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Theorists have pointed out that in America the bisexual community tends to be more or less invisible (Firestein, B.A. (1996). Bisexuality as a paradigm shift: Transforming our disciplines. In B.A. Firestein (Ed.), *Bisexuality: The psychology and politics of an invisible minority* (pp. 263–291). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage). They offer many reasons why this is so, including the tendency for people to assume that one's sexual orientation can be judged by the gender of one's current partner (Brekhus, W. (1996). Social marking and the mental coloring of identity: Sexual identity construction and maintenance in the United States. *Sociological Forum*, *11*, 497–522) or to rely on the 'one-time rule' of homosexuality (Anderson, E. (2005). *In the game: Gay athletes and the cult of masculinity*. Albany: State University of New York Press). (The one-time rule declares that if a person experiences sexual desire *one time* or engages in *one* homosexual act, he or she is 'really' homosexual and that is that.) This study was designed to investigate whether Americans do judge others by applying the 'one-time' rule. Would people perceive a target – who, in spite of a considerable heterosexual dating history, admitted to a current same-sex attraction – to be heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual? We were also interested in how certain participants would be about their categorisations. In this study, we found that the majority of participants (76.8%) categorised such targets as bisexual. Nonetheless, as predicted, participants perceived male targets (who expressed a one-time interest in the other sex) to be more homosexual than comparable female targets were judged to be.

Keywords: bisexuality; bisexual erasure; one-time rule of homosexuality

Introduction

Pressing issues of social justice involving lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) individuals – such as gay marriage, gay adoption and the repeal of Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT), the policy that enabled homosexual and bisexual individuals to serve in the American military, given that the authorities do not ask and applicants not to reveal their sexual orientation. Under DADT, military men and women can be discharged in the event of homosexual conduct, which includes stating one is gay or bisexual (Kavanagh, 1995). These issues have been attracting more media attention in recent years. The general public is also receiving more exposure to LGBTQ people and issues than they have in past decades. However, amidst the gain in public exposure and recognition of the variability in people's sexual choices, much of the Western world still defines another's sexual orientation in either/or terms. We often set up a false dichotomy that categorises individuals as

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either heterosexual or homosexual (Ochs, 1996). This binary way of thought renders invisible any individual who does not practice or desire romantic and/or sexual experiences with others who are exclusively the same or other sex as oneself. This leads to what Yoshino (2000) has defined as bisexual erasure or the invisibility of the bisexual community.

Bisexual erasure can and does operate in a multitude of ways. For example, some people may think that bisexuality is not a stable, legitimate identity, but rather a transition point from heterosexuality to homosexuality. Others might believe that bisexuality does not exist because those who identify as such are really lesbian women and gay men who are too afraid to come out fully, or who want to hold onto some amount of heterosexual privilege (Israel & Mohr, 2004). Others still assume that knowledge of one's current partner determines how people's sexual orientation should be classified (Brekhus, 1996). Another form that bisexual erasure takes is the 'one-drop rule': if one has ever had a homosexual experience, one must be entirely homosexual (Anderson, 2005; Brekhus, 1996). In this article, we will focus on bisexual erasure in the form of the 'one-drop rule.' Specifically, we are interested in whether people, when exposed to an individual who has one same-sex experience or desire amongst a history of exclusively other sex experiences, will apply the 'one-drop rule' to categorise the individual as homosexual. Additionally, we are interested in whether this rule is applied more strictly to men than it is to women, as will be discussed below.

In order to fully explain how the one-drop rule applies to sexuality, we must first explain the cultural history of the rule. The one-drop rule originally stemmed from the historical law of American racial categorisation, which stated that any person with 'one drop' of black blood should be considered completely black (Aumer, Hatfield, Swann, & Frey, 2011; Roth, 2005). The reason for this was to be able to separate 'purely' white Americans from everyone else in order to sustain the hierarchy of power. As long as one was entirely white, she or he remained in the preferred (and more powerful) social category. If an individual was not completely white, she or he could no longer remain in the preferred category, thus keeping whiteness pure and keeping all others clearly marked as less powerful.

This concept can be further explained through social cognition research. Race is a trait with hierarchically restricted categorisation or a trait that requires very few behaviours to change one's perception of categorisation on one end but many behaviours on the other end. In other words, it may take only one Black ancestor for a person to be considered Black, but having only one White ancestor would not lead to a person to be considered White (Duran, Renfro, Waller, & Trafimow, 2007). The authors found that sexual orientation is also a hierarchically restrictive trait, as they found participants changed their perception of a heterosexual target to homosexual when the target participated in two to three homosexual behaviours, but participants only changed their perception of a homosexual target to heterosexual after four to five heterosexual behaviours. As with the one-drop rule, Duran et al. (2007) propose, 'the perception of group membership as HR [hierarchically restrictive] is a function of the majority/minority status of the group' (p. 771). It is easy to have one's majority membership changed and status revoked, but it is very difficult to change a minority membership. This system may be used to allow the majority group to maintain status and power over the minority group (Duran et al., 2007).

In modern American culture, heterosexuality is the majority group and preferred social category compared to homosexuality. Thus, in terms of the 'one-drop rule', in order to keep heterosexuality 'pure', anyone with the same-sex experience must be excluded from the category. Anderson (2005, 2008) observed how the 'one-drop rule', which he has named the 'one-time rule of homosexuality', applies to sexuality. The rule 'asserts that one homosexual act necessarily defines one as a homosexual . . . homosexual *acts* in

American culture, whether active or passive, have been uniquely, and publicly, equated with a homosexual *identity*' (2005, p. 22).

In terms of hierarchically restrictive traits, it has been found that individuals do require different behavioural standards to categorise someone as homosexual rather than heterosexual, requiring more heterosexual behaviours to change their perception of a homosexual target, and fewer homosexual behaviours to change their perception of a heterosexual target (Duran et al., 2007). Braisby and Hodges (2009) also found that heterosexual categorisation is more restrictive than homosexual categorisation. However, this rule may not be applied evenly to men and women. For example, Braisby and Hodges found that male targets were more likely to be categorised as homosexual than female targets and less likely to be categorised as heterosexual than female targets. There are many cultural phenomena that might account for why the one-drop rule or one-time rule of homosexuality may be applied more strictly to men than to women. One potential influencing factor relevant to the present study is sexual flexibility.

Sexual flexibility

Sexual flexibility may influence the imbalance in how the one-time rule of homosexuality is applied to the sexes. We conceive sexual flexibility as the extent to which an individual's sexual desire, behaviour and/or sexual orientation changes over the years (Diamond, 2000; Kinnish, Strassberg, & Turner, 2005), as well as the extent that an individual's sexual desire, behaviour and/or sexual orientation encompasses multiple genders as opposed to exclusively same or other sex people (Baumeister, 2000; Zinik, 1985).

Several of the studies conducted on sexual flexibility have concluded that women describe and experience their sexual identity in terms that are more continuous, fluid and ever evolving than do men. Men are more likely to report experiencing their sexual identity in static, unchanging terms (Kinnish et al., 2005). In the study conducted by Kinnish and her colleagues on comparing sexual flexibility over time across gender, the authors found that lesbian women were significantly more likely to have not identified as homosexual at an earlier time than were gay men. Baumeister (2000) reported similar results. He argued that female sexuality is much more susceptible to the influence of sociocultural and contextual factors than is male sexuality. This means female sexuality may be more malleable and flexible. Additionally, the rate of women who were identified as bisexual is considerably higher than the rate of bisexual-identified men in the United States (Chandra, Mosher, Copen, & Sionean, 2011).

As there is a greater amount of sexual flexibility among women, by applying the one-drop rule more strictly to men than to women, people may just be relying on actual differences they perceive between men's and women's sexualities. Since male sexuality has been shown to be more static and categorically based, it is understandable that one same-sex experience may be perceived as much more indicative of a man's overall sexual orientation than would be perceived for a woman.

The present study

We designed the present study to investigate whether the one-time rule of homosexuality does apply to how individuals categorise someone's sexual orientation and whether this rule is applied more strictly to men than women. We attempted to determine whether college students would perceive a fellow college student (who possessed a traditional heterosexual dating history but had recently felt attracted to someone of the same sex)

to be heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual. Vignettes were created to describe just such a person. We could then determine the extent to which the one-drop rule was applied equally (or differentially) to men versus women. Specifically, we asked: are people more likely to classify a man (with bisexual desires and interests) as homosexual than to classify a woman with comparable interests that way? Additionally, we were interested in what 'counted' as a drop. Does an individual need to partake in same-sex sexual behaviour or is the mere desire for such behaviour 'sufficient' to be seen as a drop? Is kissing someone of the same sex enough or would an individual need to perform or desire a more explicitly sexual behaviour, such as oral sex? Our primary hypotheses were that the female target would be rated as more heterosexual and less homosexual than the male target, and the male target would be more likely to be categorised as homosexual.

Method

Design

The experiment was a between subjects design, with the factors target sex (male, female), behaviour or desire (target participated in same-sex sexual behaviour or expressed desire for same-sex sexual behaviour), and kissing or oral sex (target participated in, or expressed desire for, kissing or oral sex with a same-sex partner). This resulted in eight different conditions.

Participants

Ethical approval for involvement of human participants in this study was provided by the Social and Behavioral Sciences IRB through the Human Studies Program at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (UHM). We conducted an *a priori* power analysis to determine the number of participants required to detect a moderate effect size of the independent variables using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). For a two-tailed multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) test with an alpha level of 0.05, it was determined that a minimum of 216 participants would be needed to detect a moderate effect size. Participants consisted of 234 undergraduate students from the UHM. Of those who disclosed their gender, 162 were women and 68 were men. They were recruited from a research pool that consists of students enrolled in the introductory psychology class at UHM, as well as from various other undergraduate psychology courses. Students received one point of extra credit for their participation.

The average age was 21.31 (SD = 3.33), with a range of 18–52. As Hawai'i has many multiracial individuals, participants were allowed to select more than one category for racial identity, resulting in 36.3% Caucasian, 29.9% Japanese, 21.8% Filipino, 15% Chinese, 7.7% Hawaiian or Part-Hawaiian, 7.3% Latino, 6.4% Korean, 4.7% American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4.3% other Asian, 3% Portuguese, 2.6% other, 1.7% Pacific Islander and 1.3% African or African-American. For political identity, on a scale from 1, *very liberal*, to 5, *very conservative*, the average was 2.6 (SD = 1.02). Twenty-two percent were identified as either atheist or agnostic, while 61.1% were identified as spiritual or religious. The remaining participants chose not to disclose their religious beliefs.

The majority of participants were identified as heterosexual (88.5%), while 5.6% were identified as bisexual and 2.1% as homosexual. When asked whether they knew any bisexual or homosexual people, affirmative responses were 80.3% and 94.0%, respectively, while 65.8% stated they were friends with someone who was bisexual, and 84.2% stated they were friends with someone who was homosexual.

Questionnaires

The questionnaires presented participants with a one-paragraph vignette describing a target that either desired or engaged in sexual behaviour with another person. The different conditions of the vignette included an individual with a history of heterosexual dating and a current same-sex interest. The target was either female or male. Half of the vignettes described the target as desiring to kiss or perform oral sex on her or his same-sex interest, while the other half described the target as actually kissing or performing oral sex on her or his same-sex interest. Here is an example of a female–behaviour–kissing vignette:

> Linda is a student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. She is 20 years old, and plays soccer for an intramural team at her school. She also works part-time as a student assistant on her campus. Linda is currently single, and has only dated and had sex with men in the past. Recently, Linda has become interested in one of her classmates, Lucy. The two women went out to dinner together last weekend. After dinner, Linda and Lucy got back in the car, and Linda began kissing Lucy.

Regardless of condition, each of the narratives was identical, excepting the condition-specific terms (i.e. name and sex of the target, name and sex of the same-sex interest and stated desire or behaviour). To exemplify these similarities and differences, here is an example of a male–desire–oral sex vignette:

> Sam is a student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. He is 20 years old, and plays soccer for an intramural team at his school. He also works part-time as a student assistant on his campus. Sam is currently single, and has only dated and had sex with women in the past. Recently, Sam has become interested in one of his classmates, Brent. The two men went out to dinner together last weekend. After going out to dinner with Brent, Sam fantasized about giving him oral sex.

Table 1 displays all of the vignette conditions.

Below the vignette, the questionnaire included a series of questions about the target. We asked participants to guess what the target's sexual orientation was and rate the targets' probable sexuality using the Kinsey sexual orientation scale. We also asked them to rate the target's sexual orientation on three separate 7-point scales – one for the perceived level of homosexuality, one for perceived level of bisexuality and one for perceived level of heterosexuality. Participants were then asked to categorise the target as heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual. In addition to the main questionnaire, participants filled out a demographic form.

Table 1. Vignette conditions.

Condition	Desire		Behaviour	
Activity	Kiss	Oral sex	Kiss	Oral sex
Sex				
Female	FDK	FDO	FBK	FBO
Male	MDK	MDO	MBK	MBO

Note: D = desire, B = behaviour, F = female, M = male, K = kiss, O = oral sex.

Procedure

The study was conducted online with questionnaires distributed via SurveyMonkey. Participants who volunteered to complete the study did so at online at their choice of location. After accessing SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.com), we presented the participants with a consent form and advised them to print it out for their records. Participants were instructed that by continuing on to the next page of the study, they gave their informed consent to participate. We reminded them that they were welcome to terminate their participation in the study at any point without penalty.

Statistical analysis

The statistical tests were used to analyse the data that included the a MANOVA, chi-square and a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The MANOVA was used to analyse the differences in variance for the main effects of target gender, whether same-sex desire or behaviour was expressed, and whether the target initiated kissing or oral sex measured by participant responses on the Kinsey and HBH scales. We did not include any covariates in the MANOVA, as we did not expect participant responses to be influenced by any demographic variable other than gender, which was tested separately. Homogeneity of variance was tested for each of the dependent variables via Levene's test, which was insignificant for all except the Kinsey data, $F = 2.07$, $p = 0.047$. The Kinsey was found to violate the assumption of homogeneity of variance for the MANOVA. In sensitivity analyses (not shown), using a variety of strategies for attending to the violation, the overall results were unaffected. The equality of covariance matrices was also tested via Box's test, which was significant, $F = 1.43$, $p = 0.01$. However, as the sample sizes for each group were nearly equal, it is recommended that Box's test be overlooked due to being unstable and Pillai–Bartlett trace being robust even when MANOVA assumptions are violated (Field, 2009). Additionally, effect sizes were figured using Pearson's correlation coefficient, *r*. The chi-square test was used to analyse the categorical data of sexual orientation classification (i.e. heterosexual, bisexual, homosexual) of the target, and whether this classification was independent of the target's gender. Finally, we implemented the one-way ANOVA to test whether male participants responded differently from female participations on the dependent measures. Levene's test was used to check the assumption of homogeneity of variance. As the test was insignificant for each variable, the assumption was upheld.

Results

We tested our primary hypothesis in two ways: Firstly (in the most simple test of the hypothesis), we proposed that a male target (who described a history of bisexuality) would be categorised as homosexual more often than would a female target. We used a chi-square test to test this hypothesis. The hypothesis was not supported – sexual orientation categorisation and target sex were found to be independent of one another, $\chi^2(2) = 3.614$, $p = 0.156$. For the female target, 13 participants categorised her as heterosexual, 94 as bisexual and 8 as homosexual. For the male target, 17 participants categorised him as heterosexual, 85 as bisexual and 16 as homosexual. We also performed a loglinear analysis with all variables (target sex, desire vs. behaviour, kissing vs. oral sex, and sexual orientation categorisation), which was significant for the main effects, $\chi^2(5) = 192.44$, $p < 0.001$. However, the only variable that was significant was the sexual orientation categorisation, $\chi^2(2) = 185.47$, $p < 0.001$.

Participant responses for the Kinsey sexual orientation scale and the heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual scales were analysed with a 2(target sex) × 2(desire vs. behaviour) × 2(kissing vs. oral sex) MANOVA. This time, Hypothesis 1, which proposed that the male target would be seen as more homosexual than the female target, was supported. There was a significant main effect for target sex on the perceived sexuality of the target, $F(4, 225) = 4.486$, $p = 0.002$, $r = 0.14$. Pair-wise comparisons with the Bonferroni correction showed that the effect for target sex was significant for the homosexual scale, M (female target) = 3.149, M (male target) = 3.545, $F = 5.662$, $p = 0.018$, $r = 0.07$, and the heterosexual scale, M (female target) = 3.01, M (male target) = 2.38, $F = 12.833$, $p < 0.001$, $r = 0.07$, ratings. In each case, the female target was perceived as significantly less homosexual and more heterosexual than the male target. However, there was not a significant main effect for gender on the bisexual scale ratings, $F = 2.049$, $p = 0.154$, or the Kinsey scale ratings, $F = 2.626$, $p = 0.106$. These results are depicted in Figure 1 and Table 2.

One of our secondary hypotheses, which stated that people would be less influenced by desires than by behaviour, was also partially supported. While the overall MANOVA did not find a significant main effect for desire versus behaviour, $F(4, 225) = 1.352$, $p = 0.252$, the pair-wise comparisons with the Bonferroni correction showed that there was a significant main effect for desire versus behaviour on the homosexual scale ratings, M (desire) = 3.17, M (behaviour) = 3.52, $F = 6.996$, $p = 0.038$, $r = 0.23$, with the targets only expressing desire rated as significantly less homosexual than the targets participating in sexual behaviour. These results are depicted in Figure 2.

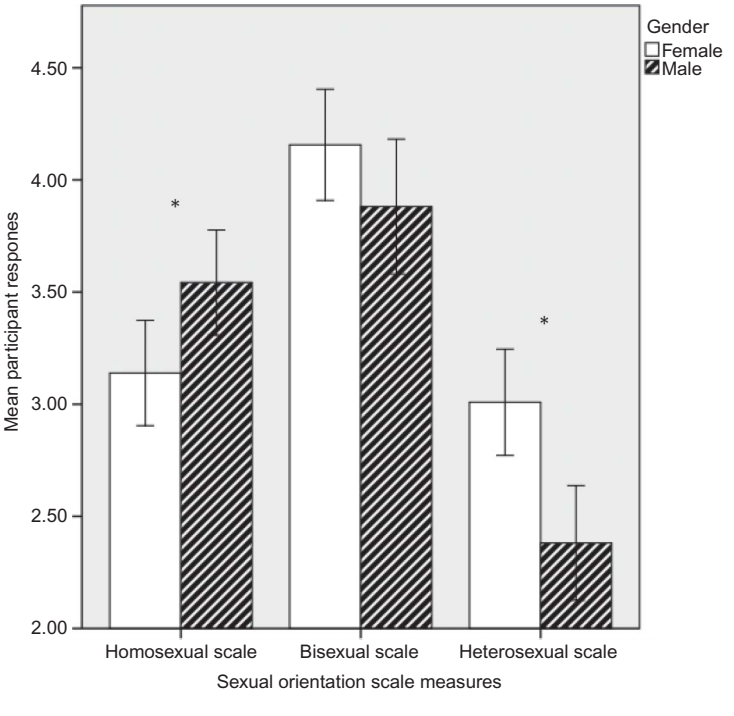

Figure 1. Participant ratings of male and female targets' sexual orientation. Bars represent the 95% confidence interval for each mean. Asterisks denote significance at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the Kinsey, homosexual, bisexual and heterosexual scales.

Scale	Sex of target	Desire vs. behaviour	Kissing vs. oral sex	*M* (SD)	*n*
Kinsey	Female	Behaviour	Kissing	3.13 (0.99)	29
			Oral sex	3.25 (1.04)	28
		Desire	Kissing	3.04 (0.92)	28
			Oral sex	2.72 (1.41)	29
	Male	Behaviour	Kissing	3.38 (1.34)	29
			Oral sex	3.41 (1.15)	29
		Desire	Kissing	3.10 (1.18)	30
			Oral sex	3.27 (1.46)	30
Homosexual	Female	Behaviour	Kissing	3.24 (1.02)	29
			Oral sex	3.54 (1.29)	28
		Desire	Kissing	2.57 (1.10)	28
			Oral sex	3.24 (1.48)	29
	Male	Behaviour	Kissing	3.66 (1.26)	29
			Oral sex	3.66 (1.26)	29
		Desire	Kissing	3.50 (1.27)	30
			Oral sex	3.37 (1.38)	30
Bisexual	Female	Behaviour	Kissing	4.21 (1.18)	29
			Oral sex	4.25 (1.55)	28
		Desire	Kissing	4.18 (1.33)	28
			Oral sex	4.03 (1.35)	29
	Male	Behaviour	Kissing	3.79 (1.70)	29
			Oral sex	4.28 (1.62)	29
		Desire	Kissing	3.67 (1.56)	30
			Oral sex	3.80 (1.73)	30
Heterosexual	Female	Behaviour	Kissing	2.66 (1.08)	29
			Oral sex	3.14 (1.40)	28
		Desire	Kissing	2.96 (1.23)	28
			Oral sex	3.28 (1.39)	29
	Male	Behaviour	Kissing	2.17 (1.28)	29
			Oral sex	2.41 (1.62)	29
		Desire	Kissing	2.30 (1.26)	30
			Oral sex	2.63 (1.44)	30

Notes: Kinsey scale – 0 (*completely heterosexual*) to 6 (*completely homosexual*), homosexual scale – 0 (*not homosexual at all*) to 6 (*completely homosexual*), bisexual scale – 0 (*not bisexual at all*) to 6 (*completely bisexual*), heterosexual scale – 0 (*not heterosexual at all*) to 6 (*completely heterosexual*).
M = mean, SD = standard deviation, n = sample size.

We also found that people were not less influenced by kissing behaviour than by oral sex. There was not a significant main effect for kissing versus oral sex in the overall MANOVA, $F(4, 225) = 2.13$, $p = 0.078$, although the heterosexual scale data approached significance in the pair-wise comparison with the Bonferroni correction, M (kissing) = 2.52, M (oral sex) = 2.87, $F = 3.79$, $p = 0.053$. In this case, participants rated the target engaging in oral sex as more homosexual than the target engaging in kissing. These results are depicted in Figure 3. Additionally, there were not any significant interactions.

Surprisingly, we also found that male participants did not differ from female participants on their perception of both the male and female targets. When male and female participant ratings were compared with an ANOVA, the responses of the two groups were not significantly different for any of the dependent variables.

Overall, the Kinsey scale was significantly correlated with the homosexual ($r = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), bisexual ($r = 0.2$, $p = 0.002$) and heterosexual ($r = -0.45$, $p < 0.001$) scales.

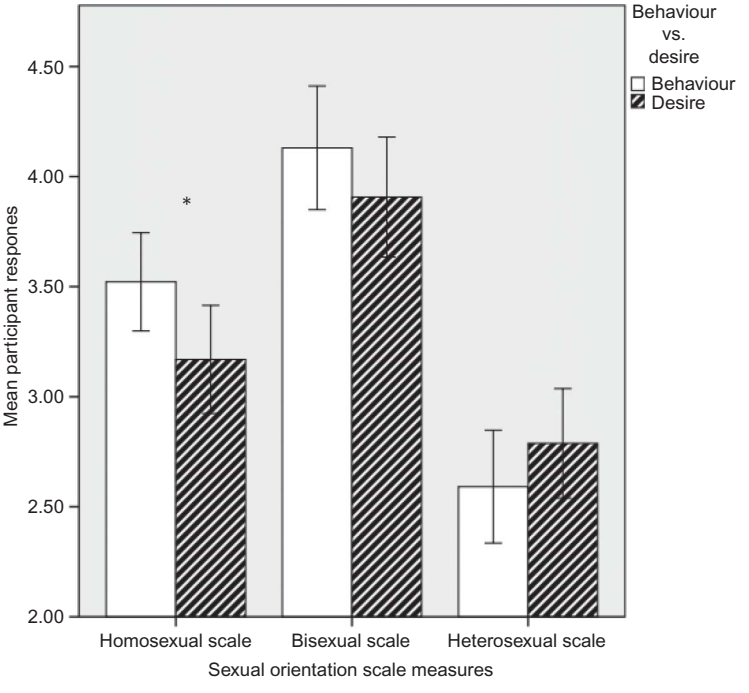

Figure 2. Participant ratings of target's sexual orientation when behavioural or desire. Bars represent the 95% confidence interval for each mean. Asterisk denote significance at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Additionally, the homosexual scale was negatively correlated with the heterosexual scale, $r = -0.386$, $p < 0.001$, and positively correlated with the bisexual scale, $r = 0.161$, $p = 0.014$. The bisexual and homosexual scales were not significantly correlated with one another.

When we divided the responses based on whether the target was male or female, the correlations changed. When the target was female, the Kinsey scale was still positively correlated with the homosexual ($r = 0.392$, $p < 0.001$) and bisexual ($r = 0.417$, $p < 0.001$) scales and negatively correlated with the heterosexual scale ($r = -0.483$, $p < 0.001$). However, the homosexual scale was also moderately correlated with the bisexual scale ($r = 0.368$, $p < 0.001$) and negatively correlated with the heterosexual scale ($r = -0.297$, $p = 0.001$). Finally, the heterosexual scale was also negatively correlated with the bisexual scale ($r = -0.297$, $p = 0.001$). When the target was male, the correlations between the Kinsey, both the homosexual ($r = 0.485$, $p < 0.000$) and heterosexual ($r = -0.409$, $p < 0.000$) scales, increased in magnitude. Additionally, the correlation between the homosexual and heterosexual scales also increased in magnitude ($r = -0.424$, $p < 0.000$). The bisexual scale was not correlated with either the heterosexual or homosexual scale.

Open-ended responses

We gave participants the opportunity to give open-ended responses after categorising the targets as heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual. Some participants who commented reported the potential for the female target to be heterosexual and bicurious.

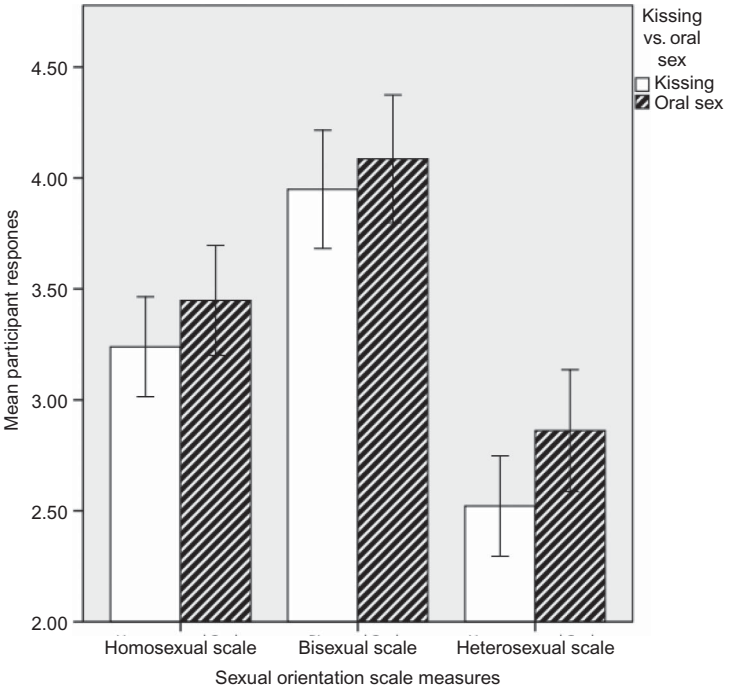

Figure 3. Participant ratings of targets' sexual orientation when kissing or performing oral sex. Bars represent the 95% confidence interval for each mean.

> She seems to be heterosexual, but i think that she would be considered bicourious [*sic*]. (Participant 65, Female)
>
> I believe that you can be totally heterosexual, while being bicurious. (Participant 77, Female)
>
> Heterosexual, but possibly bicurious? (Participant 33, Female)

Similar comments were made for the male target about his potential to be bicurious, although none of the participants remarked that he might be heterosexual instead of, or in addition to, being bicurious. Further, some participants commented on how only one same-sex experience or desire was not enough to classify the female target as bisexual.

> if this was the first and only encounter then she is probably heterosexual. (Participant 47, Female)
>
> I would say that Linda is heterosexual because this is only one girl. If there happened to be more incidents like this in which she fantasized about oral sex of the same gender, then she may be categorized as Bisexual. Linda could just be very attracted to Lucy's appearance, not necessarily her character. (Participant 113, Female)

In contrast to the responses that expressed the potential for same-sex desire or behaviour while maintaining a heterosexual identity for the female target, the participant comments for the male target at times implied that same-sex desire or behaviour (in contrast to a lifetime of heterosexual behaviour) revealed his 'true self'.

> Jonathon's past could have been due to what he thought was normal and right instead of listening to his true feelings. (Participant 234, Male)

> Bisexual, but technically there's not enough information to conclude that. He could have been in self-denial the entire [time] he has been with women, and only now accepting and allowing himself to be who is truly is, homosexual. (Participant 165, Female)
>
> I think he was probably homosexual for a while, but was too scared to express himself. (Participant 117, Female)

Additionally, where earlier comments about the female target indicated one homosexual experience was not enough for some participants to classify her as bisexual, some participant comments for the male target implied that the existence of any same-sex desire or behaviour meant he could not be heterosexual.

> Because he had oral sex, that shows his interest in men as not being purely heterosexual. (Participant 158, Male)
>
> Specifically, I would classify him as bi-curious. An interest in men does not mean that he necessarily identifies as being bisexual yet. (Participant 203, Female)

There were no participant comments that declared the female target was in any way revealing her 'true self' by participating in homosexual behaviour or desires.

Discussion

The influence of sex on the one-time rule of homosexuality

Although the majority of participants categorised the two targets as bisexual (76.8% overall), the male target (who expressed some other-sex interest) was perceived as being significantly more homosexual and less heterosexual than was the female target. This evidence suggests that the sex of an individual does have an impact on how other people perceive her or his sexual orientation based on her or his sexual activity, although it does not indicate that the one-time rule of homosexuality may apply more to men than women. As the one-time rule is a means of categorisation, and as social cognition research has in the past found that men are more likely to be categorised as homosexual than women in unclear situations (Braisby & Hodges, 2009), we expected men to be categorised as homosexual significantly more often than women. This was not the case. While one same-sex experience or desire was enough to cause the vast majority of participants to categorise the targets as not heterosexual, there was little evidence that the 'one-drop' was more influential for how participants categorised the male target in comparison to the female target.

While it appears the one-time rule may not apply differently to how people categorise men and women, there remains the main effect for sex on how homosexual and heterosexual the targets were perceived to be. The results of the current study support the notion that women may be observed as more flexible in their sexual behaviour and desires than are men in a Western college population.

Research in sexual fluidity or flexibility has been conducted for decades (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948; Klein, 1993; Zinik, 1985). Sexual fluidity can be defined in more than one way. For example, it can be the change in one's sexual orientation, identity or behaviour over time (Diamond, 2008) or it can be an individual who's sexual orientation, identity or behaviour including the capacity for sexual or romantic attraction for more than one sex (Baumeister, 2000). Much of the research supports the conclusion that women are more sexually fluid beings than men are (Baumeister, 2000; Diamond, 2008; Kinnish et al., 2005). Further, a study conducted by Mosher, Chandra, and Jones (2005) found that women were three times as likely to have had both male and female partners in the past years than

were men. If, on average, women are more sexually flexible than men, it follows there may be an expectation for women to behave in a flexible way, while there is no expectation for men to do so. Thus, a same-sex encounter or desire for a woman with an exclusive sexual history of heterosexuality may not be perceived as disruptive, or as 'meaningful,' of an event in how it changes others' perception of her sexual orientation. As the open-ended responses indicate, and as Diamond (2008) has observed, 'though women – like men – appear to be born with distinct sexual orientations, these orientations do not provide the last word on their sexual attractions and experiences' (p. 3). This flexible behaviour may be becoming more evident to individuals in the college population, thus enabling people to perceive a woman as capable of multiple or changing orientations, whereas men may still be perceived as more static and only capable of one sexual orientation.

Additionally, the surge of research and recognition of female sexual fluidity may also be obscuring lesbianism. Like bisexuals, lesbians have historically struggled with visibility in the dominant culture (Butler, 1991). The increased focus on female sexual fluidity, as opposed to static sexual identities, could also explain the result of the female target being perceived as less homosexual than the male target.

There is a perception that male sexuality, which has been described as an early developing preference for men or women, is a 'stable trait that has a consistent effect on that person's attractions, fantasies, and romantic feelings over the lifespan' (Diamond, 2008, p. 2). For women however, sexuality is often perceived as a changeable, fluid trait. This may lead individuals to perceive a singular occurrence of same-sex desire or behaviour differently for a man than for a woman. If people have the expectation that male sexuality is stable and unchanging, a sudden same-sex desire or behaviour arising in college may be seen as a repressed or unexplored sexual desire that has always existed within that individual. In comparison, if people expect women's sexuality to be flexible, a same-sex desire or behaviour appearing for the first time in college may seem entirely ordinary and have little impact on how other's perceive her sexuality (or even how she thinks of her own sexuality). These two contrasting notions were also exemplified by some of the participants' open-ended responses. While only having one same-sex experience was not always considered enough to demonstrate bisexuality or homosexuality for the female target, some participants stated that the male target's same-sex experience was likely indicative of his 'true self', leaving little room for flexibility in his sexuality or sexual expression.

While sex did not effect how participants categorised the targets, and thus the one-time rule, in terms of categorisation, does not appear to apply more to men than women, the results still indicate that people do perceive men with one same-sex experience differently than they perceive women with the same experience. The current study effectively demonstrated that the sex of an individual may influence how people perceive the degree of her or his sexual orientation. Further research needs to be conducted to better understand the varying influences on this phenomenon.

Bisexual erasure

Bisexuality is often discussed within the literature as an invisible identity (Firestein, 1996) with heterosexuality and homosexuality often being portrayed as society's only options for permanent, stable sexual identities. However, when presented with the unique perspective of the sexual history of an individual participating in bisexual desire or behaviour, the majority of participants categorised both the female and male targets as bisexual, with significantly fewer participants classifying the targets as heterosexual or homosexual. The sex of the targets did not affect how participants categorised them, which might indicate

that people are becoming more aware of male sexual flexibility, or perhaps more accepting of bisexuality as a legitimate identity for men. Anderson and Adams (2011) found that among a sample of male athletes in the United States, the 'athletes accept bisexuality as a legitimate and nonstigmatized sexual identity' (p. 3), which aligns with the categorisation choice of the participants in the current study.

Admittedly, this does not provide evidence of whether or not bisexual individuals would be perceived by others as bisexual in their daily lives, for as stated earlier, few bisexuals publicly and simultaneously date both men and women. However, the current study provides evidence that most people may not believe some misconceptions about bisexual individuals. As indicated by the study results, most individuals may not believe that bisexuals must have equal amount of experience or preference for men and women or that bisexuals must have actually had sex with both men and women.

While the majority of participants categorised the targets as bisexual, it is possible that this may have just been the best fitting sexual orientation out of the three choices available (heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual). Nearly half of the participants who chose to comment about their categorisation of the targets stated that they would more accurately describe the target as 'bicurious' or as exploring or experimenting – although the majority of participants did not comment at all on their categorisation choice. Further research would need to be conducted to see whether people think of 'bicurious' or 'experimenting' as distinctly different from a bisexual identity. Only then would we know how these two categorisation choices would affect the results of the current study.

Although it is possible that previous misconceptions of what it means to be bisexual are beginning to fade away, it is interesting that one homosexual thought or act amongst a lifetime of heterosexual behaviour was enough for the majority of people to perceive someone as not heterosexual. Past research has shown that many people will identify as monosexual while having some bisexual desire or experience (Hoburg, Konik, Williams, & Crawford, 2004). While bisexuality may be more easily recognised now than previous decades, there still appears to be a limited amount of flexibility allowed within heterosexuality, which makes sense within the context of the historical one-drop rule. Additionally, this finding is consistent with social cognition research on hierarchically restrictive traits. It appears that heterosexuality remains to be a more restrictive category than either bisexuality or homosexuality.

Conclusion, limitations and further research

The initial hypothesis that the male targets will be seen as more homosexual than female targets when they have one homosexual desire or experience was supported by the current study, although the majority of participants categorised both targets as bisexual. This phenomenon could be explained by several factors, including women's apparent higher level of sexual flexibility in our society, as well as differing social expectations for women's and men's sexual behaviours and identities. However, one of the major limitations of this study is the age group of the participants. It is likely that an older sample would have provided different results, especially as college is often perceived as a time for sexual experimentation. Thus, further research with an older population would add another layer of understanding to the topic at hand.

Bisexual erasure did not seem to be as prevalent within the context of this study, although that may be because of the unique perspective the vignette provides of the targets complete sexual history in brief. Additionally, forcing participants to choose between categorising the targets as heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual may have influenced more

participants to categorise the targets as bisexual instead of something more ambiguous, such as bicurious. Further research with more nuanced sexual identity categories may conclude with different results.

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