

PERCEIVED RESPONSIBILITY OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AS A FUNCTION  
OF COUPLES' SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND ALCOHOL USE

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## ABSTRACT

Acquaintance rape is a major problem in today's society. Approximately one quarter of women have been or will be victims of rape or attempted rape during their lifetimes. Many people still believe that women cannot be raped by someone that they know, or that if they are raped while on a date then it is somehow the victim's fault. Rape myths, such as the belief that a woman who is raped was somehow asking for it, are erroneous beliefs held by the general public about rape and perpetuate negative attitudes held toward rape victims. These negative attitudes held towards rape victims, especially victims of acquaintance rape, make cases difficult to prosecute and make victims feel like they have to prove their case to not only a jury, but also to their own family and friends. There is a large body of empirical literature that exists surrounding rape myths and attitudes held towards the victims, especially when the use of alcohol by either the perpetrator or the victim is present and if the victim's consent to sex is called into question. The body of literature is scarce when it comes to rape myths and public attitudes regarding homosexual victims, particularly gay men. The present study was conducted to extend what is known about attitudes held by the public regarding heterosexual acquaintance rape to acquaintance rape among gay males. One hundred and twenty three introductory psychology students read vignettes and answered questionnaires that aimed to measure their attitudes about what happened in the vignette. Results indicated that participants thought that the victim who was drinking, regardless of sexual orientation, engaged in more ambiguous sexual communication, namely token resistance, and was more receptive to the sexual assault than the victim who remained sober. Participants also indicated that they thought that the homosexual victim in the vignette was more receptive

to and more responsible for the sexual assault than the heterosexual victim, regardless of whether the victim had been drinking. Results from the present study showed that negative attitudes held against heterosexual victims also extended to homosexual victims of sexual assault.

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## INTRODUCTION

Sexual coercion in the form of rape is a major problem in America today. People are often victimized twice--once by the actual occurrence and again by the public's attitudes toward the victimization. There is a large body of existing empirical literature regarding the rape of females by male perpetrators. In ambiguous situations, particularly where the victim is seen as being intoxicated, people accept rape myths and tend to place more blame for the rape on the victim than if she was not intoxicated. Far less is known about the public's attitudes toward gay men who are victims of sexual coercion. There is some evidence that there is an acceptance of rape myths related to males, but the use of alcohol is not mentioned in those rape myths. The present study attempts to examine the acceptance of rape myths dealing with alcohol and the consequent blame towards both homosexual male and heterosexual female victims of coercive sex.

### COERCIVE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND SEXUAL MISCOMMUNICATION

There are still many people who believe that rape only occurs between complete strangers. For many people, their idea of rape is one that is instilled by the media, where the rapist is usually portrayed as a male stranger, his motivation is entirely sexual, and the victim is always an attractive young female (Allison & Wrightsman, 1993). The fact is that the vast majority of victims know their assailant, whether casually or through dating situations (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987).

#### Acquaintance Rape and Its Prevalence

Until the 1980's, very little attention was paid, by either researchers or authorities, to the area of date rape or sexual harassment. Mary Koss, in her afterward in Warshaw (1994), states that when she began her research in 1976, she chose the words "hidden

rape" to describe sexual assaults by acquaintances and dates, since at that time there was no term for acquaintance rape.

The notion that "real" rape consists of only stranger rape, or that a person cannot be raped by someone they know (Allison & Wrightsman, 1993) is one that is not only held by the general public, but by the actual victims, too. According to a survey of 236 rape survivors, 61% of those surveyed did not consider the incident to be a rape when it happened (Wiehe & Richards, 1995). This might be explained by the survivors' own definition of rape as defined by media portrayal. The term "acquaintance rape" refers to a sexual assault that occurs between two individuals who know one another, including individuals who are dating. Of those 236 rape victims, 58% of them were not aware of the term "acquaintance rape" before the incident happened to them (Wiehe & Richards, 1995). The high number of women who did not consider the event to be rape could also be a function of the self-blame that victims of rape often experience.

According to the literature, approximately 25% of women have been or will be victims of rape or attempted rape in their lifetimes (Koss et al., 1987). *Ms.* magazine and psychologist Mary P. Koss conducted a study of 6,159 students across 32 college campuses. The study, which was published in a peer-reviewed journal, was funded by the Center for Antisocial and Violent Behavior of the National Institute of Mental Health and is a random sample of college students across the country. Warshaw (1994) provides a detailed discussion of the results from this study. In the study, 27.5% of the 3,187 women reported having experienced an act that met the legal definition of rape (Koss et al., 1987; Warshaw, 1994). The risk of a woman being raped by someone that they know is four times greater than the risk of being raped by a stranger. Koss et al. (1987) found

that 84% of the women who were raped knew the perpetrator, and 57% of the assaults occurred while on dates.

### Consequences of Rape

Due to the myths surrounding acquaintance rape, the survivors often times face hostile attitudes from their social support network and the general public. There are those that feel that, during an incident of acquaintance rape or date rape, the victim was somehow leading the offender on, and was therefore "asking for" the event to occur (e.g., Burt, 1980). Endorsement of rape myths, which are erroneous beliefs regarding the circumstances of rape, helps to perpetuate the attitudes that many hold regarding rape and who is to blame for the incident. Those who are victims of sexual assault are therefore victimized twice--once by their assailant and then again by those that feel that the victim was partly to blame for the assault due to what they said, the way they dressed, their actions, and any other behaviors that they may have engaged in that could have "provoked" the incident. Furthermore, it is very difficult for victims of acquaintance rape to have their cases prosecuted due to the rape myths that are accepted as fact within the judicial system.

### Rape Myth Acceptance and Victim Trauma

In a survey of women seeking treatment for sexual victimization in rape crisis centers all over the country, Wiehe and Richards (1995) reported that 72% of the 236 victims did not report their assault to the police. When asked why they chose not to report the assault, many of the rape victims stated that they feared that their names would appear in the newspaper and those who read about the assault would pass judgment on them and they would feel victimized again (Wiehe & Richards, 1995). Those who were raped by

an acquaintance stated that, when they told someone else (e.g., a family member or close friend) about the sexual assault, they felt that the people they told were accepting of them on the surface, but underneath they were blaming the victim for what happened (Wiehe & Richards, 1995).

As mentioned earlier, sexual assault victims are often victimized at least twice, once by the assault itself and then again by family, friends, and the judicial system.

Respondents in the Wiehe & Richards (1995) survey reported that their family and friends overtly or covertly blamed the victim, by asking them questions such as, "Why did you go to his house? Were you drinking at the time?" (p. 30) and, "Why didn't you run away from him?" (p. 30). The victims feel as though the people that they tell may think that the victim led the assailant on, which lends some evidence that the attitudes that rape victims encounter are supported by rape myths that exist. Although the Wiehe and Richards (1995) study reports the results of a self-selected sample of victims who were all seeking treatment at rape crisis centers, the results still reflect the trauma that they endured.

Female survivors of acquaintance rape frequently have a more difficult time recovering psychologically from the assault than women who are victims of stranger rape. A study conducted by Burt and Katz (1987) found that women raped by strangers tended to blame themselves less for the rape, possibly because it was easier for the victim to view the assault as a more random and less personal event. The study also found that women who were raped by an acquaintance took a longer amount of time to recover from the event than did those raped by a stranger. Among women who were three years or less

post-rape, those raped by acquaintances rated themselves as less recovered than those who were raped by strangers.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has been linked to victims of sexual assault. In a study conducted by Arata and Burkhart (1996), female victims of sexual assault by acquaintances displayed significantly higher rates of PTSD than women who had not been victims of sexual assault. Results from Arata and Burkhart's (1996) study indicated that the victim's own attributions of blame were significantly associated with the PTSD symptoms. Women in the PTSD-positive group "were more likely to believe that they somehow deserved the sexual assault because of an internal quality of themselves or their behavior, or they believed that the nature of society caused the victimization" (pp. 88-89). This propensity to engage in self-blame could be accounted for by the victim's own belief in rape myths and by the negative attitudes held by members of society regarding acquaintance rape.

#### Prosecution of Acquaintance Rape

Attitudes of jurors and law enforcement make the prosecution of acquaintance rape more difficult, particularly because victim consent is often used as a defense in sexual assault cases. Convictions in rape cases are most likely to occur in cases that fit the stereotype that society holds of the "typical" rape. This stereotype reflects the rape myths that exist in today's society. Many rape crisis counselors admit that the bias against acquaintance rape is so strong among police, prosecutors, judges, and jurors, that they advise acquaintance rape victims not to pursue criminal proceedings against their attackers (Warshaw, 1994). According to Warshaw (1994), there is a "prototypical good

case" (p. 139) that serves as the gold standard for rape convictions. Warshaw (1994) describes the prototypical good case:

In the prototypical "good" rape case, the victim--a virgin who lives at home with her parents--is grabbed from behind by a man she's never seen before as she's walking in broad daylight to visit her dying grandmother in the hospital. Her assailant has a knife, a gun, and brass knuckles. He breaks her jaw by punching her, so she can't scream, and stabs her at least once before forcing her into the bushes and raping her. She fights back forcefully nonetheless, and the struggle attracts the attention of a male police officer, who arrives and pulls the man off of his victim. An official examination finds the man's semen within the woman's vagina and traces of her blood and skin on his body. The bruises on her face match the pattern on his brass knuckles. (p. 139).

The more alike a case is to the hypothetical one described by Warshaw (1994), the more likely the perpetrator will be convicted. The circumstances of acquaintance rape can be, in many ways, nearly opposite of the circumstances involved in the good case. Acquaintance rape, by its very definition, involves an acquaintance or dating partner of the victim, as opposed to the stranger in the hypothetical good case. There is not usually a weapon involved (Warshaw, 1994), and the presence of semen is just an indicator that the couple had sex, not that it was against the victim's will. There is also not usually a witness to the rape in the acquaintance rape case (Warshaw, 1994), so the burden of proof still lies on the victim to prove that the assault really did happen against her will.

The current study seeks to extend these findings from acquaintance rape among heterosexual couples to acquaintance rape among gay couples.

## Sexual Miscommunication

One area that is related to the response to sexual aggression is the lack of understanding of the victim's consent. The existing literature has shown that it is common for sexual aggression to occur in ambiguous dating situations, in particular, in the case where the actual or implied consent of the victim may be called into question. In some instances, the victim of a sexual assault is viewed as having greater blame for the incident because she "led on" her assailant by flirting with him, going to his apartment, kissing him, etc. In dates in which some form of sexual aggression occurred, research has found that 37.3% of women and 26.7 % of men felt that the aggressor had unintentionally been "led on" by the victim, making the male perpetrator think that the victim wanted to have sex (Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). Although this study was published in 1987, it is reasonable to believe that the trend today is still similar to the results of that study.

Johnson and Jackson (1988) conducted a study that directly examined perceptions regarding victim responsibility and perpetrator responsibility involving ambiguous versus unambiguous sexual cues in a situation where force was used to engage in sex.

Sixty male and 60 female students from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington participated in the Johnson and Jackson study. The participants were each asked to read one of six scenarios that depicted a male and female working on a class project in the female's home. The male and female in the scenario were paired by their professor and asked to work together on the project. There were three different levels of attraction between the male and female in the scenarios. In the minimal attraction level, the two disliked one another. In the moderate attraction level, the two liked one another

as friends, and in the maximal attraction scenario, the two were dating one another. In each scenario, after completing the assignment, the male made sexual advances toward the female. Two levels of ambiguity existed in the scenarios. In the ambiguous situation, the female allowed the male to kiss her extensively, but told him that she was not interested in having sex with him when he attempted to engage in intercourse. In the unambiguous situation, the female was not favorable to the male's sexual advances and quickly told him that she was not interested in engaging in intercourse. All of the scenarios ended with the male forcing the female to engage in sex against her wishes.

The participants were then asked to answer questions that measured both the perception of the female's responsibility for the event as well as the perception of the male's responsibility for the event. The results of the study revealed that significantly less responsibility was attributed to the male if the female's actions were classified as ambiguous and significantly more responsibility was attributed to the female when her actions were considered ambiguous. The results also revealed that the male participants attributed more responsibility to the female victim than did the female participants.

#### Token Resistance

One form of sexual miscommunication is when one partner in a sexual encounter says "no" to sexual intercourse, when they really mean, "yes." This situation is often referred to as "token resistance." A survey of 610 undergraduate females conducted by Muehlenhard and Hollabaugh (1988) found that 39.3% of them reported having said no to sex when they meant yes. One main reason for the use of token resistance that the participants gave was the fear of appearing promiscuous. They felt that if they said "yes" to sex, then they might appear promiscuous, while if they seemed to be resistant to sex,

then they would not seem promiscuous. Muehlenhard and Hollabaugh also found that most of the women who engaged in token resistance were more likely than other women to believe that token resistance is a common behavior among women, that male-female relationships are adversarial in nature, that it is acceptable for men to use physical force to obtain sex in male-female relationships and that women find it enjoyable when men use force in sexual relationships.

Krahé, Scheinberger-Olwig, and Kolpin (2000) conducted a survey examining the use of token resistance and perceived token resistance. The survey was given to 526 sexually experienced adolescents (mean age = 18.5 years) in Berlin and Potsdam, Germany. All respondents were given the German version of the Sexual Experiences Survey to measure sexual victimization and aggression. To measure ambiguous sexual communication, both male and female participants were asked to indicate whether or not they had ever displayed token resistance. Male respondents were also asked if they had ever perceived token resistance in a female partner. The token resistance item read as follows, "Have you ever been in a situation where a man (a woman) wanted to have sexual contact with you, but you said 'no' even though you had every intention to and were willing to engage in sex with him (her)?" (p. 319). The male respondents were also asked, "Have you ever been in the following situation: You show a woman that you want to have sex with her, and she says 'no' but you are convinced that actually she does want to have sex with you. In short: Has a woman ever said 'no' to you even though she meant 'yes'?" (p. 319).

Krahé and her colleagues found that over half (51.6%) of the female respondents reported the use of token resistance and 46.1% of the male respondents reported engaging in token resistance. In addition, 43.6% of the male respondents indicated that they had

perceived token resistance in a female partner. Often times, there is an attribution made by the perpetrator that the victim is engaging in the use of token resistance when in fact the victim really means "no." Perceived token resistance is frequently used as a rationale by the perpetrator to engage in sex in instances where the victim has stated her unwillingness to have a sexual encounter.

The results found by Krahe and her colleagues also revealed that the female respondents in their sample who reported the use of token resistance were more than twice as likely to experience any form of sexual victimization and also were more than twice as likely to experience severe victimization (i.e., sexual acts completed through the use of force or exploitation of the victim's incapacitated state) as the female respondents who did not report the use of token resistance.

Krahe and her colleagues found that, of the male respondents, those who reported the use of token resistance were 1.72 times more likely to show any sexual aggression and more than three times more likely to show severe sexual aggression than those males who did not report using token resistance. In addition, male respondents who perceived token resistance in their female counterparts were 2.4 times more likely to engage in any form of sexual aggression and were 4.42 times more likely to commit acts considered to be severe sexual aggression than those males who did not report perceived token resistance.

Unfortunately, the study by Krahe et al. (2000) did not examine whether the males who stated that they had perceived token resistance were in fact perceiving token resistance. It would have been interesting to also survey the sexual partners of those males to see if their partners admitted to engaging in the token resistance that the males perceived. It should be noted, however, that men who act upon the perception of token

resistance, whether the female is engaging in it or not, are still in violation of the law, in that the woman has verbally indicated that she does not consent to sex.

The study of token resistance may actually help to perpetuate the very rape myths that many researchers are trying to expose. The findings of Krahe et al. (2000) that over half of their female respondents admitted to engaging in the use of token resistance, seems to support the myth that women who say "no" to sex are just playing hard-to-get, and that it is the man's job to keep pushing the issue until the woman acquiesces. Perpetrators may use these findings as an excuse to force a woman into sex after she has said "no."

Victims of sexual assault may also find that they are blamed by family, friends, and law enforcement officials because results such as these may make people think that over half of all women engage in token resistance, and they may therefore erroneously think that the likelihood that the victim really did want to have sex seems to be supported.

#### RAPE MYTHS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS RAPE VICTIMS

The study of rape myths and how the public uses those rape myths in the formation of attitudes towards rape and victims of rape is important for two reasons: 1) the compassion that people feel towards the victim may be affected by their endorsement of rape myths, and 2) the victim may not receive justice in either a court of law or in the court of public opinion due to the endorsement of rape myths. Those who endorse rape myths tend to place more blame on the rape victim than they would otherwise, and the victim is consequently left to defend themselves once again after their attack.

#### Rape Myths

Extensive research has been done regarding rape myths and attributions made toward both the female victims and male perpetrators of rape. In a study regarding cultural

myths and support for rape, Burt (1980) interviewed 598 adults (60% female) from randomly selected households in Minnesota. She found that more than 50% of her sample agreed with the statement, "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on the first date implies that she's willing to have sex." (p. 229). In addition, more than 50% of the respondents in Burt's study endorsed the statement, "In the majority of rapes, the victim was promiscuous or had a bad reputation." (p. 229). The people in Burt's study who agreed with these two statements also felt that 50% or more of reported rapes are reported because the woman was angry with the man and wanted revenge, or that she was reporting the rape in an attempt to cover up an illegitimate pregnancy. Burt's (1980) study found that the greater the acceptance of rape myths, the less likely the incident was to be seen as rape. The findings in Burt's study reflect the myths that women often falsely accuse men of rape, that women want or enjoy rape, and that women instigate, or even deserve rape because of indiscreet behaviors.

One possible limitation of Burt's study is that it was conducted approximately 25 years ago. However, more recent literature also reflects the endorsement of rape myths, as well as the attribution of blame towards the victim (e.g., Johnson & Jackson, 1988; McCaul, Veltum, Boyechko, & Crawford, 1990).

Warshaw (1994) lists some of the most common rape myths that are endorsed in today's society. Warshaw (1994) states that some of these myths are that "a woman who gets raped deserves it, especially if she agreed to go to the man's house or ride in his car" (p. 19), however, the reality is that no one deserves to be raped and that being in a man's house or car does not mean that the woman has consented to have sex with him. Another myth that Warshaw (1994) cites is, "agreeing to kiss or neck or pet with a man means that

a woman has agreed to have intercourse with him" (p. 19). Warshaw (1994) counters this with the reality that everyone has the right to say "no", regardless of the preceding behavior. The rape myths discussed by Warshaw (1994) reflect the rape myths that were endorsed by Burt's (1980) participants, and it is reasonable to think that the endorsement of these rape myths still exists today.

### Victim Blame

Those who endorse rape myths might also feel that the victim of a sexual assault is more to blame for the incident. One of the theories that attempts to explain why people blame victims of rape is the Just World Theory (Lerner & Simmons, 1966). This theory posits that people believe that the world is a fair, or just, place. When a person becomes the victim of a crime, people who believe in a "just world" believe that the victim got what they deserved. They do this by derogating the victims of rape and by placing less blame on the perpetrators. Ford, Liwag-McLamb, and Foley (1998) found that men and women who held a high belief in a just world tended to believe the perpetrator of rape was less at fault than those who had a low belief in a just world. This theory might explain some of the attitudes that are held by those who blame victims of rape.

McCaul et al. (1990) conducted a study that examined how much the participants blamed a victim of sexual assault and how likely the participants were to think that the victim obtained sexual pleasure from the assault. Although the participants assigned more blame to the perpetrator than to the victim of the sexual assault, they did find significantly varying degrees of victim blame. McCaul and his colleagues found that more blame was attributed to a victim who was perceived to be less respectable, one who did not resist the sexual assault, a victim who was more attractive, and a victim who

reported she derived some pleasure from the experience. The participants also felt that, with the exception of victim attractiveness, the stronger the parameters were that produced victim blaming, the more they felt that the woman derived sexual pleasure from the assault. The researchers also found a significant effect of participant gender in that men blamed the victim of the sexual assault more than women did.

#### Alcohol Use

Alcohol use by those involved in a rape also affects the attitudes that people hold towards both the victim of rape and their assailant. Muehlenhard and Linton (1987) found that heavy usage was more common on dates that involved sexual assault than on dates that did not. They determined that heavy alcohol use by the perpetrator, the victim, or both was a risk factor for sexual assault. In a survey of 236 women who were raped by an acquaintance, 37% of the victims admitted that they had been using drugs or drinking alcohol at the time of their attack (Wiehe & Richards, 1995).

Richardson and Campbell (1982) conducted a study that examined the effect of alcohol on attributions of blame for rape. In their study, 97 female and 90 male psychology undergraduates were asked to read a description of a case based on a real incident and to answer questions about the scenario that they read. The scenario was as follows: A woman was cleaning her apartment after a late party. The doorbell rang and a neighbor who had been present at the party offered to help her clean up. She reluctantly agreed to allow him to help her. After a brief amount of time, the man disappeared into her bedroom and, when she went in to see what he was doing, he grabbed her and initiated sexual advances. When the woman refused to cooperate, he struck her across the face with enough force to daze her and he then raped her.

The drunkenness of the perpetrator and the victim were varied within the scenarios by using words such as "slurred" and "staggered", to give the impression that the perpetrator, the victim, or both were intoxicated. The participants were then asked to assign a percentage of "relative blame" to the victim, the offender, and the situation, so that the percentages added up to 100% when totaled. The participants were then asked to measure the degree of responsibility for the victim and the offender on two separate scales.

The results of the Richardson and Campbell (1982) study showed that the victim was perceived to be more responsible for the incident when she was drunk than when she was sober. A MANOVA conducted on trait ratings revealed that participants tended to derogate the victim when she was intoxicated, by saying that she was less moral and more aggressive when she was drunk than when she was sober. The participants also reported liking the victim less and being less similar to her when she was intoxicated than when she was sober.

A double blind experiment conducted by Johnson, Noel, and Sutter-Hernandez (2000) tested the hypothesis that, in a sexually ambiguous condition, acceptance of sexual aggression will vary as a function of amount of alcohol consumed. The experimenters also expected that, conversely, in a situation in which sexual cues were unambiguous, acceptance of sexual aggression would not vary as a function of alcohol consumption. One hundred and eighteen males from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington were included in the study. The participants were screened for and were excluded if they exhibited any alcohol or drug problems, had any alcohol-related arrests, or had any significant medical or psychiatric problems. The participants were randomly assigned to

one of four alcohol conditions. The first condition was a control condition in which the participants were given ice water to drink and it was clear to the participants that they were not being given alcohol to drink. The second condition was a placebo condition, in which the participants were made to think that they were being given alcohol to drink, when in fact they actually received 8ml of tonic water per kilogram (kg) of participant's body weight with a few drops of vodka sprinkled around the outside of the container to supply the scent of alcohol. The third condition was a low-dose alcohol condition in which the participants received 0.33ml/kg of ethanol mixed with tonic water in a 1:10 ratio. The final condition was a moderate-dose alcohol condition in which the participants received 0.75ml/kg of ethanol mixed with tonic water in a 1:5 ratio. The participants were given 20 minutes to drink their beverages and then engaged in an unrelated task for 25 additional minutes to allow time to reach peak blood alcohol levels.

The participants were then shown one of two 10-minute videotapes involving a blind date taking place between a college-aged male and college-aged female. In both instances, the scenario takes place in the male's apartment. In one video, the female was shown to be laughing, interested in conversation with the male, in close proximity to the male, and constantly touching the male's arm. This condition was labeled the "receptive" condition by the experimenters. In the second, "non-receptive" condition, the female does not engage in conversation with the male, does not smile, maintains a rigid posture, and informs her male counterpart that she "generally does not like blind dates" (p. 1191). The participants in the Johnson et al. (2000) study were then given two sets of questionnaires to gauge the perceptions that the participants held regarding the acceptability of forced sex and female responsibility.

The results of the questionnaires indicated that general acceptance of forced sex was significantly greater at the higher alcohol dosages. Those who viewed the non-receptive video were significantly less likely to accept the use of force to engage in sex and were significantly less likely to report personal acceptance of forced sex as compared to those who viewed the receptive video. The hypothesis of this study was supported in that the researchers found that acceptance of forced sex did not differ as a function of amount of alcohol consumed in the non-receptive condition. In addition, they found that, in the receptive condition, the consumption of alcohol by the participants in the study seemed to bring forth larger attribution of responsibility to the female. Thus in situations where the perpetrator and the victim have both been drinking, the probability for sexual assault may be increased.

#### ATTITUDES TOWARDS HOMOSEXUAL VICTIMS OF RAPE

##### Sexual Coercion Among Homosexuals

Sexual aggression against homosexual males and females in our society is a problem that has not received a great deal of attention in the existing literature. One of the major purposes of the present study is to extend the knowledge of the public's attitudes towards sexual assault among gay men and lesbians. In a study conducted in London, England, Hickson and his colleagues (1994) found that out of 930 homosexual men interviewed, 257 of those men admitted to being subjected to nonconsensual sex at some point in their lives. One of the limitations in this study is that the respondents were asked leading questions, such as, "How old were you when you were first sexually molested or raped, that is subjected to sex without your consent?" (p. 285). Since the respondents were lead

to believe that they must give an age in response to this question, the reporting of nonconsensual sex may have been inflated.

Waterman, Dawson, and Bologna (1989) found that 30.6% of the lesbians and 12.1% of the gay men in their study had been victims of forced sex, which was defined by the question, "Has your partner ever forced you to have sex against your will?" (p. 120). The significantly higher prevalence of sexual victimization among lesbians could be due to definitional and reporting biases. The lesbians in this study may have had a greater awareness of what acts constituted sexual abuse and they may have felt more comfortable in reporting that abuse.

Krahé, Schutze, Fritsche, and Waizenhofer (2000) conducted a study in Berlin in which the prevalence of unwanted sexual contacts among gay males was examined using the Homosexual Sexual Experiences Survey. Of the 310 men that participated in the study, 15.2% reported some form of physical victimization from another man to make him comply with sexual demands. Twenty percent of these men reported that their sexual victimization occurred in an incapacitated state (e.g., the use of alcohol by the victim) in which the assailant exploited their inability to offer resistance.

#### Attitudes towards Rape Myths and Homosexual Males Victims of Rape

##### Token Resistance

Krahé, Scheinberger-Olwig, and Kolpin (2000) conducted another study to examine the use of token resistance in homosexual relationships. A total of 310 homosexual men participated in this study, which was also conducted in Berlin, Germany. The respondents were administered the Homosexual Sexual Experiences Survey to measure sexual victimization and aggression. The men were also asked to answer the question,

"Have you ever been in a situation where a man wanted to have sexual contact with you, but you said 'no' even though you had every intention to and were willing to engage in sex with him?" (p. 328). The results revealed that homosexual males used token resistance at a rate comparable to heterosexual females (51.9%). Results from the Krahe study also showed that respondents who reported the use of token resistance were twice as likely to experience any sexual victimization and almost three times as likely to experience severe victimization compared to the men who did not report using token resistance. The researchers concluded from these results that token resistance was associated with an increased risk of sexual victimization for homosexual men.

#### Victim Blame

Another study has found that victims have more blame attributed to them if they could be perceived as a potential dating partner of the perpetrator. Ford et al. (1998) had 108 participants in a university setting read vignettes that depicted a sexual assault in which the gender and sexual orientation of the victim were manipulated. There were four conditions depicted by the vignettes, which were a male victim portrayed as either homosexual or heterosexual and a female victim portrayed as either homosexual or heterosexual. The perpetrator in all four of the vignettes was a male named John, whose sexuality remained ambiguous in all four of the conditions. The vignette that the participants were to read was as follows:

John, a 26-year-old single male, finished a long work week and headed up to the local tavern for a drink. At the bar, John struck up a conversation with a friendly looking young man (woman) named Chris. John and Chris spent nearly two hours talking about life in general and solving the problems

of the world. Chris told John about many things, including his (her) work and family, and he (she) also shared with John that he (she) had just ended a two-year love affair with his (her) girlfriend (boyfriend). At the last call, John and Chris masted to the "single life." As they were walking to their cars, John invited Chris over to his place for a nightcap. At John's apartment, John fixed some drinks and sat on the couch with Chris. John began to make sexual advances towards Chris. Chris told John he (she) was not interested in engaging in sexual activity, but John did not listen. Chris asked John to stop, but John continued to force himself onto Chris, while Chris unsuccessfully tried to resist. After the assault, Chris ran to the door and left John's apartment. Three weeks later, Chris confided in a close friend and told him about the assault. After much encouragement from his (her) friend, Chris decided to seek help from a therapist in dealing with the trauma of the assault. Now, six months later, Chris is having John brought up on rape charges (p. 256).

They found that, when the victim was a homosexual female, women were more likely than men to define the incident as rape. If the victim was heterosexual, men were more likely than women to define the assault as rape if the victim was a female than if the victim was a male. If the victim was a male, then men were more likely to define the assault as rape if the victim was homosexual than heterosexual. Female participants were less likely to define the incident as rape if the victim was a homosexual man than a heterosexual woman. Furthermore, Ford and his colleagues found that the homosexual male victim was seen to be more at fault for the rape than the heterosexual male victim,

and the heterosexual female victim was seen to be more at fault than the homosexual female victim for the incident.

Although this study made mention that the perpetrator and the victim both drank alcohol in the scenarios, they did not include the use of alcohol as an independent variable in their study. A comparison group that contained a couple that was not drinking might have been useful to see how much of the blame that was attributed to the victims was due to the consumption of alcohol.

### Male Rape Myths

One of the main rape myths about male rape is that it is just not possible. Many people believe that men are too strong or too intimidating to be the targets of sexual assault. One of the reasons that this myth exists might be that male rape is underreported. Groth and Burgess (1980) stated that some reasons that male victims do not report rape include: 1) societal beliefs that an adult male is expected to be able to defend himself against sexual assault; 2) that his sexuality might be questioned; and, 3) telling others is embarrassing and stressful.

Another male rape myth is that male victims are to blame for their own rape. This myth, according to Groth and Burgess (1980), is perpetuated by the societal thought that men should be able to defend themselves from an attack. Because they could not fight off their assailant or escape, then they are to blame for the incident.

A third male rape myth is that being raped doesn't really upset men. This myth has been attributed to the idea that men are often stoic and emotionally strong, so a sexual assault against them would be something that they could forget about or get over quickly.

Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1992) conducted a study that examined the acceptance of male rape myths among college men and women. Surveys regarding attitudes toward male rape were given to 365 participants that were recruited from classes in a university setting. Participants were asked to mark on a Likert-type scale, which ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree), how much they endorsed six different statements that reflected three rape myth dimensions. A sample question to assess the myth that male rape cannot happen is, "It is impossible for a man (woman) to rape a man" (p. 90). To assess the male rape myth that men are to blame for their own sexual assault, participants were asked questions such as, "Most men who are raped by a man (woman) are somewhat to blame for not escaping or fighting off the man (woman)" (p. 90). And to assess the last dimension that rape does not upset men, participants were asked to rate questions such as, "Most men who are raped by a man (woman) do not need counseling after the incident" (p. 90).

In their study, Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson found that female subjects showed stronger disagreement with rape myths than male subjects. They also found that the participants disagreed more strongly with the myths in which a man was raped by another man, as compared to myths in which a man was raped by a woman. About 22% of the males and 18% of the females in the study agreed that it is impossible to rape a man, regardless of the sex of the offender. In support of the "blame" myth, 22% of the males and 5% of the female participants agreed that, "a man who is raped by another man is somewhat to blame for not being careful" (p. 95). Although this study shows that male rape myths are upheld more strongly when the perpetrator is a female than when the

perpetrator is a male, it still shows that regardless of the gender of the perpetrator, the myths are still upheld by some.

The Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson (1992) study has several limitations that need to be addressed. First of all, the study has no comparison group, which makes it harder to interpret the results. The results cannot be compared to anything. If the respondents had been asked to rate questions based on female rape myths, then we would be able to compare how much the participants endorsed male rape myths as opposed to female rape myths. Secondly, there is no mention of the use of alcohol or sexually ambiguous communication (e.g., token resistance) in the questions that the participants were to rate. As we have seen in some of the studies cited in this literature review, victims of sexual assault tend to have more blame placed on them if they have been drinking alcohol (e.g., Johnson et al., 2000; Richardson & Campbell, 1982) and if they have been displaying sexually ambiguous communication, such as flirting (e.g., Johnson & Jackson, 1988). Lastly, the study does not specify whether the men in their questions were heterosexual or homosexual. As we have seen in previous studies (e.g., Ford et al., 1998), homosexual men are viewed to be more at fault for a sexual assault than are heterosexual men. The endorsement of male rape myths in this study may have been different if the sexual orientation of the victim had been specified.

From the above literature review, it can be noted that there is very little known about attitudes towards male victims of homosexual rape. Aside from the Ford et al. (1998) study, there have been no studies that make a direct comparison between attitudes towards homosexual encounters and rapes. Further, an extensive search revealed no studies that examine the role of alcohol and token resistance among homosexual males.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The present study addressed the research question of acceptance of rape myths dealing with alcohol and consequent blame toward the victims of coercive sex among gay males. The present study also examines the question of whether or not people will be more likely to perceive that there is token resistance among victims who are portrayed as being intoxicated.

Specifically, it is hypothesized that:

- 1) there will be greater blame placed upon the victim who has been portrayed as having been drinking;
- 2) less blame will be placed on the perpetrator if the victim has been drinking;
- 3) greater token resistance will be perceived if the victim has been drinking; and
- 4) more blame will be placed on the homosexual victims regardless of their drinking.

## METHODS

### Participants

The original sample of participants for this study was 125 students. Two of these students did not wish to participate, so the final number of participants who volunteered to participate in this study was 123 (46 male, 77 female). Students were enrolled in Introduction to Psychology classes at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. One participant failed to answer two of the questions on the questionnaire and another student failed to answer one of the questions. Those who participated received credit to complete course requirements.

## Materials

### Stimulus Materials

Four vignettes were used, which depicted two levels of alcohol consumption of the victim (two beers vs. no alcohol) and in which the sexual orientation of the couple was manipulated (gay male couple vs. male/female heterosexual couple) (see Appendix C). An independent judge who was unaware of the hypotheses of the study and who was a representative of a gay advocacy group reviewed the vignettes. He stated that the vignettes were either believable or completely believable in terms of the question. The judge was asked to answer the question of how believable the vignettes were. In addition, the scenarios were based upon previous sexual aggression studies that dealt with written vignettes (e.g., Ford et al., 1998; Johnson & Jackson, 1988; Richardson & Campbell, 1982) in which the assault took place in the apartment of either the victim or the assailant. The actions of the subjects of the scenarios were also based upon a study conducted by Klinkenberg and Rose (1994) that had homosexual members of gay organizations complete a questionnaire on dating experiences. They found evidence that, "cultural and interpersonal scripts for same-sex dating are clearly defined and parallel heterosexual scripts" (p. 32).

The first vignette depicted a homosexual male couple, Steve and John, who were on a date and met first at Steve's apartment. In this vignette, Steve offers John a beer and John accepts and then very shortly afterwards drinks another. The second vignette depicted the same homosexual couple, however John refuses the beer that Steve offers him and he remains sober throughout the vignette. The third vignette depicted a heterosexual couple, Steve and Mary, who were on a date and also met first at Steve's apartment. In this

vignette, Steve offers Mary a beer and Mary accepts and then very shortly afterwards drinks another beer. The fourth vignette depicted the same heterosexual couple, however Mary refuses the beer that Steve offers her and she remains sober throughout the vignette. All four of the vignettes contain sexually ambiguous communication between the perpetrator (Steve) and the victim (John or Mary) and Steve remains sober in all of the conditions.

#### Dependent Measures

Questionnaires were used to measure the attitudes held by the participants in regards to the vignettes that they were to have read (see Appendix D). The questionnaires were identical, except that the name of the victim and gender-related pronouns were different so as to reflect the vignette that the student had just read, and to reduce the possibility of the participant thinking that more than one vignette existed. The questionnaires consisted of six items and each of these items served as a dependent variable. The items on the questionnaires were as follows:

- 1) Steve coerced Mary into having sex;
- 2) Mary was receptive to the sexual encounter with Steve;
- 3) When Mary said "no" to sex, she really meant "yes" or "maybe";
- 4) On a scale from 1-7, with 1 being "not responsible at all" and 7 being "completely responsible", how responsible was Steve for the sexual encounter;
- 5) On a scale from 1-7, with 1 being "not responsible at all" and 7 being "completely responsible", how responsible was Mary for the sexual encounter; and
- 6) If Steve were convicted of a crime for his encounter with Mary, what should the sentence be?

The questionnaire for the homosexual condition was identical to the questionnaire for the heterosexual condition, with the exception that the name "Mary" had been changed to "John" and the pronouns for the victim were changed to match the victim's gender.

Participants were asked to rate their opinions in a Likert-scale format, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree/not responsible at all) to 7 (strongly agree/completely responsible) with anchors varying as appropriate for different items. On question 6, participants were asked to circle their response on a Likert-type scale with seven values ranging from "no jail time/probation" to "more than 25 years." Participants were also asked to indicate their gender at the end of the questionnaire.

## Procedure

### Packet Preparation

Before each experimental session, packets containing the experimental materials were prepared and placed in unmarked 9x13 manila clasp envelopes. The packets were prepared in an unsystematic order and the packets were then subsequently mixed so that the experimenter was not aware which packet was received by a given student. The study material inside the packets included a statement of the purpose of the study (see Appendix A), one written vignette, and one questionnaire that was matched to the sexual orientation of the couple that was depicted in the vignette that they received. Each packet also had a consent form (see Appendix B) affixed to the outside of the envelope, that allowed the participant to read and sign the form and tear it off easily without opening the stimulus packet.

## Experimental Sessions

Three sessions were conducted in classroom type settings, ranging from groups of 28 to 72 students. Undergraduate students in introductory psychology classes were told about the research being conducted during the beginning of their class period and were given the option of participating in the present study. Packets were handed out to all students, and those who chose not to participate were instructed to hold onto the packet until those who did choose to participate had completed their packets and they could then hand their packets in when the packets were collected. Those who chose not to participate were informed that there would be no penalty for their choice, since participation was completely voluntary.

The students who participated in the study were instructed to read and sign the consent form located on the outside of their packet before opening the study material. The experimenter explained the meaning of the consent form and why it was important, reviewed the consent form, and allowed the participants time to ask questions about the informed consent before the study began. The consent forms were then collected and placed into a pile separate from the completed packets in order to ensure anonymity.

The students were told that they could begin work on their packets after all of the consent forms were collected. Participants were instructed to read the enclosed vignette carefully and then answer the items on the questionnaire so that their own opinions could be reflected. The participants were then told, upon finishing the questionnaire, to place the study materials back inside the envelopes and fasten the clasp. The experimenter collected the packets when all of the packets were completed. Participants were then told that they could attend a debriefing session where they could ask specific questions about

the study and its purpose, and they were given the time and place where the debriefing would be held.

#### Data Analysis

A 2 x 2 MANOVA was conducted with independent variables of sexual orientation (homosexual couple vs. heterosexual couple) and level of drinking (no drinking vs. drinking two beers). The six items on the questionnaire served as dependent variables. A correlation matrix among the various questions was also computed using the SPSS statistical computer program.

## RESULTS

### Effects of Sexual Orientation and Victim's Alcohol Use

#### Multivariate Analysis

A 2 x 2 between-subjects MANOVA was performed on the six dependent variables represented as items on the questionnaire. All tests were set at an alpha level of  $p < .05$ . The results of the MANOVA, using Pillai's Trace, indicated a significant main effect for level of drinking (no drinking vs. drinking two beers) by the victim, multivariate  $F(6, 112) = 2.31, p < .05$ . The main effect of sexual orientation (homosexual couple vs. heterosexual couple), although not significant at the  $p < .05$  level, approached significance, multivariate  $F(6, 112) = 1.98, p = .07$ . No significant interactions between level of victim drinking and couples' sexual orientation was observed.

#### Univariate Analyses

Univariate tests for the significant main effect of level of drinking revealed two significant findings and one finding that approached significance. As noted in Table 1,

there was a significant univariate effect of victim drinking for the dependent variable that assessed the use of token resistance, or whether the victim in the vignettes said "no" to having sex when they really meant "yes",  $F(1, 117) = 6.55, p = .01, MS = 9.87$ . As noted in Table 2, participants attributed greater use of token resistance to the victim who drank two beers ( $M = 1.97, SD = 1.48$ ) than the victim who remained sober ( $M = 1.39, SD = 0.88$ ), regardless of sexual orientation (see figure 1).

In addition, there was a significant univariate effect of victim drinking that assessed the victim's receptivity to the sexual encounter,  $F(1, 117) = 4.29, p < .05, MS = 11.98$ . As noted in figure 2, participants were more likely to think that the victim who drank two beers was more receptive to the sexual assault ( $M = 3.10, SD = 1.68$ ) than the victim who remained sober ( $M = 2.48, SD = 1.67$ ), regardless of whether the couple was portrayed as homosexual or heterosexual.

#### Non-significant Univariate Analyses

Though the following analyses were not found to be significant at the traditional  $p < .05$  level, they are noteworthy because they approach significance. Further research is warranted to examine the direction of these findings.

For the main effect of level of drinking, the dependent variable that assessed the use of coercion by the perpetrator was found to approach significance,  $F(1, 117) = 3.39, p = .07, MS = 15.50$ . The participants attributed greater use of coercion by the perpetrator towards the victim who drank two beers ( $M = 5.18, SD = 1.85$ ) than the victim who remained sober ( $M = 4.48, SD = 2.37$ ), regardless of the sexual orientation of the couple (see figure 3). Due to the fact that the results of this variable only approach significance,

it is more likely to be a chance finding, but a valid difference may reflect a perception that the intoxicated victim is less able to defend him- or herself against the assault.

Although the main effect of sexual orientation was not significant at the traditional  $p < .05$  level, there is one significant univariate for this main effect and two univariates that approached significance. The significant univariate effect of sexual orientation was for the dependent variable that assessed the length of the jail sentence should the perpetrator be convicted of the sexual assault,  $F(1, 117) = 4.91, p < .05, MS = 12.77$  (see Table 1). The participants assigned more jail time to the perpetrator (see figure 4) if the vignette portrayed a homosexual couple ( $M = 3.64, SD = 1.76$ ) than if the vignette portrayed a heterosexual couple ( $M = 3.00, SD = 1.47$ ), regardless of whether or not the victim had been drinking (see Table 2).

There were two univariate effects of sexual orientation that approached significance. The first univariate effect was for the dependent variable that assessed victim responsibility,  $F(1, 117) = 3.14, p = .08, MS = 6.41$ . As shown in figure 5, participants in this experiment attributed a greater amount of responsibility to the victim if the victim was homosexual ( $M = 2.83, SD = 1.65$ ) than if the victim was heterosexual ( $M = 2.37, SD = 1.19$ ), regardless of whether or not the victim had been drinking alcohol.

The other univariate effect of sexual orientation that approached significance was the dependent variable that assessed victim receptivity,  $F(1, 117) = 2.98, p = .09, MS = 8.30$ . The participants were more likely to think that the homosexual victim was more receptive to the sexual assault ( $M = 3.05, SD = 1.80$ ) than the heterosexual victim ( $M = 2.53, SD = 1.57$ ), regardless of whether or not the victim was intoxicated (see figure 6).

Table 1

## Univariate Test Results for Main Effects of Sexual Orientation and Victim Drinking

Source	Dependent Variable	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Sexual Orientation	Steve coerced John/Mary	1	0.21	0.05	0.83
	John/Mary was receptive to sex	1	8.30	2.98	0.09
	John/Mary said "no", but meant "yes"	1	0.27	0.18	0.67
	Steve was responsible for assault	1	2.41	0.70	0.41
	John/Mary was responsible	1	6.41	3.14	0.08
	Jail sentence if convicted	1	12.77	4.91	0.03
Victim Drinking	Steve coerced John/Mary	1	15.50	3.39	0.07
	John/Mary was receptive to sex	1	11.98	4.29	0.04
	John/Mary said "no", but meant "yes"	1	9.87	6.55	0.01
	Steve was responsible for assault	1	0.14	0.04	0.84
	John/Mary was responsible	1	4.17	2.04	0.16
	Jail sentence if convicted	1	3.70	1.42	0.24
Sexual Orientation x Victim Drinking	Steve coerced John/Mary	1	2.66	0.58	0.45
	John/Mary was receptive to sex	1	0.01	0.00	0.96
	John/Mary said "no", but meant "yes"	1	0.05	0.03	0.85
	Steve was responsible for assault	1	5.37	1.55	0.22
	John/Mary was responsible	1	1.76	0.86	0.35
	Jail sentence if convicted	1	3.70	1.42	0.24
Error	Steve coerced John/Mary	117	4.58		
	John/Mary was receptive to sex	117	2.79		
	John/Mary said "no", but meant "yes"	117	1.51		
	Steve was responsible for assault	117	3.47		
	John/Mary was responsible	117	2.04		
	Jail sentence if convicted	117	2.60		

Table 2

## Means and Standard Deviations for Each Dependent Variable

Dependent Variable	Sexual Orientation	Victim Drinking	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Steve coerced John/Mary	heterosexual	drinking	5.00	1.95	31
		sober	4.58	2.33	31
		Total	4.79	2.14	62
	homosexual	drinking	5.38	1.74	29
		sober	4.37	2.44	30
		Total	4.86	2.17	59
	Total	drinking	5.18	1.85	60
		sober	4.48	2.37	61
		Total	4.83	2.15	121
John/Mary was receptive to sex	heterosexual	drinking	2.84	1.57	31
		sober	2.23	1.52	31
		Total	2.53	1.57	62
	homosexual	drinking	3.38	1.78	29
		sober	2.73	1.80	30
		Total	3.05	1.80	59
	Total	drinking	3.10	1.68	60
		sober	2.48	1.67	61
		Total	2.79	1.70	121
John/Mary said "no", but meant "yes"	heterosexual	drinking	2.03	1.52	31
		sober	1.42	0.89	31
		Total	1.73	1.27	62
	homosexual	drinking	1.90	1.47	29
		sober	1.37	0.89	30
		Total	1.63	1.23	59
	Total	drinking	1.97	1.48	60
		sober	1.39	0.88	61
		Total	1.68	1.25	121

Table 2 cont.

Dependent Variable	Sexual Orientation	Victim Drinking	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Steve was responsible for assault	heterosexual	drinking	5.52	1.91	31
		sober	5.87	1.48	31
		Total	5.69	1.70	62
	homosexual	drinking	5.66	1.80	29
		sober	5.17	2.20	30
		Total	5.41	2.01	59
	Total	drinking	5.58	1.84	60
		sober	5.52	1.89	61
		Total	5.55	1.86	121
John/Mary was responsible	heterosexual	drinking	2.68	1.33	31
		sober	2.06	0.96	31
		Total	2.37	1.19	62
	homosexual	drinking	2.90	1.68	29
		sober	2.77	1.65	30
		Total	2.83	1.65	59
	Total	drinking	2.78	1.50	60
		sober	2.41	1.38	61
		Total	2.60	1.45	121
Jail sentence if convicted	heterosexual	drinking	3.00	1.48	31
		sober	3.00	1.48	31
		Total	3.00	1.47	62
	homosexual	drinking	4.00	1.95	29
		sober	3.30	1.51	30
		Total	3.64	1.76	59
	Total	drinking	3.48	1.78	60
		sober	3.15	1.49	61
		Total	3.31	1.64	121

Figure 1. Univariate for token resistance for the main effect of victim drinking

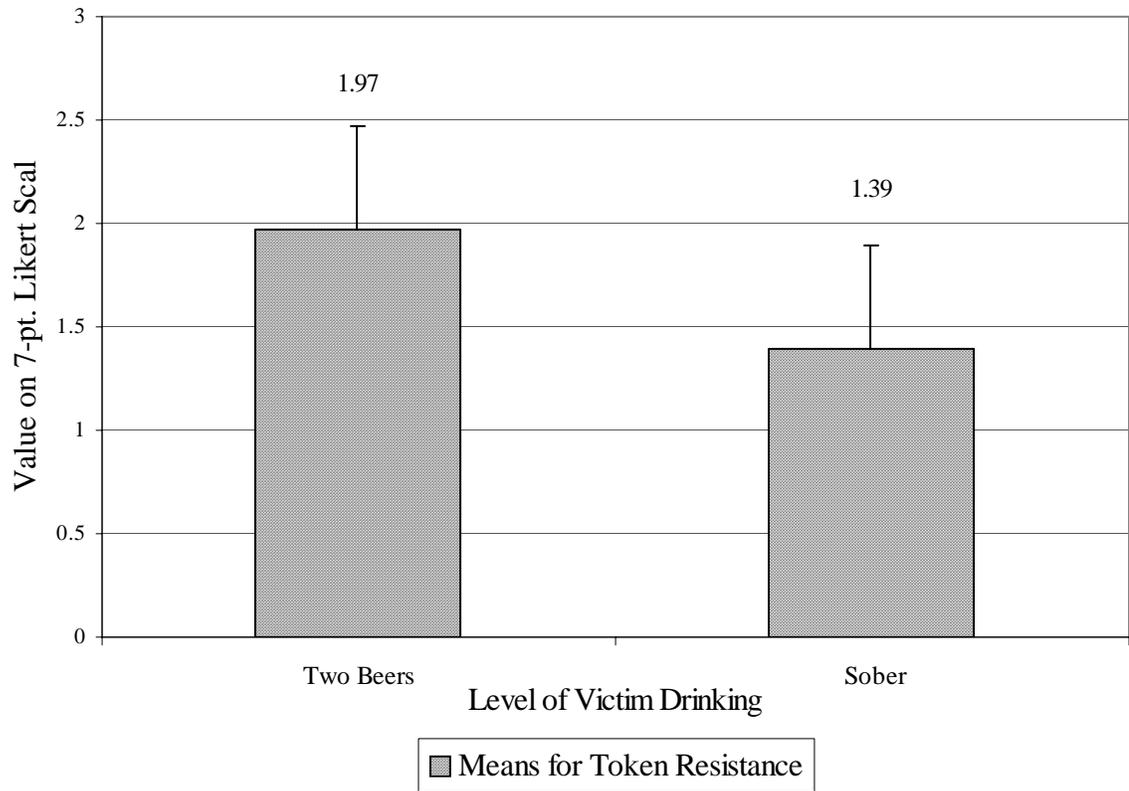


Figure 2. Univariate for victim receptivity for the main effect of victim drinking

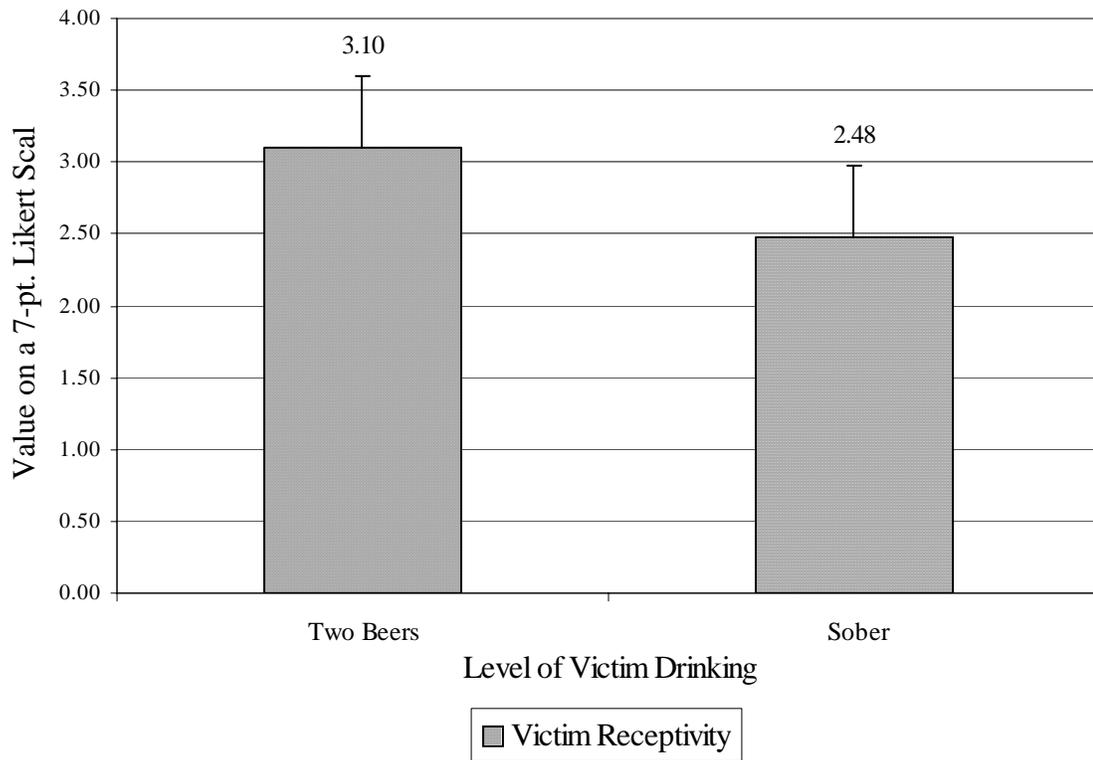


Figure 3. Univariate for perpetrator coercion for the main effect of victim drinking

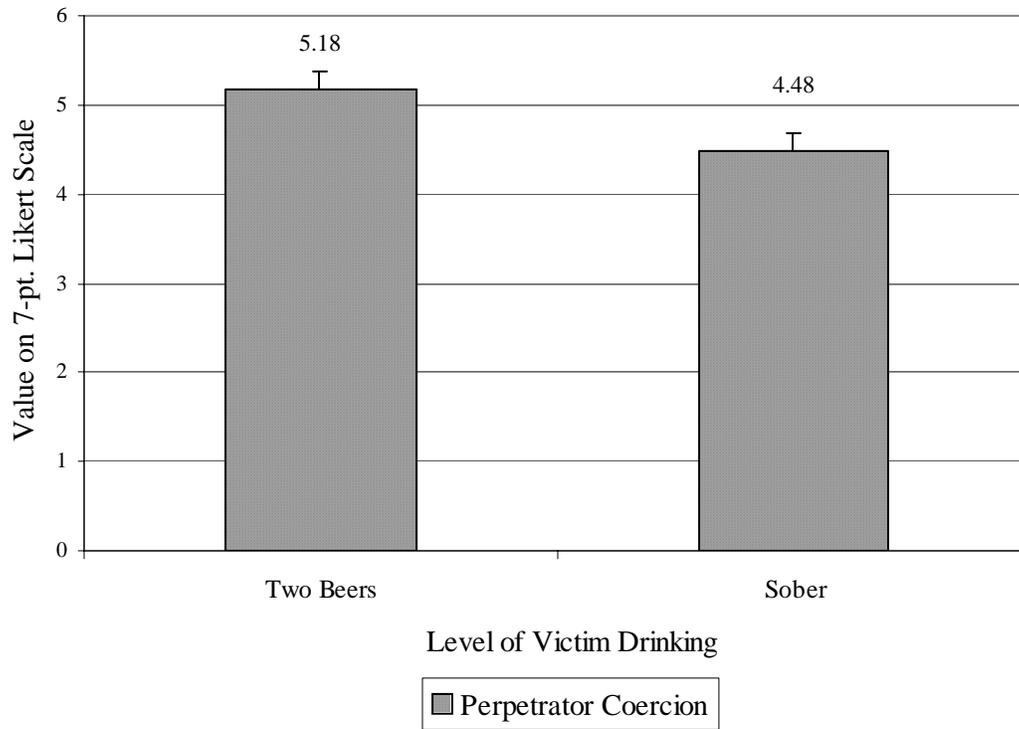


Figure 4. Univariate for perpetrator jail sentence for the main effect of sexual orientation

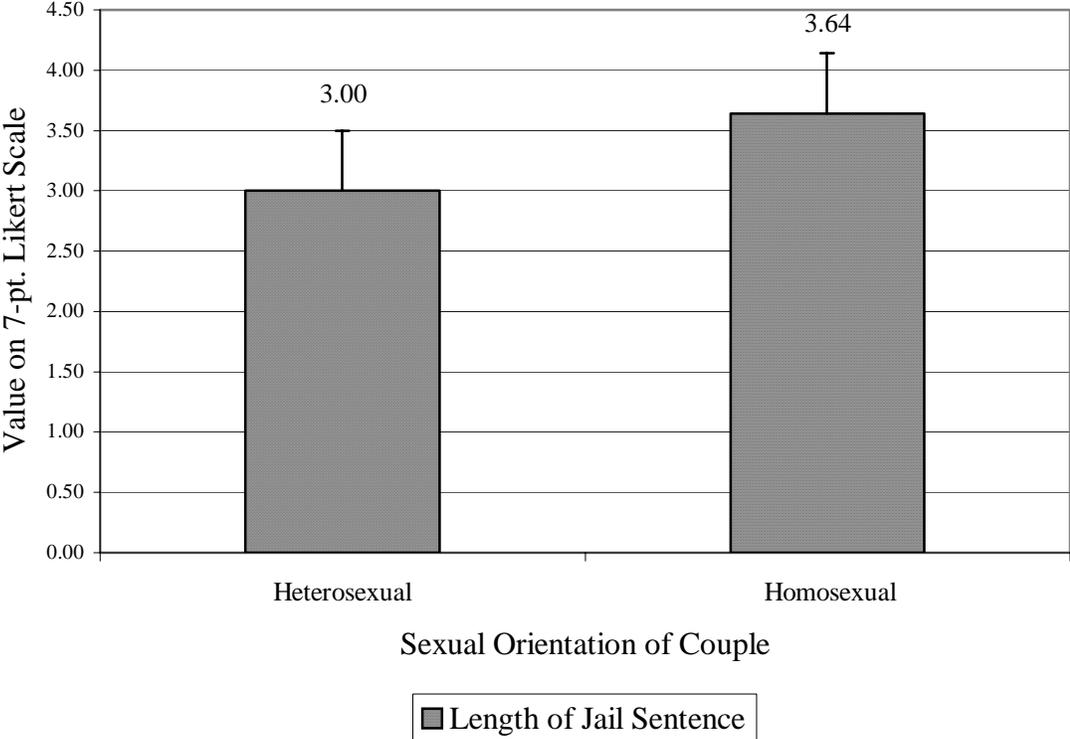


Figure 5. Univariate for victim's responsibility for the main effect of sexual orientation

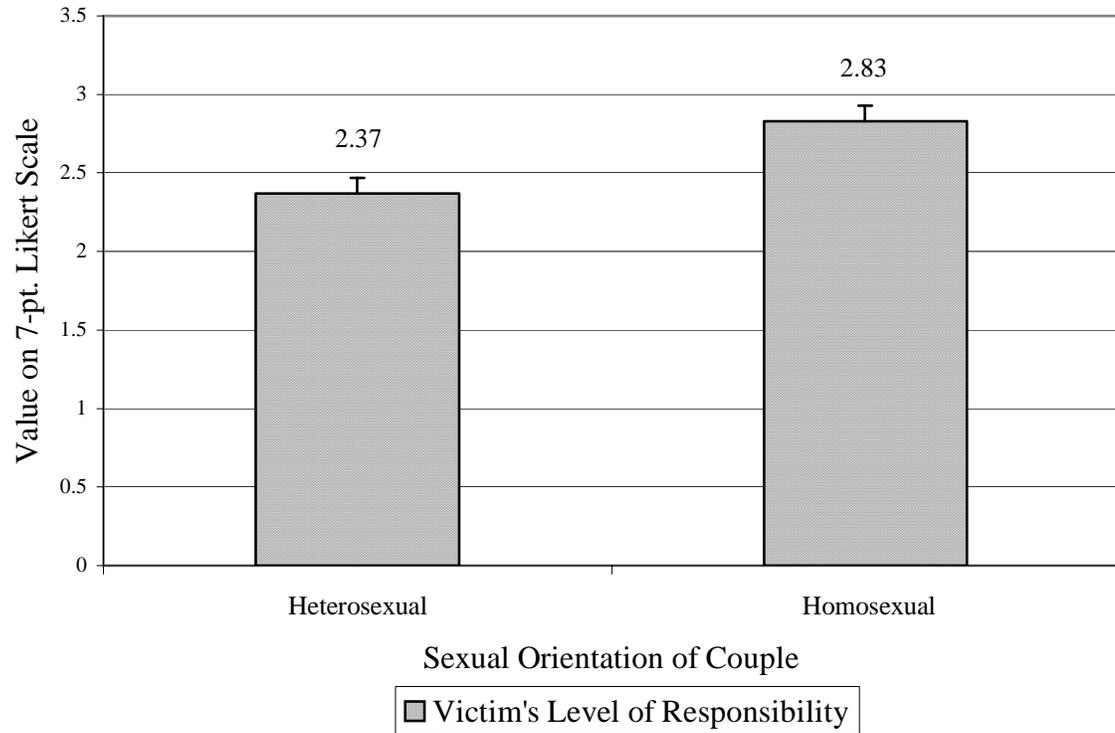
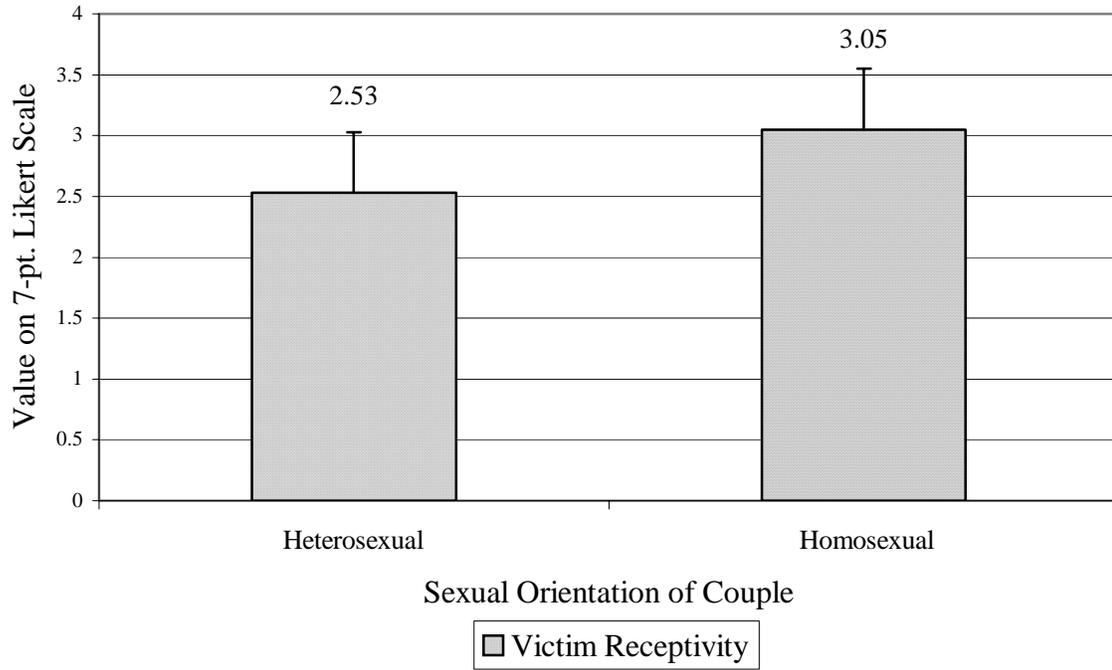


Figure 6. Univariate for victim receptivity for the main effect of sexual orientation



## Correlations

As noted in Table 3, a correlation matrix using two-tailed Pearson's  $r$  was developed for the overall means of the dependent variables. All correlations were performed using an alpha level of  $p < .05$ . The correlation matrix showed several significant correlations between the dependent variables

There was a significant positive correlation between the dependent variable that assessed the victim's use of token resistance (i.e., saying "no" to a sexual advance, but meaning "yes") and the victim's receptivity toward the assault,  $r = 0.38$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 121$ . This result shows that the more the participants attributed the use of token resistance to the victim, the more likely they were to think that the victim was more receptive to the assault.

There was also a significant positive correlation between the victim's perceived level of responsibility for the assault and the victim's receptivity to the assault,  $r = 0.41$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 121$ . This result reveals that the more likely the participants were to think that the victim was receptive to the assault, the greater the amount of responsibility that was attributed to the victim for the assault.

Another significant positive correlation was found between the victim's perceived level of responsibility and the use of token resistance by the victim,  $r = 0.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 123$ . This finding suggests that the more likely the participants felt that the victim was engaging in the use of token resistance, the more responsibility they attributed to the victim for the sexual assault.

Table 3

## Correlation Matrix for the Dependent Variables

		Steve coerced John/Mary	John/Mary was receptive to sex	John/Mary said "no", but meant "yes"	Steve was responsible for assault	John/Mary was responsible	Jail sentence if convicted
Steve coerced John/Mary	<i>r</i> <i>p</i> <i>N</i>	1.00 --- 122					
John/Mary was receptive to sex	<i>r</i> <i>p</i> <i>N</i>	0.16 0.08 121	1.00 --- 121				
John/Mary said "no", but meant "yes"	<i>r</i> <i>p</i> <i>N</i>	-0.01 0.96 122	0.38 0.01 121	1.00 --- 123			
Steve was responsible for assault	<i>r</i> <i>p</i> <i>N</i>	0.07 0.48 122	-0.14 0.12 121	-0.25 0.01 123	1.00 --- 123		
John/Mary was responsible	<i>r</i> <i>p</i> <i>N</i>	0.13 0.15 122	0.41 0.01 121	0.32 0.01 123	-0.38 0.01 123	1.00 --- 123	
Jail sentence if convicted	<i>r</i> <i>p</i> <i>N</i>	0.03 0.73 122	-0.04 0.70 121	-0.07 0.41 123	0.04 0.67 123	-0.06 0.53 123	1.00 --- 123

There were two significant negative correlations in the correlation matrix that was performed. The first was a significant negative correlation between the amount of responsibility attributed to the perpetrator for the sexual assault, and the perceived use of token resistance by the victim,  $r = -0.25$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $N = 123$ . This result shows that the more the participants thought that the victim was engaging in token resistance, the less responsibility was attributed to the perpetrator for the assault.

The other significant negative correlation was found between the amount of responsibility attributed to the perpetrator for the sexual assault and the amount of responsibility attributed to the victim,  $r = -0.38$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $N = 123$ . This finding suggests that the more responsibility that the participants attributed to the perpetrator, the less responsibility that they attributed to the victim for the sexual assault.

There were no significant correlations found between the dependent variable that assessed the use of coercion by the perpetrator and any of the other dependent variables, although there was a correlation that approached significance. There was a trend toward significance found between the dependent variable that assessed the use of coercion by the perpetrator and the perceived receptivity of the victim to the sexual assault,  $r = 0.16$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $N = 121$ . Although this is a very weak correlation and may be due to chance, the findings could be interpreted to show that the more coercion that the participants thought that perpetrator used, the more receptive that they thought that the victim was to the assault.

There were also no significant correlations found between the dependent variable that measured the length of the jail sentence should the perpetrator be convicted of the sexual assault, and any other dependent variable.

## DISCUSSION

The findings from the current study basically support results found in previous literature that deals with rape myths and acquaintance rape. The previous literature has shown that female victims who have been drinking alcohol have more responsibility attributed to them for a sexual assault than a victim who has not been drinking (Johnson et al., 2000; Richardson & Campbell, 1982). In the present study, the participants also attributed more responsibility to the victim who was drinking than to the victim who was not drinking.

Perceptions about token resistance were related to perceptions about the victim who was drinking. It should be noted that the means for token resistance were very low, meaning that as a whole, the participants did not think that the victim was engaging in the use of token resistance. However, the participants attributed greater use of token resistance to the victim who was drinking than to the victim who was not drinking. This means that they thought that the victim who was drinking was more likely to be leading the perpetrator on by saying "no" to the sexual encounter, when the victim really meant "yes" and that they wanted to have sex. As noted below, there is a significant relationship between the perception of token resistance and the perception of victim responsibility and this may be one of the mechanisms by which drunken victims are judged more harshly.

The participants in the current study also thought that the victim who had been drinking was more receptive to the sexual encounter than the victim who had not been drinking. This means that the participants thought that the victim who drank two beers, regardless of whether the victim was homosexual or heterosexual, was more willing to

engage in the sexual encounter that occurred in the vignette. This finding is supported in previous literature (e.g., Richardson & Campbell, 1982) in that the participants in previous studies felt that a victim who was intoxicated was less moral and more aggressive and therefore more willing to participate in the sexual assault, than one who was sober.

In essence, participants attributed more blame for the sexual assault to the victim if he or she had been drinking than if he or she was sober. In effect, victim blame is a combination of the perceived level of responsibility of the victim, the use of token resistance by the victim, and victim receptivity. The victim's responsibility for the assault was correlated with both victim receptivity and use of token resistance by the victim. This means that the more the participants thought that the victim was engaging in token resistance, the more responsibility they assigned to the victim for the assault. Similarly, the more receptive the participants felt that the victim was towards the assault, the more responsibility they assigned to the victim.

There was a trend that approached significance involving the amount of responsibility attributed to the victims, depending upon the portrayal of their sexual orientation. The participants in this study indicated that the homosexual victim was more responsible for the assault than the heterosexual victim. This finding could be a gender effect of the participants. Ford et al. (1998) found that, although both male and female participants placed greater blame on a homosexual male for an assault, male participants were more likely to define an assault against a homosexual male as rape than were female participants. Since the number of female participants in this study accounted for the

majority of the participants, it is possible that the attitudes of the male participants are overshadowed by those of the female participants.

There was also a trend towards significance involving victim receptivity. The participants in this study indicated that they thought that the homosexual victim was more receptive to the sexual assault than the heterosexual victim, regardless of whether or not the victim was drinking. This is in line with results from previous research (Ford et al., 1998) that homosexual males may be seen by participants to have been "asking for it" when the sexual assault occurred.

There was a trend towards significance when it came to whether or not the participants thought that the perpetrator had used coercion against the victim. The participants in the study indicated that they felt that the perpetrator was more likely to engage in the use of coercion when the victim was drinking than when the victim was sober. These findings are somewhat contradictory, since the participants also felt that the victim was more receptive to the sexual assault and engaged in the use of token resistance more when he or she was drinking alcohol. It could be that the participants felt that the more that the victim engaged in the use of token resistance, the more coercion that the perpetrator had to use in order to engage in sex with his date. Since this finding was one that was not significant, but approached significance, there is a higher probability that it is merely a chance finding. Further research might be able to confirm or refute this finding and explore the relation between the perpetrator's use of coercion and the victim's responsibility for the assault.

Regarding the sexual orientation of the couple in the vignette, participants assigned more jail time to the perpetrator when the victim was a homosexual male, than when the

victim was a heterosexual female. This is somewhat contradictory to previous research that found that female participants were less likely to define an incident as rape if the victim was a homosexual man than a heterosexual woman (Ford et al., 1998). Since 62.6% of the participants in the current study were female, it would make more sense for the greater amount of jail time to be assigned to the perpetrator in the vignette that portrayed a heterosexual couple. Further research is needed to determine the reason behind these findings. In addition, since there was no exploration of gender differences of the participants in the current study, it is not known if the findings in the Ford et al. (1998) study were being supported. If that were the case, then the male participants would be more likely to define the sexual assault against the homosexual victim as rape and they could be assigning much more jail time to the perpetrator in that situation, which may account for this interesting result. Further research will need to be conducted to explore gender differences of the participants. Another possibility that may account for these results is that, rather than sympathy for the victim, the greater jail time represents a level of homophobia towards the assailant. In this case, participants may have assigned more jail time to the perpetrator because they feel uncomfortable with the homosexual nature of the assault.

The results of this study were in line with three of the hypotheses. When it comes to victim blame, the hypothesis that significantly greater blame would be placed upon the victim who was portrayed as having been drinking was supported. The participants felt that, regardless of the sexual orientation of the victim, the victim who drank two beers engaged in the use of token resistance more than the sober victim. They also felt that the victim who drank two beers was more receptive to the sexual assault than the sober

victim. There was also a significant positive correlation found between the responsibility of the victim for the sexual assault and the amount of token resistance they used, as well as victim willingness to participate in the sexual encounter. From these results, it is reasonable to say that the participants attributed more blame to the victim if the victim had been drinking than if the victim had not been drinking.

The hypothesis that significantly greater token resistance would be perceived by the participants if the victim has been drinking was also supported. Although the participants did not agree that the victim was engaging in token resistance as a whole, they attributed a greater use of token resistance if the victim had been drinking than if the victim had not been drinking.

Although the results were not significant at the traditional .05 level, there was a trend towards attributing more responsibility to the victim if the victim was a homosexual male than if the victim was a heterosexual female. This finding would support the hypothesis, that significantly more blame would be placed on the homosexual victim regardless of drinking.

The current study did not find that significantly less blame would be placed upon the perpetrator if the victim had been drinking, as hypothesized. Although the blame attributed to the victim increased when the victim was drinking, the amount of responsibility attributed to the perpetrator did not differ whether the victim was drinking or sober. Curiously, the correlation matrix revealed that there was a negative correlation between perpetrator responsibility and the victim's use of token resistance, and also a negative correlation between perpetrator responsibility and victim responsibility. This means that the participants felt, overall, that the more responsible the perpetrator was for

the sexual assault, the less token resistance was perceived to be used by the victim, and the less responsible the victim was for the sexual assault. Further research should be conducted, as this result may also be accounted for by gender differences among the participants.

In summary, the present study found increased blame attributed to the victim, but interestingly, no significant differences were observed in blame placed on the perpetrator. In addition, there was a trend to state that there was more coercion involved when the victim was sober than when the victim was drinking alcohol.

#### Implications

The findings of the current study show evidence that the participants supported rape myths, regardless of the sexual orientation of the victim. The results also showed that there was a trend to blame the homosexual victim more for the sexual assault than the heterosexual victim, which is also in line with male rape myths. It is known from the literature that heterosexual female victims experience a "double victimization" from a sexual assault, once by the assault itself and again by the attitudes of the public (e.g., Wiehe & Richards, 1995). Homosexual victims may be victimized yet a third time, due to the fact that they often feel that they cannot report a sexual assault against them because the act itself may violate state sodomy laws.(e.g., Coxell & King, 1996), and that police may be more interested in the illegal nature of the victim's acts. Education needs to be provided to law enforcement agencies so that homosexual rape victims can feel comfortable reporting assaults against them to the police without fear of being prosecuted themselves. The results of this study may help in that step towards education in that they

show that attitudes resulting in more blame being placed on a homosexual victim for a sexual assault exist.

Furthermore, since there is an acceptance of rape myths for homosexual victims, there needs to be greater victim advocacy for those victims. Most of the rape crisis centers and victim's advocacy groups that exist today focus on female victims of rape and other forms of sexual assault. Many agencies that provide services to heterosexual rape victims either don't acknowledge that there is a need for the same services for homosexual victims, or they simply do not advertise that they provide these services (Waterman et al., 1989). Homosexual rape victims often do not receive support from their families and friends, or from law enforcement. Better victim advocacy may help homosexual victims find the support that they need after a sexual assault. A public education campaign could help to extinguish some of the male rape myths that are shown to exist in this study.

Another implication of this study is that the bias of juries against homosexual victims of rape could be examined further. It has been addressed in the literature that it is very difficult to prosecute a perpetrator for acquaintance rape since the situation deviates from what the average person defines as rape (Warshaw, 1994). Since male rape myths are so pervasive in today's society, but are usually recognized as being facts and not myths, it may be even harder for a homosexual victim of acquaintance rape to seek justice against his perpetrator. Since most adult members of the public serve as potential jurors, greater public education regarding male rape myths is needed so that homosexual victims have a better chance in prosecuting their attackers.

## Limitations

The majority of the studies that were reviewed for the present study examined the gender differences of the participants. There is literature that shows that people are more empathic towards a victim who is the same gender as that person, particularly when it comes to heterosexual female victims (Ford et al., 1998; McCaul et al., 1990). It would have been interesting to see if there was a similar gender difference among the participants in the current study. However, gender differences were not explored in this study due to the unequal number of males and females, with the majority of the participants (62.6%) being female. It is possible that some of the results of this study could be accounted for by attitudinal gender differences among the participants.

The population that was studied served as both a strength and a limitation for this experiment. The population, which consisted of undergraduate students in an introductory psychology course, is at the age that is most likely to experience victimization, become perpetrators, or be friends with a perpetrator or a victim (Koss et al., 1987; Warshaw, 1994). However, the sample does not represent the population of people who would serve on juries, have a job in law enforcement, be likely to prosecute a rape case, or work with victim advocacy.

An additional limitation is that the attitudes of the participants may be a confound of gender role schemas and sexual orientation schemas. In other words, the results found regarding the homosexual couple could have been attributed to the way the participants felt about a man sexually assaulting another man, regardless of the sexual orientation of the victim or the perpetrator. However, this reflects the confounds of attitudes in

everyday environments, thus it is not a confound in the traditional sense of the word, but probably reflects a combination of attitudes held by the participants.

#### Future Research

There are several areas of exploration that could serve as future research regarding the results of this study. First and foremost, gender differences need to be explored to see if those findings support the results found in previous literature regarding rape myths.

Second, the attitudes of particular groups, such as rape victim advocacy groups, law enforcement personnel, attorneys who might prosecute rape cases, and even members of gay and lesbian advocacy groups, could be examined. It would be interesting to note if members of those groups as a whole also endorsed acquaintance rape myths and male rape myths, or if there was a significant difference between groups in the amount of rape myth endorsement. It would also be important to examine a population that more closely resembles potential jurors.

Third, it would be interesting to examine if any differences arise from the use of written vignettes versus the use of videotaped vignettes. The vignettes used in the present study were based on written vignettes that had been used and validated in previous research (e.g., Johnson & Jackson, 1988). Although there may be an advantage to the use of written vignettes due to comparability, videotaped stimulus materials offer greater ecological validity. A study that had the same scenario both written and shown via videotape to sets of participants would help to determine if any differences exist.

Fourth, it would be beneficial to researchers that explore the area of sexual assault to examine the meaning of the word "coercion" among the participants. Many psychologists and victim advocates include "psychological coercion," or the use of heavy

persuasion or threats to force someone into a sexual encounter, to be included as a type of coercion. The participants in the current study may have only included physical force in their definition of coercion, which could have accounted for some of the results that were found. It is also quite possible that some of the participants may not have known what the term "coercion" meant. Future studies should explore participants' definitions of the term "coercion" and include that definition alongside the actual word in questionnaires in order to clarify the meaning of the word.

Finally, correlational studies should be conducted to examine how victims felt about their own sexual assault. It would be noteworthy to see if the victims themselves also endorsed rape myths, particularly homosexual male victims of sexual assault.

The current study demonstrates that attitudes towards acquaintance rape, whether the victim is male or female, require more attention in today's society. The present study shows that even those who are most at risk for being victimized and becoming perpetrators of sexual assault seem to endorse rape myths by blaming the victim of the assault. Greater education is needed for the public and also for those who are at risk of becoming victims. As long as rape myths are endorsed, both heterosexual and homosexual victims of rape will continue to be victimized by their friends, the law enforcement system, and others that they think that they can turn to for support.

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A. Cover letter for stimulus packet

The purpose of this study is to ask your opinion about encounters among people. You will be asked to read a vignette about an incident that occurred between two people on a blind date.

After reading the vignette, you will be asked to answer a brief questionnaire. Please don't discuss your answers with others who are in the group while you are answering the questionnaire. Thank you for your participation.

Appendix B. Informed consent for experimental sessions

**Information and Consent**

My name is Roxanne Howard and I am a second-year graduate student in psychology at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. This study is part of my Master's thesis. The purpose of this study is to examine how people interact in close relationships and the results from the study can potentially be applied to help us understand a more positive basis for human interrelationships.

This study should take you approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will be asked to read a story and then answer questions based on your attitudes and opinions related to the story.

Please understand that: 1) your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any explanation and without penalty; 2) you may refuse to answer any question or part of any question without explanation and without penalty; 3) you will not be identified as an individual on any study material or on any questionnaires or other study data; 4) any publication of the data will exist in group form and will not involve any individual identification; and 5) you will receive no compensation for participation in this study.

If you have any questions, you may e-mail me at [runner\\_rox@yahoo.com](mailto:runner_rox@yahoo.com). You may also contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Lee A. Jackson, Jr., professor and chair of the UNCW Psychology Department, at (910) 962-3376. You can also reach Dr. Jackson by e-mail at [jacksonl@uncw.edu](mailto:jacksonl@uncw.edu).

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the above information and you consent to participate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

Appendix C. Vignettes used in the current study

A) Heterosexual couple/victim drinking condition

Steve and Mary are an unmarried couple seeking to have a romantic relationship with someone of the opposite gender. They have been set up on a blind date with one another by a mutual friend. Mary meets Steve at his apartment and the two plan to go to a neighborhood restaurant later in the evening. Steve offers Mary a beer, which Mary accepts and begins to drink. Steve decides not to have a beer himself, but Mary accepts a second beer a few minutes later. After talking for a while, Steve decides to kiss Mary, and she allows Steve to kiss her. They both proceed to make out heavily. After a few minutes, Mary pulls away and tells Steve that she is not interested in having sex with Steve, at which point Steve forces Mary to have sex with him against her will.

B) Heterosexual couple/victim sober condition

Steve and Mary are an unmarried couple seeking to have a romantic relationship with someone of the opposite gender. They have been set up on a blind date with one another by a mutual friend. Mary meets Steve at his apartment and the two plan to go to a neighborhood restaurant later in the evening. Steve offers Mary a beer, but Mary declines his offer and says she doesn't plan on drinking tonight. Steve decides not to have a beer either. After talking for a while, Steve decides to kiss Mary, and she allows Steve to kiss her. They both proceed to make out heavily. After a few minutes, Mary pulls away and tells Steve that she is not interested in having sex with Steve, at which point Steve forces Mary to have sex with him against her will.

C) Homosexual couple/victim drinking condition

Steve and John are an unmarried couple seeking to have a romantic relationship with someone of the same gender. They have been set up on a blind date with one another by a mutual friend. John meets Steve at his apartment and the two plan to go to a neighborhood restaurant later in the evening. Steve offers John a beer, which John accepts and begins to drink. Steve decides not to have a beer himself, but John accepts a second beer a few minutes later. After talking for a while, Steve decides to kiss John, and he allows Steve to kiss him. They both proceed to make out heavily. After a few minutes, John pulls away and tells Steve that he is not interested in having sex with Steve, at which point Steve forces John to have sex with him against his will.

D) Homosexual couple/victim sober condition

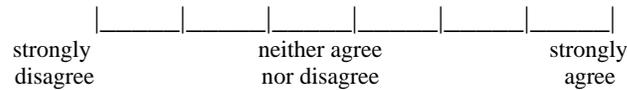
Steve and John are an unmarried couple seeking to have a romantic relationship with someone of the same gender. They have been set up on a blind date with one another by a mutual friend. John meets Steve at his apartment and the two plan to go to a neighborhood restaurant later in the evening. Steve offers John a beer, but John declines his offer and says he doesn't plan on drinking tonight. Steve decides not to have a beer either. After talking for a while, Steve decides to kiss John, and he allows Steve to kiss him. They both proceed to make out heavily. After a few minutes, John pulls away and tells Steve that he is not interested in having sex with Steve, at which point Steve forces John to have sex with him against his will.

Appendix D. Questionnaire used in the current study

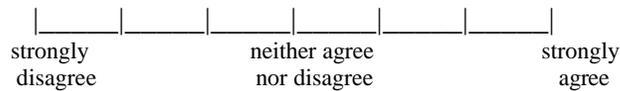
Questionnaire

**Please answer the following questions regarding the vignette you have just read. Please circle the line that best corresponds with your own opinion.**

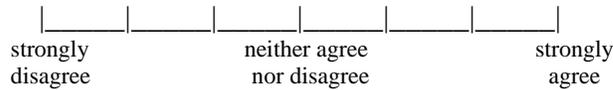
1) Steve coerced Mary(John) into having sex.



2) Mary(John) was receptive to the sexual encounter with Steve.



3) When Mary(John) said “no” to sex, she(he) really meant “yes” or “maybe.”



4) On a scale from 1-7, with 1 being “not responsible at all” and 7 being “completely responsible”, how responsible was Steve for the sexual encounter?



5) On a scale from 1-7, with 1 being “not responsible at all” and 7 being “completely responsible”, how responsible was Mary(John) for the sexual encounter?



6) If Steve were convicted of a crime for his encounter with Mary(John), what should the sentence be? Please circle one.

time/ probation | 1-5 years | 6-10 years | 11-15 years | 16-20 years | 21-25 years | more than 25 years

no jail

7) Please circle your gender: M F