	0.7579511	0.6078769				
Residual	33	259.24819	7.8560058						
Total	39	294.975							
	Coefficients	*Standard Erro*	*t Stat*	*P-value*	*Lower 95%*	*Upper 95%*	*Lower 95.0%*	*Upper 95.0%*	
Intercept	3.5103778	1.2107313	2.8993864	0.0066019	1.0471264	5.9736291	1.0471264	5.9736291	
Gender Dum	-0.7185017	1.0343653	-0.6946305	0.4921489	-2.8229337	1.3859304	-2.8229337	1.3859304	
Sex Ortn. Du	-1.353219	0.9425881	-1.4356418	0.160516	-3.2709289	0.564491	-3.2709289	0.564491	
Race Dummy	0.1820074	0.2981819	0.6103906	0.5457842	-0.4246482	0.788663	-0.4246482	0.788663	
Socioeconom	0.0340279	0.5539743	0.0614251	0.9513912	-1.0930413	1.1610972	-1.0930413	1.1610972	
Financial Dur	-0.0010623	0.5335038	-0.0019912	0.9984232	-1.0864841	1.0843594	-1.0864841	1.0843594	
Romantic Du	0.5697997	0.6394826	0.8910323	0.3793626	-0.7312375	1.8708369	-0.7312375	1.8708369	

Pivot Table: Socioeconomic Position compared to Barrier Ratings

How would you describe your socioeconomic position relative to your community?	AVERAGE of You are unable to afford an adoption and/or raise a child (time, paperwork, expenses)	AVERAGE of You are unable to juggle the unpredictable adoption timeline	AVERAGE of You lack paid leave at work to adopt a child and/or raise a new-born	AVERAGE of You lack access to adoption services (discrimination, geography, etc.)	AVERAGE of You face discriminatino from your community (isolation from family, homophobia towards same sex couples/LGBTQ + parents)	AVERAGE of You believe that a child needs different sex parents for healthy development
Lower Middle Class	8.56	6.11	7.56	4.56	3.00	1.00
Middle Class	6.86	5.91	5.23	4.45	3.00	1.73
Upper Class or Above	6.50	7.50	2.50	6.50	5.00	3.00
Upper Middle Class	8.00	6.86	4.71	3.14	2.29	1.57
Grand Total	**7.43**	**6.20**	**5.53**	**4.35**	**2.98**	**1.60**

Pivot Table: Financial Stage of Life compared to Barrier Ratings

How would you describe your stage of life financially?	AVERAGE of You are unable to afford an adoption and/or raise a child (time, paperwork, expenses)	AVERAGE of You are unable to juggle the unpredictable adoption timeline	AVERAGE of You lack paid leave at work to adopt a child and/or raise a new-born	AVERAGE of You lack access to adoption services (discrimination, geography, etc.)	AVERAGE of You face discriminatino from your community (isolation from family, homophobia towards same sex couples/LGBTQ + parents)	AVERAGE of You believe that a child needs different sex parents for healthy development
Hourly Employee	8.08	6.42	5.75	3.08	2.75	1.67
Salaried Employee	6.67	5.56	5.78	5.00	2.89	1.00
Student	7.37	6.37	5.26	4.84	3.16	1.84
Grand Total	**7.425**	**6.20**	**5.53**	**4.35**	**2.98**	**1.60**

Pivot Table: State of Life Romantically compared to Barrier Ratings

How would you describe your state of life romantically?	AVERAGE of You are unable to afford an adoption and/or raise a child (time, paperwork, expenses)	AVERAGE of You are unable to juggle the unpredictable adoption timeline	AVERAGE of You lack paid leave at work to adopt a child and/or raise a new-born	AVERAGE of You lack access to adoption services (discrimination, geography, etc.)	AVERAGE of You face discriminatino from your community (isolation from family, homophobia towards same sex couples/LGBTQ + parents)	AVERAGE of You believe that a child needs different sex parents for healthy development
Dating	7.69	6.38	5.46	5.15	3.54	1.46
Married	6.00	6.00	6.60	3.40	3.20	1.00
Single	7.59	6.14	5.32	4.09	2.59	1.82
Grand Total	**7.43**	**6.20**	**5.53**	**4.35**	**2.98**	**1.60**

Pivot Table: Race compared to Barrier Ratings

Race	AVERAGE of You are unable to afford an adoption and/or raise a child (time, paperwork, expenses)	AVERAGE of You are unable to juggle the unpredictable adoption timeline	AVERAGE of You lack paid leave at work to adopt a child and/or raise a new-born	AVERAGE of You lack access to adoption services (discrimination, geography, etc.)	AVERAGE of You face discriminatino from your community (isolation from family, homophobia	AVERAGE of You believe that a child needs different sex parents for healthy development
Black	7.00	7.25	4.25	7.50	3.75	2.50
Hispanic	7.50	7.00	5.50	4.50	4.50	1.00
Indian	5.00	6.00	5.00	6.00	2.00	2.00
Latino	9.00	9.00	5.00	5.00	3.00	1.00
Mixed	5.00	5.50	2.75	2.25	1.75	2.00
N/A	8.00	6.00	9.00	8.00	8.00	1.00
Native American	10.00	10.00	9.00	5.00	1.00	1.00
White	7.77	5.85	5.92	3.92	2.85	1.50
Grand Total	**7.43**	**6.20**	**5.53**	**4.35**	**2.98**	**1.60**

Pivot Table: Breakdown of Number of Survey Participants

Gender Identity	Sexual Orientation	Race
25 Female	18 Heterosexual	26 White
14 Male	10 Bisexual	4 Black
1 Trans Male	7 Gay	4 Mixed Race
	2 Lesbian	3 Hispanic
	2 Pansexual	1 Indigenous
	1 Queer	1 Indian
		1 Not Listed
		n=40