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Gender and Sexuality in Blame Attributions for Intimate Partner Violence

A thesis presented for the Master of Arts degree

University of Mississippi

By

JENNIFER BALLIET

April 2012

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## ABSTRACT

In this project I explore how gender and sexuality impact how respondents blame perpetrators and victims of intimate partner violence (IPV). Victims of same sex intimate partner violence (SSIPV) have different experiences with IPV than do heterosexual victims, both in articulating their experiences and in seeking legal recourse or professional aid. Blame is at the core of the biases that result in differential treatment, and I discuss belief in a just world (BJW) and groupness perceptions in blame attributions, blame in relation to gender, sexuality, and IPV. I elaborate on the results of blame in practical terms. I used an online survey in a quasi-experimental factorial design to test four broad hypotheses on target and respondent gender and sexuality using ANOVAs and UNIANOVAs. The hypotheses are as follows: (H1) Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims, (H2) Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators, (H3) Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will, and (H4) Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will. I test sub-hypotheses for each as well. The results indicate sexuality alone is not a characteristic for in- or out-groupness, but respondent gender has a significant main effect. I discuss how homonormativity and its symbolic violence might explain my nonsignificant results. I also discuss the gendered expectations surrounding violence and performance that create a culture that legitimates victimizing, the importance of intersectionality, and directions for future research.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Without the following people, this thesis would not exist. Thank you:

Dr. Kirsten Dellinger, my co-chair, for guiding and supporting me through this, and expertly  
tricking me into writing when I was afraid to start.

Dr. John Sonnett, my co-chair, for lending your expertise and ideas to this project at a critical  
time.

Dr. Elise Lake, my final committee member, for showing me where to start when I was lost in  
the literature sea.

Kady, for always being there to listen, able to restore my sanity, and (sometimes reluctantly)  
willing to accommodate my nocturnal schedule.

And Ben, for everything.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I examine how gender and sexuality affect how people blame victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence (IPV). Estimates indicate that IPV occurs at approximately the same rate in same sex-couples as in heterosexual couples, so a significant portion of the population is excluded when we study and draw conclusions only about heterosexual violence (Harris and Cook 1994). The literature is lacking a comprehensive comparative study of heterosexual and same sex intimate partner violence (SSIPV), and this is problematic in part because blame is relational – just as knowing how a single victim is blamed acontextually is virtually worthless, knowing how victims and perpetrators of SSIPV are blamed without the greater heteronormative context tells us very little. There are also heteronormative implications in the way we discuss IPV as an implicitly heterosexual phenomenon, which does symbolic violence to victims of SSIPV. This translates into real life consequences for how these victims of SSIPV find themselves unable to articulate their experiences because partner violence is conceptualized as something that happens in heterosexual relationships (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1991; Irwin 2008; Hardesty, Oswald, Khaw, and Fonseca 2011). Intimate partner violence is seen as an implicitly heterosexual phenomenon, and the invisibility of same sex victims puts them at an increased risk for escalating violence. The world is not structured to accommodate victims of SSIPV, and police and other officials often unable or unwilling to effectively intervene (Tesch, Bekerian, English, and Harrington 2010).

Intimate partner violence is experienced differently by men and women, and by heterosexual and same sex couples, but the aid network and other individuals are not prepared for these differences (Hardesty et al. 1022; Irwin 2008; Koski and Mangold 1988). The basis for this differential treatment on an individual level is how people perceive and attribute blame to victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence. There are differences in whether and how some individuals blame others, and this process can be tied to factors including perceptions of in- or out-group status and level of provocation or “asking for it” (Correia et al. 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Lerner and Miller 1978). I expect that respondent and target gender and sexuality will play a role in attributions of blame for intimate partner violence for both perpetrators and victims.

I begin the literature review by providing an introduction to intimate partner violence and rates of occurrence in official reports. I discuss two concepts explaining how people blame, the belief in a just world and in- and out-group perceptions with some of the literature on blame and IPV. Following this I provide an overview of how same sex intimate partner violence is differentially perceived and treated by officials. I finish the literature review with a discussion on how violence is a gendered phenomenon, and how this gendering interacts with a heterosexualizing to perpetrate structural symbolic violence on victims of SSIPV.

These discussions form the basis for my hypotheses: (H1) Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims, (H2) Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators, (H3) Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will, and (H4) Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will.

I use a quasi-experimental factorial design to test these hypotheses. I used four vignettes depicting moderate IPV among two heterosexual and two same sex couples to ask respondents for the percentage of blame they assign to each victim and perpetrator. I tested my hypotheses ANOVAs and UNIANOVAs with Tukey post hoc comparisons where appropriate. I discuss the results of these tests in terms of the practical and theoretical implications of the importance of intersectionality of gender and sexuality.

## I. LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Intimate Partner Violence: What is it?**

Intimate partner violence refers to physical, mental, and/or emotional violence that is intended or perceived to be intended, and perpetrated in intimate couples, including both heterosexual and same sex couples, whether spouses, cohabiting partners, dates, or boyfriends/girlfriends (Straus and Gelles 1986; Tjaden and Thoennes 1998). While psychological and emotional abuse are serious issues in American society, my focus in this study is on the physical, including but not limited to “hitting, shoving, or throwing things at one’s partner” (Anderson 1997:661 ). At least one quarter of American women have been physically assaulted by an intimate partner at some point in their adult lives, and as of the most recent National Violence against Women Survey (NVAWS) in 1998 at least 1.5 million US women were assaulted annually by an intimate partner. Findings suggest that fewer men than women are physically victimized in intimate relationships, with only approximately 834,700 men assaulted by intimate partners annually, although women are significantly more likely than men to report being victimized by an intimate partner (Tjaden and Thoennes 1998).

According to Tjaden and Thoennes (1998:27), most of these assaults involve “pushing, grabbing, shoving, slapping, and hitting,” with weapon threats and usage much rarer. They note that despite the nonfatal intent of the most common assaults, serious injury can result in some cases. Though the more serious assaults are rarer, women disproportionately experience them, being 7 to 14 times more likely than a man to report that a partner beat or otherwise attacked

them with an apparent attempt to kill (Tjaden and Thoennes 1998). Reported by Catalano, the Bureau of Justice Statistics found in a report on IPV in the U.S. (2007) that simple assault is the most common manifestation of IPV, which corroborates the NVAWS. However, it also reports that men were more likely than women to be victimized by an attacker with a weapon. It reports that women are more likely than men to be physically assaulted by an intimate partner, with IPV representing 22% of all nonfatal physical assaults on women, and 4% of all nonfatal physical assaults on men (Catalano 2007). Consistent with other reports, the BJS reports that college aged women are at highest risk of intimate partner violent victimization; adolescent and elderly men experienced the lowest rates (Catalano 2007).

Catalano continues that “nonfatal intimate partner violence is most frequently committed by individuals of opposite genders” (19), although given the ratio of heterosexual individuals to LGBTQ individuals, this is neither shocking nor informative. However, men are more likely than women to experience SSIPV (Catalano 2007). This brief mention of SSIPV highlights the general invisibility of victims of SSIPV in other official reports. In a secondary analysis of NVAWS data, Messinger (2011) found that gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals are more likely to experience IPV than are straight individuals; gay and lesbian individuals do not differ significantly in rates of experience of IPV. I will discuss this invisibility of non heterosexual victims in official reports later.

### **Blame and Intimate Partner Violence**

There are two relevant theories explaining how people assess blame. The first of these is the “belief in a just world” (BJW). This refers to faith in the notion that people deserve what they get and get only what they deserve, and most people believe this to varying degrees. People

react to the misfortunes of others by believing that these others somehow deserved or caused the trouble, whether by stupid self-endangering actions or by simply “being a bad person.” This process is psychologically protective because it allows people to believe that bad things do not simply happen to good people like them, and hardships or victimizations are somehow deserved or justified. Belief in a just world allows individuals the illusion that they have a considerable level of control over their environments and their destinies. It is frightening to acknowledge that some bad events are random, that the motivations of others are largely unknown and unpreventable, and that the most careful plans can easily be disrupted by an unexpected and undeserved event (Correia, Vala, and Aguiar 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Lerner and Miller 1978).

There is not an overt decision to blame victims, but it is a reaction that protects the perceiver from experiencing unchecked levels of fear and vulnerability (Correia et al. 2007). This phenomenon helps to explain the culture of victim blaming –it does not arise out of sadism or sociopathic social skills but out of the higher level of control attributed to victims, and by extension, to oneself by extension. This is why women are taught tips for “not getting raped,” rather than holding men accountable for “not raping women.”

If a person perceives a victim to be sufficiently similar to them, and perceives that they could be similarly at risk, it can affect whether and how they might blame a target victim. A similar victim is considered “in-group.” When straight women are shown vignettes of IPV with straight female victims, they blame the victim less because they feel they could be similarly at risk (Correia et al. 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Kristiansen and Giulietti 1990; Lerner and Miller 1978). When perceivers feel the target is “out-group” by belonging to a different race/ethnicity, gender, or social class, then they attribute more

blame to the victim, feeling secure that they will not later find themselves in a similar situation (Correia 2007). In this study I will test if sexual orientation is also one of these out-group factors, as has been hinted at in some others (Brown and Groscup 2009).

A perceiver's level of belief in a just world can work in conjunction with a target's in- or out-groupness to affect whether and how much they will blame victims and perpetrators in a variety of situations, including intimate partner violence. BJW and groupness are two separate concepts that can work in harmony, and do so well when explaining blame attributions for IPV. Belief in a just world may explain victim blaming generally, while groupness may isolate some factors that make some people blame some targets more than others.

There are factors that can mitigate or exacerbate the effect of BJW and groupness on IPV blame attributions. Target race is one of these. Locke and Richman (1999) tested target race, operationalized as black or white, in a study of heterosexual IPV. All participants blamed black male perpetrators the least of all perpetrators, assigning them even less blame when their victims were black women. The authors explain this attribution as indicative of stereotypical notions that black household violence is common and thus excusable, and that black women are loud, aggressive, and domineering, and thus inherently prone to provoking violence (Locke and Richman 1999). When the authors explain the reason for the female victim's blame, we can interpret it as BJW at work: respondents blamed this target because they were able to rationalize the violence as deserved due to their assumptions about her behavior. Respondents blamed the black male perpetrator less because they were able to project onto his victim various characteristics that made the violence more palatable. Although it did not affect the overall results, black respondents sympathized more with black victims than white, which mitigated

their attributions of blame, an example of the effect of in-group sympathizing. From this we can conclude that a factor in attributions of blame of both targets and perceivers is race.

When respondents know or infer a target's characteristics based on prior knowledge and stereotypes, it affects how they assign blame. Locke and Richman speculated that their participants blamed black female victims based on stereotyped assumptions of her behavior (Locke and Richman 1999; Witte, Schroeder, and Lohr 2006). When a target characteristic or status is made explicit the effect is magnified, such as when respondents are told that a perpetrator has a history of violent behavior. When expectations about the perpetrator matched his past actions, respondents blamed him more, whereas if the perpetrator is described in a way that is implicitly peaceful, such as a pastor, he is blamed significantly less (Witte et al. 2006). How people expect another to behave and whether those expectations are fulfilled or denied affect whether and how much they are blamed. In this situation, when a person behaves in a manner so counter to expectations, they are blamed less because the behavior interpreted as a fluke rather than just another damning event in a string of similar events (Witte et al. 2006). Level of violence can also affect blame attributions; severely violent cases are more easily attributed entirely to the perpetrator, while attributions for very mild violence are less decisively judged (Witte et al. 2006). A third situational element affecting blame is verbal victim provocation. When victims were verbally aggressive prior to the assault they were blamed more than victims who were not. This is an example of behavior that, while not necessarily affecting an in- or out-group association, squares with BJW. When perceivers are privy to the outcome of the altercation, perceivers retrospectively judge the victim's verbal aggression to be stupid, and that which directly caused the assault (Witte et al. 2006).

That presence of alcohol affects blame attributions also can be interpreted in terms of BJW. Respondents blame intoxicated victims more than sober victims because intoxicated victims are perceived to have done something irresponsible and self-endangering; as with verbal provocation, being intoxicated becomes the easy explanation and justification for violence. Perceivers also blame intoxicated perpetrators more than sober perpetrators when the victim was sober - they cannot impugn the victim's sober behavior, so they instead blame the perpetrator's choices. Violence can be perceived as a loss of control on the perpetrator's part, such as when a person with a "peaceful" status unexpectedly assaults someone, but when loss of control is associated with the loss of inhibitions triggered by alcohol consumption, perceivers may again retrospectively judge the consumption as stupid because of the outcome. However, regardless of whether a perpetrator was intoxicated or sober, perceivers blame male victims more than female victims (Stewart and Maddren 1997).

This leads to the final important element affecting blame for victims and perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Gender, whether of victim, perpetrator, or respondent, affects how perceivers attribute blame. Perceivers fairly consistently blame straight male victims more than they blame straight female victims (Dennison and Thompson 2011; Hamby and Jackson 2010; Harris and Cook 1994; Stewart and Maddren 1997; Witte, Schroeder and Lohr 2006). The roles of victim and perpetrator are gendered, so when men are assailants and women victims, the situation is ranked as more serious than the other way around. Blame is relational in this way – victims are blamed more or less in regards to who the perpetrator was. Straight male perpetrators are also blamed more because of respondents' internalized gender stereotypes regarding each person's presumed size and the resultant damage each could do. The respondent's gender can affect assignment of blame. Women perceivers have been found to blame female victims less

than male perceivers, and will blame male perpetrators more as well. If we apply the concept of groupness to this, then women are identifying with female victims as in-group, men are identifying with male perpetrators as in-group, and both men and women are blaming vignette couples accordingly. (Dennison and Thompson 2011; Hamby and Jackson 2010; Harris and Cook 1994; Stewart and Maddren 1997; Witte, Schroeder and Lohr 2006)..

There is a lack of comparative work on how gender and sexuality impact men's and women's perceptions of heterosexual and same sex violence. While Harris and Cook (1994) found that respondents blamed gay male victims more than straight female victims but less than straight male victims, they failed to probe these findings further. There are a number of studies that examine how gender and sometimes sexuality affect perceptions of IPV. These studies illustrate that gender affects blame – male respondents generally blame victims more and perpetrators less than female respondents, and male victims are generally blamed more than female victims (Beeble et al. 2008; Dennison and Thomson 2011; Ewing and Aubrey 1987; Hamel et al. 2007; Harris and Cook 1994; Hillier and Foddy 1993; Koski and Mangold 1988; Locke and Richman 1999). Whether a target's gender or sexual orientation can create an in- or out-group association, or whether it is the interaction of the two, is a salient element of what I am exploring.

Ewing and Aubrey (1987) found that men and women perceived the same vignette depicting straight male-perpetrated IPV rather differently. Men were more likely than women to believe the described incident was an isolated one unlikely to ever be repeated in the couple's future, and men more than women assigned more blame to the female victim. Women were more likely to suggest that the woman in the vignette could leave her abuser if she wished, and were more likely than men to agree that a woman who stayed with her abuser was somehow

emotionally disturbed. Beeble, Post, Bybee, and Sullivan (2008) found that in addition to youth, former victims of IPV, and those who already identified IPV as a social issue, women were more likely to believe that a situation of IPV warranted help, interference, or intervention. Hillier and Foddy (1993) found that men and women blamed heterosexual female victims (the only victims in their study) differently, with men blaming these victims significantly more than women. Further, men were more likely than women to blame the victim regardless of provocation level. But respondent gender does not guarantee differences— although Dennison and Thompson (2011) found that the perpetrator’s gender impacts how serious a respondent perceives an IPV incident to be, they did not find many differences attributable to respondent gender.

Koski and Mangold (1988) looked at how men and women differ in their perceptions of IPV and found that although men and women differ in some ways, they are both more tolerant of IPV when perpetrated by a heterosexual woman on her heterosexual male partner. A target’s gender and how it relates to expectations in a role as perpetrator or victim affects how men and women perceive the situation. Hamel et al. (2007) also found that a perpetrator’s gender can significantly affect how people generally and men and women specifically perceive IPV. Locke and Richman (1999) also studied how respondent and target gender, as well as respondent and target ethnicity, affect perceptions of IPV. They found in-group effects across the board, with women blaming the male perpetrator more and rating the seriousness of the incident higher than did men, and men blaming the female victim more than did women.

Hegemonic masculinity affects how men act and how they treat gay men and male victims of intimate partner violence. To be gay or victimized is a violation of the characteristics required to be a “true” man (Kimmel 1993). Gender and sexuality are two structures of oppression in Collins’ matrix, so when performing according to gender, men are expected to be

manly creatures, embodiments of hegemonic masculinity, while women are expected to embody traits opposite of those demanded of men (Collins 2000; West and Zimmerman 1987). When women and men do not conform to these expectations by demeanor or actions, others experience conflict when interpreting and interacting with these persons, as in cases of male victimization and female perpetration of violence (Allen-Collinson 2009, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel 1993). Women and men experience IPV differently, from the moment of altercation to subsequent police involvement and long term legal and social repercussions of either victimization or perpetration (Koski and Mangold 1988). These differential experiences are why men and women assign blame differently, regardless of prior experience with IPV. Part of this experience is exemplified in how people perceive female perpetrated victimization of straight men as more acceptable than male on female violence, because men who do not live up to demands of hegemonic masculinity somehow deserve any injuries inflicted (Koski and Mangold 1988).

Because dominance and heterosexuality are important elements of masculinity, while less important in modern femininity, the expectation of sexuality as an out-group marker for men may not hold true for women. While heteronormativity assures us of a simple hierarchy, with heterosexuality the norm and at the top, and any LGBT orientations held as less important, less human, the reality is more complex. Individuals can prefer to emphasize any aspect of their identity that they will, but certain status characteristics, like gender, race, or sexual orientation, are imposed and stackable in terms of oppression (Collins 2000). The effects of this status need to be explored, and I am doing that here with respect to victims and perpetrators of IPV because despite some forays into heterosexual-LGBT comparative work (Harris and Cook 1994; Murray

and Mobley 2009), there is no especially clear sense of how sexuality and gender interact to impact blame attributions.

## **Gendering of Violence**

In this section I review the concepts of intersectionality, hegemonic masculinity, heteronormativity, and gender performance; these themes drive my study and its hypotheses. Given that heterosexuality is essentially defined in opposition to homosexuality, an understanding of either heterosexual violence or same sex couple violence is incomplete when not appreciated fully as existing in what Patricia Hill Collins calls the “matrix of domination” (Collins 2000). Her layered analysis of power details how different statuses are related in a system of structural oppression. Social positions and categories intersect and interconnect to ensure that almost no one is entirely free of oppression. Sexuality and gender are two such structures of inequality which can control and oppress individuals in this web (Collins 2000).

American hegemonic masculinity is the root of this specific gender-sexuality hierarchy. Despite decades of progress towards gender equality, American society is still heavily patriarchal and glorifies this type of masculinity: a process or set of practices that eschews compassion and emotion in favor of ruthless ambition, aggression and acquisition (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel 1993). Although multiple masculinities exist in hierarchy under hegemonic masculinity, the ubiquity of this standard has the effect of branding men as derogatorily “feminine” should they fail to live up to its requirements (Kimmel 1993). “Real men” are exclusively straight, and hold gay men in contempt and fear because of their decided non-adherence to the standard (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Part of this fear stems from heteronormativity, the structured and enforced expectation of heterosexuality

which essentializes males and females as men and women, and ignores any variation in actual gender categories by way of appearance or behavior (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). “Real men” can be victims of violence – but only when the assailant is another straight male who is unfairly advantaged. To be victimized by a woman or a male lover strips a man of his masculinity and the social privilege and psychological stability that go along with it. But does a man lose more validity when he is victimized by a woman, who is defined inferior by opposition, or when he is victimized by another man with whom he is intimate- and thus already dangerously “feminine” (Allen-Collinson 2009, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel 1993)? I explore such questions in this study.

“Doing gender” is a process which “involves a complex of socially-guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine ‘natures’” (West and Zimmerman 1987:126). Hegemonic masculinity defines expected gender roles to be enacted, and whether or not a person is successful in their role performance affects how they are perceived (Connell 1995; West and Zimmerman 1987). Men engage regularly and methodically in ascribed masculine activities that mark them indisputably manly because it is dangerous for that status to be questioned (West and Zimmerman 1987). There are traits and actions associated with masculinity and femininity (and straightness and gayness) that can affect perceptions based on whether an individual is doing gender properly or not. As such, men are supposed to be assertive to the point of aggression, physical, strong, and dominant. Conversely, women should be passive, emotional, weak, and submissive. The former embodies the description of a perpetrator as the latter also describes a victim – ergo, men are perpetrators of violence, and women victims of it (West and Zimmerman 1987). When men are victims or when women are perpetrators of violence then they are not

properly performing their gender role, and perceivers question the validity of their claim as a men or women (Kane 2006). There are gendered methods for enforcing gender-appropriate behavior, and so a perceiver's gender identification will impact his or her judgments of targets who do or do not properly conform to a given gender (Kane 2006; Kristiansen and Giulietti 1990).

The expectations of gender performance and hegemonic masculinity form the basis for the gender paradigm study of IPV. But this framework is contested, and in the official reports on IPV prevalence is the seed of this particular contestation. Violent crimes are gender asymmetrical; men perpetrate more than women, but some question if this asymmetry extends to IPV (Arias and Corso 2005). The original context of IPV was predicated on a gender asymmetry; activists and scholars brought IPV- then referred to as domestic violence - to light in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in the context of a feminist revolution that pushed for protection of female victims of IPV. The gender paradigm analysis of IPV does not entirely ignore male victims, and acknowledges that the underreporting of assault is problematic for men and for women, but it also uses the lens of patriarchy to examine IPV (Chan 2011; Harris and Cook 1994; Langhinrichsen-Rohling 2009; McHugh 2005; Weston, Temple and Marshall 2005). In this perspective, IPV is an example of the oppression of women by men, a tactic used by men to assert dominance and control over women, fueled by masculine dogma and frustration at recent progress loosening patriarchy's death grip (Anderson 1997; Gilfus, O'Brien, Trabold, and Fleck-Henderson 2010; Lucal 1992; Scott and Straus 2007; Straus and Gelles 1986). This side is supported by some official reports, which indicate that college-aged women are at the highest risk for IPV, while men experience the lowest rates, and that women are more likely than men to experience partner assault (Catalano 2007).

There are critiques of the gender paradigm's assumption of gender asymmetry in perpetration, my own among them. Some, like Dutton (2011, 2007) assert that feminist theorists deliberately and maliciously ignore the prevalence of female-perpetrated violence. Dutton insists that other researchers use flawed methods. He asserts that these are all characteristics the "gender paradigm cult" has thrust upon male perpetrators, and instead characterizes women as such<sup>1</sup> (Dutton 2011:101). He accuses other researchers of distorting facts while he ignores the very real gendering effects of socialization, the oppressive effects of hegemonic masculinity, and the gender hierarchy itself. These of course result in differential experiences with IPV for men and women.

But other researchers oppose the gender paradigm to a lesser degree, arguing that gender nonspecific behaviors are to blame, such as Follingstad, Bradley, Helff, and Laughlin (2002), who note that:

The primary path leading to the use of force in dating relationships was initially due to the presence of anxious attachment influencing the development of an angry temperament which then leads to behaviors to control one's partner. Controlling behavior is the significant mediator between the angry temperament and greater frequency and severity of dating violence. (p. 44)

This rationale is deliberately not gender-specific, as men and women can both exhibit these characteristics (Follingstad et al. 2002). This theory is supported by the correlation between witnessing the abuse of a parent or experiencing childhood abuse and later exhibiting the behaviors linked to IPV (Archer 2000; Edelson 1999; Skuja and Halford 2004). If intimate violence is both a learned behavior and one that is precipitated by other temperaments and

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that the apparently anti-feminist and misogynistic Dutton asserts that he cannot be such, because "[he has] co-authored with female colleagues" (Dutton 2011:100).

predilections, this idea lends weight to the notion that IPV perpetration is not inherently gendered. While this non-gendered approach would make sense in a world of gender equity, this rationale ignores the greater likelihood for women to be victimized in childhood as well as what men and women are differentially taught and how they differentially use violence, IPV in particular (Archer 2000; Catalano 2009; Koski and Mangold 1988; Swan and Snow 2006). So while the mechanism that might cause IPV is universal, the prevalence of its manifestations and the implications of violence are asymmetrical. This imbalance in power and experience is addressed by other researchers.

Weston, Temple and Marshall (2005) suggest that a debate on whether men or women perpetrate more IPV focuses too much on rates without looking at the nature of the violence. Removed from the context of type of violence, they suggest that there is symmetry in perpetration rates, and a high level of mutual violence; however, men are more likely than women to perpetrate severe violence against their partners, more likely to inflict injury or death. When there is mutual violence, it is significantly less likely to have a female instigator; when there is a female primary perpetrator in a mutually violent situation, she is still more likely to experience severe injury. Weston et al. (2005) acknowledge that they did not take into account how much of women's perpetration of IPV was in self-defense as a response to explicit or implied threats, which Archer (2000) found to be common. While women can be physically aggressive, it is usually in the context of self-defense. Archer (2000) also found that in violent relationships, men are much less likely than women to be afraid of their partner, or afraid of experiencing injury from their partner's aggressions.

Swan and Snow (2006) argue that there is a need to place female perpetrated violence in a broader sociological context. Female perpetrated aggression is related to a number of unique

factors that will put women at undue legal risk should lawmakers accept the notion of equal rates of IPV perpetration among the sexes. The nature of intimate partner violence means that the context for perpetrated and experienced violence is gendered and quite different for men and women. Specifically, they test a model of women's violence that situates it within a broader victimization by society – victimization by male partners, greater levels of victimization in childhood, coping strategies for women in relationship problems, and other psychological factors like depression and anxiety (2006). Essentially, they argue for an intersectional examination of women's violence, acknowledging specifically race, class, and gender, although certainly other factors can be at play (Swan and Snow 2006).

Other researchers agree that while it may not necessarily be the only cause, gender cannot be removed from an analysis of IPV because of its usefulness as a conceptual framework for understanding differing statuses and social positions (Gilfus et al. 2010; McHugh 2005). This allows researchers to identify sites of differential access to resources, legal recourse, and therapy, as well as varying levels of risk. In this vein, Arias and Corso (2005) report that their findings suggest an asymmetry in perpetration of IPV, and that women are injured more frequently and more severely, incurring financial costs at approximately three times that of men for medical services, mental health services, and productivity losses. The effects of the gender pay gap means this places a burden on women that is much greater than what men experience (Arias and Corso 2005).

My critique of the gender paradigm and this debate is the intense focus on heterosexual concerns. Chan's exhaustive review of studies relating to the gender asymmetry debate revealed that although all of the studies in his meta-analysis examined both female and male perpetrated violence, it was always only in heterosexual contexts. Same sex couples are effectively invisible

in official statistics and in the debate surrounding asymmetry in IPV. It is apparent that IPV occurs in heterosexual and same sex couples – so why are the latter being ignored? Swan and Snow argue that female-perpetrated violence needs to be put into the broader social context wherein women are habitually victimized by society, and experience IPV differentially from men. Along with the intense gendering of the victim and perpetrator roles is a heterosexualizing of the surrounding discourse. Gay men and lesbian women experience romance and relationships differentially from their straight counterparts, and SSIPV also needs to be put into the context of a society that at turns “tolerates” and condemns same sex couples (van Eeden-Moorefield, Martell, Williams and Preston 2011).

Intimate partner violence perpetration needs to be examined with attention to intersectionality of not just race, class, and gender, but also sexuality. This sexuality component needs to be addressed in a way that acknowledges the newer homonormativity.

“Homonormativity” is a term coined to describe how gay and lesbian relationships are expected to be, like the expected mirroring of the heterosexual nuclear family. While not a perfect analogue, homonormativity functions similarly to heteronormativity, ignoring and oppressing differential experiences and persons that do not fit into its paradigm (Duggan 2002; Tilsen and Nylund forthcoming; van Eeden-Moorefield et al. 2011). I want to discuss this in the context of the symbolic violence that heteronormativity and homonormativity use to define and constrain oppressed groups. Heteronormativity describes what it means and is subsequently required to be men and women, and presupposes heterosexuality of each person. Both heteronormativity and homonormativity allow persons to access privilege in the form of symbolic capital by essentializing the categories of exclusion (in this case a presupposed nuclear family with defined roles for individuals) which their very descriptions create (Adkins and Skeggs 2004). This

exclusionary process is not intimidating or constraining to those who fit the description, such that homonormativity is only problematic for those who do not identify as heterosexual, and also do not fit into its narrow categorizations of “acceptable” homosexual behavior (Bourdieu 1991). Bourdieu describes how those with a stigmatized accent often lose their ability to articulate when trying to hide their stigma; in this same way, victims of heteronormative or homonormative systemic symbolic violence are often unable to articulate what they are experiencing because it is outside the realm of “natural” existence constructed by these terms (Bourdieu 1991). Victims of SSIPV experience IPV differently because of the way they are socialized to think about IPV as a heterosexual phenomenon and are thus excluded from categorization as “valid” victims (Irwin 2008; Hardesty et al. 2011). Same sex intimate partner violence is not regularly discussed as a problem to be addressed effectively, and this absence erases a subsection of the population and invalidates their experiences by trying to force them into an inherently heteronormative gendered analysis of IPV.

Same sex couples are not only absent in the asymmetry debate, they are invisible in the ways we label and discuss intimate partner violence. The original term “domestic violence,” while officially referring to spousal, child, and elder abuse, generally was synonymous with “wife battering” (Lucal 1992). This excludes many victims: married and unmarried men, unmarried women, and victims of same sex intimate partner violence. This exclusion did and continues to do symbolic violence to victims who did not fall into a very narrow category of “victim” by erasing their official existence and invalidating their experiences (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1991). This has been addressed in the more recently scholarly use of “intimate partner violence,” which is technically inclusive of all victims. However, there are two problems. Domestic violence is still used to reference intimate partner violence colloquially and in media

coverage; so while scholars, activists and allies have adopted inclusivity, the experiences of male and same sex victims are still largely invisible to the public (Bullock 2008; Bullock 2007; Carlyle, Slater, and Chakroff 2008; Lenahan 2009). This popular use of “domestic violence” symbolically imposes requirements of those who would otherwise fit its description: to be a victim of domestic violence one must be a straight female. Other victims who experience the same behaviors from a partner cannot identify as victims of domestic violence because they do not fit the implied requirements; as such, they have difficulty acknowledging their position and seeking help for it.

The second problem is that the media and popular portrayals of intimate partner violence perpetrated by women against men are often tinged with humor at the browbeaten male figure, bereft of his manhood and his ability to dominate his woman. Popular portrayals of same sex intimate partner violence are virtually nonexistent. In this way the usage of “domestic violence” still manages to perpetrate a structural symbolic violence on male and same sex victims of IPV. Further, despite the implicit inclusivity of “intimate partner violence,” it still is generally used to connote heterosexual couples and violence – studies on intimate partner violence do not need to specify in the title that it is heterosexual because this is assumed. Although “intimate partner violence” is meant to be inclusive, its use is still heteronormative in its implicit requirement of heterosexuality for would-be victims, which is why we need the abbreviation SSIPV to indicate that we are discussing *same sex* intimate partner violence (Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1991). Victims of same sex intimate partner violence suffer from official and cultural invisibility, and symbolic violence as a result of this. Compounding this are structural and practical challenges that arise for these victims as a result of their invisibility and marginalization. I discuss some of these challenges next.

## **Same Sex Intimate Partner Violence**

Defined as physical, emotional, psychological or sexual abuse occurring between intimate partners of the same sex or gender, same sex intimate partner violence (SSIPV) is generally perceived to be both less serious and less deserving of aid than heterosexual IPV (Alexander 2002; Baker 2009; Brown and Groscup 2009; Harris and Cook 1994; Harrison and Esqueda 1999; Hines, Brown and Dunning 2007; Muller, Desmarais, and Hamel et al. 2009; Tesch et al. 2010). Perceivers typically believe victims of SSIPV to be more deserving of the inflicted violence and more to blame for the aggression and incurred injuries than heterosexual victims, straight women in particular (Harris and Cook 1994). Compounding this are LGBT communities which do not necessarily conceptualize couple violence, particularly in lesbian partnerships, as real and problematic “domestic violence” (Murray and Mobley 2009). These overall perceptions have been studied in a variety of specific contexts. Not all of the following are blame studies, but were chosen because they illustrate the real effect of the symbolic violence in ignoring certain victims, as well as a pervasive bias against SSIPV, at the root of which is blame.

Some of the literature focuses on attitudes towards intimate partner violence in the legal sphere, and asks questions regarding inequality in the judiciary system in its treatment of requested restraining orders (Muller et al. 2009), and other researchers ask police officers about their perceptions and actions when called to intervene in domestic disturbances (DeJong Burgess-Proctor, and Elis 2008; Tesch et al. 2010). Researchers surveyed law enforcement officers to examine how, when called to a scene or presented with a vignette of IPV, officers’ interpretations of a given SSIPV situation and its seriousness are affected by variations in

presence of alcohol, gender of perpetrators and victims and other factors such as sexual orientation. DeJong et al. identified a number of issues that frustrate general police responses to IPV, such that in addition to feeling uncertain with how to handle IPV calls, officers can lack an appreciation of the psychological complexities of IPV, can harbor misogynistic views that complicate their interventions, and may also be jaded by past experiences with victims uncooperative in the prosecution of the perpetrator (DeJong et al. 2008). These are only amplified when officers are called to the scene of a same sex domestic dispute, and find they are especially unsure of how to deal with the situation because they lack training in protocol necessary for successfully negotiating same sex disputes (Tesch et al. 2010). As a result, Tesch et al. find that because of improper police handling in situations that are already prone to escalation, victims of SSIPV are at higher risk for recurring and increasingly serious violence than straight victims. This lack of training is indicative of upper-level discomfort in implementing a training program for how to act in same sex domestic disputes, and implies law enforcement bias (Tesch et al. 2010).

Protocol uncertainty extends past immediate intervention to recurrence prevention by way of court-issued restraining orders. Men have a more difficult time getting a judge to grant a restraining order against their partners, and are often persuaded by officers or legal counsel to not even file for one (Muller et al. 2009). Victims of SSIPV sometimes find themselves more afraid of the unhelpful judicial and civil systems than of their violent partner. This is exacerbated because certain safety nets, such as crisis centers and restraining orders, which are available to straight victims are less accessible for SSIPV victims (Murray and Mobley 2009).

Crisis center workers and other IPV aid sources perceive as less severe, and subsequently handle less seriously, SSIPV situations compared to heterosexual IPV. When shown vignettes of

heterosexual and same sex couple violence, crisis center workers consistently rated the same sex depictions as less severe in terms of violence perpetrated and less likely to become a recurring issue (Brown and Groscup 2009). A victim's sexuality had other effects: crisis center employees were significantly less likely to suggest a victim leave an abusive same sex partnership, even when the vignette contained exactly the same factors as the heterosexual one. These employees also believed that should they choose to, leaving is much easier for victims of SSIPV than for victims of heterosexual IPV (Brown and Groscup 2009). Although participants consistently labeled all vignettes as domestic violence, when asked for their level of confidence in this assessment, researchers found that respondents were least confident in labeling the gay male vignette as domestic violence (Brown and Groscup 2009). This difference is the only statistically significant one between gay couples and lesbian couples that Brown and Groscup mention or explore.

Crisis centers are not the only resource available to victims of IPV - helplines are a critical early resource for some victims because of the anonymity, the ease of finding and contacting, and the support and direction they can provide to victims. Hines et al. (2007) studied the call-responder reported statistics of caller characteristics and conversation highlights from a helpline expressly for male victims of IPV. They found that when men call one of the many women-dedicated helplines they will almost invariably immediately be transferred instead to a helpline for abusive men (Hines et al. 2007). This shows a pervasive bias on the part of crisis line operators and other aid organizations that handle female victims, one which categorizes men inevitably as manipulative abusers - and never as possible victims. The idea that men are always the perpetrators is reflected in the conclusions drawn in the literature on legal repercussions (Hines et al. 2007). Bias is reflected in the absence of other resources for victims of SSIPV –

there are no shelters set up specifically to accommodate these victims, and there is a dearth of counseling services available as well (Messinger 2011).

Heteronormative assumptions are found in those scholarly works that study exclusively heterosexual IPV to make sweeping generalizations about victims without mentioning victims of SSIPV (Harris and Cook 1994), and in practical contexts. These directly affect victims of SSIPV. Because these victims go unnoticed in popular and some scholarly discourse, there is a assumption that IPV is a heterosexual issue. IPV is rarely discussed in the context of same sex relationships, so these victims are even more reluctant to label aggression as intimate partner violence (Irwin 2008). Gay and particularly lesbian communities can place a unique pressure on victims to stay silent when abused so as to preserve notions of equality not seen in heterosexual relationships so tainted by patriarchy and sexism (Irwin 2008; Hardesty et al. 2011; van Eeden-Moorefield et al. 2011). Lesbian victims who are mothers face indifferent responses from police and heterosexist responses from the judicial system that make very real the threat of losing their children (Hardesty et al. 2011). Victims of SSIPV, men and women, also face isolation more intensely than heterosexual victims because many victims of SSIPV are not completely “out,” or may have lost familial contacts when they came out, and are thus preemptively cut off from potential support systems. Even seeking help would bring the potential for losses of a personal, financial, or familial nature (Irwin 2008).

The literature clearly shows a bias in the ways systems, officials, and individuals interact with SSIPV. They perceive SSIPV to be less serious than heterosexual IPV, and often handle it with much less certainty than they do heterosexual IPV. Perceptions of these situations and who deserves blame in a given situation are at the core of these biases and their manifestations.

## II. HYPOTHESES

Given my interest in exploring the intersection of gender and sexuality, I have four broadly encompassing hypotheses, each with a number of associated sub-hypotheses. My independent variables in this project are sexuality and gender, and I organize my four major tests around these themes. The first two hypotheses focus on sexuality, while the latter two focus on gender. It is important to note that these hypotheses are based on the assumption of a heterosexual sample. I have arranged this to test whether sexuality indeed constitutes an in- or out-group factor, and because project limitations did not allow access to a sufficiently large population of LGBT respondents. I list the four primary hypotheses below. These are followed by the sub-hypotheses and a detailed rationale for each.

H1: Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims.

H2: Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators.

H3: Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will.

H4: Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will.

It is easiest to discuss the more specific hypotheses in relation to each broad one. I give a detailed rationale for each hypothesis and sub-hypothesis below. See Appendix A for a full list.

### **H1: Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims.**

Underlying this hypothesis is the assumption that for heterosexual respondents, sexuality trumps gender in making a target in- or out-group, and that the heterosexual respondents will

find SSIPV targets to be out-group, which will correspondingly increase the amount of blame they place on such a target (Correia et al. 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Lerner and Miller 1978). Additionally, just as straight male victims are often accorded more blame than straight females because they should presumably be able to defend themselves against a (usually) smaller attacker, SSIPV victims may be blamed more because of their presumed physical comparability with the attacker. However, this hypothesis also tests for general variations in victim blame across the possible combinations in my study.

H1a: Respondents will blame heterosexual male victims more than heterosexual female victims.

Straight male victims fairly regularly are blamed more than straight female victims (Hamby and Jackson 2010, Stewart and Maddren 1997; Harris and Cook 1994).

H1b: Respondents will blame lesbian victims more than heterosexual female victims.

Straight female perpetrators tend to be blamed less than male perpetrators, and [straight] male victims tend to be blamed more than [straight] female victims. I expect that if there is to be a difference in how female victims are blamed, it will be attributable to an interaction of sexuality and gender and homophobia. Blame can also be tied to size and expectation of damage inflicted – women would be expected to sustain less damage from a female assailant than a male, and so be blamed more (Hamby and Jackson 2010).

H1c: Respondents will blame gay male victims more than heterosexual female victims.

With male perpetrators in both vignettes I expect the gay victim to be blamed more based on out-group status with both male and female respondents (Correia et al. 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Lerner and Miller 1978), as well as expectations of size and damage, similar to H1b (Hamby and Jackson 2010).

H1d: Respondents will blame heterosexual male victims more than lesbian victims.

Straight male victims are generally blamed more than straight female victims. If this is a matter of gender, the same should hold true for same sex couples (Stewart and Maddren 1997; Harris and Cook 1994). Respondent expectations of size and potential damage inflicted may also have an effect (Hamby and Jackson 2010).

H1e: Respondents will blame gay male victims more than they blame heterosexual male victims.

This is based on the supposition that gay male victims will be considered more out-group to heterosexual respondents than are straight male victims (Correia et al. 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Lerner and Miller 1978).

H1f: Respondents will blame gay male victims more than lesbian victims.

Hegemonic masculinity requires men be dominant - should they elect not to perform to this standard (by being gay), it is a failure of performance. Should a gay man become victimized by a lover, he is twice a failure in his performance of masculinity (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel 1993). Presumably, relations of size to damage will not be at play here, with attackers and victims assumed to be of the same size, and each victim will be a similar level of out-group to respondents, such that the effects would be negligible in comparison to one another.

**H2: Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators.**

Empirical evidence suggests that male perpetrators are blamed more than female perpetrators, which makes this a natural place to start looking at how respondents assign blame to perpetrators (Hamel et al. 2007; Koski and Mangold 1988). In addition, the complementary nature of how expectations of size and gender affect victim blame should be in play – when

couples are assumed to be evenly matched, perpetrators are blamed less (Dennison and Thompson 2011; Hamby and Jackson 2010). This hypothesis tests variations in perpetrator blame more generally, and the sub-hypotheses for H2 make explicit these comparisons.

H2a: Respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than heterosexual female perpetrators.

This hypothesis was based on past empirical evidence that straight male perpetrators are attributed more blame than straight female perpetrators (Hamby and Jackson 2010, Stewart and Maddren 1997; Harris and Cook 1994).

H2b: Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than heterosexual male perpetrators.

Physical aggression is perceived to be a masculine characteristic, and according to Witte et al. perpetrators will generally be blamed less when their behavior constitutes a break with what perceivers expect of them, in this case physical aggression as opposed to the expected feminine victimization (Witte et al. 2006).

H2c: Respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than gay male perpetrators.

If gay men are out-group to the heterosexual respondents, they will assign more blame to the gay victim, and less to the perpetrator – this trend is seen in straight male perpetrators blamed more than straight female perpetrators while their victims are blamed less and more, respectively. Literature has shown victim gender to be important in how perpetrators are blamed, so male victims are associated with less perpetrator blame (Hamby and Jackson 2010, Stewart and Maddren 1997; Harris and Cook 1994). Further, respondent assumptions about gender and size in these couplings, where respondents would presume two men to be more evenly matched in a physical altercation than a man and a woman, indicate that less blame would likely be assigned to the gay male perpetrator (Hamby and Jackson 2010).

H2d: Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than heterosexual female perpetrators.

As blame can be tied to potential for damage inflicted by attacker relative to each person's size, presumed or actual, a lesbian perpetrator will be blamed more – she would be expected to be able to inflict greater damage on a victim approximately her own size, as compared with a straight women assailing a presumably larger man (Hamby and Jackson 2010).

H2e: Respondents will blame gay male perpetrators more than heterosexual female perpetrators.

This is one of the minor sub-hypotheses where there is less supporting rationale; rather, it is one of the possible testable combinations. Because both perpetrators victimize men, a difference arising in the results may be attributable to sexual orientation as a characteristic for out-groupness.

H2f: Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than gay male perpetrators.

Physical aggression as expression of emotion is socially defined as macho, and expected of men. But gay men are “feminized” such that masculine aggressiveness might be unexpected and result in less blame attributed to them (Witte et al. 2006).

### **H3: Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will.**

Hegemonic masculinity distances straight men more from gay men than similar social structures distance straight women from both lesbian women and gay men because of its demands for subordination of women and the “lesser” gay men (Kimmel 1993). Men are also unaccustomed to being victimized so I suggest that victims are out-group to men. This is also based on empirical evidence that men typically blame victims more than women (Locke and Richman 1999). This general hypothesis also covers a number of other possible variations in how men and women respondents assign blame to all victims.

H3a: Male respondents will blame heterosexual female victims more than female respondents will.

There is empirical evidence that suggests this trend (Locke and Richman 1999), which is supported by the in-group and out-group assignments in this situation (Correia et al. 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Lerner and Miller 1978), where straight men might associate more with a straight male assailant and blame him less while concurrently blaming his straight female victim more.

H3b: Male respondents will blame heterosexual male victims less than female respondents will.

If straight men found other straight men to be in-group (as proposed in the last hypothesis), it is logical that they might find a straight male victim to be sufficiently in-group to allow for a level of sympathy not seen in their other blaming tendencies. This trend has also been suggested by previous studies (Harris and Cook 1994, Locke and Richman 1999).

H3c: Male respondents will blame lesbian victims more than female respondents will.

Men often blame victims more than women (Locke and Richman 1999). The assumption here is that men find victims to be more strongly out-group than straight women find lesbians.

H3d: Male respondents will blame gay male victims more than female respondents will.

Men often blame victims more than women do (Locke and Richman 1999).

**H4: Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will.**

In this situation, I presume that men see the male perpetrators as in-group while women see the victims as in-group, either because of straight female victim in-group associations or because of (gay) male perpetrator out-group associations. Respondents will presumably blame

their out-group target more. There is also empirical evidence suggesting this outcome (Harris and Cook 1994, Locke and Richman 1999).

H4a: Female respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than male respondents will.

Empirical evidence suggests that this is the case –whether it is women placing more blame on the assailant of an in-group character, or men assigning less blame to a character they find directly in-group (Locke and Richman 1999).

H4b: Male respondents will blame heterosexual female perpetrators more than female respondents will.

There has also been some empirical support for this, which fits with the notion that male respondents will identify less with a female perpetrator because she is assaulting a straight male, whom male respondents would presumably find to be in-group (Locke and Richman 1999).

H4c: Female respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than will male respondents will.

Women might blame the perpetrator more in this case because they can identify with the victim more than can male respondents. Following the trend finding that women generally blame perpetrators more than men do, this formulation makes sense (Locke and Richman 1999).

H4d: Female respondents will blame gay male perpetrators more than will male respondents.

I use the same rationale here as in the previous hypothesis – women generally blame perpetrators more than men do (Locke and Richman 1999).

All hypotheses can be found listed in Appendix A.

### III. METHODS

I used a 2x2 between subjects factorial design to analyze data. This was structured to test two levels of two independent variables, in this case primarily target gender (man or woman) and target sexuality (gay or straight) (Hall 1998). This is a common design among studies that examine perceptions and variable effects on them (Ewing and Aubrey 1993; Harris and Cook 1994; Hillier and Foddy 1993; Koski and Mangold 1988; Locke and Richman 1999). Hamel et al. (2007) performed a similarly structured study examining the effect(s) of target and respondent gender on analysis of motive in IPV situations with two surveys, each with three short vignettes featuring differing levels of aggression.

I collected data with a self-administered online survey using the online survey program Qualtrics which is popular with business schools and marketing teams, but useful for social scientists too (Munsch 2009). In my survey, respondents were randomly shown one of four vignettes, which differ only in the introductory sentence which states the target gender and sexuality, a line of dialogue again referring to target and his or her boyfriend/girlfriend, the names and pronouns referring to the victim and perpetrator in the depiction of the altercation. The vignettes and survey were loosely structurally based on Howard's (1984) study, with the specifics of the vignettes based on IPV survivor stories in various online forums. The vignettes depict the following: male perpetrated heterosexual IPV, female perpetrated heterosexual IPV, female perpetrated same sex IPV, and male perpetrated same sex IPV. The scenario describes a moderate level of violence occurring after the perpetrator picks the victim up from work, a

serving job. The victim was late getting out of work, and this incites anger in the perpetrator, who assaults the victim while driving, which results in a minor collision. It is a scenario selected for authenticity, believability for perpetration by either men or women, and because moderate violence is less polarizing in blame attributions (Witte et al. 2006). Target names in the vignette are Michael/Michele and Eric/Erica because they have been used in similar studies and are largely non-indicative of race, a concern for possible bias (Brown 2009; Hamel et al. 2007). The vignettes can be found in Appendix B. Qualtrics equally randomized the four different vignettes among respondents.

Because there were four vignettes, I created four versions of the survey, which differed in proper nouns, pronouns and other descriptive words in asking the same questions. Respondents were asked directly to attribute blame to the victim and to the perpetrator using a scale from 0-100 for each, essentially assigning a percentage of the total blame for the situation. I also asked respondents a number of questions about the targets on 7 point Likert scales. These semantic differentials included whether the target and his/her actions were foolish or wise and whether the altercation and injuries were attributable to specific factors. These probed further into the type of blame respondents assigned to targets. I discuss where this would have gone in the limitations section of my conclusion had I had the opportunity for analysis in this particular project. The survey can be found in Appendix C.

This study is based on data from 217 undergraduate students in four introductory sociology classes at a large Southern university. The sample included 67 men and 150 women. The average age was 19. Of these respondents, 11 did not identify as “heterosexual/straight,” and these were excluded from analysis for two reasons. The first was to preserve the validity of the hypotheses, which test in- and out-group factors related to heterosexuality. Second, because so

few identified as nonheterosexual, results from a sample of 11 spread over four vignettes would not be generalizable. Project limitations prevented collection of data from a comparably sized group of LGBT respondents. Of the remaining 206 respondents, 28% stated they had previously experienced intimate partner victimization. Thirty-five percent of the straight male respondents reported having been a victim of IPV, whereas 26% of the straight female respondents did. Male victim experience was much higher than average, although the disparate sample sizes makes statistical conclusions difficult (Harris and Cook 1994). When asked if they were close to someone who had been victimized by an intimate partner, 62% of respondents answered in the affirmative. This rate is higher than the national average (Catalano 2007). Of all respondents, 36% reported that they or someone close to them had perpetrated intimate partner violence. This has a confounding potential as respondents could include their own abusers in addition to friends, acquaintances, or relatives; I will return to this in the discussion section. I believed that IRB would find asking directly if the respondent had perpetrated violence to be “sensitive information.” As correlating past perpetration to present perceptions was not my focus, this item was preemptively excluded from the survey.

Students were offered a small amount of extra credit for their participation. Within Qualtrics I was able to upload and email the panel of potential respondents, whose panel affiliations (and thus identifying markers) were removed by the program immediately upon completion of the survey, preserving anonymity. All responses were thus entirely anonymous to me and anyone who would view responses, data, or spreadsheet documents, which after reorganization saw new numbers assigned to each case. Regardless, response data was kept on my password-protected Qualtrics account, and any documents resulting from that data will be

saved on personal flash drives and external hard drives, all of which were kept in secure locations. Identification of respondents is not a concern.

Qualtrics allowed me to download data directly into SPSS, where the dependent blame variables went through a number of iterations. The original configurations I called All Victim Blame and All Perpetrator Blame. These variables were a direct transposition of the survey question, and could range from 0-100. The data showed a bimodal distribution, so instead of one value that respondents attributed the most, there were peaks in blame at 0 at 50 for victims and 50 and 100 for the perpetrators. These bimodal distributions violated the ANOVA's assumption of normality, and so I ran the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test for both of these variables to check for errors in the ANOVAs. I elected to recode the blame variables to capture the blame distribution without the data peaks so skewing my results. I created Any Victim Blame, which measures if the respondent assigned any blame to the victim at all. I also created its mirror, Only Perpetrator Blame, which asks if the respondent assigned all blame to the perpetrator of the incident. To capture the effects of the bimodal data distribution I also created variables that asked for ranges of blame assigned to the victim and perpetrator, splitting the 0-100 range in half so that a data peak fell in each range. For each of the four hypotheses I have elected to discuss the Any/Only blame variables because they more adequately capture the question in each hypothesis for a situation where an unprovoking victim was assaulted. How much blame is given each victim and perpetrator is less important and less telling than whether a respondent felt a victim deserved any blame in the situation at all because my vignette contained no provocation from the victim and should have resulted in all blame assigned to the perpetrator. To this end H1 and H3 are tested using Any Victim Blame while H2 and H4 are tested using Only Perpetrator Blame. I ran one-way ANOVAs for H1 and H2, with post hoc Tukey multiple comparisons to test the sub-

hypotheses for each. The two independent factors (sexuality and gender) in H3 and H4 were too many for an ANOVA, so I ran a univariate analysis of variance (UNIANOVA) for H3 and H4.

## IV. RESULTS

### **H1: Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims**

For H1 (Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims) I ran an ANOVA with Any Victim Blame as my dependent variable and Experimental Group as the independent. The ANOVA showed no significant variation,  $F(3, 204) = .640, p = .590$ , so overall there appeared to be no difference in whether or not respondents blamed a victim based on the victim's gender and sexual orientation. This is corroborated in the ANOVAs run with the other dependent blame variables of All Victim Blame and Split Victim Blame, as well as a preliminary Chi-square and a Kruskal-Wallis. All results were non-significant. The descriptive statistics of the ANOVA can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptives for ANOVA of H1: Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims

<i>Victim</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</i>		<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
					<i>Upper</i>	<i>Lower</i>		
Straight Female Victim	51	1.549	.502	.070	1.400	1.690	1	2
Straight Male Victim	52	1.634	.486	.067	1.490	1.770	1	2
Same Sex Female Victim	52	1.673	.473	.065	1.540	1.800	1	2
Same Sex Male Victim	53	1.585	.497	.068	1.450	1.720	1	2
Total	208	1.610	.488	.034	1.540	1.670	1	2

The sub-hypotheses involved direct comparisons in a Tukey post hoc, and are arranged in order in Table 2. The comparison in H1a (Respondents will blame heterosexual male victims more than heterosexual female victims) had a mean difference of  $(I - J) = .08560$  and a significance level of  $p = .812$ . There is no statistically significant difference among straight victims in whether or not a respondent assigns them any blame. The comparison for H1b (Respondents will blame lesbian victims more than heterosexual female victims) showed a mean difference of  $(I - J) = .12406$  and a significance level of  $p = .574$ . I would have expected to see lesbian victims assigned more blame than their straight counterparts, but this was not the case. The comparison in the periphery H1c (Respondents will blame gay male victims more than heterosexual female victims),  $(I - J) = .03589$  and a significance level of  $p = .982$ , so there was virtually no difference between these victimized gay men and straight women in whether they were blamed at all.

The comparison in H1d (Respondents will blame heterosexual male victims more than lesbian victims) had a mean difference of  $(I - J) = .03846$ ,  $p = .978$ , which tells us that there is no statistically significant difference in whether or not respondents blame straight male and lesbian victims. The male victims comparison in H1e (Respondents will blame gay male victims more than they blame heterosexual male victims) showed a mean difference of  $(I - J) = .04971$ ,  $p = .954$ . This result runs counter to expectations, and displays no significant difference for male victims based on sexuality for whether respondents assign any blame. The final comparison for H1, H1f (Respondents will blame gay male victims more than lesbian victims) showed a mean difference of the two victims was  $(I - J) = .08817$ ,  $p = .793$ . There is no significant difference in respondent blaming tendencies for gay male victims and lesbian victims.

Table 2. Tukey multiple comparisons for H1: Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims<sup>2</sup>

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Straight female victim</i>	<i>Straight male victim</i>	<i>Same sex female victim</i>	<i>Same sex male victim</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
1a	-	+			.085	.096	.812
1b	-		+		.124	.096	.574
1c	-			+	.035	.961	.982
1d		+	-		.038	.096	.978
1e		-		+	.049	.095	.954
1f			-	+	.088	.095	.793

In conjunction with the statistically insignificant results from ANOVAs run with the other dependent blame variables and a chi-square that also reported statistically not significant results, I believe that I have an interesting finding. It appears as though a victim’s gender and sexuality has no significant effect on whether or not a respondent assigns any blame to that victim. This runs absolutely counter to expectations and some past empirical findings.

**H2: Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators**

The ANOVA for H2 (Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators) showed  $F(3, 207) = .523, p = .667$ . This ANOVA was run with Only Perpetrator Blame as the dependent variable and Experimental Grfoup as the independent, and a significance level of  $p = .667$  suggests that there is no difference that the ANOVA can discern in whether a respondent assigns a perpetrator the full amount of blame. This is corroborated in the ANOVAs run with All Perpetrator Blame and Split Perpetrator Blame as dependent variables, as

<sup>2</sup> In tables 2, 4, 6, and 8, a plus sign indicates the expectation for that character to be blamed more than the character with the minus sign.

well as the preliminary Chi-Square and the Kruskal-Wallis. The descriptive statistics of the ANOVA can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptives for the ANOVA of H2: Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators

<i>Perpetrator</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</i>			
					<i>Upper</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Straight Male Perpetrator	51	1.451	.502	.070	1.309	1.592	1	2
Straight Female Perpetrator	52	1.377	.489	.067	1.242	1.512	1	2
Same Sex Female Perpetrator	52	1.346	.480	.066	1.212	1.479	1	2
Same Sex Male Perpetrator	53	1.436	.500	.067	1.301	1.571	1	2
Total	208	1.402	.491	.033	1.336	1.469	1	2

The results of another Tukey post hoc test for the sub-hypotheses H2a-H2f can be found in Table 4. The straight perpetrator comparison, H2a (Respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than straight female perpetrators), showed a mean difference for these two groups was  $(I - J) = .07362$ ,  $p = .872$ . This lack of significant difference is an interesting result. Typically studies have shown that female perpetrators might be blamed less than male counterparts, in conjunction with straight male victims being assigned higher levels of blame. H2b (Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than heterosexual male perpetrators) could have gone either way and instead showed a mean difference of  $(I - J) = .10483$ ,  $p = .703$ . This is not a statistically significant result; it appears there is little difference in whether lesbian and straight male perpetrators are assigned sole blame when compared to one another. The male perpetrators comparison H2c (Respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than

gay male perpetrators) showed a mean difference between the two of  $(I - J) = .01462$ ,  $p = .999$ .

This is statistically non-significant.

A comparison for perpetrating women, H2d (Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than heterosexual female perpetrators) showed a mean difference of  $(I - J) = .03120$ ,  $p = .988$ . It is not significantly different; it appears as though there is scant difference in whether or not respondents blame female perpetrators of IPV. The sub-hypothesis H2e (Respondents will blame gay male perpetrators more than heterosexual female perpetrators) show that the mean difference between these two is  $(I - J) = .05901$ ,  $p = .925$ . It is not significant. The final H2 sub-hypothesis H2f (Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than gay male perpetrators) showed a mean difference of  $(I - J) = .09021$ ,  $p = .780$ . This is not statistically significant.

Table 4. Tukey multiple comparisons for H2: Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Straight male perpetrator</i>	<i>Straight female perpetrator</i>	<i>Same sex female perpetrator</i>	<i>Same sex male perpetrator</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
2a	+	-			.073	.096	.872
2b	-		+		.105	.097	.703
2c	+			-	.014	.096	.999
2d		-	+		.031	.096	.988
2e		-		+	.059	.094	.925
2f			+	-	.090	.095	.780

### **H3: Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will**

When I began examining H3 (Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will), I switched to a two-way ANOVA (UNIANOVA) with Any Victim Blame as

my dependent variable, and Experimental Group and (respondent) Sex the independent variables. The test for interaction showed no significance,  $F(3, 200) = 1.637, p = .182$ , so I tested for main effects of both variables. Unsurprisingly, given earlier results, the experimental group showed no significant effect,  $F(3, 200) = .956, p = .415$ . However, the test for main effect of respondent sex showed a weak significance,  $F(1, 200) = 3.152, p = .077$ . Men are more prone to blaming victims than are female respondents. This result can be found in Table 5.

Table 5. UNIANOVA for H3: Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will

<i>Source</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Corrected Model	2.670 <sup>a</sup>	7	.381	1.631	.129
Intercept	445.960	1	445.960	1906.357	.000
ExperimentalGroup	.671	3	.224	.956	.415
SEX	.737	1	.737	3.152	.077
ExperimentalGroup * SEX	1.149	3	.383	1.637	.182
Error	46.787	200	.234		
Total	589.000	208			
Corrected Total	49.457	207			

a. R Squared = .054 (Adjusted R Squared = .021)

The sub-hypotheses for H3 are organized by their results in Table 6. Gleaned from the main effects test is H3a (Male respondents will blame heterosexual female victims more than female respondents will) with a mean difference of  $(I - J) = .248$ , and a weak significance of  $p = .075$ . Male respondents are blaming straight female victims more than are female respondents, who would identify this victim as in-group. H3b (Male respondents will blame heterosexual male victims less than female respondents will) showed no significant differences between men and women,  $(I - J) = -.167, p = .329$ . While this in itself is not significant, it does bear noting that this is the only victim that male respondents blamed less than female respondents. The main effects test for H3c (Male respondents will blame lesbian victims more than female respondents will)

showed a significant difference in the means of blame assigned by respondents,  $(I - J) = .292$ ,  $p = .046$ . The main effects summary for H3d (Male respondents will blame gay male victims more than female respondents will) was not significant, with  $(I - J) = .155$ ,  $p = .265$ . To summarize briefly, men are blaming female victims significantly more than women do, though women are not blaming the male victims in a similar fashion.

Table 6. Comparisons from UNIANOVA of H3: Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Victim</i>	<i>N for Male Respondents (I)</i>	<i>N for Female Respondents (J)</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
3a	Straight female victim	21	31	.248	.139	.075
3b	Straight male victim	11	45	-.167	.170	.329
3c	Same sex female victim	16	37	.292	.145	.046
3d	Same sex male victim	19	36	.155	.139	.265

#### **H4: Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will**

I also used a two-way ANOVA in testing H4 (Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will), with Experimental Group and (respondent) Sex as the factors and Only Perpetrator Blame as the dependent variable. When the interaction test showed no significance,  $F(3, 203) = 1.175$ ,  $p = .320$ , I also checked main effects for Experimental Group and Sex. Neither showed any significance, with Experimental Group showing  $F(3, 203) = .418$ ,  $p = .740$  and Sex showing  $F(1, 203) = 1.691$ ,  $p = .195$ . These results can be found in Table 7.

Table 7. UNIANOVA for H4: Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will

<i>Source</i>	<i>Type III Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Corrected Model	1.872 <sup>a</sup>	7	.267	1.111	.358
Intercept	327.968	1	327.968	1361.889	.000
ExperimentalGroup	.302	3	.101	.418	.740
SEX	.407	1	.407	1.691	.195
ExperimentalGroup * SEX	.849	3	.283	1.175	.320
Error	48.886	203	.241		
Total	466.000	211			
Corrected Total	50.758	210			

a. R Squared = .037 (Adjusted R Squared = .004)

The following specific hypotheses can be found in Table 8. The main effects summary showed that H4a (Female respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than male respondents will) had a weak significant result,  $(I - J) = -.248$ ,  $p = .079$ . This result is not unexpected. H4b (Male respondents will blame heterosexual female perpetrators more than female respondents will) showed no significance, with mean differences  $(I - J) = .151$ ,  $p = .381$ . While this result is not significant, in terms of sympathies for in- and out-group characters, it is interesting because the heterosexual female is the only perpetrator that male respondents blamed more than female respondents. The results for lesbian perpetrators in H4c (Female respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than will male respondents will) found no significant differences for respondents,  $(I - J) = -.112$ ,  $p = .458$ . Finally, H4d (Female respondents will blame gay male perpetrators more than will male respondents) also showed no significance,  $(I - J) = -.184$ ,  $p = .187$ .

Table 8. Comparisons from UNIANOVA of H4: Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Victim</i>	<i>N for Male Respondents (I)</i>	<i>N for Female Respondents (J)</i>	<i>Mean Difference (I-J)</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
4a	Straight male perpetrator	21	31	-.248	.141	.079
4b	Straight female perpetrator	11	45	.151	.172	.381
4c	Same sex female perpetrator	16	37	-.112	.150	.458
4d	Same sex male perpetrator	19	36	-.184	.139	.187

Whether a respondent has had prior exposure to IPV could influence their blame attributions. This was not the case in my study. Chi-Squares for three items regarding past experience with IPV against victim and perpetrator blame all showed no association. For Victimized and Any Victim Blame,  $X^2=(1, N=208) = .056, p=.814$ . Close\_Victimized and Any Victim Blame showed  $X^2=(1, N=208) = .594, p=.441$ . Perpetrated and Any Victim Blame showed  $X^2=(1, N=208) = 1.552, p=.213$ . Victimized and Only Perpetrator Blame showed  $X^2=(1, N=211) = .091, p = .764$ . Close\_Victimized and Only Perpetrator Blame showed  $X^2=(1, N=211)=.116, p = .733$ . Finally, Perpetrated and Only Perpetrator Blame showed  $X^2=(1, N=211)= 1.373, p = .241$ . None of these are significant; past experience with IPV was not associated with whether or how a respondent blamed a target.

In sum, there appears to be no significant difference in how respondents blame victims based on the victim's characteristics, and no significant difference in how respondents blame these perpetrators based on the perpetrator's characteristics. Rather, the gender of the respondent

is what might affect whether or not a victim or perpetrator is blamed, with men generally blaming female victims more and male perpetrators less than women.

## V. DISCUSSION

### **Sexuality and Groupness: Progressivism?**

In the results I showed that H1 and H2 were both statistically non-significant, as were each of their 12 total sub-hypotheses. This did not allow me to reject the implied null hypothesis which assumed equal blame. I found that respondents as a group are not assigning blame in differing amounts to victims or perpetrators based on the target characteristics of gender or sexual orientation. It appears as though sexuality in itself is not a major factor in out-group judgments. This was unexpected. I discuss a number of reasons for this nonsignificant outcome, as well as other factors that may have contributed to it.

The first, and most idealistic possibility, is that the nation is simply becoming more progressive as a whole, and the gradual national increases in LGBT rights are leading to more widespread acceptance of LGBT individuals as people with whom one may identify. In this interpretation, sexuality was not seen as a factor which necessitated the target's categorization as out-group. Certainly this might relate to the sample's average age of 19 – youth are more progressive in all areas than their parents' generation, and this gap is greatest for social and cultural issues, including perspectives on homosexuality (Halpin and Agne 2009). This may be the case here; students in my sample may be deviating from what I expected because their stance on social issues is generally more progressive than that of the rather conservative region. My results may also vary from studies conducted with samples from professional organizations because sexuality-based bias will reproduce differently in an organizational context than in a less

structured social, collegiate atmosphere (Acker 2006). However, other IPV blame studies conducted using college students as a sample showed the gender differences that mine did (in H3 and H4), but also showed differences based on target sexuality (Harris and Cook 1994). My sample appears to be unique in this fashion.

There also were about twice as many women in the sample as there were men, and as we saw in the results for H3 and H4, respondent gender can result in some significant differences in blame for both victims and perpetrators. It is possible that this gender imbalance skewed the overall results for H1 especially, with women pulling the overall averages closer together. This is conceivable given that women generally blame victims less than men, women tend to recognize IPV as a serious issue, and female socialization lacks a violent opposition to homosexuality (Beeble et al. 2008; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel 1993; Locke and Richman 1999). But the results for H3 and H4 showed that differences were not an interaction of the respondent's gender and the target's sexuality, so it is rather unlikely that the sample's gender imbalance skewed my results in any meaningful way.

A deliberate element that might be considered a limit of my measures, these vignettes portray a situation weighted heavily in the victim's favor in terms of innocence. This is reflected in the results, save for some more extreme outliers. There was no provocation from the victim, no presence of alcohol for either target, no information beyond gender and sexual orientation to affect pre-judgments, and no "risky" behaviors, all of which can change blame attributions for victims and perpetrators (Locke and Richman 1999; Howard 1984; Stewart and Maddren 1997; Witte, Schroeder, and Lohr 2006). So certainly some of the results here might be context dependent – in random occurrences of violence, victim blaming was significantly worse for those who were attacked when doing something perceived as "risky," such as hitchhiking, as opposed

to something normal or respectable, like jogging (Howard 1984). Being picked up from work at a restaurant is easily identifiable, and is not going to trigger value judgments the way that a victim behaving in a “questionable” manner might, whether that would be arguing with the partner, or even coming home from work at a strip club or other disreputable location. All of these can create a difference in blame in a single IPV scenario, so it is possible that they could exacerbate minor differences in victim and perpetrator blame between heterosexual and same sex couples. Because none of these attribution-altering elements were present in my vignette respondents were unable to attribute more blame to victims on the basis of doing something stupid or self-endangering.

If I had used a “risky” or otherwise morally questionable situation, it might have created disproportionately more blame for female victims, given the culture of victim blaming that would punish the perceived-to-be-vulnerable (women) for actions perceived to be stupid, such as picking a fight or working in a place that would upset her partner (Correia et al. 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Lerner and Miller 1978).

It is conceivable that I presented these students with a situation they were not anticipating by asking them to blame partners involved in such an altercation, and they might have too quickly responded using a schema of reactions to either sexual orientation or violence, particularly in the context of speeding through the survey (Cerulo 2010). I am fairly confident that this is not an issue, however. Vaisey (2009) contends that fixed response surveys, of which mine was a slight variation, better get at the rapid and unintentional thought that comprises automatic cognition, which essentially runs on these schemas of experience. In this manner I ostensibly was able to elicit a response that was the result of those mental structures and thereby sidestep a respondent’s concerns over “the right answer.” While this was probably the first time

anyone asked these students to specifically attribute blame to victims and perpetrators of IPV, it was not an entirely unfamiliar situation – 62% of respondents were close to someone who was a victim of IPV, and 28% of respondents had themselves been a victim. So although the inclusion of sexuality may have been a new element for them, most respondents had at least some prior experience with intimate partner violence. Respondents' past experience with IPV as a victim or close to a victim or perpetrator was not associated with whether or not a respondent blamed victims or perpetrators.

### **Homonormativity and Symbolic Violence**

While heterosexuality is still normative, its essentialism of biological realities as tied to gender identities and roles has been lessened, such that deviations from this have become more normalized over the past few decades (Duggan 2002; Warner 2000) . There often are news items about gay marriage, and many people know at least one gay person or have seen them in the media, whether celebrities or gay-positive television shows. There are also too frequent headlines about gay youth tragically committing suicide after being tormented for being gay, and the anti-homophobia framing of these cases may have created the expectation for sympathy when LGBT are victimized. While I do not suppose this to be a direct causal link, there is an atmosphere that allows for and facilitates the framing of these news items which both affects and is reflective of the audience. Audiences are no longer passive consumers, but interact with media. They are able to be frequently exposed to it, and can respond and orient things they do around media, which exemplifies how media can affect what people say and do (Couldry 2004). In this way, more gay-positive articles and airtime are products of a more gay-positive social environment even as they influence that environment by their consumption. The normalization of gay and lesbian

relationships and issues in news and politics has featured in the development of the new “homonormativity” (Duggan 2002). This homonormativity, which “does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them,” precipitated a break with classic gay and lesbian ties to radical politics and aligned them instead with conservatives, with the effect of smoothing over relations between the two historically opposed groups (Duggan 2002: 190). This new paradigm may have affected the sample in my study; these Southern students and their generally conservative families are the very targets for alliance targeted in this neoliberal homonormativity.

Homonormativity tries to force same sex couples into gendered roles expected in heterosexual couples to access privilege normally reserved for heterosexual couples. One effect of this is that different experiences of same sex couples, such as role dynamics and effects of homophobia, are made invisible (van Eeden-Moorefield et al. 2011). This is problematic in its perpetrated structural symbolic violence, as well as its practical implications. The manifestations of violence in same sex couples may be experienced differently than in heterosexual relationships, but the current system of resources and aid is not set up to accommodate this. Lesbian victims may have issues seeking recourse from a legal system designed to handle disputes between a man and a woman and so complications arise when both women in an abusive relationship have sought aid (Hardesty et al. 2011; Irwin 2008; Koski and Mangold 1988; van Eeden-Moorefield et al 2011). Just as straight men and women require different treatment regarding victimization, victims of SSIPV may require aid different from the available heterosexual resources.

These differential experiences return us to the symbolic violence in terminology. Homonormativity posits gay experiences as directly parallel to heterosexual experiences, even as

the popular use of “domestic violence” connotes a ubiquity of experience. There are problems here. Gay and lesbian victims and perpetrators may not experience violence the same way as heterosexual ones, and often have difficulty articulating their abuse because lesbian and gay communities make it both implicit and explicit that harmony and equity are givens in homosexual relationships as compared to heterosexual ones. Because theirs does not fit the description of relationships as expected, they are robbed of words to adequately articulate their position. This is compounded by aid designed for straight victims, and people trained to aid or intervene in heterosexual IPV. These people and systems can discriminate against same sex victims, whether willfully or because they lack the training to properly help (Adkins and Skeggs 2004; Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1991; Hardesty et al. 2011; Irwin 2008; van Eeden-Moorefield et al. 2011). This is a symbolically violent silencing and invalidating of a vast number of victims.

### **H3 and H4: Implications of Gender Differences**

My findings for H3 and H4 have replicated results of other studies, but with the added element of target sexuality. Researchers have established that men and women blame differently, and that while the specifics on what might affect how much or how little they do can vary, men typically blame victims more and perpetrators less than women. But the addition of sexuality conceptualized as the signifier for in- or out-group associations is more unique. Because H3 and H4 were both nonsignificant with the significant differences lurking in their sub-hypotheses and main effects, we know that sexuality or gender alone are not enough to determine whether a target will be in-group or not. I had expected that differing sexual orientations, given the current political climate, would be enough to qualify a target for either category. H3 (Men will blame victims more than women) showed a weakly significant main effect for respondent sex,  $p = .077$ ,

whereas H1's inquiry of blame by victim sexuality showed nothing significant. From this, I can conclude that while the specific hypotheses show a very slight ordering effect for blame, it really comes down to whether the respondent identifies as a man or woman. This has a number of implications in its connections to hegemonic masculinity and gender performance, structural oppression, and real world manifestations of the gender-based blame attribution trends.

When men distance themselves from a victim by attributing a larger degree of blame to that victim, and a corresponding lesser degree to the perpetrator, they may be affirming their masculinity. Victimization is a "feminine" trait, and the rejection of this in the form of blame is a rejection of femininity and feminized men (Allen-Collinson 2009, Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Kimmel 1993). Hegemonic masculinity is an ideal imposed on men, and attributing more blame to all but straight male victims is a way for some men who may not otherwise be paragons of machismo to claim a greater level of success in those demands (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Peralta, Tuttle and Steele 2010). Hegemonic masculinity is based on the subordination of women and lesser men, so these greater attributions of victim blame may be a reflection of men's experience in the broader social realm. So just as with belief in a just world blame attributions, men may blame victims more because these victims were not only different but also inferior, and that inferiority might serve as a rationale for why a given victim is more or less deserving of blame.

Men and women differed significantly only in how they blamed both female victims. H3a (men will blame straight female victims more than women respondents will) had a weak significance at  $p = .075$ , and was not surprising given past empirical studies that explored blame attributions by respondent gender. This situation is fairly simple to break down – men are presumably identifying more with the male abuser, not because he is an abuser, but because he is

a fellow straight man. Meanwhile, women are presumably identifying more with the straight female victim. These effects resulted in men blaming the victim more than women did. The complementary hypothesis, H4a (women will blame straight male perpetrators more than men will) also carried a level of weak significance,  $p = .079$ , which further supports my theorizing here. My respondents were blaming as predicted according to their associations that targets of their gender and sexuality were in-group. This does not totally contradict my earlier assertion that sexuality was not a defining element in groupness. Rather, the intersectionality of gender and sexuality was important here – gender alone was not a sufficient predictor of blame, but sexuality had the effect of mildly enhancing the main effect of gender. Instead of differences being stratified only by gender, there was an element of sexuality involved in association.

The result for H3c (men will blame lesbian victims more than will women) had a significance of  $p = .046$  – while I expected significance, I was anticipating the greatest difference would be for the straight female victim because of the aforementioned gendered in-group associations. I was not anticipating that the greatest difference in blame attributions would be for the lesbian couple. It still fits with the trend of men blaming victims more than women, but there is something more here, and I propose that it is a result of gender role expectations. These women, being lesbians, have rejected not just the behaviors expected of them by men and patriarchy, but have also in effect rejected men as well. This is an infuriating break with expectations – women that do not submit to men in relationships are outside accustomed parameters of control. Obviously lesbians still exist within the matrix of domination, and so are not actually outside these parameters, but the perceived defiance of gender role expectations might be part of why men are blaming the lesbian victim the most of all victims. The complementary H4c (women will blame lesbian perpetrators more than will men) was not

significant, which prevents theorizing on the compounded effects of men also identifying with the perpetrator.

### **Legitimizing Violence in a Culture of Victimizing**

These are not necessarily abusers that are blaming victims more, which would not be surprising given the abusive tendency to do just this would (Levitt 2007). Instead, they are just men who are identifying more with perpetrators of IPV than they do with the victims. So how do these gendered differences in blame manifest in the real world? To discuss these manifestations and consequences of them, I am going to look at the dynamics of gender, power, and symbolic violence in the wider social realm.

Earlier I discussed layers of structural oppression, namely gender and sexual orientation, in the context of Collins' matrix of domination, and while this model allows for nuance not found in the simple dominant-oppressed dualism, there is still a level of this dynamic. With gender this is male domination and female subordination and the resulting male privilege (Connell 1995). Patriarchy grants men certain dividends for simply being men, including a level of power in both the abstract and the concrete sense, that allow as acceptable for men to behave in certain ways towards women, from simple cat-calling on the street to rape and perpetration of intimate partner assault. The latter two are examples of how men can and do use violence to assert control over women and "lesser" men, and though an individual man may not participate in any of these, the internalized ideology of superiority can mask the unacceptability and unjustifiability of these actions (Connell 1995). Men may blame victims more than women because masculinity supports the victimization of others, and men can and do regularly victimize others to varying degrees. This is not to say that only men are capable of perpetrating violence

against a partner, but that men will generally find others' perpetration more acceptable because they are socialized to believe that victimizing another is normal and acceptable. The experiences of men and women with partner violence are gendered, and need to be situated in this context of differing expectations and notions of acceptability.

The legitimization of gendered violence and domination is also a form of socialized symbolic violence because it perpetuates the “naturalness” of dominant men and subordinate women, similar to how the use of “domestic violence” encourages the misrecognition of the phenomenon of partner abuse as heterosexual, and male perpetrated (Adkins and Skeggs 2004; Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1991). Men and abusers accept that violent victimization is natural and that there are natural victims, namely women and feminized men, just as victims frequently internalize discourse to perceive as justifiable the abuse they experience (Scott and Straus 2007). This form of symbolic violence is similar to the belief in a just world- victims are victims because they “should” be, whether because of the “natural tendencies” of their gender or because they did something to directly deserve aggression (Adkins and Skeggs 2004; Bourdieu 1998; Bourdieu 1991; Correia, Vala, and Aguiar 2007; Correia et al. 2001; Dalbert 2002; Furnham 2003; Howard 1984; Lerner and Miller 1978). Both of these rationalize violence by presuming that because a person was victimized, there was a valid reason, something to justify the assault.

This masculine legitimization of victimization extends past direct social interaction, and I want to discuss representations of intimate partner violence in the media as an example of the manifestations of this culture. The influences of masculinity and patriarchy that created the gender-based blame attributions in H3 and H4 are also existent in various media representations of IPV. Newspaper articles on intimate partner assaults are framed problematically; often only intimate partner homicides are reported, and rarely are they referred to as intimate partner

violence or even domestic violence. The lack of proper labeling means that such incidents are rarely placed into a broader cultural context of pervasive IPV; instead, they are framed as isolated and extreme episodes (Carlyle et al 2008; Bullock 2008; Bullock 2007; Palazzolo and Roberto 2011; Wozniak and McCloskey 2010). In the realm of fiction, popular movies have depicted a wide range of behaviors that all can be classified as intimate partner violence. These are usually perpetrated by a man, and usually romanticized and normalized, and very rarely penalized or demonized.SSIPV is virtually nonexistent in popular media, except for where it is also romanticized and hypersexualized. When men are portrayed as victims they are rendered comedic figures which underscores the actual ramifications of abuse. Female perpetrated heterosexual IPV turns the gender paradigm on its head, and the result is portrayed in visual media as parody of natural roles. Even a fictional character who fails at expectations of masculinity deserves his fictional victimization, and deserves to be mocked for it by other characters and audiences (Lenahan 2009). These trends are the result of men historically and currently dominating the newspaper and film industry - it did take 82 years for the Academy Awards to vote a woman as Best Director (Greenslade 2011).

Men, presumably not maliciously, use their occupational and social privilege to create and perpetuate a culture that allows them to distance themselves from intimate partner violence by minimizing it in the papers and romanticizing it in the movies (Ewing and Aubrey 1987; Lenahan 2009). Couldry's theory of media as practice tells us that this is not production in a social vacuum – the media item is a product of and helps produce a culture of protection for abusers (2004). It is a cultural fraternity that, by way of images and attitudes, shifts responsibility and accountability for abuse from the perpetrator to the victim and to the abstract “society” or “culture” for which it is nigh impossible to pinpoint a single producer. They do this by de-

emphasizing the seriousness and pervasiveness of IPV, and over-emphasizing a victim's culpability in "knowing" whether a situation is dangerous or not, and holding them accountable for it. If it were conscious and overt, it would be a vast conspiracy. As it is, men are products of a socialization which encourages extreme competition by way of domination, violent or otherwise.

## CONCLUSION

My goal for this study was to begin to fill a gap in literature that lacked direct comparisons of blame for heterosexual and same sex couples, and to examine the intersectionality of gender and sexuality. I found that men blame female victims more than women, and blame straight male perpetrators less than women, which result from a culture that legitimates male-perpetrated violent victimization. The practical manifestations of this blame differential are many, and while I did not find significant differences in blame based on a target's sexuality, the systems in place to help victims and perpetrators of IPV have not yet caught up to some apparent progressivism. There is a pervasive bias in resources available to victims, one which sees SSIPV as less serious than heterosexual IPV, and can have damaging effects. Victims of SSIPV are at risk for experiencing escalating violence without intervention because the legal system, the aid network, and the police force are set up to handle heterosexual IPV, usually male perpetrated. Victims of SSIPV are largely invisible in official reports and in many scholarly works, and the symbolic violence of terminology and heteronormative and homonormative hierarchy sees their experiences are invalidated. We know that IPV is experienced differently by heterosexual and same sex couples, but the world is organized to accommodate heterosexual individuals. In order to address how aid structures and affiliates, legal or social, can better treat victims of SSIPV it was first necessary to examine how people perceived these victims in comparison to heterosexual victims.

### **Implications: Intersectionality of Sexuality and Gender**

Sexuality alone is not an overall factor of out-groupness in my study. My sample's youth and associated Millennial progressivism may have affected this outcome. Results may have been compounded by two other factors (Halpin and Agne 2009). My vignettes did not allow respondents to easily attribute blame to the victims - they were doing nothing out of the ordinary and exhibited no verbal aggression. This low-blame element should have uncovered any sexuality bias, but it did not. The success of neoliberal homonormativity on its would-be allies of conservative persuasion might be part of why sexuality was not perceived as an out-groupness factor (Duggan 2002). Gay and lesbian men and women who conform to homonormativity may have persuaded social conservatives that they are just like heterosexual individuals in every way but the obvious, and while this has had the effect of normalizing homosexuality, it has had some negative effects. Same sex couples are not perfectly analogous to heterosexual couples in social experiences, and while homosexuality is more normalized, trans, intersex, and other queer individuals have lost allies and visibility. So while homosexuality was not a factor of out-groupness here, it is likely that because of their still-deviant status, other queer sexualities would not elicit the same group characterizations.

Gender can determine perceptions of out-groupness. In H3 and H4 I found that men and women differ in how they attribute blame for victims and perpetrators, and that we cannot explore or explain blame attributions for one target without also discussing the other. It is interesting that men only blamed female victims more than did women, with no significant difference for male victims, but this is a reflection of gender dynamics in a broader cultural context. It appears to be more important for men to ally themselves first by gender, and then by sexuality, perceiving gender as important but the intersection of gender and sexuality to be the

deciding factor. Men are socialized to expect some forms violence, and are expected to support the hierarchies of gender and multiple masculinities by victimizing subordinates to maintain dominance (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Peralta et al. 2010).

Intersectionality is important. Only one of my four umbrella hypotheses was even weakly statistically significant; it was when I examined the intersectionality of sexuality and gender that I uncovered any differences in blame. Intimate partner violence is deeply gendered, the way it is discussed and subsequently perceived is heterosexualized, and so it is not enough to test broad hypotheses which focus on only one element of difference. The juxtaposition of targets with a controlled element of difference shows which traits are important in a situation; here it was the interaction of gender and sexuality. Sexuality is a secondary element of difference, and one that can drastically alter the experiences of an individual from what would be expected when looking at gender alone. The gender power dynamic of dominant men and submissive women is complicated by the introduction of sexuality. The hierarchy is no longer clear-cut, and will only get more complex with the introduction of new factors of difference (Collins 2000). Men and women experience IPV differently, and heterosexual and same sex couples experience it differently as well. A heterosexual woman abused by her male partner has a different experience of that violence in the moment of altercation and in seeking aid and legal recourse than a lesbian woman – gender alone does not account for such difference (Hardesty et al. 2011; Irwin 2008; Koski and Mangold 1988).

These fundamentally differential experiences surrounding violence and victimization of all types are at the core of where we need to go from here. Researchers in particular need to be aware of the implications of intersectionality, so the asymmetry debate should shift its focus from rates of perpetration. Further, researchers should continue the newer focus on how partner

violence needs to be contextually situated with regard to gender power dynamics, but with the inclusion of sexuality for studies examining perceptions of blame. Intimate partner violence researchers, and others, need to be aware that claims about the ubiquity of IPV as an experience for men and women perpetuate perceptions of IPV as a heterosexual issue, continue structured symbolic violence against homosexual and queer victims and reinforce these elements of oppression.

### **Limitations and Avenues for Future Research**

It is entirely possible my survey fell prey to lazy survey takers who answered questions as simply as they could, attributing blame in the 50-50 or 0-100 patterns. To remedy this in a future replication I would separate the survey questions on victim and perpetrator blame. I am not certain what patterns this placement might return, but it would be less tempting for respondents to assign blame as they did in my study. Additionally, people are less than accustomed to attributing blame in a numerical fashion, and so it might be easier for respondents to assign blame on an ordinal scale. I would ideally have a larger sample size as well, and one with a better gender balance. Despite randomization, some vignettes saw a greater gender imbalance than others.

I gathered a lot of data that I ultimately did not analyze. I was unable to cover the difference between character and action blame because of time and other practical considerations. Character and action are types of blame attributed to victims that depend largely on whether a respondent perceives a target to be in- or out-group. Generally, a perceiver will blame aspects of a target's character if they perceive the target to be out-group. This places the blame on who the victim is, rather than on what they do or external situational circumstances. In-

group associations typically result in blame attributed to a victim's actions. Perceivers will blame a victim's actions, i.e., doing something "stupid" or "risky," because they can insist to themselves that while they share the victim's characteristics, they would never do something so blatantly endangering (Lerner and Miller 1978). In the future I hope to examine the questions that probed whether the respondents blamed a target's character or actions to clarify how gender and sexuality interact in attributions. Further, different situational elements can also affect blame attributions, and I would like to explore how a "risky" vignette situation or a level of victim verbal aggression as provocation might enhance some slight differences I saw in this study. I would expect that, given the opportunity to blame targets for doing something retrospectively judged to be less than wise, respondents might situationally identify sexuality as an out-group factor.

I might also be able to explore the blame distribution with some of the data I already have. Respondent laziness may have been the reason behind the 50/50 blame assigned to some victims and perpetrators, but I would like to explore which respondent characteristics were associated with this, and which vignette was most affected by this tendency.

In this study I found that gender divided my respondents, and I would like to explore how race factors into a design like this one with factors of target gender, sexuality, and race, and respondent gender and race. There are a number of studies on race and intimate partner violence, and some on race and SSIPV, but adding race as a factor to the current design would show how another prominent element of structural oppression affects blame attributions (Gillum 2008; Locke and Richman 1999; Taft, Bryant-Davis, Woodward, Tillman, and Torres 2009). This is a particularly salient issue within SSIPV; homonormativity has hit the too-common pitfall of presuming a ubiquitous experience for anyone not identifying as heterosexual. This is the

assumption of sexuality as master status, which ignores the experiences of people of color whose sexuality status is subsumed by their racial categorization (Agathangelou, Bassichis, and Spira 2008; Hin 2008). Blame dynamics regarding racial groups can be obscured if researchers focus only on black-white relations, and so other racial categories should be considered for inclusion in the analysis (Cho 2012). The addition of a regional analysis of the samples might give a clearer sense of what kinds of prejudice and structural biases affect responses.

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## **List of Appendices**

**Appendix A: The Hypotheses**

### **Sexuality and Victim Blame**

H1: Respondents will blame same sex victims more than heterosexual victims.

H1a: Respondents will blame heterosexual male victims more than heterosexual female victims.

H1b: Respondents will blame lesbian victims more than heterosexual female victims.

H1c: Respondents will blame gay male victims more than heterosexual female victims.

H1d: Respondents will blame heterosexual male victims more than lesbian victims.

H1e: Respondents will blame gay male victims more than they blame heterosexual male victims.

H1f: Respondents will blame gay male victims more than lesbian victims.

### **Sexuality and Perpetrator Blame**

H2: Respondents will blame heterosexual perpetrators more than same sex perpetrators.

H2a: Respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than heterosexual female perpetrators.

H2b: Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than heterosexual male perpetrators.

H2c: Respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than gay male perpetrators.

H2d: Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than heterosexual female perpetrators.

H2e: Respondents will blame gay male perpetrators more than heterosexual female perpetrators.

H2f: Respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than gay male perpetrators.

### **Gender and Victim Blame**

H3: Male respondents will blame victims more than female respondents will.

H3a: Male respondents will blame heterosexual female victims more than female respondents will.

H3b: Male respondents will blame heterosexual male victims less than female respondents will.

H3c: Male respondents will blame lesbian victims more than female respondents will.

H3d: Male respondents will blame gay male victims more than female respondents will.

### **Gender and Perpetrator Blame**

H4: Female respondents will blame perpetrators more than male respondents will.

H4a: Female respondents will blame heterosexual male perpetrators more than male respondents will.

H4b: Male respondents will blame heterosexual female perpetrators more than female respondents will.

H4c: Female respondents will blame lesbian perpetrators more than will male respondents will.

H4d: Female respondents will blame gay male perpetrators more than will male respondents.

## **Appendix B: The Vignettes**

Straight male perpetrator, straight female victim:

The following is a transcript of a recorded statement given by Erica, a college aged straight woman regarding a recent altercation. Please read it carefully and answer the following questions.

Officer: Erica, I understand you were recently involved in a minor traffic collision precipitated by a distracted driver in your car, who was allegedly distracted as a result of an altercation between the driver and the passenger, correct?

Erica: Yes, that is correct.

Officer: You were the passenger and the driver is or at the time was your boyfriend Michael?

Erica: Yes.

Officer: Could you please tell me in your own words about the car ride and the incident that led up to the collision?

Erica: Well, I was working, and Michael picked me up from work. I'm a server, and the coworker coming in to relieve me was late so I had to stick around a bit longer. But I also can't have my phone on me at work, because management got tired of some people hanging out in the kitchen to text. So our phones are all locked up during our shift. Anyway, they kept me an extra 25 minutes or so, and Michael was waiting the whole time. I guess he was actually waiting more like 40 minutes, because he got there early hoping I would get out early.

I got into the car and could tell right away that Michael was in one of his moods and as soon as I was in he started saying things like "Nice of you to finally join me," and "I don't understand how you manage to keep a job, it's like you're always late." Just mean, snarky kinds of things that felt kind of ominous.

I tried explaining that it wasn't my fault, and if I wanted to keep my job it was my responsibility to hang out a bit longer if someone was running late, and that my phone was locked up like always, so I couldn't let him know about it. He accused me of delaying on purpose, of just standing around talking after work and not caring that he was waiting for me, and that now we were hitting traffic because of me, and we were going to be late for the movie and it was all my fault. Just a lot of rambling, a lot of yelling.

I tried to point out that I could have just driven myself to work and picked him up like I'd originally suggested. I should have known, but that just made him mad, maybe because I was right. Anyway, he grabbed me by the hair and yanked me across the armrest, screaming that he likes to be nice and pick me up, and I should just appreciate it and not be late and an ungrateful bitch. Then he pushed me away, so I was reeling a bit, and then he punched me in the side of the head, screaming all the while. He basically punched my head into the window.

That was when he lost control of the car a bit and rear-ended that minivan. He was still yelling at me for causing the accident when all you guys showed up, and I guess I looked dazed, because I was taken to the hospital where they found out I had a concussion. I guess someone

pieced together that bruises on the side of my head don't come from a low speed collision like that one, and here we are.

Straight female perpetrator, straight male victim:

The following is a transcript of a recorded statement given by Michael, a college aged straight man regarding a recent altercation. Please read it carefully and answer the following questions.

Officer: Michael, I understand you were recently involved in a minor traffic collision precipitated by a distracted driver in your car, who was allegedly distracted as a result of an altercation between the driver and the passenger, correct?

Michael: Yes, that is correct.

Officer: You were the passenger and the driver is or at the time was your girlfriend Erica?

Michael: Yes

Officer: Could you please tell me in your own words about the car ride and the incident that led up to the collision?

Michael: Well, I was working, and Erica picked me up from work. I'm a server, and the coworker coming in to relieve me was late so I had to stick around a bit longer. But I also can't have my phone on me at work, because management got tired of some people hanging out in the kitchen to text. So our phones are all locked up during our shift. Anyway, they kept me an extra 25 minutes or so, and Erica was waiting the whole time. I guess she was actually waiting more like 40 minutes, because she got there early hoping I would get out early.

I got into the car and could tell right away that Erica was in one of her moods and as soon as I was in she started saying things like "Nice of you to finally join me," and "I don't understand how you manage to keep a job, it's like you're always late." Just mean, snarky kinds of things that felt kind of ominous.

I tried explaining that it wasn't my fault, and if I wanted to keep my job it was my responsibility to hang out a bit longer if someone was running late, and that my phone was locked up like always, so I couldn't let her know about it. She accused me of delaying on purpose, of just standing around talking after work and not caring that she was waiting for me, and that now we were hitting traffic because of me, and we were going to be late for the movie and it was all my fault. Just a lot of rambling, a lot of yelling.

I tried to point out that I could have just driven myself to work and picked her up like I'd originally suggested. I should have known, but that just made her mad, maybe because I was right. Anyway, she grabbed me by the hair and yanked me across the armrest, screaming that she likes to be nice and pick me up, and I should just appreciate it and not be late and an ungrateful bastard. Then she pushed me away, so I was reeling a bit, and then she punched me in the side of the head, screaming all the while. She basically punched my head into the window.

That was when she lost control of the car a bit and rear-ended that minivan. She was still yelling at me for causing the accident when all you guys showed up, and I guess I looked dazed, because I was taken to the hospital where they found out I had a concussion. I guess someone pieced together that bruises on the side of my head don't come from a low speed collision like that one, and here we are.

Lesbian perpetrator and victim:

The following is a transcript of a recorded statement given by Erica, a college aged lesbian woman regarding a recent altercation. Please read it carefully and answer the following questions.

Officer: Erica, I understand you were recently involved in a minor traffic collision precipitated by a distracted driver in your car, who was allegedly distracted as a result of an altercation between the driver and the passenger, correct?

Erica: Yes, that is correct.

Officer: You were the passenger and the driver is or at the time was your girlfriend Michele?

Erica: Yes.

Officer: Could you please tell me in your own words about the car ride and the incident that led up to the collision?

Erica: Well, I was working, and Michele picked me up from work. I'm a server, and the coworker coming in to relieve me was late so I had to stick around a bit longer. But I also can't have my phone on me at work, because management got tired of some people hanging out in the kitchen to text. So our phones are all locked up during our shift. Anyway, they kept me an extra 25 minutes or so, and Michele was waiting the whole time. I guess she was actually waiting more like 40 minutes, because she got there early hoping I would get out early.

I got into the car and could tell right away that Michele was in one of her moods and as soon as I was in she started saying things like "Nice of you to finally join me," and "I don't understand how you manage to keep a job, it's like you're always late." Just mean, snarky kinds of things that felt kind of ominous.

I tried explaining that it wasn't my fault, and if I wanted to keep my job it was my responsibility to hang out a bit longer if someone was running late, and that my phone was locked up like always, so I couldn't let her know about it. She accused me of delaying on purpose, of just standing around talking after work and not caring that she was waiting for me, and that now we were hitting traffic because of me, and we were going to be late for the movie and it was all my fault. Just a lot of rambling, a lot of yelling.

I tried to point out that I could have just driven myself to work and picked her up like I'd originally suggested. I should have known, but that just made her mad, maybe because I was right. Anyway, she grabbed me by the hair and yanked me across the armrest, screaming that she likes to be nice and pick me up, and I should just appreciate it and not be late and an ungrateful bitch. Then she pushed me away, so I was reeling a bit, and then she punched me in the side of the head, screaming all the while. She basically punched my head into the window.

That was when she lost control of the car a bit and rear-ended that minivan. She was still yelling at me for causing the accident when all you guys showed up, and I guess I looked dazed, because I was taken to the hospital where they found out I had a concussion. I guess someone pieced together that bruises on the side of my head don't come from a low speed collision like that one, and here we are.

Gay male perpetrator and victim:

The following is a transcript of a recorded statement given by Michael, a college aged gay man regarding a recent altercation. Please read it carefully and answer the following questions.

Officer: Michael, I understand you were recently involved in a minor traffic collision precipitated by a distracted driver in your car, who was allegedly distracted as a result of an altercation between the driver and the passenger, correct?

Michael: Yes, that is correct.

Officer: You were the passenger and the driver is or at the time was your boyfriend Eric?

Michael: Yes.

Officer: Could you please tell me in your own words about the car ride and the incident that led up to the collision?

Michael: Well, I was working, and Eric picked me up from work. I'm a server, and the coworker coming in to relieve me was late so I had to stick around a bit longer. But I also can't have my phone on me at work, because management got tired of some people hanging out in the kitchen to text. So our phones are all locked up during our shift. Anyway, they kept me an extra 25 minutes or so, and Eric was waiting the whole time. I guess he was actually waiting more like 40 minutes, because he got there early hoping I would get out early.

I got into the car and could tell right away that Eric was in one of his moods and as soon as I was in he started saying things like "Nice of you to finally join me," and "I don't understand how you manage to keep a job, it's like you're always late." Just mean, snarky kinds of things that felt kind of ominous.

I tried explaining that it wasn't my fault, and if I wanted to keep my job it was my responsibility to hang out a bit longer if someone was running late, and that my phone was locked up like always, so I couldn't let him know about it. He accused me of delaying on purpose, of just standing around talking after work and not caring that he was waiting for me, and that now we were hitting traffic because of me, and we were going to be late for the movie and it was all my fault. Just a lot of rambling, a lot of yelling.

I tried to point out that I could have just driven myself to work and picked him up like I'd originally suggested. I should have known, but that just made him mad, maybe because I was right. Anyway, he grabbed me by the hair and yanked me across the armrest, screaming that he likes to be nice and pick me up, and I should just appreciate it and not be late and an ungrateful bastard. Then he pushed me away, so I was reeling a bit, and then he punched me in the side of the head, screaming all the while. He basically punched my head into the window.

That was when he lost control of the car a bit and rear-ended that minivan. He was still yelling at me for causing the accident when all you guys showed up, and I guess I looked dazed, because I was taken to the hospital where they found out I had a concussion. I guess someone pieced together that bruises on the side of my head don't come from a low speed collision like that one, and here we are.

## **Appendix C: The Survey**

## A Study: Interactions of Gender and Sexuality with Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence

The purpose of this study is to assess gendered violence in college relationships. The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete.

You will be asked to fill out a survey that asks for demographic information (e.g. gender, age, etc.) and your opinion on a dating situation that you will read in the survey.

Some of the questions could make you feel uncomfortable. We do not think there are any other risks.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may discontinue your participation at any time during the study. If you quit the survey any time before you click on the "submit" button at the very end, no data will be collected.

Completing the survey will compensate you the 5 points extra credit in your introductory sociology class as discussed by your instructor.

Upon completing the survey all personal information (email address) will be removed by the Qualtrics program, ensuring anonymity. Your name's absence is what will cue your instructor to award the extra points.

If you have any additional questions about the research, you may contact Jennifer Balliet by e-mail at [jaballie@olemiss.edu](mailto:jaballie@olemiss.edu) or my advisor, Dr. Kirsten Dellinger, at [kdelling@olemiss.edu](mailto:kdelling@olemiss.edu) or 662-915-7421.

This study has been reviewed by The University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at (662) 915-7482.

By clicking on the arrow below, you consent to take the survey. Thank you for your participation.

[arrow button]

(Demographic Information)

Please enter your age

- 18
- 19
- 20

- 21
- 22
- 23+

Please select your sex

- Male
- Female

Do you identify as heterosexual /straight?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever been hit, pushed, or had things thrown at you by someone you were dating or an otherwise intimate partner?

- Yes
- No

Has someone close to you ever been hit, pushed, or had things thrown at them by someone they were dating or an otherwise intimate partner?

- Yes
- No

Have you or someone close to you ever hit, pushed, or thrown things at a dating partner or otherwise intimate partner?

- Yes
- No

VIGNETTE

(Straight, male perpetrated questions)

Please indicate, from 0-100%, how much you think Michael and Erica are each to blame for this specific altercation. This should total 100.

- Michael, the driver

- Erica, the passenger

- Total

Questions regarding Erica, the passenger.

To what extent do you think the following items regarding Erica, the passenger, are to blame for her part in the altercation? These do not have to amount to 100%, but should add up to no more than 100%.

- Erica's decision to get in the car with Michael

- Erica's lateness

- Erica's carelessness for being on time

- Erica's implicit trust of Michael

- Total

In the incident described in the transcript, Erica, the passenger, and her actions were:

Foolish

        

Wise

Rational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrational
Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Aggressive
Stable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unstable
Insane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sane
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad
Understandable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Understandable
Masculine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feminine

From 0-100 with 0 being “not at all” and 100 being “completely,” how much do you sympathize with Erica, the passenger, in this situation?

Questions regarding Michael, the driver.

To what extent do you think the following items regarding Michael, the driver, are to blame for his part in the altercation? These do not have to amount to 100%, but should add up to no more than 100%.

- Michael's lack of restraint

- Michael's decision to lash out

- Michael's aggressive personality

- Michael's physically violent actions

- Total

In the incident described in the transcript, Michael, the driver, and his actions were:

Foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wise						
Rational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrational						
Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Aggressive						
Stable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unstable						
Insane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sane						
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad						
Understandable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Understandable						
Masculine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feminine						

From 0-100 with 0 being “not at all” and 100 being “completely,” how much do you sympathize with Michael, the driver, in this situation?

The altercation and injuries to Erica, the passenger, described in the transcript were:

Intended	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unintended						
Serious	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Serious						
Accidental	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deliberate						

Not Erica's Fault	<input type="checkbox"/>	Erica's Fault
Severe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not severe
Probable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not probable
Believable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Believable
Michael's Fault	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Michael's Fault

(Straight, female perpetrated questions)

Please indicate, from 0-100%, how much you think Erica and Michael are each to blame for this specific altercation. This should total 100.

- Erica, the driver

- Michael, the passenger

- Total

Questions regarding Michael, the passenger.

To what extent do you think the following items regarding Michael, the passenger, are to blame for his part in the altercation? These do not have to amount to 100%, but should add up to no more than 100%.

- Michael's decision to get in the car with Erica

- Michael's lateness

- Michael's carelessness in being on time

- Michael's implicit trust of Erica

- Total

In the incident described in the transcript, Michael, the passenger, and his actions were:

Foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wise
Rational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrational
Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Aggressive
Stable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unstable
Insane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sane
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad
Understandable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Understandable
Masculine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feminine

From 0-100 with 0 being “not at all” and 100 being “completely,” how much do you sympathize with Michael, the passenger, in this situation?

Questions regarding Erica, the driver.

To what extent do you think the following items regarding Erica, the driver, are to blame for her part in the altercation? These do not have to amount to 100%, but should add up to no more than 100%.

- Erica's lack of restraint

- Erica's decision to lash out

- Erica's aggressive personality

- Erica's physically violent actions

- Total

In the incident described in the transcript, Erica, the driver, and her actions were:

Foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wise						
Rational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrational						
Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Aggressive						
Stable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unstable						
Insane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sane						
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad						
Understandable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Understandable						
Masculine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feminine						

From 0-100 with 0 being “not at all” and 100 being “completely,” how much do you sympathize with Erica, the driver, in this situation?

The altercation and injuries to Michael, the passenger, described in the transcript were:

Intended	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unintended
Serious	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Serious
Accidental	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deliberate
Not Michael's Fault	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael's Fault
Severe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not severe
Probable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not probable
Believable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Believable
Erica's Fault	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Erica's Fault

(Lesbian perpetrated questions)

Please indicate, from 0-100%, how much you think Michele and Erica are each to blame for this specific altercation. This should total 100.

- Michele, the driver

- Erica, the passenger

- Total

Questions regarding Erica, the passenger.

To what extent do you think the following items regarding Erica, the passenger, are to blame for her part in the altercation? These do not have to amount to 100%, but should add up to no more than 100%.

- Erica's decision to get in the car with Michele

- Erica's lateness

- Erica's carelessness in being on time

- Erica's implicit trust of Michele

- Total

In the incident described in the transcript, Erica, the passenger, and her actions were:

Foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wise
Rational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrational
Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Aggressive
Stable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unstable
Insane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sane
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad

Understandable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Understandable						
Masculine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feminine						

From 0-100 with 0 being “not at all” and 100 being “completely,” how much do you sympathize with Erica, the passenger, in this situation?

Questions regarding Michele, the driver.

To what extent do you think the following items regarding Michele, the driver, are to blame for her part in the altercation? These do not have to amount to 100%, but should add up to no more than 100%.

- Michele's lack of restraint

- Michele's decision to lash out

- Michele's aggressive personality

- Michele's physically violent actions

- Total

In the incident described in the transcript, Michele, the driver, and her actions were:

Foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wise						
Rational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrational						
Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Aggressive						

Stable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unstable
Insane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sane
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad
Understandable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Understandable
Masculine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feminine

From 0-100 with 0 being “not at all” and 100 being “completely,” how much do you sympathize with Michele, the driver, in this situation?

The altercation and injuries to Erica, the passenger, described in the transcript were:

Intended	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unintended
Serious	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not serious
Accidental	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deliberate
Not Erica's fault	<input type="checkbox"/>	Erica's Fault
Severe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not severe
Probable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not probable
Believable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not believable
Michele's Fault	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Michele's fault

(Gay male perpetrated questions)

Please indicate, from 0-100%, how much you think Eric and Michael are each to blame for this specific altercation. This should total 100.

- Eric, the driver

- Michael, the passenger

- Total

Questions regarding Michael, the passenger.

To what extent do you think the following items regarding Michael, the passenger, are to blame for his part in the altercation? These do not have to amount to 100%, but should add up to no more than 100%.

- Michael's decision to get in the car with Eric

- Michael's lateness

- Michael's carelessness in being on time

- Michael's implicit trust of Eric

- Total

In the incident described in the transcript, Michael, the passenger, and his actions were:

Foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wise
Rational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrational
Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Aggressive
Stable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unstable
Insane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sane
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad
Understandable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Understandable
Masculine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feminine

From 0-100 with 0 being “not at all” and 100 being “completely,” how much do you sympathize with Michael, the passenger, in this situation?

Questions regarding Eric, the driver.

To what extent do you think the following items regarding Eric, the driver, are to blame for his part in the altercation? These should add up to 100%.

- Eric's lack of restraint

- Eric's decision to lash out

- Eric's aggressive personality

- Eric's physically violent actions

- Total

In the incident described in the transcript, Eric, the driver, and his actions were:

Foolish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wise
Rational	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irrational
Aggressive	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Aggressive
Stable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unstable
Insane	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sane
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bad
Understandable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Understandable
Masculine	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feminine

From 0-100 with 0 being “not at all” and 100 being “completely,” how much do you sympathize with Eric, the driver, in this situation?

The altercation and injuries to Michael, the passenger, described in the transcript were:

Intended	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unintended
Serious	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not serious
Accidental	<input type="checkbox"/>	Deliberate
Not Michael's fault	<input type="checkbox"/>	Michael's fault
Severe	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not severe
Probable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not probable
Believable	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not believable
Eric's fault	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not Eric's fault

VITA

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