

SAME-SEX SEXUALITY AND THE RISK OF DIVORCE: RESULTS FROM TWO NATIONAL STUDIES

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Background: Sociodemographic Predictors of Divorce

Sociologists and other family scholars have established that many sociodemographic factors predict divorce, including:

- Parental divorce (Amato 1996; Wolfinger 2005)
- Premarital cohabitation (Booth and Johnson 1988; Bumpass et al. 1991a)
- Early entry into marriage (Bumpass et al. 1991b)
- Extramarital sex (London et al. 2013)
- African American race/ethnicity (Banks 2011; Cherlin 2009)
- Lower socioeconomic status (Cherlin 2009; Martin 2006)

Same-sex sexuality – desire/attraction, behavior, and/or identity?

Background: Mixed-Orientation Marriages

Mixed-orientation marriages

- Highly prone to divorce
 - Tornello and Patterson (2012): 153 of 167 eventually divorced
- Mostly qualitative
 - Need analyses of population-representative data

Assumes discordant *identities* – the effects of same-sex desires/attractions and behaviors remain unclear

Background: Same-Sex Desires/Attractions and Behaviors

Experience and awareness of pre-marital same-sex desires/attraction

- Pearcey (2005): 17 of 20 had awareness of desires/attractions prior to marriage
- Rationalized these feelings as rooted only in friendship or dismissed them as fleeting

Same-sex behavior, prior to and during marriage

- Humphreys (1970) on “tearooms”: 54% of those observed sought anonymous public sex

Background: Theory

Theoretically, same-sex sexuality may increase the likelihood of divorce from a different-sex spouse because of heteronormativity and the ideology of romantic love.

- Heteronormativity: heterosexual and the nuclear family are both natural and normal (e.g., Kitzinger 2005; Martin 2009)
- Ideology of romantic love: spouses have special, exclusive, and enduring bonds (e.g., Swidler 2001)

Same-sex sexuality within a different-sex marriage is an “ideological impossibility” (Wolkomir 2009: 504).

The Current Investigation

Hypothesis: The components of same-sex sexuality will be associated with an increased likelihood of divorce from a different-sex spouse.

- Preliminary analyses examine the associations between same-sex sexuality and never marrying

Two nationally-representative surveys conducted two decades apart: National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLS) and National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)

- Constrained sample to the once-married
- All data are cross-sectional

The National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs)

A cross-sectional probability sample of 18-59-year-old, non-institutionalized adults, who were residing in the U.S. in 1992 and able to complete an English-language interview (N=3,432)

The main multi-stage area probability sample (N=3,159) was designed to give each household in the United States an equal probability of being included in the study.

A supplementary over-sample of Blacks and Hispanics (N=273)

Overall response rate of 78.6%.

NHSLS: Measures

Dependent variable: divorced (=1) versus not divorced (i.e., still married, separated, or widowed) (=0)

Independent variables:

- Same-sex desire
- Same-sex attraction
- Same-sex behavior
- Lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity

All independent variables were recoded as dichotomous

The National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG)

A cross-sectional probability sample of 15-44-year-old non-institutionalized adults, who were residing in the U.S. in 2011-2013 (N=10,416)

In-person interviews

- Most data collected using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), but some, including the data on same-sex sexuality, were collected via audio computer-assisted self-interviewing (ACASI) to reduce social desirability bias.

Overall response rate of 72.8%

NSFG: Measures

Dependent variable: divorced (=1) versus not divorced (i.e., still married, separated, or widowed) (=0)

Independent variables:

- Same-sex attraction
- Same-sex behavior
- Lesbian, gay, or bisexual identity

All independent variables were recoded as dichotomous

Analysis

Analytic approach was the same for each survey

- Preliminary analyses
- Bivariate associations
- Multivariate logistic regression

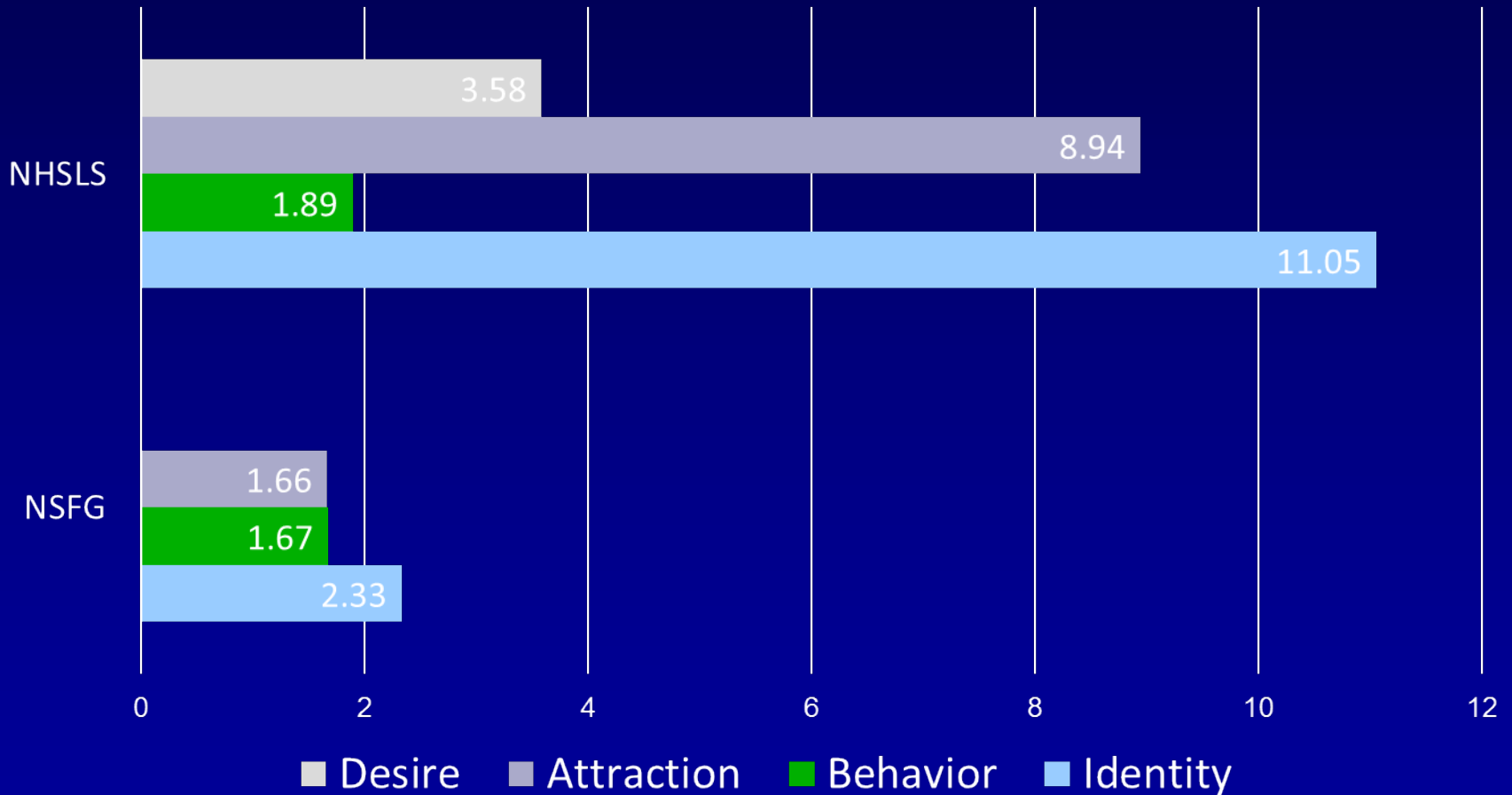
All multivariate analyses control for:

- *Demographic* variables: gender, age, race/ethnicity, place of birth, mother's and father's education
- *Early life* (age 14) variables: maternal employment status, living arrangements, religion, location of residence, region of residence

All analyses are weighted

Standard errors adjusted for the complex sampling design

Preliminary Analysis: Adjusted Odds Ratios (AORs), Same-Sex Sexuality and Never Married, 1992 NHSLs and 2011-2013 NSFG



Estimates of Same-Sex Sexuality, Once-Married Persons, 1992 NHSLs and 2011-2013 NSFG

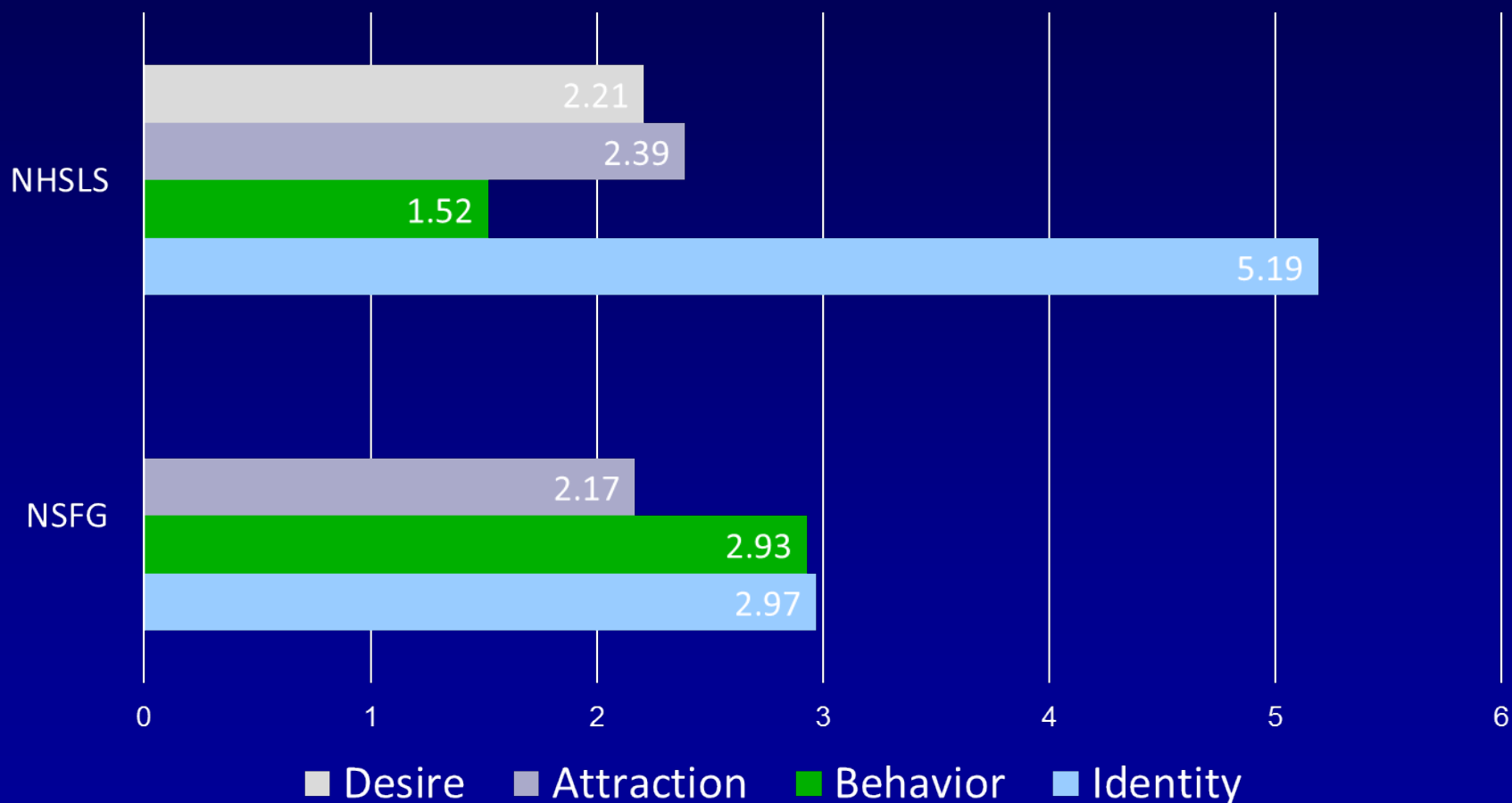
	<u>NHSLs</u> Weighted %	<u>NSFG</u> Weighted %
Total	100	100
Same-Sex Desire		
Yes	3.1	---
No	96.9	---
Same-Sex Attraction		
Yes	1.3	9.1
No	98.7	90.9
Same-Sex Behavior		
Yes	10.8	9.0
No	89.2	91.0
LGB Identity		
Yes	0.7	3.0
No	99.3	97.0

Rates of Divorce, Once-Married Persons, 1992 NHSLs and 2011-2013 NSFG

	<u>NHSLs</u> Weighted % Divorced	p	<u>NSFG</u> Weighted % Divorced	p
Total	12.6	---	14.3	---
Same-Sex Desire				
Yes	25.8	**	---	---
No	12.3		---	
Same-Sex Attraction				
Yes	25.4	#	23.8	***
No	12.4		13.4	
Same-Sex Behavior				
Yes	16.8	#	29.6	***
No	12.1		12.8	
LGB Identity				
Yes	42.1	**	32.6	***
No	12.3		13.9	

Significance levels: # = p<0.10; * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; *** = p<0.001

Primary Analysis: Adjusted Odds Ratios (AORs), Same-Sex Sexuality and Divorce, Once-Married Persons, 1992 NHSLs and 2011-2013 NSFG



Summary of Findings

Analyzed two nationally-representative datasets, the 1992 NHLS and the 2011-2013 NSFG

Preliminary analyses: all three components increase the likelihood of never marrying.

- Same-sex sexuality may serve as a brake on divorce by preventing some different-sex marriages that might ultimately end in divorce

Primary analyses: all three components are associated with an increased risk of divorce from a different-sex spouse among the once-married, net of demographic and early-life factors.

- Results are consistent across datasets, although they did vary some in magnitude

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Limitations:

- Data are cross-sectional
- Lack of subjective appraisals and attributions

Directions for future research:

- Better conceptualizations of same-sex sexuality
- Longitudinal data on same-sex sexuality
- Marital duration
- Effects of marriage equality

Thank you!

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Preliminary Analysis: NHSLS

- Dependent Variable: Never married
- Sample sizes ranged from 3,380 to 3,396
- Adjusted odds ratios (AORs) –
 - **3.58** ($p < 0.001$) for those who reported **desire** versus those who did not
 - **8.94** ($p < 0.001$) for those who reported **attraction** versus those who did not
 - **1.89** ($p < 0.001$) for those who reported **behavior** versus those who did not
 - **11.05** ($p < 0.001$) for those who reported a **gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity** versus those who did not

Results indicate that those who reported same-sex desire, attraction, behavior, and identity were significantly more likely than those who did not to have never married.

Preliminary Analysis: NSFG

- Dependent Variable: Never married
- Sample sizes ranged from 8,892 to 8,989
- AORs –
 - **1.66** ($p < 0.001$) for those who reported **attraction** versus those who did not
 - **1.67** ($p < 0.001$) for those who reported **behavior** versus those who did not
 - **2.33** ($p < 0.001$) for those who reported a **gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity** versus those who did not

Same-sex sexuality selects some out of marriage

Present (or nascent) for those who did marry, and thus may influence the likelihood of divorce

Rates of Divorce, Once-Married Persons, 1992 NHLS

	Weighted %	Weighted % Divorced	p
Total	100	12.6	---
Same-Sex Desire			
Yes	3.1	25.8	**
No	96.9	12.3	
Same-Sex Attraction			
Yes	1.3	25.4	#
No	98.7	12.4	
Same-Sex Behavior			
Yes	10.8	16.8	#
No	89.2	12.1	
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Identity			
Yes	0.7	42.1	**
No	99.3	12.3	
Significance levels: # = p<0.10; * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; *** = p<0.001			

Sub-Study #2: Rates of Divorce, Once-Married Persons, 2011-2013 NSFG

	Weighted %	Weighted % Divorced	p
Total	100	14.3	---
Same-Sex Attraction			
Yes	9.1	23.8	***
No	90.9	13.4	
Same-Sex Behavior			
Yes	9.0	29.6	***
No	91.0	12.8	
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Identity			
Yes	3.0	32.6	***
No	97.0	13.9	
Significance levels: # = p<0.10; * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; *** = p<0.001			

The Associations Between Same-Sex Desire, Attraction, and Behavior, and Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Identity and Divorce, Once-Married Persons, 1992 NHLS

	b (se)	AOR	p
Same-Sex Desire	0.794 (0.311)	2.21	*
Same-Sex Attraction	0.873 (0.494)	2.39	#
Same-Sex Behavior	0.421 (0.211)	1.52	*
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Identity	1.646 (0.599)	5.19	**

Significance levels: # = $p < 0.10$; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$

Models include controls for demographic and age-14 variables. The demographic variables are: gender; age; race/ethnicity; place of birth; mother's and father's education. The age-14 variables are: maternal employment status; living arrangements; religion; location of residence; region of residence.

The Associations Between Same-Sex Attraction, Behavior, and Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Identity and Divorce, Once-Married Persons, 2011- 2013 NSFG

	b (se)	AOR	p
Same-Sex Attraction	0.774 (0.195)	2.17	***
Same-Sex Behavior	1.074 (0.191)	2.93	***
Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Identity	1.101 (0.231)	2.97	***

Significance levels: # = $p < 0.10$; * = $p < 0.05$; ** = $p < 0.01$; *** = $p < 0.001$

Models include controls for demographic and background variables. The demographic variables are: gender; age; race/ethnicity; place of birth; and mother's education. The background variables are: maternal employment status when the respondent was between 5 and 15 years old; living arrangements at age 14; and religion in which the respondent was raised. Survey year is also controlled.