The Differences in Divorce Rates Between Heterosexual and Sexual Minority Adults

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Research Questions

• Is there a difference in the divorce rates between heterosexual respondents and those that identify as a sexual minority?
• Does this association depend on gender?

Significance

• The divorce rate and factors related to them have been of great interest to researchers and policy makers.
• Same-sex marriage was legalized in 2015; yet has not been completely accepted.

Background

• Divorce rates may be higher among sexual minorities because they face more challenges and make fewer relationship-specific investments than heterosexuals due to discrimination (Lau, 2012; Manning et al., 2016).
• Divorce rates may be lower among sexual minorities because of their higher socioeconomic status such as education, and income (Manning et al., 2016).
• The lack of children or lack of being legally married makes deciding to end the relationship easier (Manning et al., 2016).
• Male couples have higher divorce rates than female couples (Lau, 2012).

Hypothesis

• Heterosexual respondents will have a lower divorce rate due to the fact that some same-sex couples have difficulty adopting or having children of their own, which makes the choice of ending the relationship easier.

Data and Sample

• General Social Survey (GSS)
• U.S. adults 18+ that speak English who had ever been married and reported their sexual identities (N = 6,698)

Dependent Measure

Ever Been Divorced

• Asked the respondent to disclose if they had ever been divorced or legally separated

Independent Measure

Sexual Orientation

• Asked the respondents to disclose their sexual orientation

Control Measure

Gender

• Asked the respondents to disclose whether they are Male or Female

Analysis

• Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SPSS

Results

Figure 1. % Respondents Who Have Ever Been Divorced

43.1% 56.9%

MALE FEMALE

Figure 3. % Males and Females

44.0% 45.8%

Heterosexual Sexual Minority

MALE FEMALE

Figure 4. % Respondents Who Had Ever Been Divorced by Sexual Orientation and Gender

Note: Chi-square tests are not significant for men but significant for women at p < .01.

Summary and Concluding Thoughts

• Among men, 52.5% of sexual minorities had been divorced, whereas 44% of heterosexual men had divorced (Figure 4). The difference was not significant.
• Among women, 62.5% of sexual minorities reported having been divorced, compared to 45.8% of sexual majority reported (Figure 4). The difference was significant at p < .01.
• These results support my hypothesis that heterosexual respondents would have a lower divorce rate only for women.
• Now that same sex marriage is legal in the United States, I would like to examine the rate of divorce among same sex respondents.

References