

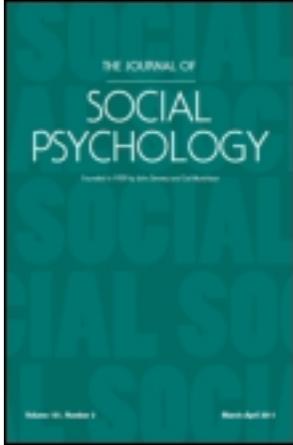
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Sexual Preference, Gender, and Blame Attributions in Adolescent Sexual Assault

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ABSTRACT. The study investigated the impact of victim sexual orientation, perpetrator gender, and participant gender on judgements toward a 15-year-old male victim of a depicted sexual assault. One hundred and eight-eight participants (97 male, 91 female) read a hypothetical scenario depicting the sexual assault of a 15-year-old male victim where the victim's sexual orientation and the perpetrator's gender were varied between subjects. Participants then completed a questionnaire assessing their attributions toward both the victim and the perpetrator. Results revealed that male participants blamed the victim more than female participants when the victim was both gay and attacked by a male perpetrator. All participants, regardless of gender, made more positive judgements toward the female as opposed to male perpetrator. Results are discussed in relation to gender role stereotypes and homophobia.

Keywords: gender, homosexuality, sexual assault, sexual preference

CHILDREN OF BOTH GENDERS ARE AFFECTED by child sexual abuse (CSA). Fergusson and Mullen (1999) reviewed studies over a period of 20 years and found CSA prevalence rates ranging from 3% to 30% for males and 6% to 62% for females, depending on the definition and type of measure used (see also Bolen, Russell & Scannapieco, 2000). In Britain, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) estimated that around 1.1 million of British girls (21%) and half-a- million British boys (17%) have experienced some form of sexual abuse with around 16% of girls and 7% of boys being victims of contact CSA (that is, CSA where there is direct physical contact between victim and perpetrator, rather than non-contact CSA, which does not involve direct contact, such as forcing a child to watch pornography; Cawson, Wattam, Brooker & Kelly, 2000; Nurse, 2006; see Bacon, 2008).

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More sample-specific rates of the lifetime prevalence of sexual abuse on males have been investigated among gay and bisexual men who had been sexually assaulted both as children and adults. Hickson, Davies, Hunt, Weatherburn, McManus and Coxon (1994) investigated rates of non-consensual sexual activity among 930 gay and bisexual males, living in England and Wales. Of these, 257 (27.6%) had been subjected to non-consensual sexual activity at some point in their lives. In this study 10 of the cases stated the perpetrator was female. Gay and bisexual youths appear to be victimized physically and sexually during childhood and adolescence more so than heterosexual youths (Finkelhor & Dziuba-Leatherman, 1994; see Davies, 2002, for a review of other prevalence studies in relation to male sexual assault).

Victims of sexual assaults are sometimes considered partly responsible for their abuse. Howard (1984) found that male victims of (adult) sexual assault were blamed more for their own abuse than were their female counterparts. Moreover, this blaming stemmed from observers' negative perceptions of males victims' behavior (e.g. looking scared, failing to fight back or escape) during and/or immediately after their ordeal. Such failures to protect oneself during a (sexual) confrontation violate the gender stereotype that men are strong and in control (Thompson & Pleck, 1986) and subsequently increases the amount of responsibility attributed to victims for their own (sexual) assault (Howard, 1984).

Perceptions of adult male sexual assault victims also differ in terms of observers' endorsement of negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Anderson (2004), for instance, found that expressing high levels of homophobia predicted negative perceptions on male rape victims, more so amongst male than female participants. Additionally, Davies and McCartney (2003) found that whilst heterosexual men blame male rape victims, gay men do not. This gives further support to the notion that holding negative attitudes toward gay men will contribute to the blaming male of sexual assault victims. Finally, several studies have shown that male victims portrayed as gay are blamed more than those portrayed as heterosexual (Burt & DeMello 2002; Davies, Pollard & Archer, 2001, Davies, Pollard & Archer, 2006; Davies, Rogers & Bates, 2008; Davies & Boden, 2009; Ford, Liwag-McLamb & Foley, 1998; Mitchell, Hirschman & Nagayama-Hall, 1999; Wakelin & Long, 2003; see Davies & Rogers, 2006, for a review), adding further support for the homophobia hypothesis.

Another factor to influence attributions toward male sexual assault victims is perpetrator gender. Smith, Pine and Hawley (1988), showed that adult male victims (whose sexual orientation was not specified) were more negatively evaluated when assaulted by a female—rather than male—perpetrator. Davies and colleagues (2006) furthered Smith and colleagues' work by investigating perceptions of victim blame when both victim sexual orientation and perpetrator gender were experimentally manipulated. As before, male respondents blamed the victim more if he was gay (as opposed to heterosexual) and assaulted by a male (as opposed to female) perpetrator. Interestingly, males also blamed a heterosexual victim more if he was assaulted by a *female* perpetrator. Finally, attributions of victim blame

in female-perpetrated sexual assault were greater when the victim was depicted as heterosexual (versus homosexual). In short, more blame was attributed to a male victim when he was sexually assaulted by a member of the gender that he was normally attracted to. This crossover interaction was subsequently termed the “sexual preference effect” (Davies et al., 2006) and has since been replicated in hypothetical cases of (adult) sexual assault (Davies & Boden, 2009).

Similar trends have been found in studies that investigate negative attributions toward CSA, with men generally more negative toward child victims of sexual assault than women. Waterman and Foss-Goodman (1984) conducted the first study on attributions toward male victims of CSA. They presented a hypothetical scenario depicting the victim aged either 7, 11, and 15 years, and found that males attributed more fault to a 15-year-old male than to a 15-year-old female victim. Later, Broussard and Wagner (1988) found that men attributed less responsibility toward the perpetrator when the victim was male, and in addition, the 15-year-old male victim was judged more negatively when the perpetrator was female rather than male. Findings for blame toward adolescent male victims, whose sexual orientation is not specified, appear to mirror those relating to the sexual assault of adults whose sexual orientation is not specified (Smith et al., 1988).

Broussard and Wagner’s (1988) work has since been replicated using a variety of different assault situations, but as in Broussard and Wagner’s work, none of these studies have specified the victim’s sexual orientation. Maynard and Wiederman (1997) found that 15-year-old victims are deemed more responsible for their own CSA when perpetrated by a female rather than male attacker. Mellott, Wagner, and Broussard (1997) found this was especially true for a male, as opposed to female, 15-year-old. Similarly, Davies and Rogers (2004) found male participants viewed CSA on a male victim by a female perpetrator to be less severe than CSA on a female victim or when the perpetrator was a male (see also Rogers & Davies, 2007). In sum, robust trends suggest that an adult or near-adult¹ male victim of sexual assault is viewed more negatively—with his abuser viewed more positively—when the assault is carried out by a female perpetrator. However, none of these studies have investigated how victim sexual orientation might affect perceptions of adolescent male victims.

To date just one study (Davies, Rogers & Whitelegg, 2009) has investigated CSA attributions where the victim’s sexuality is under question. However, in this study, the victim was depicted as being sexually assaulted by a male perpetrator only; Davies and colleagues did not include a female perpetrator condition. Considering that the sexual preference effect seems to be a robust finding in adult victim cases, it would seem important to consider whether the sexual preference effect also holds in a case where the victim is below the U.K.-legal age of consent. This study is therefore unique in investigating the sexual preference effect in an adolescent victim depiction. This type of research is important and relevant to real world cases, as many adolescents are aware of their sexuality before they reach the legal age of consent (Troiden, 1993). Confusion about sexual orientation, internalized homophobia, minority stress, lack of support systems, and

negative family issues can contribute to serious negative outcomes in adolescents who begin to identify as being gay or bisexual (e.g., DiPlacido, 1998; D'Augelli, 1998). Worryingly, young gay men tend to be assaulted more than older gay men (Dean, Wu & Martin, 1992), and such abuse can have a major effect on future mental health (D'Augelli, 1998). Further, some sexual assaults upon adolescent males are conducted by females (see, e.g., Davies, 2002; Davies & Rogers, 2004; Davies & Rogers, 2006) and thus investigating perceptions of this situation are timely and progressing our understanding of how victims might be treated in real cases.

As previously stated, no research has yet investigated judgments towards under-age male victims when both victim sexual orientation and perpetrator gender is varied. Considering that adolescent males are vulnerable to sexual assault by both male and female perpetrators, it is important that we understand reactions towards them. The current study investigated the sexual assault of a 15-year-old male victim. The age of 15 years was chosen for three reasons: First, to be consistent with several other studies in the area (Broussard & Wagner, 1988; Davies & Rogers, 2004; Davies, et al, 2009; Maynard & Wiederman, 1997; Mellott, et al., 1997; Rogers & Davies, 2007). Second, because 15 years is a common age for sexual assault to occur. LaFontaine (1990), for example, found that most referrals to a specialist CSA unit in London were for victims aged 12–16 years. Finally, because 15 years is just under the legal age of sexual consent in the UK, the situation is one where the victim is still a child (see also Footnote 1).

Research suggests that it is more common for CSA victims to know their perpetrator, with the latter often being a family friend and/or neighbor (Fergusson & Mullen, 1999). With this in mind, and to improve ecological validity, the current study depicted CSA as being perpetrated by a family friend.

Two main predictions were made. First, given the sexual preference effect (Davies et al., 2006; Davies & Boden, 2009) male participants should make more negative attributions toward a victim who is sexually assaulted by someone of the gender that he would normally be attracted to. Thus, a gay male victim would be blamed more, and the assault deemed less severe, when the perpetrator is also male. By comparison, a heterosexual male victim should be blamed more, and the assault deemed less severe, when the perpetrator is female. Second, consistent with previous research (see Davies & Rogers, 2006, for a detailed review) women should blame victims less and would consider the assault to be more severe than men, regardless of the experimental condition.

Method

Respondents

An opportunity sample of 188 respondents (97 males and 91 females) took part in the study. All were undergraduates from a large university in the Northwest region of England. Respondent age varied from 18 years to 49 years ($M = 20.5$

years) with most (93.6%) claiming to be of White/British ethnicity (the remainder stated they were Black/Afro-Caribbean, Asian or Chinese). The vast majority (98.9%) of respondents identified themselves as heterosexual.

Design

A 2 victim sexual orientation (homosexual vs. heterosexual) \times 2 perpetrator gender (male vs. female) \times 2 respondent gender (male vs. female) between subjects design was employed. Dependent variables assessed attributions of victim blame (e.g., "How much do you feel Dave's behaviour is to blame for the event?") and perceived assault severity (e.g., "Dave's life will be adversely affected. How much do you agree?"). Respondents were randomly allocated to one of the four experimental groups, with item order presentation the same for all conditions.

Materials

A questionnaire booklet was designed for the current study. The booklet included a brief sheet containing standardized instructions, a hypothetical CSA vignette was approximately 350 words in length, a list of 13 CSA attribution items, a short demographics questionnaire and a detachable debrief sheet. The CSA vignette depicted the sexual assault of a 15-year-old boy by a close family friend who was asked to look out for the boy while his parents were away for the night. The assault involved the perpetrator intimately fondling him in his bed, some threatening behavior, followed by forced fellatio. The victim made some attempt to escape, but the perpetrator was shown to leave when the victim did not respond (See Appendix 1). Except for slight variations in wording to highlight the victim's sexuality and the perpetrator's gender, the scenario was identical for all conditions. The victim ("Dave") was portrayed as either heterosexual or gay by stating that he was attracted towards a girl or a boy from his school. Perpetrator gender was manipulated using a gender-specific name ("Graham" vs. "Sarah") and appropriate gender pronouns throughout. The 13-item questionnaire was modified from Davies and colleagues' (2001) and incorporated attribution items similar to those used elsewhere (e.g., Davies et al., 2006; Davies & Boden, 2009; see Appendix 2). Responses were given on a five-point Likert scale, with a higher response depicting a more anti-victim judgement. The conceptual content of items included victim blame, responsibility, and culpability, and items relating to assault severity (see Appendix 2 for exact wording of all items).

Procedure

In all, 240 questionnaire booklets were distributed among students via opportunity sampling around the main university campus. Respondents were asked to read through the vignette and answer questions in their own time before returning completed booklets to a secure box housed in the student common room within

the School of Psychology. One hundred and eighty eight usable questionnaires were returned; overall response rate was 78.3%. All aspects of this research conformed to British Psychological Society (BPS) ethical standards.

Results

Prior to analysis, all attribution items were (re)coded such that higher scores reflected a more anti-victim/less severe stance. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was then performed out on the 13 CSA attribution items, extracting two factors. Two factors with eigenvalues in excess of 1.0 were extracted. The first comprised five items relating to attributions blaming the victim for his own assault. This had a high level of internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .86) and was subsequently named "victim culpability." Scores on this factor ranged from a potential minimum of zero to a potential maximum of 20.

The second factor included six items relating to the perceived seriousness of the assault, also had high internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .85) and was thus labelled assault "severity." Factor 2 scores ranged from a potential minimum of zero to a potential maximum of 24. A third, two-item factor, with very low internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .28), was found but subsequently dropped from further analysis. Factor loadings, eigenvalues and percentage of explained variance for all factors are given in Table 1.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

The first two factors were calculated (as the mean of all relevant items) and then subjected to a 2 victim sexual orientation \times 2 perpetrator gender \times 2 respondent gender between subjects MANOVA. Analysis revealed significant multivariate main effects for both perpetrator gender, $Wilks = 0.76$, $F(2,179) = 28.45$, $p < .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .24$ and respondent gender, $Wilks = 0.43$, $F(2,179) = 120.57$, $p < .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .57$. In addition, significant two-way multivariate interaction effects were also found for victim sexual orientation \times perpetrator gender, $Wilks = 0.84$; $F(2,179) = 17.07$, $p < .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .16$, victim sexual orientation \times respondent gender, $Wilks = 0.97$; $F(2,179) = 3.25$, $p = .041$, $partial\ eta^2 = .04$, and perpetrator gender \times respondent gender, $Wilks = 0.94$; $F(2,179) = 5.99$, $p = .003$, $partial\ eta^2 = .06$. Finally, a significant three-way multivariate victim sexual orientation \times perpetrator gender \times respondent gender effect was also found, $Wilks = 0.91$, $F(2,179) = 8.56$, $p < .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .09$. Subsequent post-hoc univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) explored these effects further. Mean score for each effect are included in the text. All means and standard deviations can be found in Table 2.

Victim culpability. As predicted, a significant perpetrator gender effect for victim culpability, $F(1,180) = 8.77$, $p = .003$, $partial\ eta^2 = .05$, was found with the male

TABLE 1. Factor Names, Eigenvalues, Percentage Variance Explained, Reliability

Coefficients and item loadings for all factors			
Factors and items	Factor loadings		
	F1	F2	F3
Victim culpability			
<i>Eigenvalue: 5.54</i>			
<i>Variance explained: 42.6%</i>			
<i>Internal reliability: Alpha = .86</i>			
4. Victim no struggle	.85		
3. Victim try harder	.82		
6. Victim did best	.73		
5. Victim responsible	.72		
2. Sympathy for victim	.68		
1. Victim blame	.62		
Assault severity			
<i>Eigenvalue: 1.55</i>			
<i>Variance explained: 11.9%</i>			
<i>Internal reliability: Alpha = .85</i>			
11. Perpetrator punishment		.81	
10. Police serious		.80	
13. Victim negatively affected		.77	
9. Victim trauma		.76	
12. Victim upset		.67	
Uninterpretable †			
<i>Eigenvalue: 1.08</i>			
<i>Variance explained: 9.14%</i>			
<i>Internal reliability: Alpha = .28</i>			
8. Perpetrator responsible			.88
7. Surprise at upset			.47

Figures to 2 decimal places. † Factor dropped from further analysis ($n = 188$)

victim deemed less culpable for his own abuse when the perpetrator was male as opposed to female ($M = 1.04$ vs. $M = 1.30$ respectively). A highly significant main effect for respondent gender was also found, $F(1,180) = 229.08$, $p < .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .56$, with males judging the victim more culpable than females ($M = 1.78$ vs. $M = .53$ respectively). Additionally, a significant two-way univariate victim sexual orientation \times perpetrator gender interaction was revealed, $F(1,180) = 10.88$, $p = .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .06$. Post hoc simple effects analysis (with α adjusted to .016) confirmed that when CSA was undertaken by the male perpetrator, the gay victim was judged more culpable for his own CSA than was the heterosexual victim ($M = 1.20$ vs. $M = .89$ respectively; $t_{92} = -3.71$,

TABLE 2. Mean Attribution Ratings

Item	Respondent Gender	Heterosexual victim						Gay victim						All						Sig. effects	
		Male perpetrator		Female perpetrator		All		Male perpetrator		Female Perpetrator		All		Male perpetrator		Female perpetrator		All			
		M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)	M	(SD)		
Victim culpability	Male	1.39	(.61)	1.96	(.61)	1.69	(.67)	1.95	(.85)	1.77	(.54)	1.87	(.72)	1.67	(.79)	1.88	(.58)	1.78	(.69)	P **	
	Female	.36	(.36)	.81	(.53)	.57	(.49)	.42	(.40)	.55	(.38)	.49	(.39)	.39	(.38)	.66	(.47)	.53	(.44)	G ****	
	All	.89	(.72)	1.47	(.81)	1.18	(.82)	1.20	(1.02)	1.12	(.77)	1.16	(.90)	1.04	(.89)	1.30	(.80)	1.17	(.86)	OxP ***	
Assault severity	Male	.23	(.30)	1.52	(.64)	.91	(.82)	.87	(.49)	.93	(.34)	.90	(.42)	.55	(.51)	1.25	(.60)	.91	(.66)	P ****	
	Female	.36	(.35)	.72	(.58)	.53	(.50)	.18	(.27)	.37	(.31)	.28	(.30)	.27	(.32)	.52	(.48)	.40	(.42)	G ****	
	All	.29	(.33)	1.18	(.73)	.74	(.72)	.53	(.52)	.63	(.43)	.58	(.48)	.41	(.45)	.90	(.65)	.66	(.61)	OxP ****	
																				OxG *	
																					PxG **
																					OxPxG ****

Range: 0 'pro victim/more severe' to 4 'anti-victim/less severe'
 Significant victim sexual orientation (S), Perpetrator gender (P), Respondent gender (G) and subsequent interactions found at the: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .005$, *** $p < .001$ levels (two-tailed; $n = 188$)

$p < .001$). No other differences in victim culpability ratings were found at the adjusted alpha level.

Assault severity. Univariate ANOVA also revealed several significant effects for assault severity ratings. First, a significant perpetrator gender effect, $F(1,180) = 56.22$, $p < .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .24$, was found such that CSA by a male perpetrator was deemed more severe than CSA by a female perpetrator ($M = .41$ vs. $M = .90$ respectively). Similarly, a significant respondent gender effect was also found, $F(1,180) = 56.66$, $p < .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .24$, with men judging the assault to be less severe than women ($M = 1.25$ vs. $M = .52$ respectively). Finally, several significant two- and three-way interaction effects were uncovered. First, a significant victim sexual orientation \times perpetrator gender interaction, $F(1, 180) = 30.81$, $p < .001$, $partial\ eta^2 = .15$, was found. Second, a significant victim sexual orientation \times respondent gender interaction was revealed, $F(1,180) = 5.05$, $p = .026$, $partial\ eta^2 = .03$. Third, a significant perpetrator gender \times respondent gender interaction was uncovered, $F(1,180) = 9.95$, $p = .002$, $partial\ eta^2 = .05$. Finally, a significant three-way victim sexual orientation \times perpetrator gender \times respondent gender interaction was found, $F(1,180) = 17.15$, $p < .001$ $partial\ eta^2 = .09$.

Post hoc simple effects analyses (with alpha adjusted to .004) confirmed 1) that men judged CSA on the heterosexual victim by the female perpetrator to be less severe than did women ($M = 1.52$ vs. $M = .72$ respectively; $t_{45} = 4.39$, $p < .001$), and 2) that corresponding differences were not found for CSA by the male perpetrator. Simple effects also confirmed (3) that men judged CSA on the gay victim by the male perpetrator to be less severe than did women ($M = .87$ vs. $M = .18$ respectively; $t_{36.2} = 6.01$, $p < .001$). Similar respondent gender differences were found for (4) CSA on the gay victim by the female perpetrator, with men judging this less severe than their female counterparts ($M = .93$ vs. $M = .37$ respectively; $t_{45} = 5.95$, $p < .001$). Additional analyses revealed (5) that men judged male-perpetrated CSA to be less severe when against the gay as opposed to heterosexual, victim ($M = .87$ vs. $M = .23$ respectively; $t_{38.3} = -5.45$, $p < .001$) and (6) that women, in contrast, did not. By comparison, (7) men deemed female-perpetrated CSA to be *more* severe when against the gay, as opposed to heterosexual, victim ($M = .93$ vs. $M = 1.52$ respectively; $t_{40.7} = -4.14$, $p < .001$) with (8) similar differences not found amongst women respondents. Finally, post hoc simple effects also confirmed (9) that men judged CSA on a heterosexual victim to be more severe when undertaken by a male, as opposed to female, perpetrator ($M = .23$ vs. $M = 1.52$ respectively; $t_{37.7} = -9.32$, $p < .001$) whereas (10) women, again, did not. No other significant differences were found.

Discussion

Consistent with previous research on adult victim depictions (Davies et al., 2006; Davies & Boden, 2009; Smith et al., 1988), more blame was attributed

to the victim, with the assault also deemed less severe, when the perpetrator was female rather than male. Further, men were more blaming toward the victim and perceived the assault to be less severe than did women. Moreover, and as predicted by the sexual preference effect (Davies et al., 2006), men made more negative attributions toward the gay victim who had been sexually assaulted by a male perpetrator than did women. Women, in contrast, made low attributions of victim blame regardless of condition. Additionally, men made more pro-victim judgements and perceived the assault to be most severe when the victim was heterosexual and the perpetrator was male. Taken together, results suggest that blame attributions made by men were affected by the victim's sexual orientation, even when the victim is under the legal age of consent and clearly exposed to a sexually abusive situation. Moreover, current findings extend upon the work of Davies, Rogers, and Whitelegg (2009) by showing that perpetrator gender is another factor that will influence attributions toward male victims of sexual assault, even when that victim is portrayed as only 15 years of age.

Davies and colleagues (2006) argue that the blaming of (adult) male sexual assault victims occurs because of inappropriate application of negative gender role stereotyping and homophobic values in CSA cases. In particular, people tend to base their negative victim judgements on their own beliefs and expectations about consensual sexual activity and negative beliefs about sexuality. In short, more victim blame is attributed whenever that individual is sexually assaulted by a perpetrator with the same gender to whom the victim might normally be attracted to (Davies et al., 2006). Current findings implicate parallel biases relating to homophobia and the endorsement of negative gender stereotyping occur even when the victim is too young to give informed sexual consent by law and/or is clearly being threateningly sexually abused.

It is important to investigate attributions of victim blame for male sexual assault further. Secondary victimization occurs when a third party (e.g. someone to whom a victim discloses his/her abuse) makes further negative evaluations of the victim. This will often have a profound and delaying influence on that victim's recovery from sexual trauma (e.g. Walker, Archer & Davies, 2005). Investigating judgments toward child victims who are approaching adulthood is especially important considering how many adolescents are vulnerable to CSA (e.g. Fergusson & Mullen, 1999; Finkelhor & Dzuiba-Leatherman, 1994) as well as to negative attributions about other parts of their lives including their sexual identity (D'Augelli, 1998). As D'Augelli illustrated, adolescent boys who begin to identify as gay often face confusion, self blame, and internalized homophobia, beliefs that need to be overcome in order to lead happy adult lives. Being sexually assaulted and then berated for this abuse means that such problems are compounded in a cycle of secondary victimisation (see, e.g., Williams, 1984).

The type of attribution research conducted in the current paper informs those working with adolescent CSA survivors, such as therapists or educationalists, of the types of negative attributions that survivors may have encountered

in the past. This knowledge may open up new and useful lines of communication between survivor and treatment provider, whereby the treatment provider can understand how specific negative judgements may have been made toward the survivor, based on the specifics of the assault. Furthermore, increased knowledge and positive publicity about adolescent survivors of CSA may encourage more survivors to come forward to receive psychological interventions that will reduce the possibility of negative outcomes in the future.

Methodological and Sample Issues

As with other studies that utilize hypothetical vignettes, the current study may lack a certain degree of ecological validity. That said, vignette methodological is well established in both social and forensic psychology (Schoenberg & Ravdal, 2000; West, 1982) and is especially useful for investigating lay perceptions of sexual assault (for a discussion, see Sled, Durrheim, Kriel, Solomon, & Baxter, 2002). Similarly, whilst the use of a student sample limits the generalizability of current findings to some degree (cf. Collings & Bodill, 2003), our findings are generally supportive of earlier work based on general population samples. Thus, the current methodology seems justified, with current data providing a valuable contribution to the victim blame literature.

Nevertheless, future work needs to investigate the factors that influence judgments toward adolescent CSA survivors, such as those investigated in this study, with broader samples. One avenue for such work would be to recruit a police sample. Attributional research that investigates police workers' judgments of sex crime cases is rare, due to the difficulties in attaining such samples. However, knowing how police workers feel about such crimes is as important as in criminal cases, as they are usually the first contact victims have with the criminal justice system and are therefore extremely important in decisions as to whether or not to pursue further action, and evidence collected at this point is crucial in determining further legal treatment (Davies, Smith, et al., 2009).

Davies, Smith, and Rogers (2009) investigated police workers' judgements toward adult victims of rape when victim gender and sexuality were varied between subjects. They found that police workers' judgements toward the victim were generally positive, though significantly less positive toward male victims than female victims. One important avenue for future work would be to investigate police workers' judgements toward adolescent CSA survivors when issues such as victim sexuality are considered. The authors of the current paper are not aware of any work that has currently been done in this regard. We can therefore put forth that the findings of the current paper are important in encouraging researchers to conduct similar work in the future utilizing other samples, such as police workers.

One additional issue that is worthy of note is that the majority of individuals in the current sample identified themselves as heterosexual. Although the fact that the majority of individuals did identify themselves as heterosexual is not unusual

and is consistent with other studies that have utilized opportunistic student samples (e.g., Davies, Rogers, et al., 2001; Davies et al., 2006; Davies et al., 2009). It must be acknowledged that utilizing samples that are not primarily heterosexual would be useful in future work. Future research might, for example, consider investigating the effects of participant sexuality on perceptions of adolescent victim depictions. As Davies and McCartney (2003) showed that only heterosexual men, as opposed to gay men or heterosexual women, were negative towards adult male rape victims, it would seem pertinent to investigate whether this is also the case in a depiction of a male victim under the legal age of consent.

Concluding Comments

The current study has demonstrated differences in attributions of blame and assault severity in a hypothetical case of male sexual assault across three factors, namely the victim's sexual orientation, the perpetrator's gender and the gender of the respondent. Overall findings suggest there is a strong sexual orientation effect (Davies et al., 2006) toward blaming male victims who are sexually attracted to the gender of his abuser, even when the abusive situation is clearly threatening and unwelcomed by the victim. We have shown that this effect also occurs when the victim is too young to give informed consent to any form of sexual activity. But much more research is still needed in this comparatively neglected area of (social) psychology, with future research also needing to focus on how victim blame can be reduced in cases where the victim is male. In sum, more publicity and a heightened programme of education is needed to inform the public of just how serious sexual assault against males can be.

NOTE

1. For current purposes, adulthood is defined as the legal age of sexual consent, which in the United Kingdom is 16 years. Thus, near-adults are individuals who are approaching, but still below, 16 years of age.

AUTHOR NOTES

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APPENDIX 1

Gay Victim and Male Perpetrator Condition [Descriptors Relating Specifically to Victim Sexual Orientation and Perpetrator Gender Were Varied Between Subjects]

Dave is a 15-year-old schoolboy. Dave enjoys school and has many friends. Dave has been curious about his sexuality and has become attracted towards one of his male friends at school. Dave recently spoke with his neighbour Graham about his feelings towards his friend and has told him he is gay. Graham has been friends with Dave and his family for about 2 years and is 41 years old and lives alone.

Dave's parents have been invited to stay at a friend's house for a night at the weekend. Dave's parents ask Graham to stay at the house and stay with Dave so he is not alone all night. Dave and Graham got on well and spent the night playing video games and watching a movie. At around midnight Dave was very tired so told Graham he was going to bed.

At about 2 a.m. Dave was woken up by Graham who had crept into his bed and asked Dave if he wanted to have sex with him. Dave was very shocked and said no and told Graham to get out of his bed. But Graham started to touch Dave's genitals under the bed covers and demanded sex off him and told Dave he would enjoy it. Dave told Graham to leave and tried to get out of the bed but Graham held him down and began to perform oral sex on him. Dave did not respond and after this Graham left the house and didn't return. Dave's parents came home the next day and noticed Dave was very quiet, Dave's mum asked him what was wrong. Dave refused to talk but his mum demanded that he did. Dave told his mum what had happened and his mum contacted the police.

Dave was very upset at what had happened and his mum was very shocked. Specially trained police officers went on to interview Dave. The police also took Graham in for questioning about what happened that night, but Graham denied that the incident occurred.

APPENDIX 2**Attribution Items (With Labels)**

1. How much do you feel that Dave's behaviour is to blame for the event? [victim blame]
2. How much sympathy do you have for Dave? [sympathy for victim]
3. Dave could have tried harder to get out of the bed. How much do you agree? [victim try harder]
4. Do you think Dave is to blame for what happened because he didn't struggle enough to get free? [victim no struggle]
5. Dave is responsible for the event. How much do you agree? [victim responsible]
6. Dave did the best he could do to stop Graham. How much do you agree? [victim did best]
7. How surprised were you that Dave was very upset by what Graham did to him? [surprise at upset]
8. The attacker should not be held responsible. How much do you agree? [perpetrator responsible]
9. Do you feel Dave will be traumatised for a long time? [victim trauma]
10. The police should take the attack very seriously. How much do you agree? [police serious]
11. How severely should Graham be punished? [perpetrator punishment]
12. If you were Dave how upset would you be by the attack? [victim upset]
13. Dave's life will be adversely affected. How much do you agree? [victim negatively affected]