

Crime Victims' Institute



Our Mission

The mission of the Crime Victims' Institute is to :

- Conduct research to examine the impact of crime on victims of all ages in order to promote a better understanding of victimization
- Improve services to victims
- Assist victims of crime by giving them a voice
- Inform victim-related policy-making at the state and local levels.

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Research Highlights

Blame, Empathy, and Homophobia Toward Same-Sex Intimate Partner Violence Victims

The Crime Victims' Institute recently sponsored Dr. Cortney Franklin (Assistant Director) and HaeRim Jin (PhD student) to attend the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences conference in Denver, Colorado and to present their research related to perceptions of same-sex victims of intimate partner violence. This article provides some highlights of this research presentation, and a full report will be distributed later this year.

Cortney A. Franklin and HaeRim Jin

Limited attention has focused on the victimization of sexual minorities, which has produced a dearth of resources available for these survivors. Furthermore, sexual minorities have been reluctant to disclose and seek help from social services or criminal justice agencies due to the fear of experiencing discriminatory responses, such as prejudice and stigmatization (Calton et al., 2015; Parry & O'Neal, 2015). Indeed, evaluations of police training on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) communities has been scant, and research has demonstrated a need for cultural competency education to aid in responding to calls for service involving LGBT victims (Israel et al., 2014). Furthermore, service providers, criminal justice professionals, and college students perceived same-sex IPV victims as more culpable and less believable

than heterosexual survivors (Brown & Groscup, 2009; Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Harris & Cook, 1994). In addition, IPV incidents involving sexual minorities were viewed as less violent, less serious, and less in need of police intervention (Brown & Groscup, 2009; Cormier & Woodworth, 2008; Harris & Cook, 1994).

Defensive Attribution Theory

Scholars have suggested that practitioners, observers, and service providers who perceive themselves as analogous to a specific victim of catastrophe, trauma, and gendered violence exhibit increased empathy and decreased blame (Shaver, 1970). Termed defensive attribution, this theory has argued that blame or culpability decreases when similarity and situational relevance increase (Shaver, 1970). To date, however, defensive attribution theory has not been used to assess perceptions of blame or culpability toward a victim of same-sex IPV.

To assess the relationships among prior IPV experience, perceiver similarity, empathy, homophobia, and same-sex victim blame, data were collected in undergraduate criminal justice classes at a Texas public university. Participants were randomly assigned one of three scenarios that described a domestically violent relationship occurring between either a gay or lesbian

Same-Sex IPV Victims, continued...

couple. Analyses used 211 responses. The average age of participants was approximately 20-years-old. Freshman represented 32.7 percent of participants, sophomores made up 35.1 percent, followed by juniors who accounted for 20.9 percent and seniors who represented 11.4 percent of the sample. Less than half of participants were white, and 57 percent were women. Ninety-four percent of participants identified as heterosexual, and 36 percent were in an exclusive dating relationship.

Findings and Implications

Statistical analyses revealed that increased adherence to homophobia significantly decreased perceived similarity, which decreased victim empathy. Decreased empathy, in turn, increased victim blame. Those participants who reported prior lifetime IPV experience reported increased perceived similarity to the victim in the IPV scenario, which subsequently increased victim empathy, decreasing victim blame.

Findings from the analysis demonstrated the usefulness of homophobia as a broad construct to understand perceptions of sexual minorities and the role these attitudes have on empathy and blame directed toward same-sex IPV victims. Increased homophobia hindered the degree to which perceivers related to and were empathic toward the sexual minority survivor. Findings highlight the continued need to identify individual characteristics that increase empathy and decrease blame toward same-sex IPV survivors (Poorman et al., 2003). Indeed, further assessments are warranted as increased discriminatory responses resulting from homophobia and decreased empathy can impede practitioners' abilities to identify the unique needs of LGBT victims, provide appropriate treatment, and interface with survivors in a victim-centered way (Crisp, 2006).

Current findings highlight the continued need for education programs targeting college students and the general population regarding the dynamics of same-sex IPV and the detrimental effects that victim blaming has on IPV survivors following victimization (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005). Moreover, cultural sensitivity training and educational programs for formal service providers and criminal justice practitioners may be helpful in raising awareness of the reality of IPV among sexual minorities and in developing tailored resources that meet the needs of these survivors (Calton et al., 2015).

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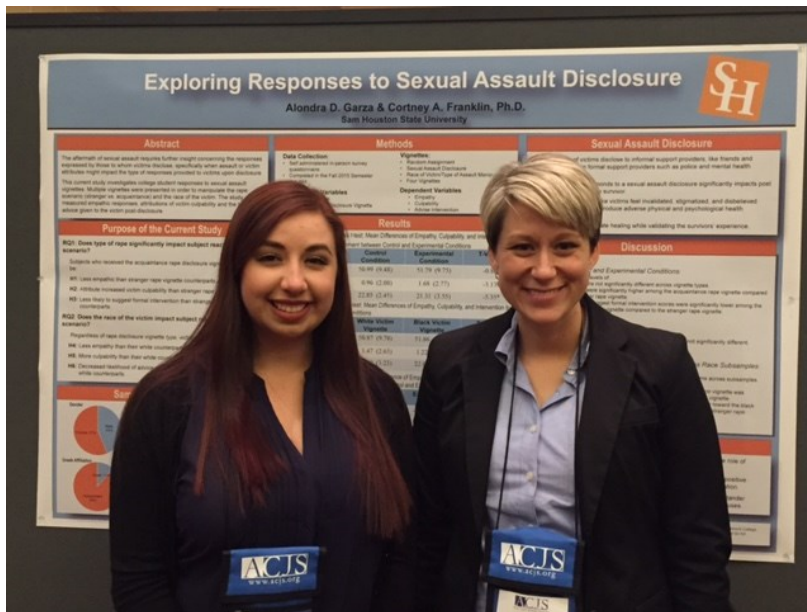
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In the Works....

Look for upcoming publications from the Crime Victims' Institute on:

- Evaluation of an Expedited Domestic Violence Court
- Strangulation in Intimate Partner Violence Cases
- Domestic Violence Offender Specialization
- Campus Sexual Assault Series



Focus On...

Alondra Garza

Alondra D. Garza, B.S., will begin the Masters of Arts program in Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) in the Fall of 2016. She graduated *with highest honors* from SHSU in May and as an undergraduate, she served as an ambassador for the Elliot T. Bowers Honors College and was a Ronald E. McNair scholar. She presented a research poster at the annual meeting of the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences in Denver, CO in 2016 with co-author, Dr. Courtney Franklin, titled: "Exploring Responses to Sexual Assault Disclosure." Together, they are in the process of preparing the paper for submission to a referred journal of publication consideration. Alondra was also recently accepted into the Graduate Bridge program at SHSU. Her research interests include victimology, violence against women, and gender and crime.

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Share your ideas:

We welcome your input. Please send issues or topics you would like to see CVI conduct research on to :

crimevictims@shsu.edu

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Upcoming Events



International Family Violence and Child Victimization Research Conferences Portsmouth, NH	July 10-12, 2016
Crime Against Children Conference Dallas, TX	Aug. 8-11, 2016
National Organization for Victim Assistance Atlanta, GA	Aug. 14-16, 2016
National Sexual Assault Conference Washington D.C.	Aug. 31-Sept. 2, 2016
National Center for Victims of Crime Philadelphia, PA	Sept. 19-21, 2016
Domestic Violence Awareness Month	October
American Society of Criminology New Orleans, LA	Nov. 16-19, 2016

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