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(Bi)Sexuality and Victim Blame: How Observer Sexuality Affects Attributions Of Blame in a Case of Acquaintance Sexual Assault with a Heterosexual Female Victim

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(BI)SEXUALITY AND VICTIM BLAME: HOW OBSERVER SEXUALITY

AFFECTS ATTRIBUTIONS OF BLAME IN A CASE OF ACQUAINTANCE

SEXUAL ASSAULT WITH A HETEROSEXUAL FEMALE VICTIM

by

Olivia Mann

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The members of the Honors Thesis Committee appointed
to examine the thesis of Olivia Mann
find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

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ABSTRACT

(Bi)Sexuality and Victim Blame: How Observer Sexuality Affects Attributions Of Blame
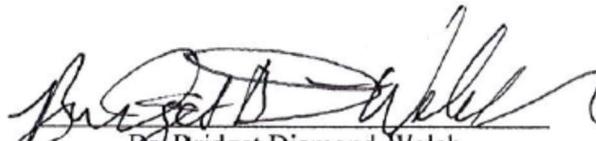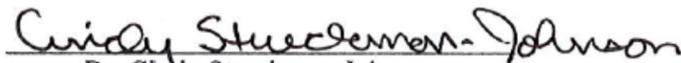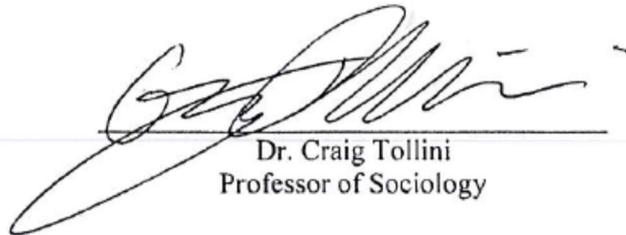in a Case of Acquaintance Sexual Assault with a Heterosexual Female Victim

Olivia Mann

Director: Bridget Diamond-Welch, Ph.D.

This study examined the ways in which members of the heterosexual and queer

communities assign blame in cases of sexual assault. Heterosexual, bisexual, and

homosexual participants were recruited from Amazon mTurk. After reading a vignette

depicting a sexual assault, participants completed a survey measuring variables like

victim blame, empathy for and similarity to the victim and perpetrator, and rape myth

acceptance (RMA). There appears to be a gender/sexuality interaction at play wherein

males of all sexualities are significantly less victim-friendly than females of all

sexualities *and* wherein there are significant differences between males of different

sexualities. Significant differences were found between the heterosexual, bisexual, and

homosexual samples, which were largely driven by the gay male results. Bisexuality

promoted slightly more victim-friendly attitudes in four areas of analysis: victim blame

tendencies relative to heterosexuals and homosexuals; victim blame tendencies relative to

homosexuals; perceived similarity to the victim on the part of bisexual males relative to

heterosexual males; and victim-friendliness of bisexual males relative to gay males.

KEYWORDS: Criminology, Sexual Assault, Gender and Sexuality, Bisexuality

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INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault is a traumatizing experience with a number of negative physical, social, and psychological outcomes (Perilloux, Duntley and Buss 2012; Rees, Silove and Chey 2011). These negative outcomes can be exacerbated by negative reactions to disclosure, and especially by reactions that blame the victim for their own assault (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral 2009; Ullman and Peter-Hagene 2014). So far considerable research has explored a number of variables that influence victim blame, such as victim appearance (Clarke and Stermac 2011), perpetrator social reputation (Black and Gold 2008) or type of assault (Basow and Minieri 2011). However, next to no research has explored how members of the queer (non-heterosexual or non-cisgender) community attribute blame in cases of sexual assault. This is highly problematic, as queer people are far more at-risk for sexual assault than heterosexual people (Balsam, Rothblum, and Beauchaine, 2005; Katz-Wise and Hyde 2012; Rothman, Exner, and Baughman, 2011) despite the fact that they only make up 2.5% (Ward, Dahlhammer, Galinsky and Joestl 2014) to 4.1% (Gates 2017) of the US population. Per defensive attribution theory (Shaver, 1970; discussed in more detail in the literature review), higher victimization rates could have a profound impact on the extent to which members of an at-risk community identify with a victim and therefore assign blame to that victim. Moreover, what little research has been done has focused largely on comparisons between heterosexual and homosexual people (Davies and Hudson 2011; Davies and McCartney 2003; Diamond-Welch, Mann, Bass, and Tollini, 2017). This means that bisexual people have largely been left out of sexual assault research despite the fact that they consistently report higher rates of sexual assault and victimization than any other

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population (Balsam et al. 2005; Ford and Soto-Marquez 2015; Freedner, Freed, Yang and Austin 2002) and have been found to react more negatively to victim blame than other groups (Sigurvinsdottir and Ullman 2015). This exclusion of bisexual people from research is part of a troubling academic trend towards bisexual invisibility (Barker et al. 2012a; Barker et al. 2012b).   In order to remedy this problem, this research built on the work of Diamond-Welch et al. (2017) to compare the reactions of bisexual, homosexual, and heterosexual people to the acquaintance rape of a heterosexual female victim. This allowed me to ask the following question: to what extent and in what ways do heterosexual, homosexual, *and* bisexual people react to a heterosexual victim and a perpetrator differently in cases of sexual assault? To answer this question, I begin with an in-depth review of existing victim blame literature before transitioning into my own research. After describing the project and detailing the results of my research, I discuss significant results and provide recommendations for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Note on Terminology

The word queer is a complex term and that many people within the community may reject the term due to its past use as a slur or due to deep-seated cultural reasons, and that because of this the use of the word queer in academic research can be controversial. Therefore, I feel it is important to outline my above reasons for using this word throughout my paper. I also feel that it is important that readers who are not members of the queer community be aware that the word queer has a complicated history and that the use of the word in academia should be carefully considered. In keeping with current practices in the growing field of queer criminology (see: Ball 2016; Buist and Lenning 2015) the word *queer* is used in this work to describe the community of people who fall outside cisgender (a term used to describe people who identify with the gender they were assigned at birth) and/or heterosexual normative frameworks. The choice to use this term is a deliberate one and was made in order to remain consistent with current literature (e.g. Buist and Lenning 2015), to be as inclusive as possible of communities frequently excluded by acronym-based community names (e.g. LGBTQ+), and to encourage deconstruction of typical perspectives on the queer community (Ball 2016).

Two additional terms used throughout this paper which may require definition and discussion are the terms *bisexual* and *monosexual*. Bisexuality encapsulates attraction to men and women, attraction to two or more genders, or a degree of fluidity in sexual attraction that lacks another label (Barker et al., 2012; Gammon and Isgro, 2006). In order to acknowledge this complexity while still centering this work on a clear concept, bisexuality in this paper will be defined as attraction to two or more genders.

Monosexuality, meanwhile, is defined as "attraction to a single gender" (Barker, Richards, Jones, Bowes-Catton, Plowman, and Yockney, 2012; Gammon and Isgro, 2006; Gooß 2008). This term is often used to contrast homo- and heterosexuality with bisexuality, and as such it is an important and useful term in both the academic study of bisexuality and the creation and definition of bisexual communities (Gammon and Isgro, 2006; Gooß 2008). However, the concept of monosexuality has been critiqued on the grounds that the term unjustly combines heterosexual and homosexual communities into the same category and thereby equates a disadvantaged group with their oppressors and unfairly equates "the power dynamics that exist between bisexuals and lesbians/gay men with those between homosexuals and heterosexuals" (Hemmings, 2002, p29; Gammon and Isgro, 2006). This is a valid critique, but it is not sufficient grounds for avoidance of the word monosexual. Rather, the term should be used with care and with a clear acknowledgement of its potential weakness. Ultimately, I feel that the use of the term monosexual is important and defensible as it plays an important role in helping to define the bisexual community and serves a useful academic purpose as a label for the non-bisexual community which can be used to more neatly describe and understand the power dynamics and axes of advantage and disadvantage which influence bisexual people. This terminology will also help improve the clarity of this research in a substantial way, as it is far more efficient and intelligible to discuss 'bisexual people and monosexual people' rather than 'bisexuals, and homosexuals and heterosexuals.'

Sexual Assault and the Queer Community

Research on sexual violence has shown that queer people are at greater risk than heterosexual people for sexual victimization in general and sexual assault in particular

(Balsam, Rothblum, and Beauchaine, 2005; Katz-Wise and Hyde 2012; Rothman, Exner, and Baughman, 2011). The 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) found that queer people report the highest rates of sexual assault (Walters, Chen and Breiding 2013). Though most research groups lesbian, gay, and bisexual people together into a single 'LGB' category, research that separates the three has found that bisexual people consistently report higher rates of sexual victimization, coercion, abuse, and assault (Balsam et al. 2005; Ford and Soto-Marquez 2015; Freedner, Freed, Yang and Austin 2002; Walters et al. 2013). The 2010 NISVS, for example, found that 74.9% of bisexual women reported lifetime experiences of sexual violence compared to 46.4% of lesbian women and 43.3% of heterosexual women (Walters et al. 2013). Additionally, bisexual people tend to report more severe victimization and greater rates of revictimization (Heidt, Marx and Gold 2005; Hequembourg, Livingston and Parks 2013).

Sexual assault and rape lead to a number of negative psychological, physical, and interpersonal outcomes that include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and poor self-esteem (Perilloux, Duntley and Buss 2012; Rees, Silove and Chey 2011). Queer victims tend to report experiencing more negative outcomes after victimization (Walters et al. 2013). Bisexual women in particular have more negative outcomes and experience greater difficulty in recovering from a sexual assault than other populations (Walters et al. 2013; Sigurvinsdottir and Ullman 2015; Sigurvinsdottir and Ullman 2016). Social reactions to disclosure of an assault can have a significant impact on a victim's subsequent well-being, particularly negative reactions like victim blame.

Victim Blame

The term "victim blaming" was initially coined in Ryan's (1971) book on racism, but the term has since been commonly used in the context of sexual assault. Feldman, Ullman, and Dunkel-Schetter (1998) explain that observers sometimes react to victims of a sexual assault by blaming the victim for their own assault, and argue that this behavior may be the result of an attempt by observers to reduce the feelings of discomfort and fear that a victim's experience engenders. This blame behavior is intimately linked to the concept of rape myths, "defined as prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (Burt 1980:217). Some myths, like "in the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation," directly blame a victim for their rape (Burt 1980: 223). Others, like "rapists are sex-starved, insane, or both," lessen the perpetrator's guilt by excusing or diminishing their actions (Burt 1980: 217). This makes it clear that rape myths and victim blame are closely intertwined. A consistent finding in sexual assault research has been that higher levels of rape myth acceptance (RMA) correlate with increased victim blame (Ayala, Kotary and Hetz 2015; Clarke and Lawson 2009; Clarke and Stermac 2011; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014). RMA is in turn influenced by racism, sexism, homophobia, ageism, classism, and religious intolerance (Asoved and Long 2006; Kassing, Beesley and Frey 2005), which neatly demonstrates one of the ways in which certain observer characteristics can influence victim blame (see Factors Influencing Victim Blame- Observer Characteristics for more). RMA alone, however, does not fully explain victim blame behavior. To better understand the mechanisms driving victim blame and RMA, it is important to understand two major theories of victim blame. Before exploring theories of victim blame and relevant factors

influencing blame attribution, it is first important to understand the effects of victim blame.

Effects of Victim Blame

Ultimately, victim blaming is a form of secondary victimization. Victim blaming responses to disclosure of an assault have a direct negative impact on victim well-being, and serve to both worsen the physical, mental, and social consequences of an assault *and* to increase the likelihood of alcohol and substance abuse, anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidal ideations (Campbell, Dworkin and Cabral 2009; Ullman and Peter-Hagene 2014). The reactions of specific parties to a victim's disclosure can also have special impacts. Negative reactions and victim blame on the part of police, for example, can affect victim's emotional well-being, hope for their case's outcome, the actual strength of their case, and even the likelihood that their case will be prosecuted (Greeson, Campbell and Fehler-Cabral 2016; Patterson 2010, 2011). Positive social reactions can mitigate some of the negative outcomes of an assault and prevent the harms of negative social reactions (Brewin, Andrews and Valentine 2000; Littleton, Horsley, John and Nelson 2007; Ozer, Best, Lipsey and Weiss 2003). This makes the study of victim blame and its causes and related factors especially important, as understanding the factors that influence victim blaming behaviors can make it possible to take steps to educate people (particularly service providers likely to receive a disclosure, like police officers or medical personnel) on how to respond to a victim's disclosure without revictimizing them. The first step towards this goal, clearly, is understanding the reasons people victim blame.

Theories of Victim Blame

Two theories on victim blame have been widely used to establish a framework for victim blame research. These two theories are defensive attribution theory and just world theory.

Defensive Attribution Theory

Defensive attribution theory (Shaver 1970) outlines ways in which observers can protect themselves from the discomfort and fear created by interacting with and hearing the stories of victims. This process involves harm avoidance and blame avoidance behaviors. In harm avoidance, observers who perceive themselves as similar to a victim shift blame away from the victim in order to effectively protect themselves from harms (like victim blame). In blame avoidance, observers who perceive themselves as likely to be victimized shift blame away from the victim to avoid being blamed themselves *should the feared victimization occur* (Shaw and McMartin 1973). Essentially the distinction between the two is the motivator: in harm avoidance the motivator is identification with the victim, while in blame avoidance the motivator is perceived likelihood of similar victimization (though it *should* be noted that identification with a victim may increase perceived likelihood of victimization). Both of these processes are guided by a common set of factors: the observer's identification with a victim or perpetrator and the observer's perception of the likelihood that they themselves could be similarly victimized. Consistent support has been found for this theory (Anderson 2007; Amacker and Littleton 2013; Bell, Kuriloff and Lottes 1994; Gilmartin-Zena 1983; Grubb and Turner 2012; Haywood and Swank 2008; Muller, Caldwell and Hunter 1994; Olsen-Fulero and Fulero 1997; Rogers, Lowe and Reddington 2016; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014). One of the

things this research will explore, then, is the possibility that observer sexuality (and particularly observer bisexuality) interacts with or influences identification with a victim or perpetrator and so changes the ways in which an observer attributes blame. The possible effects of sexuality on victim blame will be discussed in the Victim Blame and Sexuality section.

Shaver's (1970) theory suggests two variables of interest that will be studied in this research. The first is victim similarity, a measure of how similar an observer perceives themselves to be to the victim in a sexual assault. Heightened levels of victim similarity may lead to increased identification with the victim, or to a greater perceived likelihood of similar victimization. Per defensive attribution theory, both of these outcomes should lead to lower levels of victim blame. Research has borne out this hypothesis (Amacker and Littleon 2013; Bell et al. 1994; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014). The second is victim empathy. Because empathy implies a fundamental understanding of another's situation (as opposed to sympathy, which only implies pity for another's misfortune), empathy can usually be considered a function of identification with the victim. Defensive attribution theory would therefore suggest that higher levels of empathy for a victim should lead to lower levels of victim blame. This has also been generally borne out by research (Muller et al. 1994; Olsen-Fulero and Fulero 1997), though a few studies have questioned the role of empathy in victim blame (e.g. Coller and Resick 1987).

Just World Theory

While defensive attribution theory will provide the main framework for a great deal of this current work, it is also important to consider a second major theory of victim

blame: just world theory. Lerner (1980) explains that belief in a just world is a coping mechanism that allows people to avoid the fear that comes with being faced with a victim of some unfortunate circumstance by enabling observers to attribute the victim's suffering to some failing of their character or in their past. In doing so, the non-victim is able to create a narrative wherein the victim "deserved" their suffering. This allows the non-victim to clearly identify ways to avoid similar suffering or reasons that they themselves do not deserve to suffer, which reassures them that they will not suffer the same way. This entire process hinges on belief in a just world that delivers suffering only to those who deserve it.

Jones and Aronson (1973; cited in Lerner 1980) applied this theory to victim blame in cases of sexual assault by comparing married or virginal victims to divorcees. It was found that participants recommended harsher punishments for the perpetrators who assaulted the more respectable victims (the married or virginal women) than for those who assaulted the divorcees (Jones and Aronson 1973). This suggests that participants were operating on a just world belief, as they indicated that the rape of the less respectable victim was more acceptable. Despite these early findings, overall support for just world theory is somewhat limited, and researchers have concluded that this theory alone is not sufficient to explain victim blame (Grubb and Harrower 2008; Hammond, Berry and Rodriguez, 2011; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014).

Just world theory and defensive attribution theory are not mutually exclusive. It is possible that just world beliefs may guide the cognitive harm avoidance and blame avoidance behaviors described by defensive attribution theory. For example, an observer who identifies with a victim of a sexual assault may be prompted to emphasize the

victim's innocence as a blame avoidance strategy. Alternately, an observer who identifies with a perpetrator may emphasize the victim's promiscuity to paint her as deserving of her assault and thereby shift blame away from the perpetrator. This possible interaction makes just world theory relevant to the current research, which is why this brief discussion was included.

Factors Influencing Victim Blame

Traditionally, research into attributions of blame in cases of sexual assault has focused on four variable categories: victim characteristics (e.g. Clarke and Stermac 2011; Grubb and Turner 2012), perpetrator characteristics (e.g. Black and Gold 2008; Burris and Rempel 2012), assault characteristics (e.g. Basow and Minieri 2011; Ben-David and Schneider 2005), and observer characteristics (e.g. Angelone, Mitchell, and Smith 2016; Bell, Kuriloff, and Lottes 1994). Each of these four categories is discussed in more detail below, as an understanding of the diverse variables that influence victim blame is highly relevant to the design and purpose of this research. The variable of greatest significance, sexuality, will be discussed in more detail in its own section.

Victim Characteristics

A variety of victim characteristics have been found to influence the extent to which a victim is considered culpable for their own assault. Race, for example, interacts with other factors to influence attributions of blame (Dupuis and Clay 2013; Foley, Evancic, Karnik, King and Parks 1995; Jimenez and Abreu 2003; Maeder, Yamamoto and Saliba 2015). Male victims tend to receive more blame, while perpetrators who assault male victims are generally considered less culpable (Anderson and Lyons 2005;

Burt and DeMello 2002). Socially-supported victims, or victims with good social reputations, tend to receive less blame, while victims with a bad social reputation receive more blame (Anderson and Lyons 2005; Cohn, Dupuis and Brown 2009). Perhaps as a result of the effect of social reputation and support, victims who have been assaulted previously also receive more blame (Calhoun, Selby and Warring 1976; Williams, Porter and Smith 2016).

In addition to the above factors, some special attention has been paid to victim characteristics like appearance, substance use, and resistance. This special attention is warranted because these factors are common elements of rape myths. Victims who are considered conventionally attractive, and especially thin victims, receive more blame than unattractive or overweight victims (Calhoun, Selby, Cann and Keller 1978; Clarke and Lawson 2009; Clarke and Stermac 2011). Victims who are provocatively dressed or otherwise sexually objectified also receive more blame (Cassidy and Hurrell 1995; Maurer and Robinson 2008). Willing alcohol use on the part of the victim increases victim blame, but involuntary alcohol or drug consumption instead increase perpetrator blame (Angelone, Mitchell and Pilafova 2007; Angelone, Mitchell and Smith 2016; Grubb and Turner 2012; Maurer and Robinson 2008). Finally, active resistance on the part of the victim leads to increased victim credibility, lowered victim culpability, and increased perpetrator culpability (Angelone, Mitchell and Grossi 2015; Angelone et al. 2016; Black and Gold 2008; Cohn et al. 2009).

Perpetrator Characteristics

Less research has focused on perpetrator characteristics, but certain impactful factors have still been identified. Perpetrators of lower socioeconomic status receive more

blame from male observers, as do perpetrators with a bad social reputation (Black and Gold 2008; Cohn et al. 2009). Conversely, perpetrators who have their images 'softened' by a flaw like sexual dysfunction may be viewed as less culpable (Burris and Rempel 2012). A perpetrator's gender does not seem to affect perpetrator blame, but may influence the blame attributed to the victim of an assault. Typically, victims of female perpetrators will receive more blame (Davies, Pollard and Archer 2006; Gerber, Cronin and Steigman 2004).

Assault Characteristics

The type and context of an assault also impact blame. For example, victims are blamed more and rapes are considered more justifiable when a male perpetrator paid for an expensive date prior to the assault (Basow and Minieri 2011). In general, a victim will be blamed more for their assault if they know the perpetrator beforehand. Victims of stranger rapes are blamed less than victims of acquaintance, date, or marital rapes (Areh Mesko and Umek 2009; Bell et al. 1994; Ben-David and Schneider 2005; Bridges and McGrail 1989). Additionally, victims of sexual assault situations where the victim involuntarily consumed drugs or alcohol (i.e. a situation where the perpetrator used date rape drugs) receive less blame (Angelone et al. 2007).

Observer Characteristics

Last but not least, researchers have considered the role observer characteristics play in attributions of blame. The observer is any person who assigns blame after witnessing or learning about a sexual assault. Age, education, and race all affect attributions of blame (Kassing, Beesley and Frey 2005; Jimenez and Abreu 2003; Koo,

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Stephens, Lindgren and George 2012). Gender plays a significant role in blame attribution, with men consistently blaming victims more than women (Acock and Ireland 1983; Anderson and Lyons 2005; Angelone et al. 2016; Bell et al. 1994; Black and Gold 2008; Calhoun et al. 1976; White and Kurpius 2002). Some research suggests that these differences may be driven by gender role attitudes, as traditionalist gender attitudes and sexism have been found to increase victim blame and rape myth acceptance while decreasing perpetrator blame (Acock and Ireland 1983; Anderson and Lyons 2005; Angelone et al. 2015; Angelone, Mitchell and Lucente 2012; Angelone et al. 2016; Ben-David and Schneider 2005; White and Kurpius 2002; White and Yamawaki 2009). Other observer attitudes like rape myth acceptance (RMA) also play a role in blame (Ayala, Kotary and Hetz 2015; Clarke and Lawson 2009; Clarke and Stermac 2011; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014). Finally, some work has shown that perceived similarity to the victim or perpetrator may cause observers to attribute blame away from the party they identify with (Bell et al. 1994; Donovan 2007; Fulero and DeLara 1976; Grubb and Harrower 2008, 2009). This provides strong support for Shaver's (1970) defensive attribution theory.

Victim Blame and Sexuality

The role of sexuality as a victim characteristic has been thoroughly investigated. Homosexual victims are typically accorded more blame than heterosexual victims, with gay male victims especially likely to receive increased blame (Daugherty and Esper 1998; Davies, Austen and Rogers 2011; Davies and Boden 2012; Davies and Hudson 2011; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014). The role of observer sexuality, on the other hand, is understudied. Recent vignette research, featuring a female victim, has found that

gay men blame victims significantly more and have significantly higher levels of RMA

than heterosexual men, heterosexual women, and lesbian women (Diamond-Welch et al.,

2017). This is in line with Schulze and Koon-Magnin's (2017) findings that queer people

who identify as gay victim blame at higher rates than those who identify specifically as

'queer' (which, when used as an identity label, typically indicates an identity that is more

radical, politicized, and deconstructive of gender and sexuality norms). What makes

Schulze and Koon-Magnin's (2017) work particularly interesting is that it seems to

suggest that people with more radical and deconstructive identities victim blame less,

which may suggest that bisexual people (as people with an identity that is more

deconstructive of gender and sexuality norms than monosexuality is) may victim blame

less than even homosexual people.

Yet two studies suggest that heterosexual male observers make more anti-victim

judgements than any other group and that gay men victim blame similarly to heterosexual

women (Davies and Hudson 2011; Davies and McCartney 2003). These results seem

surprising in light of research with heterosexual populations that has highlighted the

positive correlation between homophobia, rape myth acceptance, and victim blame (e.g.

Anderson 2004). Yet, when the research is examined more closely, it becomes clear that

homophobia plays a role specifically in blame attributed to male and gay male victims

(Anderson 2004; Burt and DeMello 2002; White and Yamawaki 2009). Davies and

Hudson's (2011) and Davies and McCartney's (2003) work studied judgements of an

acquaintance rape involving a male perpetrator and male victim (a key difference from

this work, which studies reactions to the male-perpetrated acquaintance rape of a female

victim). Additionally, because they were studying the assault of a male victim, the

researchers utilized a male rape myth scale. Finally, both studies intentionally excluded bisexual people from their samples, and their sample was limited to people present at general bars and gay bars in northern England. The generalizability of the work is therefore limited.

Continued exploration of sexuality and victim blame is not only important because victim blame can have a profound impact on victim health (as discussed above). It is also important because the field of criminology has historically played a role in labeling members of the queer community as deviants, sinners, criminals, or perverts (Woods 2015). Moreover, the field is still plagued by heteronormative bias (a bias which favors and ascribes normality to heterosexual people and heterosexuality generally; Ball 2016; Panfil and Miller 2015). Such bias is highly problematic because it creates a rigid framework that strictly divides people into queer and non-queer categories without acknowledging the diversity of sexuality and gender expression that can be found even within heterosexual communities. Additionally, failure to address heteronormative bias often leads to the denial of queer people's agency in the criminal justice system. Within victim blame research, for example, queer people are often assigned only the passive role of victim (e.g. van der Bruggen and Grubb, 2014). This makes it clear that the queering of criminology is necessary and important, and when it comes to sexual assault research this queering *must* include a focus on bisexuality.

Bisexual people are (or at least should be) of special interest in sexual assault research because the previously-discussed high rates of sexual assault in the bisexual community may make bisexual observers more aware of and sympathetic to the challenges faced by sexual assault victims and thereby reduce victim blame tendencies. It

is even possible that those high rates might make bisexual people more likely to identify with the victim of a sexual assault or more likely to perceive themselves as at risk for being assault, and thereby decrease the likelihood of victim blame per defensive attribution theory (Shaver, 1970). However, there are also two additional reasons a focus on bisexuality in this work is relevant and necessary: the hypersexualization of the bisexual community and the general trend in academia towards bisexual invisibility and erasure.

Because attraction to one gender is considered the norm in most modern societies, and particularly in the United States, bisexual people (who violate this norm) are often stereotyped and portrayed in popular media as being highly sexual, promiscuous, kinky, non-monogamous, diseased, and depraved (Barker, Richards, Jones, Bowes-Catton, Plowman, Yockney, and Morgan, 2012a; Eliason, 2001; McLean, 2008; Monro 2014). This stereotype is relevant to the current research because the sexualization of a victim is a common element of victim blame and rape myths. As previously discussed, victims who are portrayed as highly sexualized or dressed provocatively tend to receive more blame (Cassidy and Hurrell 1995; Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, and Puvia 2013; Maurer and Robinson 2008; Schult and Schneider 1991). Many rape myths, including some of those in the RMA scale, explicitly involve sexualization of the victim (Burt 1980; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994, 1995). Following defensive attribution theory (Shaver 1970), it is possible that the hypersexualization faced by the bisexual community may make them more likely to reject the similar sexualization of rape victims and thereby reduce the RMA and victim blame scores of bisexual participants.

One of the other challenges faced by members of the bisexual community is bisexual invisibility. In day-to-day life, bisexual people often feel invisible because it is usually assumed that (for example) a bisexual man dating a man is gay while a bisexual man dating a woman is straight (Barker et al. 2012a; Ochs 1996). On the institutional scale, bisexual invisibility means that bisexual people are highly underrepresented in media, policy and legislation, queer communities, and in academia (Barker et al. 2012a; Barker et al. 2012b). Within academia, much research has treated bisexuality as merely a midway point between heterosexual and homosexual, attempted to demonstrate that sexuality is dichotomous and that bisexuality does not exist, or simply mixed bisexual people in with homosexual people in order to create a lesbian, gay, and bisexual ("LGB") sample usually dominated by lesbian women and gay men (Barker et al. 2012b). This approach erases bisexual people from research samples. Though there have been improvements in recent years (Ochs 2011), this invisibility means that surprisingly little is known about bisexuality today. Because of this, any research focusing on bisexual people serves to help close a longstanding gap in academic literature that spans multiple fields. Criminology is no exception. At the time of this writing I have been unable to find a single article on victim blame that accounts for bisexual (rather than broad "LGB") perspectives on sexual assault. This work, therefore, will help to begin closing a current and significant gap in the sexual assault literature left by decades of bisexual erasure.

METHODOLOGY

Participant Demographics

This work combined data newly gathered from bisexual participants with data previously gathered from monosexual participants by Diamond-Welch et al (2017). The monosexual data were collected about a year and a half before the bisexual data were collected, but both datasets were collected using near-identical sampling (see Procedures). This created a sample of 207 participants. Of these, 34 (16.4%) were heterosexual males, 37 (17.9%) were heterosexual females, 27 (13.0%) were gay males, 35 (16.9%) were lesbian females, 34 (16.4%) were bisexual males, and 40 (19.3%) were bisexual females. All participants can be described as cisgender (meaning that their gender identity matches their gender assigned at birth; see Manipulation and Identity Checks, below).

Overall, 112 participants (54.1%) were female. The remainder (n=95; 45.9%) were male. The average age of the sample was 35.51 years (SD=10.82 years). The majority of participants (72.0%; n=149) identified themselves as white, while 18 (8.7%) identified as black, 12 (5.8%) identified as Asian, eight (3.9%) identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, and 4 (1.9%) identified as Hispanic. A further 15 participants (7.2%) identified with two or more races, while one (0.5%) chose not to answer. Comparing these demographics to US Census data (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016), it becomes clear that white, black, and Hispanic people are slightly underrepresented, while American Indians/Alaskan Natives and bi- or multi-racial people are overrepresented. Just over half of the participants (52.2%, n=108) had completed a Bachelor's degree, and the supermajority (87.2%, n=181) had completed at least some college. Given that the

Census indicates that only about 30.3% of the US population has a Bachelor's degree or more education (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2016), this sample is clearly more highly educated than the general population.

Materials

Vignette

The text of the vignette, which was the same for all participants, was as follows:

> "Jessica is a 35 year-old heterosexual female. She recently broke up with her long-term boyfriend but is now starting to see David – a nice man whom she really likes. She works in a computer security company.
>
> John is also a 35 year-old and works at the computer security company with Jessica. One night they have to stay late to deal with a computer virus outbreak. By 10 PM they are the only ones left in the building.
>
> John approached Jessica and started rubbing her shoulders. Jessica was a bit uncomfortable with the physical touch, but didn't say anything. Instead, Jessica froze to show that the touch was not welcomed. John ignored this and started running his hands down Jessica's chest. Jessica told John to stop and to let her leave. John responded by getting angry and slapping Jessica across her face. John then pinned Jessica's arms down. Jessica kept yelling at John to stop, but John pulled down Jessica's pants and underwear and proceeded to have sex with her. When he finished, John got up and left."

Diamond-Welch et al.'s survey was slightly modified in this work. In order to verify the realism of the vignette, participants were asked to rate the believability of the vignette and the likelihood that such a scenario could occur in real life. While these questions were only answered by bisexual participants (n=74), 60.8% (n=45) rated the vignette "Completely Believable." When it came to likelihood of occurring in real life, 59.5% (n=44) rated the scenario "Very Likely." Overall, 94.6% (n=70) thought the situation was believable to some degree and 91.9% (n=68) thought the scenario was likely to some degree. This indicates that participants viewed the vignette as a realistic portrayal of sexual assault, which in turn indicates that the participant's responses to the vignette can likely be considered representative of their reactions to a real sexual assault.

Measures

Assessment of Victim

In order to assess participants' reactions to the victim in the vignette (and specifically their victim blame tendencies, one of the key dependent variables in this work), I used the ten-item victim blame scale developed by Feldman, Ullman, and Dunkel-Schetter (1998; see Appendix A). The scale, which had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.931, was used to create a composite variable with scores ranging from 10 to 50. Higher scores indicate greater levels of victim blame.

I also used the empathy and similarity scales designed by Haegerich and Bottoms (2000). These variables were included because defensive attribution theory (Shaver 1970) suggests that both may influence attributions of blame. The empathy scale consisted of five items (see Appendix B) and had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.858, and was used to create

a composite victim empathy variable with a range of 5 to 25. Higher scores on this scale indicate greater empathy for the victim. The three-item similarity scale (see Appendix C) had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.858 and was used to create a composite variable for victim similarity, which had a range of 3 to 15. Higher scores indicate greater perceived similarity to the victim.

Rape Myth Acceptance

RMA is another key variable in this research because RMA can influence attributions of blame. It was therefore included in this work, both to account for that influence and to provide insight into differences in RMA across sexuality groups. Participants' rape myth acceptance (RMA) was measured using a 19-item Likert scale (see Appendix D). The scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.959 and was used to create a composite variable for RMA with a range of 6 to 114. Higher scores on this variable indicate greater RMA.

Assessment of Perpetrator

Because Shaver's (1970) defensive attribution theory highlights the importance of empathy for and similarity to both victim *and* perpetrator, I also used the Haegerich and Bottoms (2000) empathy and similarity scales (see Appendices B and C) to test participants' reactions to the perpetrator in the vignette. For perpetrator empathy, the empathy scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.921 and was used to create a composite variable with a range 5 to 25. For perpetrator similarity, the similarity scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.791 and was used to create a composite variable with a range of 3

to 15. Higher scores on the composite variables indicate greater empathy for and similarity to the perpetrator, respectively.

Additionally, I utilized Gudjonsson and Singh's (1989) Gudjonsson Blame Attribution Inventory (GBAI) in order to provide more insight into the ways in which participants perceived the perpetrator's guilt. The GBAI uses three subscales to measure the extent to which participants blame or excuse a perpetrator's actions (see Appendix E). The first subscale, which contains 15 items, measures how guilty participants think the perpetrator should feel. The second subscale, which also contains 15 items, measures how much participants blame external elements for the perpetrator's actions. Finally, the third subscale, which contains 5 items, measures how much participants blame the perpetrator's actions on their mental state. The guilt subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.902 and was used to create a composite variable with a range of 5 to 75. The external elements subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.877 and was used to create a composite variable with a range of 5 to 75. The mental state subscale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.626 and was used to create a composite variable with a range of 5 to 25. (Note: this Cronbach's alpha is low, but because the subscale has been tested and used in other research the results were still considered in this project.) Higher scores on the composite variables indicate greater belief that the perpetrator should feel guilty, greater belief that the perpetrator's actions were caused by external elements, and greater belief that the perpetrator's actions can be blamed on mental state, respectively.

Assessment of Incident

In order to assess the participants' perceptions of the vignette scenario, I asked participants to indicate the extent to which the scenario was rape. This offered another

opportunity to understand how the participants evaluate incidents of rape. This was done using a scale question where 1 meant the scenario "definitely was not a rape" and 10 meant the scenario "definitely was a rape." This variable will be referred to in this paper as Was Rape.

Manipulation and Identity Checks

The survey included eight manipulation checks meant to ensure that the participant remembered details like the gender and sexuality of the victim and to check that the participant was paying attention to the questions they were answering. While gender and sexuality were not manipulated in this project, future research using this dataset will examine these variables. in order to ensure that participants were paying attention to the vignette, any participant who answered even one manipulation check incorrectly was removed from the data sample. Identity checks were also used to restrict the sample to cisgender participants. Participants were removed if their gender identity and gender assigned at birth ("sex") did not match or if they identified themselves as transgender. Participants were also removed if their gender identity and sexuality label did not match (e.g. if a participant identified as both lesbian and male). A total of 96 participants were removed for failing these checks: eight heterosexual males, eight heterosexual females, 21 gay males, 24 lesbian females, 21 bisexual males, and 14 bisexual females, leaving the previously-described sample of 207.

Procedures

The new data gathered in this study were collected using the same methods as Diamond-Welch et al. (2017). Participants were recruited on Amazon's MTurk website,

an online marketplace where employers or researchers can post small Human Intelligence Tasks (HITs) for workers to complete. This site has been found to be a reliable and extremely useful tool for data collection (Hunzaker 2014; Kuwabara and Sheldon 2012; Mason and Suri 2011; Shank 2015). The data previously collected by Diamond-Welch et al. (2017) was collected using HITs targeting heterosexual men, heterosexual women, gay men, and lesbian women. The data gathered for this research was collected using HITs targeting bisexual men and bisexual women. Each HIT required that the participant identify within the population targeted by the HIT, be a United States Citizen, and be over the age of eighteen. The advertisement for the HIT also contained warnings that the HIT contained adult content and that the survey was about perceptions of sexual assault incidents.

When participants clicked on the HIT, they were directed to a SurveyMonkey survey. The first page of the survey was an informed consent page, the completion of which was required to continue participation. After completing the informed consent page, participants read the sexual assault vignette and completed a survey containing the measures described above. At the end of the survey, participants were directed to create and submit a unique code that they could copy into mTurk to receive their $2.00 participation payment.

RESULTS

As this was exploratory research, I did not establish formal hypotheses. In order to explore the relationship between sexuality, gender, and victim blame, I used a four-step analysis for each variable of interest. I used two nonparametric[1] tests: the Mann-Whitney U and the Kruskal-Wallis H. The Mann-Whitney U test is a test for finding significance between two groups (similar to a T-test), while the Kruskal-Wallis test looks for comparisons within multiple groups (a process roughly analogous to an ANOVA). First, I used Mann-Whitney U tests to compare male and female participants, in order to see if my results were consistent with previous research and revealed any significant relationship between gender and response to the assault. These results can be found in Table 1. Next I used the same test to compare the heterosexual and non-heterosexual (homosexual and bisexual) populations and the bisexual and monosexual samples to see if there were any differences between these two key sexuality 'types.' These results can also be found in Table 1. Following that step, I compared the heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual groups in order to evaluate whether or not bisexuality resulted in different responses. For this stage, I used Kruskal-Wallis H tests. The results of this test can be found in Table 2. Finally, I compared each gender/sexuality group to every other gender/sexuality group in order to try and identify which groups were driving the

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[1] Note: nonparametic tests are used for non-normal results, and therefore use medians rather than means. Because of this, medians have been reported in this paper's tables instead of means. In some cases, two groups with the same median are reported as significantly different. This is because the test uses median ranks, and should be taken to mean that significance exists but effect size is small.

differences discovered in the first three steps. I utilized Mann-Whitney U analyses in this final step, as I was concerned that the multiple comparisons made in the Kruskal-Wallis H test with Bonferroni correction would actually obscure significant cross-group differences. These results can be found in Table 3.

Comparison Summaries

The first note that should be made about these results is that median scores for every demographic group fell on the victim-friendly side of the midpoint for every tested variable (with the exception of victim similarity). By victim-friendly I mean that the side of the scale the medians fell on directly implies or correlates with lower levels of victim blame. For example, all groups scored 20.0 or below on Feldman et al.'s (1998) victim blame scale, which was used to create a composite range of 10-50 and therefore had a midpoint of 30.0. Therefore, all samples scored relatively low on victim blame. A similar trend was found for all variables but victim similarity. This means that while some samples may have scored significantly differently from others on certain variables, *all* generally exhibited victim-friendly attitudes. In other words, conclusions that a certain group is less victim-friendly should not be taken to mean that that group is *unfriendly* to victims. It merely means that the group was not *as* victim-friendly as another group. Victim similarity, which had a midpoint of 9.0, was the only exception. Where the findings for this variable have been reported, they have been framed so as to make it clear where on the variable scale each sample group fell.

Significant differences were found between male and female participants for every variable except external elements and Was Rape. In every case where significance

was found, male participants exhibited significantly less victim-friendly views than female participants (see Table 1).

There were no significant differences between the heterosexual and non-heterosexual groups for any variable of interest (see Table 1). This suggests that sexuality as a binary variable with heterosexuality and non-heterosexuality as the only options has no influence on responses to a sexual assault. When I compared the bisexual and monosexual groups, the only significant difference was in victim blame (see Table 1). Monosexual people were significantly more likely to blame the victim than bisexual people (p=0.012).

Table 1: Mann-Whitney U Analyses* of Gender, Heterosexuality, and Bisexuality

	Descriptives Range N Median	Gender Comparisons Median N Mann-Whitney U		Heterosexual-Non-heterosexual Comparisons Median N Mann-Whitney U		Bisexual-Monosexual Comparisons Median N Mann-Whitney U	
	Overall	Male	Female	Heterosexual	Non-heterosexual	Bisexual	Monosexual
Assessment of Victim							
Victim Empathy	20.0 202 19.0	17.0 93	20.0 109	18.0 69	19.0 133	19.0 73	18.0 129
		3403.5		4171.5		5105.0	
Victim Similarity	12.00 204 9.0	8.0 94	11.0 110	8.0 71	10.0 133	10.0 73	9.0 131
		3284.0		4009.5		5402.5	
Victim Blame	35.0 203 16.0	18.0 92	15.0 111	17.0 71	16.0 132	15.0 71	18.0 132
		6252.5		4467.5		3691.5	
Rape Myth Acceptance							
RMA	88.0 198 25.0	32.5 92	23.0 106	25.5 70	25.0 128	23.0 71	27.0 127
		6465.0		4223.5		4123.0	
Assessment of Perpetrator							
Perpetrator Empathy	20.00 204 5.0	7.0 94	5.0 110	5.0 71	5.0 133	5.0 74	5.0 130
		6265.5		4906.5		4322.0	
Perpetrator Similarity	9.0 203 3.0	3.0 94	3.0 109	3.0 70	3.0 133	3.0 73	3.0 130
		6104.0		4657.7		4224.5	
GBAI (guilt)	41.0 201 68.0	66.0 93	69.0 108	69.0 71	67.0 130	67.0 73	68.0 128
		4219.5		4865.0		5088.5	
GBAI (external)	33.0 198 18.0	18.0 91	18.0 107	16.0 70	18.0 128	16.0 71	18.0 127
		5548.5		3778.0		4387.5	
GBAI (mental)	12.0 207 9.0	9.0 95	7.0 112	9.0 72	9.0 135	7.5 74	9.0 133
		6697.0		4780.5		4217.0	
Assessment of Incident							
Was Rape	7.0 207 10.0	10.0 95	10.0 112	10.0 72	10.0 135	10.0 74	10.0 133
		4849.5		5033.5		5096.5	

*shaded statistics are significant at the p=0.05 level

When the heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual groups were compared (see Table 2), the Kruskal-Wallis H analysis revealed a significant difference between the three groups for victim blame (p=0.003). Dunn's (1964) post hoc analysis with Bonferroni correction revealed that the bisexual and homosexual groups differed significantly (p=0.002) such that homosexual participants blamed the victim more than bisexual participants. Significance was also found for external elements (p=0.049). This

time the post hoc analysis showed the significant difference was between the heterosexual and homosexual groups, with the homosexual group attributing more blame to external elements than the heterosexual group.

Table 2: Kruskal-Wallis H Test and Post Hoc Analysis Comparing Sexuality Groups

	Kruskal-Wallis H χ^2 (df) N	Post Hoc Analyses for Differences Between Groups Median N		
		Heterosexuals	Bisexuals	Homosexuals
Assessment of Victim				
Victim Empathy	1.379 (20 202	18.0 69	19.0 73	19.0 60
Victim Similarity	3.642 (2) 204	8.0 71	10.0 73	9.5 60
Victim Blame	11.489 (2)* 203	17.0 71	**15.0** **71**	**20.0** **61**
Rape Myth Acceptance				
RMA	3.168 (2) 198	25.5 70	23.0 71	29.0 57
Assessment of Perpetrator				
Perpetrator Empathy	1.851 (2) 204	5.0 71	5.0 74	5.0 59
Perpetrator Similarity	3.280 (2)	3.0 70	3.0 73	3.0 60
GBAI (guilt)	3.318 (2) 201	69.0 71	67.0 73	67.0 57
GBAI (external)	6.022 (2)* 198	**16.0** **70**	16.0 71	**18.0** **57**
GBAI (mental)	4.776 (2) 207	9.0 72	7.5 74	9.0 61
Assessment of Incident				
Was Rape	2.305 (2) 207	10.0 72	10.0 74	10.0 61

* indicates significance at the p=0.05 level
bold boxes are significantly different from one another

A number of significant differences were found between the six gender/sexuality groups (see Table 3). Males generally displayed less victim-friendly attitudes than females, but significant differences between males of different sexualities in certain variables suggest that sexuality may interact with gender such that males of all sexualities are less victim-friendly than females and that males of different sexualities vary in their victim-friendliness. This effect will be discussed further in the Discussion section.

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	Descriptives Range N Median	Gender/Sexuality Group Median N					
	Overall	Heterosexual Male	Heterosexual Female	Bisexual Male	Bisexual Female	Gay Male	Lesbian Female
Assessment of Victim							
Victim Empathy	20.0 202 19.0	16.0 34 *	20.0*+ 35	17.0 33 +	19.5*+ 40	19.0* 27	19.0* 34
Victim Similarity	12.00 204 9.0	7.0 33 *	10.0*+ 37	9.0* 34 +	**11.0*+** **39**	**9.0*** **27**	10.0* 34
Victim Blame	35.0 203 16.0	**17.0*** **33**	5.0* 36	15.5* 32	**14.0*** **39**	23.0 27 *	18.0* 35
Rape Myth Acceptance							
RMA	88.0 198 25.0	31.5 34 +	22.0*+° 35	30.0 32 °	22.0*+° 39	38.0 26 *	23.0 32
Assessment of Perpetrator							
Perpetrator Empathy	20.00 204 5.0	**7.0** **34**	5.0* 36	5.0 34	**5.0*** **40**	10.0 26 *	5.0* 34
Perpetrator Similarity	9.0 203 3.0	3.0 33	3.0* 36	3.0 34	3.0* 39	4.0 27 *	3.0* 34
GBAI (guilt)	41.0 201 68.0	68.0* 34	69.0* 36	69.0* 33	67.0* 40	54.0 26 *	71.0* 32
GBAI (external elements)	33.0 198 18.0	17.0* 32 +	14.0*+ 37	16.0 33	16.5*+ 38	21.0 26 *	18.0 32
GBAI (mental elements)	12.0 207 9.0	9.0 34	7.0* 37	9.0* 34	7.0* 40	10.0 27 *	8.0 35
Assessment of Incident							
Was Rape	7.0 207 10.0	10.0 34	10.0* 37	10.0 34	10.0* 40	10.0 27 *	10.0 35

*, +, and ° indicate significant difference at the p=0.05 from shaded box with matching symbol
bold boxes are significantly different from each other at the p=0.05

Assessment of Victim

Males were significantly less empathetic (p<0.001) to and perceived themselves as significantly less similar (p<0.001) to the victim than females. Both groups displayed low victim blame scores, but males blamed the victim significantly more than females did (p=0.005).

There were no differences between the heterosexual and non-heterosexual

samples for any of the victim assessment variables, or between the bisexual and

monosexual samples for all variables but victim blame. Monosexual people were

significantly more likely than bisexual people to victim blame (p=0.012). Comparison of

the heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual groups revealed no significance for victim

empathy or victim similarity, but a significant difference was found for victim blame

(p=0.003). Dunn's (1964) post hoc analysis with Bonferroni correction revealed that

homosexual participants blamed the victim significantly more (p=0.002) than bisexual

participants.

Heterosexual males were found to be significantly less empathetic to the victim

than heterosexual females (p<0.001), bisexual females (p<0.001), lesbian females

(p=0.008), and gay males (p=0.018). Bisexual males were significantly less empathetic

than bisexual females (p=0.015) and heterosexual females (p=0.017). For similarity,

heterosexual males, who saw themselves as dissimilar to the victim, felt themselves

significantly less similar to the victim than bisexual females (p<0.001), heterosexual

females (p<0.001), lesbian females (p=0.002), bisexual males, (p=0.014), and gay males

(p=0.017). Each of these other groups scored at the midpoint or higher. Bisexual males

were significantly less similar than bisexual females (p=0.002) and heterosexual females

(p=0.039), with bisexual males identifying themselves as neither similar nor dissimilar to

the victim and the females exhibiting higher perceived similarity. Gay males, who scored

on the midpoint for victim similarity with a median of 9.0, were significantly less similar

than bisexual females (p=0.039), who demonstrated relatively high perceived similarity

to the victim. Finally, for victim blame, heterosexual males scored significantly higher

than bisexual females (p=0.025). Gay males, meanwhile, scored significantly higher than *every* other group (heterosexual females, p<0.001; bisexual females, p<0.001; heterosexual males, p=0.004; bisexual males, p=0.007; lesbian female, p=0.013).

Rape Myth Acceptance

Males were significantly more accepting of rape myths than females (p<0.001). There were no significant differences between the heterosexual and non-heterosexual groups, bisexuals and monosexuals, or the heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual groups. Gay males were significantly more accepting of rape myths than heterosexual females (p=0.001) and bisexual females (p=0.001), while heterosexual males were significantly more accepting than bisexual females (p=0.004) and heterosexual females (p=0.008). Finally, bisexual males scored significantly higher than heterosexual females (p=0.016) and bisexual females (p=0.022). Lesbian females did not differ significantly from any group.

Assessment of the Perpetrator

Both males and females displayed little empathy for the perpetrator, but males had significantly more empathy than females did (p=0.004). Scores in both groups were also low for perpetrator similarity, but males still displayed significantly more perceived perpetrator similarity than females (p=0.006). The GBAI scale for guilt revealed that males felt perpetrators should feel significantly less guilty than females did (p=0.049). However, no significant differences were found for the external elements scale. Males scored significantly higher on the mental state scale (p=0.001).

The heterosexual and non-heterosexual groups were not significantly different for any perpetrator assessment variable. There were also no significant differences between the bisexual and monosexual groups for these variables. Comparison of heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual participants found no significance for perpetrator empathy, perpetrator similarity, perpetrator guilt, or mental elements, but significance was found for external elements ($p=0.049$). Dunn's (1964) post hoc analysis with Bonferroni correction revealed that there was a significant difference ($p=0.045$) between the heterosexual and homosexual groups, with homosexuals placing more blame on external elements than heterosexuals.

For perpetrator empathy, heterosexual males scored significantly higher than bisexual females ($p=0.037$). Gay males were significantly more empathetic than bisexual females ($p=0.004$), heterosexual females ($p=0.025$), and lesbian females ($p=0.028$). Similar results were found for perpetrator similarity, where gay males scored significantly higher than bisexual females ($p=0.002$), heterosexual females ($p=0.006$), and lesbian females ($p=0.038$).

On the guilt scale, gay males scored significantly lower than all other gender/sexuality groups (heterosexual females $p=0.004$; bisexual females $p=0.005$; heterosexual males $p=0.009$; bisexual males $p=0.009$; lesbian females $p=0.039$). For external elements, gay males scored significantly higher than heterosexual females ($p=0.004$), bisexual females ($p=0.025$), and heterosexual males ($p=0.038$). Heterosexual males also scored significantly higher than bisexual females ($p= 0.006$) and heterosexual females ($p=0.025$). For mental elements, gay males scored significantly higher than bisexual females ($p=0.001$), heterosexual females ($p=0.003$), and bisexual males

(p=0.048). Heterosexual males also scored significantly higher than bisexual females (p= 0.006) and heterosexual females (p=0.025).

Assessment of Incident

There were no significant differences between males and females, heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, bisexuals and monosexuals, and the heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual groups. All groups felt very strongly that the incident was rape. Only the gender/sexuality group comparisons revealed significant differences in assessments of the incident as rape. Gay males were significantly less likely than heterosexual females (p=0.019) and bisexual females (p=0.032) to identify the incident as rape. However, it is important to highlight the fact that even in these comparisons both groups strongly felt the incident was rape.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to examine whether or not observer sexuality in general (and bisexuality in particular) has an influence on attributions of blame in a case of sexual assault of a heterosexual woman. A number of the results obtained in this study, outlined above, are highly consistent with previous victim blame research. All samples in this research yielded victim-friendly results for every variable but one, but there were variations in the degree of victim-friendliness. Males, as a group, were consistently less victim-friendly than females. This reflects previous findings (Acock and Ireland 1983; Anderson and Lyons 2005; Angelone et al. 2016; Bell et al. 1994; Black and Gold 2008; Calhoun et al. 1976; White and Kurpius 2002), and is consistent with the tenets of defensive attribution theory (Shaver 1970) in that males had less empathy for the victim, more empathy for the perpetrator, and therefore victim blamed significantly more than females. However, there is also a clear sexuality effect for males. While females of different sexualities did not differ significantly from each other for any variable, there were considerable differences between heterosexual, bisexual, and gay males.

Some of these differences provide an apparent challenge to defensive attribution theory. Heterosexual males were significantly less empathetic to and shared less perceived similarity with the victim than both bisexual males and gay males. Given that there were no significant differences between these three groups for perpetrator empathy and similarity, defensive attribution theory (Shaver 1970) would suggest that heterosexual males should subsequently exhibit higher rates of victim blame because they identify less with the victim than gay males. Yet what the data *actually* show is that gay men victim blamed significantly more than any other gender/sexuality group.

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What does this mean for defensive attribution theory? At first glance these results serve as a challenge to the theory in that they suggest that participants who demonstrate less victim empathy (like heterosexual men did relative to gay men) do not necessarily exhibit the highest levels of victim blame (as gay men scored the highest in victim blame). However, the reality is that these results simply make it clear that further research into the ways in which gay males respond to sexual assault is necessary. Specifically, the response of gay males to victims and perpetrators of different sexualities needs to be studied. It may be that gay males victim blame significantly less when the victim is a fellow gay male. If this is the case, then defensive attribution would in fact be supported by the data. Therefore, the results of my study are not sufficient grounds for dismissing defensive attribution theory but do indicate the need for further exploration of the theory as it applies to the queer community. This is especially true when the work of Davies and Hudson (2011) and of Davies and McCartney (2003) is considered. In these studies, which explored the responses of gay males to the sexual assault of a male victim, gay males blamed the victim significantly less than heterosexual males. Most notably, the investigation by Davies and McCartney (2003) featured a gay male victim and found that gay males made the most pro-victim judgements of any studied group. Future research should attempt to replicate these findings using online methodology, rather than sampling people at gay bars, and should seek to expand upon them by including victims of each gender/sexuality group. This will allow for a thorough exploration of how identification with and similarity to a victim may influence an observer's reaction to a sexual assault.

That said, the results of this study can still be explored independently of their relationship to defensive attribution theory. Why do gay males victim blame a

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heterosexual female victim significantly more than any other studied demographic group? Schulze and Koon-Magnin (2017) found that gay respondents were more accepting of rape myths than lesbian women, bisexual participants, and participants who literally identified as "queer" (a result consistent with the results presented in this paper). They also found that respondents who identified themselves as "queer" were significantly less accepting of rape myths than any other group, and suggest that this may be a result of the fact that people who identify as "queer" are less accepting of the gender binary (Schulze and Koon-Magnin 2017). This claim is supported by research that has found that factors like gender-role traditionalism play a role in victim blame behaviors and rape myth acceptance (Acock and Ireland 1983; Anderson and Lyons 2005; Angelone et al. 2015; Angelone, Mitchell and Lucente 2012; Angelone et al. 2016; Ben-David and Schneider 2005; White and Kurpius 2002; White and Yamawaki 2009). This trend may help to explain the results of the current study. While research has found that gay men and heterosexual women can have fulfilling, useful, and positive friendships with one another (Muraco 2006; Russell, Del Priore, Butterfield, and Hill 2013), some work suggests that some members of the gay male community are highly invested in rigid gender boundaries (e.g. Clarkson 2004; further citations below). Traditional masculinity dictates that gay men should be punished and policed because they violate norms of masculine behavior and adopt, to some degree, femininity. Because of this, scholars argue, some gay men reject femininity in an attempt to establish firm boundaries between themselves and women, to escape homophobia, and to gain access to a more stable position in patriarchal society (Clarkson 2004; Forrest 1994; Johnson and Samdahl 2004; Moon 1995; Sánchez and Vilain 2012; Shepperd, Coyle, and Hegarty 2010; Spindelman 2010; Yeung,

Stombler, and Wharton 2006). For example, a gay bar ethnography found that gay men reacted to the presence of lesbian women at a Lesbian Night event not by identifying common ground (homosexuality) but by characterizing lesbians as an unwelcome female 'other' discussed in misogynistic terms in a way that reinforces gender hierarchies even within supposedly inclusive spaces (Johnson and Samdahl 2004). Such investment in gender boundaries could function to prevent gay men from learning about, understanding, or accepting the heterosexual female experience of rape. This could potentially explain the higher rates of victim blame found in my work. However, it is key to remember that gay men did *not* victim blame at a particularly high rate. Instead, they were merely less victim-friendly than other groups. Therefore, even if gay men's investment in rigid gender boundaries leads to increased victim blame, these results cannot and should not be interpreted to mean that gay men are *unfriendly* to heterosexual female victims of sexual assault.

What about bisexual people? Given that bisexual people (and especially bisexual women) are at far greater risk for sexual assault than monosexual people (Balsam et al. 2005; Ford and Soto-Marquez 2015; Freedner et al. 2002; Walters et al. 2013), it would have been reasonable to hypothesize that bisexual people would be more empathetic towards victims of sexual assault than monosexuals and therefore (following defensive attribution theory) would be significantly less likely to victim blame than monosexuals. This was not entirely the case in this study. Instead, bisexuals only differed significantly from monosexuals of the same gender in four parts of my analysis: bisexuals were significantly less likely to victim blame than monosexuals, bisexuals victim-blamed significantly less than homosexuals, bisexual males were significantly more likely the

perceive themselves as similar to the victim than were heterosexual males, and bisexual males were significantly more victim-friendly than gay males when it came to victim blame, perpetrator guilt, and mental elements of perpetrator blame. Bisexual females did not differ significantly from heterosexual females for any variable. This makes it clear that bisexuality does in fact play a limited role in attitudes towards victims of sexual assault.

What is that role, specifically? The easiest way to explain these results is to take them one at a time. First, bisexual men view themselves as more similar to the victim than heterosexual males. This may be the result of a sort of shared sense of oppression, as bisexual males violate patriarchal sexual norms of masculinity in a way that may serve to make them more sympathetic to others who are disadvantaged within the same patriarchy. This conclusion would seem easy to challenge based on the fact that gay men, who also violate sexual norms of masculinity, do not exhibit the same similarity trends, but it has already been explained that (at least some) gay men appear to be highly invested in maintaining rigid boundaries between themselves and women. It is possible that because bisexual men are not interested exclusively in men their interest in rigid boundaries is not present or as pressing. If this is the case, the common ground they share with women as members of marginalized groups may prompt greater perceived similarity. This common ground could also be strengthened if bisexual men perceive themselves as a minority within a minority and therefore are more aware of their own oppression. The significant difference between bisexual and heterosexual men for victim similarity should, per defensive attribution theory, mean that bisexual men blamed the

victim significantly less than heterosexual men. Bisexual men did in fact blame the victim slightly (though not significantly) less than heterosexual men.

There were also interesting differences between bisexual men and gay men. Gay men were significantly less victim-friendly than bisexual men and bisexual women, which suggests that the significant difference between bisexuals and monosexuals for victim blame were likely driven by the gay male sample. Breaking down these results, it becomes clear that gay males victim blame more and excuse the perpetrator more than bisexual men. The possible reasons for this have already been discussed, but for now it is interesting to note that there was no significant difference between these two groups for victim empathy or victim similarity- a result inconsistent with defensive attribution theory. In fact, gay men had slightly (but not significantly) more empathy for the victim than bisexual men. This result is both interesting and difficult to explain, and may suggest a need for future research. Overall, however, it appears that bisexuality, operating as part of an overarching sexuality effect, tends to correlate with slightly more victim-friendly attitudes. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that my research found no significant differences between heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals for victim blame, while Diamond-Welch et al's (2017) work found that non-heterosexuals (specifically, in that work, homosexuals) victim blamed at significantly higher rates than heterosexuals. The only difference between my dataset and Diamond-Welch et al's (2017) dataset is that mine included bisexual people, which suggests that the addition of bisexual people to the dataset lowered the non-heterosexual victim blame rates enough to make the difference between the two groups non-significant.

Another important variable to discuss is RMA, which has been found to be an important component of victim blame (Ayala, Kotary and Hetz 2015; Clarke and Lawson 2009; Clarke and Stermac 2011; van der Bruggen and Grubb 2014). While men demonstrated significantly higher RMA than women, there were no differences in RMA for any other binary comparison or between heterosexuals, bisexuals, and homosexuals. At the gender/sexuality group level, however, there were some differences. Heterosexual, gay, and bisexual men demonstrated significantly higher RMA than heterosexual and bisexual women. Clearly, the important variable at play here is male identity. Yet there is a distinct possibility that this study might not have captured RMA differences based on sexuality. The rape myths identified by Burt (1980) and used in scales like the one in this study are based on highly heteronormative conceptions of sex and sexual assault. Even male rape myth scales tend to rest on highly heteronormative assumptions about male sexuality (Chapleau, Oswald, and Russell 2008). While this certainly does not mean that the mythologies do not accurately reflect assaults involving heterosexual people, this begs the question of whether or not rape mythologies within and about the queer community are significantly different from traditional rape myths.

The potential failings of traditional rape myth scales in queer research serves as evidence for Ball's (2016) argument that queer criminology needs to do more than simply include people who fall outside the cisgender heterosexual norm in data samples. Criminological work itself needs to be queered. By this, I mean that operating within theoretical frameworks and using measures developed through work on and historical used almost exclusively to study cisgender heterosexual populations will not allow researchers to fully understand the queer experience or identity as it relates to crime and

criminal justice. In the short-term, work which focuses on including queer people in data samples can close gaping holes in the literature and provide answers to important questions. Such work also has the potential to point out the flaws in current frameworks and assumptions of mainstream criminology. In the long term, however, it is crucial to assess and reassess items like Burt's (1980) conceptualization of rape myths in order to queer the field of criminology.

Finally, there should be a brief discussion of the female results in this study. Despite the differences between groups of males, there were no significant differences between any of the female groups. This result is interesting in and of itself. One possible interpretation is that sharing a gender identification with a victim may overpower the effects of sexuality on victim blame and rape myth acceptance. To explore this notion further would require additional research (see below for recommended next steps). For now, however, no solid conclusions about this result can be drawn.

There are limitations to this work that need to be acknowledged. First and foremost, the sample sizes used in this work may have limited the statistical power of the analyses conducted. The gay male sample, for example, consisted of only 27 participants. These limited sample sizes are partially the result of strict manipulation check rules, and can be corrected by allowing participants who only failed one or two checks into the sample. Second, the fact that this work only tested responses to a heterosexual female victim limits my ability to draw conclusions about defensive attribution theory because I cannot compare responses of observers of different sexualities to victims of different sexualities. Third (as discussed above), the RMA scales used in this research were highly heteronormative. This may limit the validity of the RMA data collected from queer

populations. Fourth, there is some bias in the sample. Comparing the demographics of my

sample to the US Census, it is clear that my sample is not racially representative of the

US population and that the people in my sample tended to be more highly educated than

the general population. Finally, the bisexual data used in this research was gathered a

year after the monosexual data. This timeline could potentially introduce bias.

Fortunately, these are limitations that future research could correct.

Specifically, an important next step would be to explore how members of

different sexual identities respond to the assault of males and victims of different sexual

identities. This would allow for a much more thorough explanation of how gender

identity and sexuality interact in observers' responses to sexual assaults, for a better

examination of how empathy and similarity are influenced by observer and victim

variables and in turn influence victim blame, and for new insight into how queer people

respond to sexual assaults within their own communities. Additionally, future research

should include male rape myth scales (even when the victim is not a male) in order to

collect more data on how queer people accept or reject rape myths. Researchers should

also find ways to explore queer peoples' rape mythologies and whether or not these

mythologies differ from traditional, heterosexual rape mythologies. Next, a replication of

this study could seek to gather all data within a similar time frame, as the data I used

from Dr. Diamond-Welch et al.'s (2017) work was gathered about a year and a half

before the bisexual data. Such a replication could also improve on this work by including

a measure of perceived likelihood of future victimization. Finally, future research should

consider the possible influences of just world theory in results like these. I could not

consider that theory in my work because my defensive attribution approach meant that I

did not include a measure of just world beliefs in my survey. However, given the possible inconsistencies with defensive attribution theory that were found in these results, considering just world theory could be valuable in explaining queer attributions of blame.

Overall, this study shows that observers' attributions of blame in a case of sexual assault with a female victim are influenced by both gender and sexuality. While there were no significant differences between females of different sexualities, the differences between males of different sexualities and between gay males and every other gender/sexuality group show that sexuality does play a in blame attribution. Bisexuality specifically appears to promote slightly more victim-friendly attitudes in men. Further research is required in order to fully understand the actual influence of and interaction between these variables, but these results ultimately show that a great deal more work needs to be done to include the queer community in sexual assault research.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Victim Blame Scale

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Victim behaved in a very irresponsible manner.					
The incident could have been prevented had *victim* been more assertive or physical in dealing with *perpetrator*.					
The incident could have been prevented had *victim* done more to resist *perpetrator*.					
Victim may have provoked *perpetrator* in some way.					
Victim does not know how to take care of herself.					
Victim appears to be the type that lets herself get into predicaments she cannot handle.					
Victim is too open and trusting of other people, especially where acquaintances are concerned.					
Victim does not seem to be assertive enough.					
Victim seems to be a very irresponsible sort of person.					
Victim seems to be a bad judge of other people and situations, which likely contributed to the incident's occurrence.					

Appendix B: Empathy Scale

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I can really imagine the thoughts running through *victim/perpetrator*'s head.					
I can really feel what *victim/perpetrator* must have been feeling the night of the incident.					
I can experience the same feelings that *victim/perpetrator* experienced.					
I can take the perspective of *victim/perpetrator* and understand why the incident occurred.					
I can really see myself in *victim/perpetrator*'s shoes.					

Appendix C: Similarity Scale

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I think I have a lot of things in common with *victim/perpetrator.*					
I know what it would be like to be *victim/perpetrator.*					
I feel similar to *victim/perpetrator*.					

Appendix D: RMA Scale

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
When women talk and act sexy, they are inviting rape.					
When a woman is raped, she usually did something careless to put herself in that situation.					
Any woman who teases a man sexually and doesn't finish what she started realistically deserves anything she gets.					
Many rapes happen because women lead men on.					
Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.					
In some rape cases, the woman actually wanted it to happen.					
Even though the woman may call it rape, she probably enjoyed it.					
If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say it was a rape.					
A rape probably didn't happen if the woman has no bruises or marks.					
When a woman allows petting to get to a certain point, she is implicitly agreeing to have sex.					
If a woman is raped, often it's because she didn't say "no" clearly enough.					
Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.					
When men rape, it is because of their strong desire for sex.					
It is just part of human nature for men to take sex from women who let their guard down.					
A rapist is more likely to be Black or Hispanic than White.					
Rape mainly occurs on the "bad" side of town.					
Many so-called rape victims are actually women who had sex and "changed their minds" afterwards.					
If a guy pays all the bills, he has the right to sex with his girlfriend whenever he wants.					

Appendix E: GBAI Scales

Guilt

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Perpetrator should feel very ashamed of the incident.					
Perpetrator should be constantly troubled by his conscience for the incident.					
Perpetrator should never forgive himself for the incident.					
Perpetrator should feel no remorse or guilty for the incident. **(reverse coded)**					
Perpetrator should hate himself for the incident.					
Perpetrator would be better off if he gets caught.					
Perpetrator should constantly have the urge to punish himself for the incident.					
Perpetrator should fear that people will never accept him because of the incident.					
Perpetrator has no need to feel ashamed of what he did. **(reverse coded)**					
There is no such thing as an innocent victim in this incident. **(reverse coded)**					
Perpetrator should not punish himself for what he did. **(reverse coded)**					
Perpetrator should have no serious regrets about what he did. **(reverse coded)**					
Perpetrator should want to make amends for what he did.					
Perpetrator should have nightmares about this incident.					
Perpetrator deserves to be severely punished for this incident.					

External

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Perpetrator is not entirely to blame for the incident.					
Perpetrator does not deserve to be arrested for the incident.					
Perpetrator is responsible for the incident. **(reverse coded)**					
Perpetrator should not blame others for the incident. **(reverse coded)**					
Society is to blame for this incident.					
Perpetrator should not be punished for what he did.					
In this case the other person (not *perpetrator*) was largely to blame for the incident.					
Perpetrator would not have done what he did if he had not been seriously provoked by the other person.					
Perpetrator deserved to be arrested for what he did. **(reverse coded)**					
Perpetrator was in no way provoked into committing this act. **(reverse coded)**					
Other people are to blame for the incident.					
Perpetrator could have avoided getting into trouble. **(reverse coded)**					
Perpetrator could have avoided getting into trouble.					
Perpetrator had very good reasons for committing this act.					
Perpetrator has no excuse for his actions in this incident. **(reverse coded)**					

Mental

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
At the time of the act, *perpetrator* was fully aware of what he was doing. **(reverse coded)**					
Perpetrator would not have committed the act if he had not lost control of himself.					
The act was beyond *perpetrator*'s control.					
Perpetrator would not have committed the crime if he had been mentally well.					
Perpetrator was in full control of his actions. **(reverse coded)**					

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