

THE RISE AND REPERCUSSIONS OF BISEXUAL CHIC:

Examining female-female sexual activity in the heterosexual dating context

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Abstract

With the rise of bisexual chic, this project seeks to explore the messages being sent by female-female sexual relations and the repercussions of bisexual staging for both the bisexual and lesbian communities. This project is composed of three studies examining same-sex infidelity in heterosexual relationships and perceptions of promiscuity in female-female sexual relations within the heterosexual dating context. Study 1 examines attributions, perceptions of sexual orientation, and relational outcomes following a same-sex infidelity. Study 2 looks at male jealousy following the same-sex infidelity of their female partners. Lastly, Study 3 explores the message that female-female kissing sends regardless of an infidelity. Overall, this project examines the role of bisexual staging on judgments of promiscuity, and what effects a new generation of bisexual chic is having on the bisexual community. With the rise of bisexual staging, female-female acts are no longer seen as distinctive indicators of a bisexual or lesbian sexual orientation. Ultimately, this paper explores the messages that female-female sexual relations sends, both as an act of infidelity and as an entity itself.

Introduction

Neither a thorough understanding of heterosexual relationships nor a thorough understanding of homosexual relationships accounts for the tensions that exist in bisexual relationships. “Bisexuality is linked in people’s minds with jealousy because it brings home the fact that no one can be considered safe” (Garber, 2000, p. 449). However, bisexuality is no longer the only reason women hook-up with women. Among teenage populations, same-sex female encounters are thought to be a turn on for men. As one teenage girl puts it, “...Girls hook up with other girls because they know the guys will like it.... They think, *Then the guys are going to want to hook up with me and give me a lot of attention...*” (Levy, 2005, p. 150). The issue this trend raises is the misperception of what it means to be a bisexual woman and the new stereotypes being applied to this community. With new promiscuity scripts arising, onlookers are quick to consider bisexual women “sluts”, rather than consider the possibility of attraction to both sexes. It is necessary to examine communication patterns about and by same-sex dyads to better understand how “bisexual chic” may in fact be damaging the bisexual community.

Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual (GLB) Relationships

Over the decade same-sex relationships have come to the forefront with issues such as same-sex marriage entering the mainstream. More than ever, college campuses are taking part in GLB issues and the younger generation is coming to understand a new type of relationship that many of their parent’s generation never witnessed. With the exposure of GLB relationships, comes the need to explore new lines of research and

break free of a heterosexual supposition. Many studies, whether from twenty years ago or two years ago, fail to account for the prevalence of GLB relationships and the necessity of understanding communication in such dyads.

Defining the GLB population is a difficult task, though, as actual percentages are hard to determine. “Assessing the demographic characteristics of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender population can be a daunting challenge, in part because sexual orientation and gender identification are not easily measured constructs, data are relatively rare, and the GLB population can be reluctant to identify themselves as such in surveys” (glbtc.com, 2004). While many surveys have been done, a lack of appropriate questions, skewed population sources, or small sample size weaken the validity of the studies.

Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin attempted to research GLB relationships in their 1948 and 1953 studies. Kinsey et al. (1948) derived the well known 10% figure, (that 10% of the population was exclusively homosexual) from his study on males. This figure is generally thought to be incorrect, because it does not measure who actually identifies themselves as gay or lesbian (glbtc, 2004). In 1992 “the NHSLS (National Health and Social Life Survey) found that 1.4 percent of women and 2.8 percent of men thought of themselves as homosexual or bisexual, while more than 4 percent of women and more than 6 percent of men report a sexual attraction to people of the same sex,” (Gates, 2004, p. 3) explains.

Perceptions of GLB Relationships

Wong, McCreary, Carpenter, Engle, and Korchynsky (1999) examined gender roles and their connection to perceived homosexuality. “The belief that homosexuals typically are more similar to members of the other sex suggests that people conceptualize ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ as *bipolar* constructs which share a one-to-one relationship with both biological sex and sexual orientation” (Wong et al., 1999). Wong et al. (1999) found that men were more likely to perceive/target other male homosexuality. The reason for this finding is based on the perception that homosexual men exhibit inverted gender qualities (Wong et al., 1999). Thus, a male is better able to notice another male (the target) not acting masculine and will perceive the target as a homosexual. Masculine women, however, are not assumed to be homosexuals as quickly (Wong et al., 1999).

Hinrichs and Rosenberg (2002) also examined perceptions towards gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals. A sample was taken on college campuses to determine feelings of college-age students towards homosexuality and bisexuality. Hinrichs and Rosenberg (2002) found that women are more accepting of homosexual and bisexual persons. On the Homosexuality Attitude Scale (1 = not accepting and 5 = very accepting), men’s mean score was 3.9, while women’s mean score was 4.3 (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002). Similar results were discovered using Herek’s ATLG scale (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002). Interestingly, Hinrichs and Rosenberg (2002) found that both sexes were less tolerant of gay men than lesbian women.

The last scale used by Hinrichs and Rosenberg (2002) was the Bogardus Social Distance Scale. Men demonstrated putting greater social distance between themselves

and gays, lesbians, and bisexuals than women students did (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002). Men also accepted lesbians more than they accepted gay men, while women accepted gay men more than lesbians (Hinrichs & Rosenberg, 2002). Overall, Hinrichs and Rosenberg (2002) found that 85% of females and 69% of males were accepting of homosexual/bisexual lifestyles.

Bisexuality in Women

The past decade has brought bisexuality into the limelight. “Bisexuality—and even the by now much-recycled concept of ‘bisexual chic’—has moved steadily into the mainstream, fueled by music videos, talk shows, sitcoms, and advertising, as well as by sexual practice” (Garber, 2000, p. 21). The issue of whether bisexuality actually exists, and whether it can be displayed in a monogamous relationship, is an on-going debate (Klesse, 2005).

While homophobia is currently being confronted, “biphobia” is just emerging. “Like homophobia, biphobia draws on a set of stereotypes. A heightened sexuality, an essential non-monogamy or promiscuity is a strong feature of biphobic discourses” (Klesse, 2005, p. 449). The association of promiscuity with bisexuality is often contested. Arguments exist that promiscuity is expected in bisexual women as part of the double-standard in which women are labeled “sluts” and “whores” in association with a natural impurity (Tanenbaum, 1999; Klesse, 2005).

Pheterson (1986) used the term “whore stigma” to explain the unfair label women are given when expressions of their sexuality cannot be controlled by men. Klesse (2005)

interviewed bisexual women, one of whom summed up the fascination straight men have with the idea of promiscuous bisexual women:

Sharon refers to this [bisexual women's sexualization] as "hot-bi-babe" syndrome, when she explains the gendered specificities of bisexual coming-out experiences. While straight men would frequently feel either extremely insecure or react with rampant homophobia, if they learn about a male friend's bisexual identity, such information about a female friend would often entice their sexual fantasy. (Klesse, 2005, p. 452)

Bisexual chic is not a completely new idea, though. As early as 1970, *Newsweek* was already boasting that bisexuality was in bloom (Garber, 2000). It went on to cite the new trends of androgynous clothing and hair styles as the beginning of a trend which led to a gender blur. From this blur came a new identity in which it was acceptable, and even chic to be attracted to all sexes. As one *New Yorker* stated, "We're the new race. I'm somewhere else and in between" (*Newsweek*, 1974, p. 555). However, while bisexuality became all the rage, a new discourse of biphobia arose in which bisexuals struggled to find a place as an invisibility minority, often unwelcome by both heterosexual and homosexual communities. This invisibility has prevented thorough research from being conducted about not only bisexuality, but infidelity in a multitude of GLB relationships.

Study 1A

At one time infidelity was a taboo topic, an occurrence seen as rare and wrong. In modern times, though, relationships have begun to change, and with this change has come a new face of infidelity. Many couples enter serious monogamous relationships that result in cohabitation exclusive of marriage (Harrison & Marsden, 2004). The changing face of relationships means a changing face of affairs and infidelity. No longer can infidelity remain exclusive to married couples, and even more importantly, to heterosexual couples. As Lannutti (2005) explains, the emergence of same-sex marriages has brought a new context to same-sex relationships, and with this new context comes new possibilities for infidelity in all types of relationships: heterosexual, homosexual, and bisexual.

However, with the growing trend of bisexual chic, sometimes it is difficult to pinpoint what exactly constitutes bisexuality. The rising popularity of a bisexual façade may also mean increased instances of women in heterosexual romantic relationships exploring extradyadic affairs with members of the same-sex. While previous studies have explored the differences men and women exhibit when faced with infidelity, oftentimes infidelity occurring between members of the same sex is discounted (Harris, 2002). With a growing trend of same-sex relations, it is important to examine both why these incidents occur and how infidels' partners respond. This study examines same-sex infidelity committed by the female partner in a heterosexual relationship. It seeks to explore the unique extra-relational affair of same-sex infidelity in a generation where girls kissing girls is becoming increasingly pervasive.

Infidelity

According to Wiederman and Hurd (1999), extradyadic activity (sexual or not) is rampant among both sexes—75% of men and 68% of women partake. An important aspect to grasping the complexities of infidelity is understanding the different types that exist and the emotions generally prescribed. Infidelity is broken into the two categories: emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity. To thoroughly understand the distinctions between emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity, it is necessary to examine the emotional, physical, and biological differences revealed in past literature.

Defining Emotional and Sexual Infidelity

While “love” itself is a difficult emotion to measure, it is generally the distinction between emotional infidelity versus sexual infidelity. Rempel and Burris (2005) proposed that love “involves valuing the other and is essentially a motive associated with the goal of preserving and promoting the other’s well-being” (p. 309). This attachment serves as a defining mark of emotional infidelity versus sexual infidelity in forced-choice methodology. Sabini and Silver (2005, p. 715) identified common questions used in forced-choice methodology involving emotional versus sexual infidelity. Respondents were asked to decide whether their partner’s forming an emotional attachment (options a) or engaging in sexual intercourse (option b) was more distressing (Sabini & Silver, 2005).

Option (a) uses both love and a “deep emotional attachment” as markers of emotional infidelity. As made evident by option (b), sexual infidelity most specifically involves sexual intercourse with someone outside the dyadic relationship. While both

love and sex may exist in extradyadic relationships, such forced-choice methodology is used to compare sexual infidelity versus emotional infidelity. One of the most important ways in which such comparisons are used is seen in the studies of differing gender responses to infidelity.

Gender Differences in Infidelity

According to Buunk and Dijkstra (2004), most research suggests that men are more open to sexual infidelity than women. Men, more than women, fantasize about sexual relationships with people other than their primary partner (Hicks & Leitenberg, 2001). Not only are men more willing to partake in extradyadic sex (Prins, Buunk, & Van Yperen, 1993), but they actually do commit such sexual infidelity (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983). However, Buunk (1980) found that women commit acts of infidelity just as often as men do over the span of a relationship, even though men had more casual extradyadic sexual relationships.

Men's desire for extradyadic sex stems from a desire for sexual variety (Buunk & Dijkstra (2004). Buunk (1984) and Glass and Wright (1992) confirm this. Such inclinations for sexual experimentation echo Baxter's (1993) dialectic tension of novelty versus stability. However, Buunk (1980) also found that much of men's extradyadic sex sprung from what they perceived as insufficient sexual fulfillment in the primary relationship.

In the same study, Buunk (1980) determined that women are more likely to enter into a sexual affair if they are not satisfied in the relationship, perhaps seeking a new partner, not just new sex. In a demonstration of costs and rewards, Prins et al. (1993)

discovered that women are more likely to exhibit infidelity when they feel they are in an unequal partnership. In such a relationship, the rewards would not be in balance with the costs.

Buunk and Dijkstra (2004) point out that the growing sexual revolution of women in Western society has also had a profound influence on infidelity, and even more so, on monogamous relationships. Levy (2005) uses the term “Female Chauvinist Pigs” to describe this new generation of women who embrace casual sex as proof that they are, in fact, equal with men. Being a female chauvinist pig means evening the playing field of sexual infidelity for many women. These women use casual sex as proof-positive that they are equal to men not only in the work force, but also in the ways they deal with relationships and infidelity. Wiederman (1997) looked at this generation’s response to the 1994 U.S. Social Survey and found that women and men of the younger generation did not differ in the prevalence of extradyadic sex. The modern generation of Western women seems to possess a more autonomous air, one not necessarily welcomed by men.

Buunk (2005) discovered that men respond more positively than women do to issues of autonomy, while women respond more positively than men to issues of commitment. Despite this difference, Buunk (2005) found that women and men did not perceive the scenarios differently, “suggesting that men and women have the same standards for evaluating whether a relationship is characterized by autonomy, independence and freedom or by commitment, togetherness and intimacy” (p. 666). However, a previous study by Buunk and Hupka (1986) that looked at cross-cultural autonomy found more of a difference in responses to autonomy in other cultures than

exists in Western society. The study found that while men may not recognize their own autonomy, they are cognoscente and often rebuffing of their partner's (Buunk & Hupka, 1986).

Returning to the idea of costs and rewards presented by Prins et al. (1993), Lawrance and Byers (1995) built on the idea of social exchange and costs/rewards, using the Interpersonal Exchange Model of Sexual Satisfaction (IEMSS) to look at sexual fulfillment in heterosexual relationships. They defined sexual satisfaction as “an affective response arising from one’s subjective evaluation of the positive and negative dimensions associated with one’s sexual relationship (1995, p. 268). Lawrance and Byers (1995) further predicted that even if gender difference existed in terms of costs and rewards, gender would not be a defining difference in overall sexual satisfaction in a relationship. Their hypothesis was correct and found no gender differences as a predictor of sexual satisfaction.

What Lawrance and Byers (1995) did find, though, was that the costs and rewards of sexual relationships vary greatly for men and women. Women, more than men, reflected “emotional, relational qualities of the sexual relationship, such as being with same partner each time you have sex, how partner responds to your sexual advances, and how partner treats you when you have sex” (Lawrance & Byers, 1995, p. 282). It is these emotional concerns in relationships that have sparked a large field of interest as to the evolutionary differences of men and women in dealing with infidelity and jealousy (see Study 1b).

Emotions Elicited

As seen in many of these studies, evolutionary work centers on the degree of jealousy exhibited. While the work of evolutionary theorists is of great importance, it is important to realize the wider spectrum of possible emotional responses to both types of infidelity. The emotions infidelity elicits extend far beyond the sole response of jealousy. Shackelford, LeBlanc, and Drass (2000) sought to find these emotions free of the influence of jealousy. Shackelford et al. (2000) focused on the emotions of the cheated on, the partner who the infidelity was done to. Shackelford et al. (2000) found that the component “Undesirable/Insecure” elicited the most emotions, with undesirable, physically unattractive, insecure, self-conscious, and inferior ranking at the top (p. 648).

The emotions were also compared across gender. “Men provided higher ratings than women in reaction to a partner’s infidelity for Content/Relieved, Homicidal/Suicidal, Happy and Sexually aroused,” while women ranked higher in the components of “Nauseated/Repulsed, Depressed, Undesirable/Insecure, Helpless/Abandoned, and Anxious” (Shackelford, LeBlanc, & Drass, 2000, p. 651). Despite the different ratings, Shackelford et al. (2000) found the only significant gender difference was in the components of Helpless/Abandoned and Shocked, where women demonstrated a higher rating than men. Also interesting to note, was the finding that men experience greater emotional differences when deciphering between sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity (Shackelford, LeBlanc, & Drass, 2000). Overall, women responded as being more angry and hurt than men in reaction to sexual infidelity, and more angry,

hurt, and jealous than men in response to emotional infidelity (Shackelford, LeBlanc, & Drass, 2000).

Pinpointing specific emotions and using a continuous scale measure, Becker, Sagarin, Guadagno, Millevoi, and Nicastle (2004) examined whether sex differences were robust in response to jealousy. Becker et al. (2004) used the emotions of jealousy, anger, hurt, and disgust “loaded on the factors of undesirable/insecure, hostile/vengeful, depressed, and nauseated/repulsed, respectively” (p. 530). The study built on the emotions found in Shackelford et al. (2000) to not only find emotions, but predict how and when they would be used (Becker et al. 2004).

Becker et al. (2004) adopted the evolutionary perspective on jealousy, predicting that men would exhibit greater jealousy in response to sexual infidelity and women would exhibit greater jealousy in response to emotional infidelity. For both disgust and anger, Becker et al. (2004) predicted greater responses to sexual infidelity for both sexes. Lastly, it was predicted that hurt would be displayed in much the same way as jealousy, but that “emotional withdrawal” might lead to more hurt for both sexes, bordering on sadness/depression (p. 531).

The study yielded support for the evolutionary perspective of sex differences in jealousy (Becker, et al. 2004). Jealousy was the only emotion with a significant variance between men and women, with men responding with greater jealousy to sexual infidelity and women with greater jealousy to emotional infidelity, as predicted (Becker et al., 2004). In terms of the other three emotions studied, Becker et al. (2004) found hurt to be the strongest feeling in response to infidelity, and more salient in emotional infidelity

than sexual infidelity. Responses of anger and disgust also proved as predicted, with both sexes responding more greatly in these areas to sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity (Becker et al., 2004). Becker et al. (2004) accounts for this response by explaining that “it is likely that a sexual infidelity evokes greater anger than an emotional infidelity because the sexual infidelity involves more of a choice, a decision on the part of the partner to act in a way that threatens the relationship” (p. 536). In explaining disgust, Becker et al. (2004) return to the evolutionary perspective, suggesting that concerns about fitness may be driving such reaction to infidelity.

A surprising result in Becker et al.’s (2004) study was that women consistently experienced “more intense negative reactions to infidelity than men” (p. 536). While this does not imply a male disregard for infidelity, it suggests an issue that more deeply affects women, perhaps because of prevalence and/or salience. Ultimately, Becker et al. (2004) found that the only emotional response to infidelity that showed significant sex differences in heterosexual relationships was that of jealousy.

A Closer Look at Jealousy. In 2002, Dijkstra and Buunk took a closer look at the jealousy-evoking effect of rival characteristics. Unlike past studies, though, Dijkstra and Buunk (2002) conducted a sample of homosexual individuals. What they found was a sex difference between what gay men and lesbian women cite as exciting jealousy. “Men reported significantly more jealousy than women when their rival is younger, has a better figure, has broader shoulders, is more muscular, is tougher, is more of a troublemaker and is more egotistic” (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002, p. 844). Dijkstra and Buunk (2002) pointed to a similarity between this response and that of heterosexual women, while the response

of lesbian women seemed more like that of heterosexual men. Lesbian women demonstrated greater jealousy than men when their rival exhibited more self-confidence (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002).

Despite finding sex differences between homosexual men and homosexual women, less sex differences emerged than between heterosexual men and heterosexual women (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002). Dijkstra and Buunk (2002) also compared the rival characteristics that evoke jealousy in homosexuals to those of heterosexuals, and found that homosexuals exhibited more jealousy in response to a rival's social dominance, physical attractiveness, and physical dominance. However, homosexuals responded less jealously than heterosexuals in response to a rival's social status (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002).

More specifically, gay men's response to physical attractiveness in a rival corresponded with the typical feminine response, while in "typical masculine domains such as a rival's social status and social and physical dominance... gay men highly resembled heterosexual men" (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002, p. 847). On the reverse side, lesbian women's response to social dominance was more masculine, while their response to physical attractiveness resembled that of heterosexual women (Dijkstra & Buunk, 2002). While inverted gender stereotypes are often assumed to predict homosexual behavior, the generalization can oftentimes prove incorrect. To truly understand homosexual behavior, it is necessary to examine both the history of gay, lesbian, and bisexual relationships, and the recent studies that are continually shedding light on the differences and similarities of the heterosexual and homosexual communities.

Infidelity in GLB Relationships

While same-sex friendships are well researched, less work exists on same-sex romantic relationships, especially in the area of infidelity. Issues of infidelity have long been studied in heterosexual relationships, but only recently have literature exploring homosexual relationships and infidelity become prominent. Sheets and Wolfe (2001) composed one such study of the effects of gender and sexual orientation on jealousy. In terms of an evolutionary perspective, Sheets and Wolfe (2001) reasoned that if biology alone is the guiding force, then sexual orientation should not change the natural reaction of each sex to infidelity.

The study also looked at the sociocultural theory of jealousy, focusing on how culture can shape jealousy reactions (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001). Returning to the idea of a double-standard explored by Klesse (2005), Sheets and Wolfe (2001) proposed a “discounting hypothesis. This idea is based on the existence of a double standard that permits men greater freedom than women to engage in extrarelational sex” (p. 259). Their “cognitive adaptive” hypothesis is similar, explaining that women expect infidelity of their male partner, and thus despite disapproval, will downplay partner infidelity (and react with less jealousy) as a coping mechanism (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001). Since the focus of these hypotheses is the gender of the cheater, it can be predicted that a gay man would respond as a heterosexual woman would, and a lesbian woman would respond as a heterosexual man would (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001).

A final interesting prediction by Sheets and Wolfe (2001) focuses on the idea that women are socialized to bond with others and to avoid social isolation. In the same way, because many homosexuals face stigmatization, infidelity may pose a greater threat. Their fear of isolation may result in a heightened sensitivity to cues of partner infidelity (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001).

Sheets and Wolfe (2001) found that heterosexual women, gay men, and lesbians experienced greater distress in response to emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity, leaving only heterosexual men to rank sexual infidelity as more distressing (though nearly equally distressing as emotional infidelity, heterosexual men nonetheless are the only group to exhibit significant distress towards sexual infidelity). “These findings imply that sexual jealousy did not evolve as part of a sex-specific, biologically based, mating module” (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001, p. 270). One explanation Sheets and Wolfe (2001) offer is that sexual and emotional jealousy evolved sequentially.

The only prediction supported by the data of Sheets and Wolfe (2001) was the “discounting” hypothesis. “As expected, heterosexual women and gay men (and unexpectedly lesbians as well) appear to discount the threat of abandonment by a sexually unfaithful partner more so than heterosexual men” (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001, p. 272). While both homosexual and heterosexual women and gay men seem adjusted to infidelity as part of a relationship, heterosexual men have a harder time accepting the same. “...A sexually unfaithful man is not expected to abandon his primary partner whereas a sexually unfaithful woman is” (Sheets & Wolfe, 2001, p. 272). This double-

standard again echoes men's problems with accepting women's autonomy. This, however, is only one of the issues that surfaces after an extradyadic affair occurs.

After the Affair

Following an infidelity a number of questions arise regarding the consequences of the infidel's actions. It is important for the survival of the relationship to understand and examine the communication that arises following relational transgressions.

Communication patterns regarding accounts and attributions, expectation violation/relational outcomes, and justifications for an infidelity all contribute to the relationships success or failure.

Rethinking Account and Attributions

Understanding the various perspectives on infidelity has led to a number of communication models and theories about accounts and attributions following extradyadic affairs. Mongeau, Hale, and Alles (1994) examined this phenomenon in a groundbreaking study exploring attributions of responsibility, blame, and guilt. Mongeau, Hale, and Alles (1994) found that females were seen as more responsible for their infidelities and "...were evaluated somewhat more harshly for the same infidelity (i.e. as being more responsible for and expected to feel greater guilt) than males" (p. 340). Additionally, females experienced more guilt after committing the infidelity (Mongeau, Hale, & Alles, 1994).

Another attribution-based study by Bradbury and Fincham (1990) further noted that within married couples, spouse's behavior is given meaning by their partner. When

the spouse's behavior is neither negative nor unexpected, the partner's response will occur automatically, without consciousness (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). However, when a negative relational event occurs, such as an infidelity, the partner will make a conscious attribution of their spouse's behavior and respond according to this assignment. Correspondingly, when the partner assigns internal negative attributions (specific to their spouse) it will likely result in a negative reaction. However, an external attribution assignment (not an inherent behavior of the spouse) will produce a greater chance of reconciliation. In sum, "conflict-promoting attributions for infidelity seem more conducive to relationship-destructive behaviors such as breakup, whereas the latter more benign attributions might lead to relationship-constructive behaviors such as reconciliation" (Hall & Fincham, 2006). Through this understanding of attribution assignment, it is clear that relational outcomes are closely tied to expectancy violations.

Expectancy Violations and Relational Outcomes

In their 1998 study, Afifi and Metts reexamined the roles of expectation violations in close relationships and their relation to uncertainty. "...People in 'interpersonal' relationships require a good deal of idiosyncratic and personalistic knowledge in order to predict and explain each other's behavior" (Afifi & Metts, 1998, p. 366). While previous research has characterized violation expectations as both significant and important, Afifi and Metts (1998) proved that the importance of violations exhibits a high degree of variety. Some violations are almost beneficial in their dispelling of uncertainty, an idea previously disregarded. Berger (1993) assumed that expectation violations would

increase uncertainty, but Afifi and Metts (1998) found that violations often decrease uncertainty about the violator.

Another interesting finding in the investigation revealed individuals' preference for uncertainty-decreasing information over uncertainty-increasing information, regardless of whether that information was positive or negative (Afifi & Metts, 1998). In this way, expectation violations may aid the progress of a relationship in furthering partner's understanding of one another. While the study expanded understandings of expectation violation, Afifi and Metts (1998, p. 389) note that "...discovering that a partner was unfaithful... may decrease the individual's uncertainty about his or her partner's relational commitment, and may lead to relational termination".

Justifications for an Infidelity

When discussing infidelity, it is important to understand society considers acceptable reasons for cheating. Yeniceri and Kokdemir's (2006) study of perceptions and explanations regarding infidelity helped to create the Infidelity Questionnaire (INFQ), a measurement of justifications for cheating. Yeniceri and Kokdemir focused on the six components of legitimacy, seduction, normalization, sexuality, social background, and sensation seeking.

The study found that men rated seduction as a more justifiable reason for their cheating than their female counterparts, while women cited social background as a more viable reason than men (Yeniceri & Kokdemir, 2006). Seduction components involved a third person coming onto the infidel and social background involved such reasons as "marrying young". Sex of the infidel was also an important aspect in the investigation.

Yeniceri and Kokdemir (2006) found that legitimacy (relational partner deserved to be cheated on) was a more acceptable justification for woman than men. This may be due to the emotional issues for women who feel that their relationship lacks legitimacy. This finding is consistent with Barta and Kiene (2005) and Glass and Wright (1985) who found that women participate in emotionally motivated infidelities more than men. Conversely, seduction, sexuality (unsatisfying sexual relationship), and social background were more reasonable causes for men. Most beneficial, though, was Yeniceri and Kokdemir's (2006) creation of a reliable measure of justifications for an infidelity.

While previous studies have set into place competent designs for measuring accounts and attributions, expectation violations, and justifications for an infidelity, they have failed to examine multiple elements of infidelity free of heterosexual exclusivity. The goal of this study is to re-examine the accounts and attributions designed by Mongeau, Hale, and Alles (1994) and break free of the heterosexual supposition of the study. The question remains—how do heterosexual partners respond to same-sex infidelity? This study explores same-sex infidelity committed by a female partner in a heterosexual relationship.

Same-Sex Infidelity in Heterosexual Relationships

Emotions Elicited

As previously examined, Shackelford, LeBlanc, and Drass (2000) composed a list of emotions elicited from experiences with both emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity. Among those emotions were the components of undesirable/insecure, hostile/vengeful,

depressed, and nauseated/repulsed. Becker, Sagarin, Guadagno, Millevoi, and Nicastle (2004) used these categories as guidelines to study the emotions of jealousy, anger, hurt, and disgust across gender and across sexual infidelity versus emotional infidelity.

While Becker et al.'s (2004) original work yielded support for the evolutionary perspective on jealousy, H1 takes into account the inconsistency of this view in light of homosexual acts of infidelity. However, because same-sex infidelity may imply (or has already been stated as) bisexual feelings, the issue of jealousy may be re-examined. "Under heterosexuality half the world, at least, seems unavailable for sexual betrayal.... Everyone is a potential erotic rival" (Garber 449). Due to the fascination straight men often experience when learning of a woman's bisexuality, men may experience a lesser reaction of jealousy (Klesse, 2005).

Continuing with the idea of woman-woman sexual infidelity as a source of arousal for men, a suggestion made by Klesse (2005), responses to jealousy will vary between sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity for men. Becker et al. (2004) found hurt to be the strongest response to infidelity, and more salient in emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity. However, in same-sex acts of infidelity, it can be predicted that both men and women will be more hurt by the sexual infidelity. This can be predicted as both men and women *expect* emotional bonds between close same-sex friends of their partners. Thus, emotional infidelity may be seen as a close bond with a friend, while sexual infidelity would substantiate that the love between the two "friends" is more than friendly.

H1: Men will experience a greater amount of hurt in response to same-sex sexual infidelity than same-sex emotional infidelity.

Becker et al. (2004) found that for both anger and disgust, both sexes responded more greatly to sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity. Similar to the predicted jealous response of men, men can be expected to exhibit less disgust than women in response to sexual infidelity. Women are seen as forming more intimate same-sex friendships (Fehr, 1996). This idea combined with the arousal factor of men for bisexual sexual acts (Klesse, 2005) will result in less disgust for men. The disgust men do exhibit, though lower than women's disgust, will be stronger in response to emotional infidelity due to arousing factors of sexual infidelity. Formally:

H2: Men will experience more disgust in response to same-sex emotional infidelity than same same-sex sexual infidelity.

Becker et al. (2004) found that anger was stronger towards sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity. One explanation was that the idea of making a choice knowing it will hurt the relationship was driving the force of the emotion of anger (Becker et al., 2004). In same-sex infidelity, it is predicted that this finding will prove robust. Despite possible arousal for men, the decision to physically commit an act of infidelity will overshadow any positive aspects of the act. Simply stated:

H3: Men will experience more anger in response to same-sex sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity.

The Hookup

In further understanding the nature of infidelity, it is important to grasp the concept of the hookup, a recent phenomenon among the college-aged population. According to Paul and Hayes (2002, p. 640), a hookup is a “sexual encounter (that may or may not involve sexual intercourse) between two people who are brief acquaintances or strangers, usually lasting only one night without the expectation of developing a relationship”. Paul and Hayes (2002) found that approximately 85% of college students have hooked up at least once. A previous study found that 91% of college women believed hookups to be common at their educational institutions and 11% of those women had experienced six or more hookups during college (Glenn and Marquardt 2001). Alcohol was an important factor in many hookups. Glenn and Marquardt (2001) found that almost all hookups occurred while both participants were intoxicated. Adams-Curtis and Forbes (2004, p. 95) also found that “hookup experiences involving coitus were associated with greater levels of intoxication than hookups without coitus”. This could be due to the fact that alcohol has been shown to be a cue to men of women’s sexual availability (Corcoran & Thomas, 1991).

In a more in-depth study of hookups and their sociosexual context, Paul, McManus, and Hayes (2000), examined the correlation between love styles, self-esteem, and personality characteristics and willingness to engage in a hookup. They predicted that women who engaged in hookups would have lower self esteem while men would have higher self-esteem, but found that all individuals who engaged in hookups had lower self-esteem. While self-esteem did not vary across sex, they found that love styles varied

between men and women who engaged in hookups. Paul, McManus, and Hayes (2000) discovered that women who experienced hookups involving intercourse were more agapic lovers than men who did the same. They hypothesized that this behavior may be connected to a woman's traditional role of sexually gratifying men to the fullest extent. Research on hookups is slowly emerging, but has yet to be examined in a same-sex context. However, because both hookups and bisexuality have become popularized, it can be predicted the same-sex hookup infidelity will be identified as more normal, or expected, than same-sex sexual or emotional infidelity.

H4: Same-sex hookup infidelity will be perceived as more expected than same-sex sexual and emotional infidelity.

Because of this normalizing of female-female hookups, women who engage in such behavior will not necessarily be viewed as lesbians. This may be due to the fact that not all hookups involve intercourse. While a female same-sex hookup may be viewed as a common occurrence, a sexual infidelity is a greater a extreme and may pose a question of sexual orientation rather than performance value. Participants will be more likely to view such an act as the female infidel harboring lesbian attitudes and more likely to view sexual infidelity as an infidelity. Emotional infidelity will also be seen as less common, because while female-female friendly love may exist, less women will define themselves as being "in love" with their friend. Formally:

H5: The infidel is more likely to be viewed as a lesbian for committing a sexual infidelity than for committing an emotional or hookup infidelity.

While research on hookups is limited, it serves to increase understanding of the many ways infidelity can occur and the various terms used to describe such extradyadic affairs.

Accounts and Attributions

Mongeau, Hale, and Alles (1994) examined responsibility, blame, and guilt in relation to accounts and attributions. They found that “silence and concessions were associated with the most responsibility while excuses, justifications, and refusals were associated with lower ratings of responsibility” (p. 335). Similar results were found with regard to blame. In the case of same-sex infidelity by a female partner in a heterosexual relationship, her silence or refusal could be taken in one of two ways. One option is that, in line with findings of previous studies, she is guiltier (responsibility/blame), and perhaps harboring bisexual/homosexual tendencies. Another possibility is embarrassment, perhaps due to an alcohol induced infidelity, or an act she thought might be appealing to her partner, but was not. It is important to recognize that women are often harsher critics of their own sex. “Girl on girl” acts may be viewed by other women as a divisive tool for gaining attention. The possibility of arousal that exists when men hear of such infidelity is more likely to be nonexistent with women. Simply stated:

H6: Women will perceive accounts of same-sex infidelity by a female partner to be more deserving of responsibility, blame, and guilt than men.

Attributions will also vary in response to the type of infidelity committed. Due the blurred line between the love of female friends and female lovers, same-sex emotional infidelity will warrant fewer attributions of responsibility, intent, blame, and guilt.

Attributions of responsibility and intent will increase when a physical infidelity (sexual or

hookup) occurs. However attributions of blame and guilt will be more prevalent when a same-sex sexual infidelity occurs than when a same-sex hookup infidelity occurs. This will be due to the ever-increasing acceptance of women hooking-up with one another for the sake of male arousal. Additionally, women who partake in this infidelity will feel less guilty or deserving of blame because of the popularity of such behavior and the pressure to create a bisexual façade.

Expectancy Violations and Relational Outcomes

Afifi and Metts (1998) discussed the sometimes beneficial effect of expectation violations in their ability to decrease certainty. In the current study, two types of uncertainty are important to note: uncertainty about the state of the relationship and uncertainty about the infidel's sexual orientation. Due the popularizing a bisexual façade and bisexual chic, it is expected that a hookup between two women will not necessarily be viewed as a bisexual or lesbian act, but rather, may be a ploy for men's attention. Because of the multiple meaning a same-sex hook-up carries, this will not increase uncertainty about the relationship. Similarly, because two female friends tend be closer than two male friends (Fehr, 1996) a same-sex emotional infidelity may be viewed as an extreme form of female friendship, and will not increase uncertainty about the infidel's sexual orientation or the state of the relationship. However, a sexual infidelity will be viewed as a more serious commitment to a bisexual/lesbian lifestyle and a more extreme infidelity. Thus, the more serious/extreme the infidelity is viewed, the more likely that the relationship will end in relationship termination. Formally:

H7: The state of the relationship will be more negatively affected by a sexual infidelity versus an emotional or hookup infidelity.

Despite understandings about expectancy violations and uncertainty, it cannot be predicted whether any form of same-sex infidelity will result in relationship termination. Hall and Fincham (2006) suggested that uncertainty (or unstable) attributions are connected to relationship termination. However, same-sex infidelity may warrant a different response. Despite male allure to female-female sexual acts, the arousal effect still may not be ample justification for an infidelity, and may hurt the relationship and/or result in the relationship's termination

Additional analysis suggests that men find female-female sexual acts to be a source of arousal (Klesse, 2005). Due to the commercialization of a bisexual façade, men may find female-female acts, even in the context of an infidelity, to be arousing. Lastly, a goal of this study is to examine the implications of female same-sex infidelity on the bisexual community. However, because images of bisexuality have become distorted with the growing media sensationalizing of bisexual chic, it is difficult to predict whether sexual, emotional, or "hook-up" infidelities will create the perception of a bisexual sexual orientation for the infidel. Formally stated:

RQ1: What type of infidelity gives the perception of the infidel as a bisexual?

Method

Design

The study used a 3 (infidelity: sexual, emotional, hookup) x 2 (sex of participant: male, female) factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the three infidelity conditions.

Type of infidelity was manipulated in each scenario. All three scenarios described a woman in a heterosexual romantic relationship going to a bar and meeting a female classmate. In the physical infidelity scenario the woman goes home with the female classmate and has sex with her. In the emotional infidelity scenario the woman goes home with the classmate, and while no physical interaction occurs, the woman believes she has fallen in love with the classmate. In the uncertainty/hook up infidelity scenario, the woman goes home with the classmate and they hook up. There were no other differences among scenarios.

Instrumentation

Participants were asked to read the assigned scenario (Appendix A). They were then asked their opinion about what happened during the woman's evening and to respond to a 5-point attribution scale, infidel partner blame: $\alpha = .84$, other partner blame: $\alpha = .82$, intentionality: $\alpha = .80$. These measures were taken from Mongeau, Hale, and Alles (1994).

Participants were then asked their feelings about the event on a 5-point semantic differential scale, examining negative perceptions of the scenario, $\alpha = .82$. Following this scale, participants were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert scale to statements

measuring expectation violations as outlined by Afifi and Metts (1998), expectedness of event: $\alpha = .94$, importance of event: $\alpha = .72$, negativity of event: $\alpha = .84$, relational outcomes: $\alpha = .80$.

Participants were then asked to respond to a 5-point Likert Biphobia Scale (Mulick & Wright, Jr., 2002), $\alpha = .95$. This was followed by an Infidelity Questionnaire, assessing various justifications for an infidelities occurrence (Yeniceri & Kokdemir, 2006), $\alpha = .95$. Following this measurement, participants were asked to examine their religiousness, based on Strayhorn et al's (1990) Religiosity Scale, $\alpha = .90$. Lastly, participants were asked demographic questions and whether their own experiences with infidelity.

Participants

The study was conducted at a large northeastern university. One-hundred eight-four undergraduate Communication Majors received course credit for participating in the study. One-hundred eight women and 76 men, all heterosexual, participated in the study, ranging in age from 18-23 ($M = 20.28$, $Mdn = 20$, $SD = .98$). One-hundred twenty-six participants (68%) identified as white, 18 (9%) as African American, 12 (6%) as Asian, 19 (10%) as Hispanic, and 6 (3%) as other. Ninety-five (51%) of the participants were single, 71 (38%) were in romantic relationships, and 18 (9%) were not sure. For those involved in relationships, the length of the relationship ranged from 1 to 84 months ($M = 18.59$, $Mdn = 12.5$, $SD = 17.42$).

Results

The negative emotional reactions scale was used to address *H1*, *H2*, and *H3*, none of which were supported. A t-test yielded no significant difference for men's experiences of hurt, disgust, and anger in men's responses to same-sex sexual infidelity versus same-sex emotional infidelity, $t(50) = -.95, p = .35$. Nor did the use of a negative event scale as extracted from Afifi and Metts (1998), $t(51) = -1.15, p = .26$. This finding may be due to men's ambivalence towards all types of infidelity involving female-female sexual activity or simply a desensitization to infidelity in general.

H4 predicted that same-sex hookups would be more expected than other types of infidelity, due the popularization of both the hookup and specifically the female-female hookup. *H4* was not supported. An ANOVA analysis of the three scenarios found no significant difference between the expectedness of each type of infidelity, $F(2, 173) = 1.15, p = .32$. *H5* also utilized an ANOVA test and found no significant difference between assumptions of lesbianism across sexual, hookup, and emotional infidelity scenarios, $F(2, 182) = .68, p = .51$. *H5* was not supported.

H6 was supported for the emotional condition only. A t-test found significant differences in men's and women's perceptions of the infidel as deserving of responsibility, blame, and guilt, $t(181) = 1.65, p = .10$. Overall, women felt that the infidel was more worthy of blame than did men when an emotional infidelity occurred, $t(58) = 2.38, p = .02$; women: $M = 3.52, SD = .80$; men: $M = 3, SD = .94$.

H7 was supported, and an ANOVA test found significant differences regarding the state of the relationship following the three different infidelity conditions, $F(2,180) =$

5.99, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .06$. An examination of the t-tests found a significant difference between emotional infidelity versus sexual infidelity ($t[121] = -3.06$, $p = .003$), such that more negative relational outcomes, such as terminating the relationship, arose in sexual infidelity scenarios, ($M = 3.91$, $SD = .88$) than in emotional infidelity scenarios ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .86$). A similar pattern arose in comparing hookup infidelity versus emotional infidelity, $t(115) = -2.88$, $p = .005$, such that hookup infidelity also warranted more negative responses ($M = 3.87$, $SD = .77$) than did emotional infidelity ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .86$).

A final important note involves *RQI*, which was addressed using a t-test and found a significant difference between determinations of bisexuality between sexual and hookup infidelities, $t(121) = 2.38$, $p = .019$. In sum, participants found that women who engaged in a sexual infidelity were more likely to be perceived as bisexuals than were women who only engaged in a hookup infidelity.

Discussion

This study sought to examine responses to same-sex infidelity in heterosexual relationships, specifically the case of a female partner cheating on her male partner with another woman. No difference for hurt, disgust, or anger emerged in men's responses to same-sex emotional versus sexual infidelity. This finding may be due to the arousal effect of female-female sexual activity, or to men's greater acceptance of infidelity in general. On the converse, it may also be indicative of the equality of all types of infidelity in the eyes of the betrayed.

It was also found that same-sex hookup infidelity was not more expected than sexual or emotional infidelity. This finding suggests that all infidelities are essentially unexpected. A rule within a monogamous relationship is that extradyadic affairs are unacceptable in all contexts. Even though female-female kissing is becoming normalized (and even alluring) in society, it is still a violation of a relationship expectation.

This could be connected to another finding in the study: that there is no significant difference in perceptions of lesbianism across the three types of infidelity (emotional, sexual, hookup). Interestingly, this implies that while various forms of female-female sexual activity may be unexpected, none of them are viewed as lesbianism. It is plausible that when men know their female partner is not a lesbian, they will be more accepting with female-female encounters because they do not necessarily threaten the relationship. However, these findings suggest that sexual orientation is not the problem with the action—it is the act itself. In a way, this implies a blindness to gender when assessing relational betrayal.

This finding may also be due to the fact that many believe lesbianism cannot be determined from one event alone. Experimentation may be an excuse for one time occurrences in the case of sex or hookups between two women. It may also be due to the fact that the woman in the scenario is already involved in a heterosexual relationship, thus, a determination of her sexual orientation cannot be made from an outside source. All three conditions insinuated some sort of lesbian desire, but to which degree was not discernable.

The next finding revealed similar degrees of attribution between men and women across all three conditions. Women generally did not attribute responsibility, blame, and guilt to the infidel to a greater degree than men. However, when an emotional infidelity occurred, women, more than men, believed that the female infidel was more deserving of guilt. This may be due to the fact that women are more aware of emotional markers, or that women can recognize an overstepping of the female friendship-love boundary more easily than men.

Interestingly, the study found that relationships were more likely to be terminated following a sexual infidelity. This may be due to the fact that female-female love is often simply viewed as friendship gone a step further, and thus forgivable, or even retractable. It seems sexual infidelity is generally viewed as more detrimental to the relationship than emotional infidelity. If someone is in love and can still withhold physical action, they are sometimes even rewarded for restraining their desire. This is consistent with another finding in this study—hookup infidelities have a more negative relational effect than do emotional infidelities. This again suggests that only infidelity involving a physical aspect is deemed “cheating”.

One of the most important findings of this study is that women who engage in female-female sex are more likely to be viewed as bisexuals than women who only hookup with women. This suggests that the female-female hookup is becoming normalized and not indicative of sexual orientation. It also suggests that the only time a woman’s sexual orientation will be questioned as non-normative (heterosexual) is when she has sex with another woman.

Study 1B

While study 1a sought to explore a multitude of emotional and relational outcomes associated with same-sex extradyadic affairs, Study 1b specifically examines the emotion of jealousy. As explored earlier, jealousy has become an important emotional marker, specifically when examining the evolutionary perspective and its relevance in modern relationships. Early studies of evolution and jealousy sought to examine whether biological sex determined how an individual would react to either sexual infidelity or emotional infidelity.

Evolutionary Perspective on Infidelity and Jealousy

Daly, Wilson, and Weghorst (1982) and Symons (1979) paved the way for evolutionary psychologists who wanted to prove that jealousy varied by gender as a result of biological differences. The basis of this research is two-fold. Firstly, because men will never truly know whether they are the father of a child (since the woman carries the child), they are more jealous of a woman's sexual infidelity because it brings into question paternity issues (Symons, 1979). Under such a circumstance, a man may, "unknowingly, invest heavily in another man's offspring without passing on their own genes" (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2004). Secondly, women are more jealous of a man's emotional infidelity because it could mean less investment in the couple's offspring and more investment in the offspring of the extradyadic mate. "...Cues to an emotional bond may be reliable indicators to women of the risk of having to share her partner's resources with another woman, or of losing her partner—and thus his resources—to another woman" (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2004). A wide range of studies both support and negate the

evolutionary perspective and examine overlooked aspects of the theory, even the suitability of its name.

Jealousy as a Specific Innate Module. Harris (2000) argues that the term “evolutionary” is not the appropriate word, since the issue is more based on natural selection—the idea of survival of the fittest. Instead, Harris (2000) proposes the more accurate name of “jealousy as a specific innate module,” also known as “JSIM.” Harris (2003) explains that “this term makes clear that this debate is not about evolution but rather about the specificity of the mechanisms involved in jealousy” (p. 103). Support for JSIM is constantly changing. Most notably, Harris (2000, 2002, 2003, 2005) and Sagarin (2005) are key players in the debate.

Harris (2002) examined the validity of JSIM across imagined infidelity and actual infidelity. Harris (2002) found that across all groups (aspects of infidelity, sexual orientation, and gender), actual experience with infidelity resulted in a greater concern for emotional rather than sexual aspects of infidelity. Men and women exhibited no significant difference in response when recalling actual infidelity scenarios (Harris, 2002). Interestingly, men and women almost equally reported terminating the relationship as a result of the affair (58% of women, 57% of men) (Harris, 2002). Yet, Harris (2002) found that gender played a key role in who terminated the relationship—94% of women claimed to end the relationship, while only 43% of men did the same. Harris (2000) ultimately concludes that the previous support of the JSIM model came from college-based surveys, and not from truly random samples of adults experiencing infidelity. She suggests that using wider samples and viewing jealousy from a cognitive-social

perspective (where people question what truly drove the affair) will offer a more robust answer to the questions of the JSIM model's validity (Harris, 2002).

In 2003, Harris again sought to explore the validity of JSIM. She found a lack of support for the JSIM hypothesis. "In summary, the kinds of sexually dimorphic modular mechanisms proposed by JSIM are by no means the only accounts of human mating psychology consistent with natural selection" (Harris, 2003, p. 125). Harris (2003) went on to explain that the JSIM model is reduced by a lack of evidence. "Instead, it seems quite possible that, in the domains of attachment and jealousy, natural selection shaped the two sexes to be more similar rather than different" (Harris, 2003, p. 125).

While Harris (2003) sees an issue with the exclusivity of the JSIM model, Buss, Larsen, Westen, & Semmelroth (1992) recognize that both sexes will experience jealousy in response to both types of infidelity. However, it is the weight placed on each type of infidelity that is of importance when examining sex differences (Buss et al., 1992). Not only is weight of importance, but assumption is also a key factor. Many times when one infidelity transpires, another infidelity is assumed to have also occurred. This line of thinking led DeSteno and Salovey (1996) to formulate their Double-shot Hypothesis.

Double-shot Hypothesis. DeSteno and Salovey (1996) used an evolutionary perspective framework to examine how much one type of infidelity implies another type. For example, does emotional infidelity imply sexual infidelity as well? To calculate the double-shot hypothesis, DeSteno and Salovey (1996) "subtracted participants' likelihood judgments of sexual infidelity implying emotional infidelity from their judgments of emotional infidelity implying sexual infidelity" (p. 369). The result was defined as the

differential infidelity implication (DII) (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996). The further the value diverged from zero, the less the individual believed one infidelity implied the other (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996). If the value of the DII was zero, it would show an even likelihood for one infidelity to imply the other, while a negative DII value would indicate that sexual infidelity implied emotional infidelity (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996).

DeSteno and Salovey (1996) found that a substantial number of women chose emotional infidelity as worse than sexual infidelity (46 to 15), while men, though choosing sexual infidelity as the greater offense, were nearly equal in their choice (27 chose sexual infidelity, 26 chose emotional infidelity). What the double-shot hypothesis ultimately says is that each sex chooses the infidelity [that they determine to be most important] based on which infidelity they believe implies the other (DeSteno & Salovey, 1996). This means that women are more affected by emotional infidelity because they believe that it implies sexual infidelity, while men are more affected by sexual infidelity because they believe it implies emotional infidelity. Ultimately, DeSteno and Salovey's (1996) study questioned the validity of forced choice samples, as their study asserted that "the choice between sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity is a false dichotomy for many individuals" (p. 371).

These studies, though, fail to examine the validity of evolutionary perspective in gay, lesbian, and bisexual relationships. To thoroughly understand the role of jealousy in modern relationships, it is necessary to examine its role in same-sex infidelity. Only when jealousy is examined outside the heterosexual supposition will a robust understanding of this emotion emerge.

Rethinking the Evolutionary Perspective

The evolutionary perspective hypothesizes that men and women will both be threatened by different types of infidelity based on instinctive concerns about fitness (Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982; Symons, 1979). Infidelity committed with a person of the same-sex, though, does not exhibit evolutionary concerns in the same manner. Unlike the heterosexual concern a man faces when sexual infidelity is discovered (of paternal investment in a child that is not his own), a female partner committing sexual infidelity would not elicit the same response. Thus, it is expected that a man who is the victim of same-sex infidelity by his female partner, will be more jealous of an emotional infidelity and the possibility of a loving relationship and homosexual desire on his partner's part.

Thus:

H: Men will experience more jealousy in response to a woman's same-sex emotional infidelity than sexual infidelity.

only the appeal of bisexual chic, but the feeling that the woman's friendship with another female turned into an act of betrayal.

*Method**Design*

Study 1B compared male participant's perceptions of jealousy across two conditions (type of infidelity: sexual, emotional). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two infidelity conditions. Type of infidelity was manipulated in each scenario. Sexual infidelity and emotional infidelity scenarios were taken from Study 1A.

Instrumentation

Participants were asked to read the assigned scenario. They were then asked to imagine they were the partner who had been cheated on, and rate their jealous responses. These scales were acquired from Green and Sabini (2006) and Pietrzak et al (2002), $\alpha = .94$. The survey also included demographic measurements.

Participants

This study was conducted at a large northeastern university. Sixty-two male undergraduate Communication Majors received course credit for participating in the study. Sixty straight men and 2 bisexual men participated in the study, ranging in age from 18-24, ($M = 20.5$, $Mdn = 21$, $SD = 1.22$). Forty-three participants identified as white, 9 as black, 4 as Asian, 5 as Hispanic, and 1 as other. Twenty-four of the participants were single, 34 were in romantic relationships, and 3 were not sure. For those involved in relationships, the length of the relationship ranged from 1 to 96 months, ($M = 24$, $Mdn = 24$, $SD = 20.8$).

Results

The H was not supported, though a t-test found a significant difference between men's responses to female partner's same-sex emotional infidelity versus sexual infidelity, $t(60) = -2.86$, $p = .006$. The t-test found that men are more jealous of a sexual

infidelity between two women ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.16$) versus an emotional infidelity ($M = 2.95$, $SD = .91$).

Discussion

This study found a result similar to that of study 1A. The study found that men are more jealous of sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity. Interestingly, this finding supports the evolutionary perspective. While this suggests similar reactions to both opposite-sex and same-sex infidelity, it may also imply that same-sex interactions often have a heterosexual script applied to them, where one person is viewed as the female and the other, same-sex person, is viewed as the male. Thus, men may not reevaluate the situation and consider the fact that two women cannot physically have a child (the explanation for men's responses to sexual infidelity in the evolutionary perspective), and instead view the female who is not their partner as the "man" in the relationship and revert to the evolutionary script.

Study 2

While infidelity may carry its own stereotypes, whether in a same-sex or opposite-sex scenarios, it is important to examine the stereotypes that exist about women who hookup with women regardless of an infidelity being committed. With a growing media fascination with attractive women sexually pursuing other women, it is becoming difficult for lesbian and bisexual women to avoid stereotypes so often applied to heterosexual women who only put on the façade of female attraction for attention. The “whore stigma” is being wrongly placed on women whose attraction to the same-sex is sincere.

Biphobia

At one time biphobia was seen as a guised homophobia, directed at the homosexual inclinations of bisexual individuals. However, recent literature has furthered the understanding of biphobia and its distinctions from homophobia (Ochs, 1996). “A primary manifestation of biphobia is the denial of the very existence of bisexual people,” Ochs (1996, p. 224)) explains. Since bisexuality does not fall into the convenient categories of straight and gay, it creates distress and discomfort for heterosexuals and homosexuals who attempt to interact and understand bisexual individuals.

Bisexuals are also viewed as “invisible” (Ochs, 1996, p. 225). Since bisexuals are often considered gay or straight depending on who they are romantically involved with at one given time, it is hard for communities to accept their attraction to both sexes when it is eventually revealed. Bisexuality is rarely seen as a history of relationships and attractions, but simply as an inclination at one period of time. It is easiest to believe that a

person is grappling with feelings of homosexuality or heterosexuality, than to accept the complexity of an attraction to both sexes.

One of the reasons biphobia exists is its threat to the binary system and the creation of the “other.” As Ochs (1996, p. 225) explains,

It is much less threatening to the dominant heterosexual culture to perpetuate the illusion that homosexuals are ‘that category, way over there,’ very from heterosexuals. If ‘they’ are so different, then heterosexuals do not have to confront the possibility of acknowledging same-sex attractions within themselves and the attendant anxiety of possibly ‘becoming like them.’ There is considerable anxiety in being forced to acknowledge that the ‘other’ is not quite as different from you as you might like...

In 1999, Mohr and Rochlen created an Attitudes Regarding Bisexuals Scale (ARBS), with two variations—one for women and one for men. To create the scale, Mohr and Rochlen (1999, p. 354) identified three attitude domains: “attitudes regarding moral tolerance for bisexuality; attitudes regarding the legitimacy of bisexuality as a sexual orientation; and attitudes regarding bisexuals’ reliability as romantic partners, friends, and community members”. Interestingly, in their study, they found that heterosexual men were more tolerable of bisexual women than bisexual men (Mohr & Rochlen, 1999). As a comparison between biphobia and homophobia, Eliason (1997) created a biphobia scale and compared this with participants beliefs about lesbians, gay men, bisexual women, and bisexual men. What he found was that while biphobia and homophobia are related, they are in fact distinct (Eliason, 1997). Like Mohr and Rochlen

(1999), Eliason (1997, p. 324) also found more tolerance of bisexual women than bisexual men, and noted that “these attitudes may stem from common themes in heterosexual male-orientated pornography that depict two or more women in sexual activities as a prelude to heterosexual sex, or for male erotic pleasure”. These findings suggest the existence of beliefs that bisexual women are really heterosexual women seeking the attention and arousal of on-looking men. It is beliefs such as these that create and degenerative and destructive view of what it means to be a bisexual woman, and propagate a promiscuity stereotype towards this community.

Promiscuity Stereotypes

Recent studies have sought to better understand the promiscuity stereotype that is quickly becoming associated with bisexual women (Rust, 1993). As explained in Study 1, Pheterson (1986) used the term “whore stigma” to explain the unfair label women are given when expressions of their sexuality cannot be controlled by men. Many arguments about bisexual promiscuity are based around an alleged inability to satisfy desires for both sexes. Bisexual’s affinity to both sexes is mistaken as a *need* for both sexes, “a need that cannot be fulfilled by any one relationship and that therefore dooms the bisexual to a life of promiscuity, or, at best, serial monogamy in an effort to satisfy both sides of her conflicted self” (Rust, 1996, p. 128). This stereotype is further propagated by the association of bisexuals with either heterosexuality or homosexuality when they enter into a monogamous relationship (Rust, 1996). For example, when a bisexual woman dates another woman, she is deemed a monogamous lesbian. “...As soon as a bisexual

chooses a single partner, she is no longer perceived as bisexual, thereby tautologically proving the point that bisexual cannot be monogamous” (Rust, 1996, p. 128).

Thus, many of the promiscuity stereotypes exist around the perceived inability of bisexual’s to be fully content in monogamous relationships with only one sex, and suggest that bisexuals who do practice monogamy will be prone to infidelity. From these beliefs, views of the bisexual infidel as promiscuous are heightened. While previous studies have been conducted regarding perceptions of heterosexual infidels, less knowledge exists about individuals in heterosexual romantic relationships who commit an infidelity with a member of the same-sex (as explored in Study 1).

Bisexual Staging and Increased Perceptions of Promiscuity

While both same-sex and opposite-sex infidelity is perceived by many as a negative relational behavior, it is important to understand the perceptions of same-sex hookups versus opposite-sex hookups free of a relational transgression. Klesse (2005) suggests that the real issue may be a fear of female sexual autonomy, and that applying a promiscuity script to any autonomous women may be causing harm to various groups of women who participate in activities perceived as thus. As Klesse (2005, p. 449-50) explains, “...The promiscuity stigma may serve to delegitimize a wide range of sexual activities of women: ...[including] sex with other women...”

One major cause for this delegitimizing is the manipulation of female-female sexual acts for male pleasure. As one college student explained, girls hooking up with girls is becoming a means of advancement and privilege, and for college women can mean waved entrance fees and free drinks (Joiner, 2006). These women who engage in

“staged bisexuality” for performance sake, do not identify as bisexual or at the very least, bi-curious. “They’re firmly straight, they say, but they’ll kiss their friends as a performance for guys—either for material gain, like free entry or alcohol, or to advertise that they’re sexually open and adventurous” (Joiner, 2006, p. 2).

However, as Joiner (2006) explains, it is important to keep the balance of not appearing to be a lesbian when engaging in such behavior. Girls who makeout with girls for male on-lookers are being deemed “heteroflexible”, meaning they identify as strictly heterosexual, but are flexible enough to participate in staged bisexuality. The real difference is when sexual activity among women goes beyond kissing. This is when promiscuity stereotypes begin to come into play and the words “slut” and “lesbian” become interchangeable. As one teenager explains, “Taking that step to the boobs isn’t a big deal in the guy-girl world, but in the girl-girl world it’s a huge leap. It’s taking it above and beyond. It’s like, now she’s a lesbian, or she’s a huge slut” (Joiner, 2006, p. 4). While lesbians and bisexual women see the obvious danger in such activities, the girls who participate in bisexual staging are less concerned about the consequences of their actions. Their biggest concern is to make sure no one thinks they are a lesbian. This denial is, as one woman explains, equivalent to saying that “actually being a lesbian is unnatural and disgusting” (Joiner, 2006, p. 4).

Perceptions of Women Who Hookup with Women

To thoroughly understand perceptions of bisexuality it is important to recognize the interconnectedness of bisexual staging and increased promiscuity stereotypes for

women who engage in sexual activity with other women. While Study 1 sought to examine same-sex infidelity, Study 2 seeks to explore female-female sexual relations devoid of a specified relational transgression.

While biphobia plays an important role in perceptions of women who identify as bisexual, women who casually engage in a female-female makeout in the presence of men will not necessarily be perceived as bisexual, and therefore not as prone to biphobic opinions. As Joiner (2006) explains, bisexual staging often occurs by women in the presence of the opposite sex. The common occurrence of a bisexual façade has led to a decreased perception of bisexuality for women who kiss other women in the presence of men. This has made it difficult to predict whether such acts will be perceived as bisexuality or bisexual staging.

RQ1: How will men perceive the sexual orientation of women who engage in female-female kissing in social scenarios versus those that do not?

RQ2: How will women perceive the sexual orientation of women who engage in female-female kissing in social scenarios versus those that do not?

While female-female kissing in the presence of men may not be necessarily be perceived as bisexuality, they will still be subject to the promiscuity stereotypes that dually apply to the bisexual community and to women who hookup with other women for attention. A number of studies have found that female bisexual staging often occurs for the sake of male arousal (Joiner, 2006; Klesse, 2005; Levy, 2006). Furthermore, as Klesse (2005) explains, a fear of female autonomy, in this case seen in the female-female kiss, may raise perceptions of promiscuity. Formally stated:

H1: Promiscuity stereotypes will more often be applied to social scenarios in which female-female kissing occurs in the presence of men versus when no female-female kissing occurs.

Recent studies indicate that 10.6% of women ages 15-19 have had same-sex sexual experiences (Joiner, 2006). These statistics imply that female-female kissing will often be viewed as a common occurrence.

RQ3: How typical will male participants view female-female kissing?

RQ4: How typical will female participants view female-female kissing?

Ultimately, Study 2 seeks to examine whether a promiscuity stereotype is being applied to women who kiss women versus women who do not, and what repercussions these findings hold for the female bisexual community.

Method

Design

This study used a 2 (scenario: dancing only, kissing involved) x 2 (sex of participant: male, female) factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions involving women dancing at a bar.

The presence or absence of kissing by two women in a heterosexual dating scenario was manipulated in both scenarios (Appendix B). Both scenarios described women going to a bar and dancing together while men were watching. In the dancing only scenario, the women dance with one another as the men watch. In the kissing

scenario, two of the women in the group begin to dance with only one another, and then kiss as the men watch. There were no other differences among the scenarios.

Instrumentation

Participants were asked to read the assigned scenario. They were then asked their opinion about what happened during the woman's evening and to respond to a 5-point semantic differential scale measuring the typicality of the event, $\alpha = .91$. Participants were then asked questions regarding the women's promiscuity, based on Conley, Collins, and Garcia's (2002) promiscuity scale $\alpha = .87$. This was followed by demographic measures.

Participants

The study was conducted at a large northeastern university. One-hundred nineteen undergraduate Communication Majors received course credit for participating in the study. Forty-nine women and 79 men participated in the study, ranging in age from 18-23, ($M = 20.04$, $Mdn = 20$, $SD = 1.04$). Eighty-seven participants (73%) identified as white, 8 as black, 8 as Asian, and 16 as Hispanic. One-hundred seventeen (98%) of participants identified as straight, with 1 gay participant and 1 lesbian participant. Seventy-four (62%) of participants described themselves as Catholic, 23 as Christian, 2 as Jewish, 1 as Muslim, and 11 as other.

Sixty-five participants identified as single, 44 were in romantic relationships, and 10 were not sure. For those involved in relationships, the length of the relationship ranged from 1 to 65 months, ($M = 19.35$, $Mdn = 15$, $SD = 16.8$). Ninety-three participants

claimed to never have kissed someone of the same-sex, 116 had never had sex with someone of the same-sex, and 111 never had a threesome (involving someone of the opposite-sex and someone of the same-sex).

Results

To address *RQ1*, a t-test was used to compare men's perceptions of the women as lesbians and/or bisexuals across the two conditions. No significant difference was found when comparing whether the women kissing were lesbians, $t(68) = -1.43, p = .16$. However, the t-test found a significant difference in perceptions of bisexuality across the two conditions ($t(68) = -3.47, p = .001$), such that conditions where female-female kissing occurred ($M = 2.83, SD = .81$) were more likely to warrant a bisexual assignment than were strictly dancing conditions ($M = 2.17, SD = .75$). The final variable used was a measure of the women's "hotness". No significant difference emerged between the two conditions, $t(68) = .58, p = .56$.

RQ2 was also addressed using a t-test, both sexual orientations measures (lesbianism and bisexuality) were found to have significant differences between conditions. Female participants believed that two women engaging in female-female kissing ($M = 2.26, sd = .93$) were more likely to be lesbians than were two women strictly dancing ($M = 1.67, sd = .80$), $t(47) = -2.38, p = .02$. They also believed that two women engaging in female-female kissing ($M = 2.84, sd = 1.01$) were more likely to identify as bisexual than were two women strictly dancing ($M = 1.97, sd = .89$), $t(47) = -3.18, p =$

.003. The final variable, the women's hotness, resulted in no significant difference across the two conditions $t(47) = -1.22.58, p = .23$.

H1 was supported, revealing that women in scenarios where female-female kissing occurs ($M = 3.29, SD = .42$) experienced more promiscuity stereotypes than did strictly dancing scenarios ($M = 2.58, SD = .33$), $t(112) = -9.91, p < .001$. To address *RQ3*, a t-test was used between scenarios to compare typicality of the event occurring, $t(68) = -7.90, p < .001$. A significant difference was found between men's perceptions of the typicality of female-female kissing ($M = 3.34, SD = .85$) versus female-female dancing only ($M = 1.81, SD = .72$). *RQ4* was also addressed with a t-test and found significant differences between the conditions, $t(46) = -6.05, p < .001$. Women believed that the female-female kissing scenario was less typical ($M = 2.60, SD = .68$), than was the strictly dancing scenario ($M = 1.55, SD = .51$).

Discussion

Similar to findings in Study 1A, (which found that men were not more likely to view women as lesbians depending on whether they had sex with, fell in love with, or hooked up with another woman) no significant difference emerged in men's perceptions of women as lesbians depending on whether there was female-female kissing in the scenario. However, men did believe that women who kissed other women, as opposed to only dancing with them, were more likely to identify as bisexual. This again implies that lesbianism is a more extreme designation, and not one easily assigned to women interacting in a heterosexual context, even if their interaction is similar to that of a lesbian

scenario. Rather, it is assumed that women in a heterosexual dating context must at least have a partial attraction to men, even if they also have an attraction to women.

Additionally, despite the rise of bisexual chic and its use as a ploy for male attention, men did not find female-female kissing to be any “hotter” than female-female dancing.

Despite these findings, women believed that female-female kissing implied both lesbianism and bisexuality more than female-female dancing only. This suggests that women realize the implications of physical interactions with other women. Whereas men may view the action as a “fad”, women recognize a capacity for female sexual desire in such actions. Like men, though, women did not find female-female kissing to be “hotter” than only dancing. This may also be due to the application of a whore stigma by female on-lookers, who may see such actions as a ploy for attention.

As predicted, participants more readily applied promiscuity stereotypes to women engaging in female-female kissing than those who did not. When combined with the fact that participants suspected a bisexual orientation, this finding suggests that bisexuals may inadvertently be the subjects of promiscuity stereotypes for engaging in the same sexual behavior (kissing) that heterosexual couples publicly engage in. This finding may be the result of the unacceptability of lesbian interactions in society, or the belief that bisexual chic is really a promiscuous manipulation of sexuality.

The final finding assessed the typicality of female-female kissing, and found that, when compared to other female interactions such as dancing, kissing was less typical. However, both men and women still regarded female-female kissing as a middle ground between typical and not typical. Women’s average response suggested that female-female

kissing is more typical than not. This suggests that many women are aware of its occurrence, and perhaps even its uses. This is further solidified by the fact that, while only three participants had slept with someone of the same-sex, 26 had kissed someone of the same-sex.

Project Findings and Discussion

The goal of this project was to examine responses to female-female sexual activity in a heterosexual dating context. To thoroughly analyze the messages surrounding this phenomenon, three studies were conducted. All three studies included a variable of sexual activity among two women, whether it be within a heterosexual monogamous relationship or a more casual heterosexual dating context. This project ultimately expanded our understanding of same-sex interactions and the evaluation of these occurrences.

The first study in this project sought to examine responses to same-sex infidelity in heterosexual relationships. The study used Mongeau, Hale, and Alles' (1994) study of accounts and attributions following an infidelity as a model, but expanded the study with measures of emotions elicited, relational outcomes, and perceptions of sexual orientation. Study 1A revealed similar attribution patterns between men and women across all three conditions. No significant difference was found between women's attributions of responsibility, blame, and guilt of the infidel in comparison to men's. However, when specifically comparing men's and women's attributions within the emotional infidelity scenario, women were more likely than men to believe that the infidel was deserving of guilt. This suggests that women place more importance on emotional infidelity (falling in love with someone else), than do men, and may be due to women's greater recognition of emotional markers. Also, women may more easily recognize the difference between female-female friendship and female-female love, whereas men may believe that

emotional infidelity between two women is no different than two very close female friends.

Study 1B also examined attributions and emotions, specifically, jealousy. The study found support for the evolutionary perspective which holds that men will exhibit more jealousy in response to sexual infidelity than emotional infidelity (Daly, Wilson, & Weghorst, 1982; Symons, 1979). This finding suggests the application of a heterosexual script to same-sex scenarios, such that within the female-female scenario one woman is masculinized. Rather than reevaluate the situation in a non-normative context, men's evolutionary belief that sexual infidelity is more upsetting than emotional infidelity emerges. The original basis for the evolutionary perspective of jealousy was centered on men's paternal issues with sexual infidelity (that they may be providing for a child that is not their own). However, it can be argued that this impossibility in a same-sex infidelity is not reassessed, and instead, a heterosexual script is applied, one female is viewed as the man, and the evolutionary perspective is maintained. In some ways, these findings suggest a blindness to gender when assessing relational betrayal.

While jealousy helped to reveal important insights regarding the evolutionary perspective, other attribution measures such as hurt, disgust, and anger were also explored. Among the findings in Study 1A was a lack of difference between men's responses to hurt, disgust, or anger in same-sex emotional versus sexual infidelity. This finding suggests that Klesse (2005) was correct in his finding that female-female sexual activity has an arousal effect on men, and thus, any type of activity between two women is acceptable. It may also be connected to Becker et al.'s (2004) finding that men

experienced less intense negative reactions to infidelity. Thus, men would not exhibit a great diversity in their reactions to same-sex emotional versus sexual infidelity, because all types of infidelity are less emotionally damaging for men.

Despite the possibility of men's ambivalence to infidelity, men, as well as women, found both emotional and sexual infidelity between two women equally unexpected. This finding suggests two things. Firstly, it points to the fact that all infidelities are essentially unexpected. The commitment of a monogamous relationship entails a specification of sexual and emotional love with only one partner. To break this rule is a violation of the relationship agreement. Secondly, this finding suggests that female-female sexual activity is still an unexpected event. The body of research surrounding female-female sexual activity presents both the pervasiveness of bisexual staging as well as the marginalization of lesbianism. This finding is consistent with Joiner (2006) and Levy (2005), both of whom found that female-female sexual activity is common, but doing so because one identifies as a bisexual or lesbian is not. Both studies (Joiner, 2006; Levy, 2005), spoke of the term "lesbian" acting as an insult or the recognition of an overstepping of a social agreement to only enact bisexuality, not subscribe to it. Thus, when two women engage in sexual activity, moving beyond a bisexually staged kiss, they are subject to the discrimination and unexpectedness applied to lesbian couples. As Joiner (2006) explains in her interview with one teenager, taking the step from kissing to breast fondling and beyond warrants the title of either a lesbian or a slut.

This is consistent with findings in Study 1A. One of the most important findings of this study was that women who engage in female-female sex are more likely to be viewed as bisexuals than women who only hookup with women. While the hookup term was purposely vague, it is the applied rhetoric of many articles on bisexual staging (Joiner, 2006). Its commonality is appropriate given the finding that the female-female hookup is not necessarily indicative of a bisexual orientation, but rather, a frequent occurrence among women. This finding also suggests that the only time a woman's sexual orientation will be questioned as non-normative is when she has sex with another woman. This is also consistent with Joiner's (2006) explanation that anything past making out between two women raises suspicion about sexual orientation.

Despite this finding regarding bisexual designations, no significant difference emerged in perceptions of lesbianism across emotional, sexual, and hookup infidelity scenarios. This finding suggests that in a heterosexual context, women are assumed to have a heterosexual capacity (i.e. their same-sex activity may be a result of a bisexual orientation, but not indicative of a purely lesbian identity), even if their activity suggests otherwise. A similar finding emerged in Study 2, which found no significant difference in men's perceptions of lesbianism in situations where women kiss versus those where they do not (regardless of an infidelity). In the case of Study 1A, the fact that the woman was in a heterosexual relationship was read as her capacity to be attracted to men, and not the possibility of a guise for a lesbian orientation. This finding may also be due to the notion of "experimentation", and thus not determining sexual orientation from one event alone. While all three conditions insinuated some sort of lesbian desire, to which degree was not

discernable. In Study 2, it can again be expected that, though the women were not in committed heterosexual relationships, the heterosexual context the women inserted themselves in expelled the possibility of a lesbian orientation.

But the possibility was not expelled in women's minds. Study 2 found that women perceived two women kissing to be more indicative of both lesbianism and bisexuality than two women simply dancing together. This finding suggests that while male on-lookers apply one script to female-female sexual activity, women apply another. It suggests that women realize that female-female kissing *does* express a certain capacity of same-sex desire, and that perhaps women who kiss other women within the heterosexual context use the excuse of bisexual staging as a guise for exploring their own sexual desires. The possibility of a double-guise emerges, in which women use men's suspicion of bisexual staging by women for male attention as a guise for an actual bisexual or lesbian orientation of which only they are aware. In this way, the heterosexual context becomes the guise of bisexual and lesbian women.

Yet, this guise is permeable. Study 2 found that men believe that women who engage in female-female kissing are more likely to identify as bisexual versus those who do not. However, this does not necessarily dispel the function of the guise. Instead, it suggests that same-sex activity naturally raises questions about the subjects' sexual orientation. Additionally, despite a more frequent perception of bisexuality in female-female kissing scenarios versus those without kissing, men still did not strongly believe that this was indicative of bisexuality, but more so, were confused by such activity.

This confusion, inflicted by female-female physical interaction, may have a damaging effect on relationships. Despite the possibility of sexual “experimentation”, in Study 1A women and men agreed that same-sex sexual infidelity scenarios were more likely to result in relationship termination. This suggests that sex is the determinant of unforgivable infidelity. Whereas emotional infidelity may be viewed as a restraining of physical desire (and even admired for not acting upon it), and hookup infidelity is written off as an attempt to appear sexually liberal to one’s own partner, sexual infidelity brings about confusion in a relationship. It causes the male partner to not only question his female partner’s sexual orientation, but also her commitment to the relationship.

Though a hookup infidelity may not end in relationship termination, the physical act of cheating was not disregarded. Hookup infidelities were found to have a more negative relational effect than emotional infidelities. When viewed in conjunction with sexual infidelity’s effect on relationship termination, this suggests that infidelity involving a physical aspect is the most detrimental to a relationship.

When this finding is combined with Study 2’s finding that both men and women did not believe that female-female kissing between two single women in a heterosexual context was any “hotter” than a situation where no kissing occurred, the question is raised: Why exactly is female-female kissing so popular? This question becomes especially important when viewed in conjunction with the finding that both men and women viewed women who engaged in female-female kissing versus those who did not as more promiscuous. Thus, women who engage in such behavior are subjecting themselves to the “whore stigma” discussed in Klesse (2005) without any of the benefits

of being viewed as “hot”. The message sent by female-female kissing is that the women are promiscuous. It is this promiscuity that gains male attention, not a heightened “hotness”. Simply stated, men’s attraction to bisexual staging is the message of sexual availability.

As suggested in various studies (Levy, 2005; Klesse, 2005; Joiner, 2006), women engage in female-female kissing to boost their confidence and appear hot in men’s eyes. It is a mode to self-esteem and women’s own belief that they are physically attractive. In reality though, what men see is not hotness but sexual availability. Thus, men may pursue these women because they believe they have a greater chance at sexual success, and women perceive this as becoming “hotter” to men, not simply being sexually used.

The repercussions are damaging not only for heterosexual women, but for bisexual women as well. When combined with the perceived bisexuality of women who engage in female-female kissing, the application of a promiscuity stereotype to female-female kissing suggests that bisexuals may inadvertently be the recipients of the whole stigma for engaging in the same sexual behavior (kissing) that heterosexual couples publicly engage in. This finding may be due to the unacceptability of lesbian interactions in society, or the belief that bisexual chic is really a promiscuous manipulation of sexuality.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to explore the messages sent by female-female sexual activity in a heterosexual context. By examining same-sex infidelity, jealous responses, and promiscuity scripts, it was revealed the female-female sexual activity sends mixed signals. While such activity leads to suspicions of bisexuality, it also warrants promiscuity stereotypes. This combination results in a dangerous finding for the bisexual women's community: women who engage in sexual activity with other women are automatically deemed promiscuous. While this project examined female-female activity in a heterosexual context, the reality is that many bisexual and lesbian women often find themselves in such contexts, and are thus subjected to these stereotypes. Furthermore, these stereotypes have the danger of becoming pervasive and not sanctioned only to the heterosexual dating scene, but to all situations in which women express sexual interest in other women.

The only benefit of perceived bisexual staging is the ability of women questioning their attraction to other women to experiment without the necessity of deeming themselves bisexual or lesbian. This experiment is not consequence free (they may be subjected to promiscuity stereotypes), but it still allows them to experiment with their sexuality in a more lackadaisical manner.

Despite this benefit, bisexual staging is ultimately damaging to women in opposite-sex relationships, straight women, and bisexual women. Heterosexual women in monogamous relationships who commit a same-sex infidelity risk relationship termination; promiscuity stereotypes pervade women who engage in female-female

kissing a heterosexual context; and bisexual women are no longer allowed to express their affection publicly without being subjected to the whore stigma and being presumed bisexual stagers.

Ultimately, the goal of bisexual chic—to appear attractive to men—is no more than a myth. Instead, men’s attraction to sexual availability is mistaken for physical attraction, leaving women with a false sense of self-esteem and belief that bisexual staging can benefit romantic relationships. The rise of bisexual chic has created a dangerous atmosphere for heterosexual, lesbian, and bisexual women. The repercussions are bisexual chic’s use to objectify and abuse female sexuality. This study ultimately found that female-female sexual relations in a heterosexual context serves as an obstacle to lesbian and bisexual women’s romantic relationships and a degrader of straight women, and thus, the rise of repercussions of bisexual chic should serve as an example to approach female-female sexual relations with both caution and respect.

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Appendix A

Study 1A and 1B Scenarios

Sexual Infidelity Scenario:

Anne is in a monogamous relationship with Tom. One night, Anne goes to a party without Tom and meets some girls she knows from class. One girl, Kelly, is flirting with Anne. After a few drinks, Anne and Kelly decide to leave together. They go back to Kelly's apartment and have sex. There is no emotional attachment; it was purely physical.

Emotional Infidelity Scenario:

Anne is in a monogamous relationship with Tom. One night, Anne goes to a party without Tom and meets some girls she knows from class. One girl, Kelly, is flirting with Anne. After a few drinks, Anne and Kelly decide to leave together. They go back to Kelly's apartment and talk all night. Nothing physical happens between them, but Anne thinks she is in love with Kelly.

Hookup Infidelity Scenario*:

Anne is in a monogamous relationship with Tom. One night, Anne goes to a party without Tom and meets some girls she knows from class. One girl, Kelly, is flirting with Anne. After a few drinks, Anne and Kelly decide to leave together. They go back to Kelly's apartment and hook-up.

* = *This scenario was omitted from Study 1B.*

Appendix B

Study 2 Scenarios

Female-Female Kissing Scenario:

Anne is a college student. One night, Anne decides to go to a bar with a few of her female friends. The bar is a popular spot for men and women from local colleges to meet each other. Later in the night, they decide to move to the dancing area of the bar. The room is crowded with men and women, some dancing and some watching. Some men and women are dancing together, but Anne's group of women decides just to dance with one another. The women dance together in the middle of the room as a group of men watch them. Anne and one of the women in the group begin to dance just with one another. With the men around them watching, Anne and her female friend continue to dance and eventually start to kiss each other on the dance floor.

Female-Female Dancing Only Scenario:

Anne is a college student. One night, Anne decides to go to a bar with a few of her female friends. The bar is a popular spot for men and women from local colleges to meet each other. Later in the night, they decide to move to the dancing area of the bar. The room is crowded with men and women, some dancing and some watching. Some men and women are dancing together, but Anne's group of women decides just to dance with one another. The women dance together in the middle of the room as a group of men watch them.