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ADVISING VICTIMS OF CRIME

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on examining how three primary variables (Victim Intoxication, Offender Intoxication, and Victim-Offender Relationship) affect individuals' decision to advise victims of sexual assault to report to the police. The design of the study was a 3 x 2 x 2 between-subjects experiment, such that there were three levels of Victim Intoxication (sober, drunk, or unconscious from being drunk), two levels of Offender Intoxication (drunk or sober), and two levels of Victim-Offender Relationship (friend or stranger). Sexual assault vignettes were utilized within questionnaires to assess the effects of these variables on Advice to Report. Two other dependent variables, Victim Blame and Offender Blame, were also included, as were demographic questions. The participants in this study were 225 undergraduate students from four different criminology classes at The Pennsylvania State University. The results of this study show that the drinking habits of the participants significantly affected whether or not they advised the victim to report the assault, as well as whether or not they blamed the victim for the crime. The findings of this study suggest that future research needs to focus on drinking habits and how they affect individuals' decision to advise reporting.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

Victims of crime often look for advice from others before contacting the police. These “others” are usually family members or friends, but even strangers can be the source of advice (Knoth & Ruback, 2016). Considering that victims look for advice, it is essential to determine what factors influence an individual’s decision regarding whether or not to advise a victim to contact the police. Several situational factors can be considered when determining how individuals advise victims, especially victims of sexual assault. These factors include the intoxication level of the victim, the intoxication level of the offender, and the relationship between the victim and the offender.

Previous research has focused on the ways in which individuals go about reporting different types of crime. One of the crimes that is greatly affected by situational factors and whether or not victims report is sexual assault. According to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC), 1 in 5 women will be raped in their lifetime. Furthermore, women in college between the ages of 18 and 24 are three times more likely than women in other age groups to experience sexual violence (Department of Justice, 2014).

One of the biggest problems with collecting data regarding the prevalence of sexual assault is that it usually goes unreported. The NSVRC reports that more than 90% of sexual assault victims on college campuses do not report the assault, and sexual assault in general is the most underreported crime: approximately 63% of sexual assaults go unreported.

Alcohol can play a role in explaining why these crimes are not reported. According to a national-level study of college women, results showed that the Victim’s use of alcohol made them more likely to disclose the sexual assault to a friend, but not to authorities (Fisher, Daigle, Cullen, & Turner, 2003).

Approximately one-half of reported sexual assault cases involve alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, the victim, or both (Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, & McAuslan, 2001).

Of college students between the ages of 18 and 24, almost 60% report drinking alcohol in the past month, and 2 out of 3 of those individuals reported binge drinking in the past month. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines binge drinking as a pattern of drinking that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels to 0.08 g/dL. For men, this is typically 5 drinks within 2 hours, and for women it is about 4 drinks in the same time frame.

There is only limited research that focuses on what factors influence individuals' decisions to advise victims of sexual assault to contact the police. In order to increase public knowledge on sexual assault and reporting, it is pertinent to conduct research that focuses on sexual assault and what factors affect how individuals advise victims. In the current research, I examined these factors by manipulating the following independent variables: the victim's intoxication level (drunk, sober, or unconscious from being drunk), the offender's intoxication level (drunk or sober), and their relationship with one another (stranger or friend). I hypothesized that each of these factors would directly affect an individual's decision to advise the victim to report the sexual assault to the police. More specifically, I believed that individuals would be more likely to advise contacting the police when the victim was sober or unconscious as opposed to drunk, when the offender was sober as opposed to drunk, and when the offender was a stranger as opposed to a friend. The design was a 3 x 2 x 2 between- subjects experiment, which was approved by the Penn State University Institutional Review Board (See Appendix A).



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Victim's Disclosure to Others**

Victims of crime typically consult with others and often receive information, support or nonsupport, and advice (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992). These reactions from the consulted individuals often affect victims' behaviors and emotional reactions.

With regard to sexual assault specifically, victims who report their victimization to others receive both positive and negative reactions (Filipas and Ullman, 2001). In their study, the authors examined the reactions of informal and formal "support providers" to the disclosure of a victim's sexual assault. These support providers included a number of different types of individuals: 94.2% of victims went to friends or relatives, 52% went to mental health professionals, 43% went to some other source, 27.1% went to physicians, 26.4% went to the police, 14.1% went to a rape crisis center, and 7.6% went to local clergy (Filipas & Ullman, 2001).

Through quantitative and qualitative analysis, the authors found that victims who sought help from "support providers" often received negative reactions that included nonbelief, judgmental responses toward the crime, and victim-blaming (Filipas & Ullman, 2001). Some victims also received a large amount of positive support, the most helpful being emotional support (Filipas & Ullman, 2001). Overall, however, their study found that victims experienced a much higher frequency of negative reactions than positive reactions.

Given that individuals may have negative reactions or positive reactions to a victim's report of a crime, it is important to examine what factors affect this initial reaction. Furthermore, it is important to consider how these factors influence the individual's decision about advising the victim of to report or not to report the crime. Ruback, Ménard, Outlaw, and Shaffer (1999) conducted a study on how intoxication

of the victim, gender of the victim, age of the victim, and type of crime affects individuals' advice about whether or not to contact the police. The nine different crimes that the study focused on included four property crimes and five person crimes, with variation as to how severe the crimes were. The participants were given a questionnaire that asked basic demographic questions and then described a hypothetical situation of a crime that had taken place. The hypothetical situation varied in terms of the victim's gender, the intoxication level of the victim, and the type of crime. Participants were then asked to rate using a 9-point scale the extent to which they agreed with contacting the police. Sexual assault was included as one of the nine crimes used in the study.

The results regarding how individuals would advise sexual assault victims indicated that for female participants, neither the victim's age nor the victim's intoxication had an effect on the advice given to report the crime. In contrast, there was a significant difference among males. For males under the age of 21 who were advising a victim who was drunk, participants were significantly less likely to advise contacting the police as opposed to all other subject combinations. Thus, it appeared that victim intoxication made some participants less likely to advise a victim of sexual assault to call the police (Ruback et al., 1999).

### **Role of Alcohol**

Given Ruback et al. (1999)'s results regarding victim intoxication and its effect on victim advising, it is important to consider how prevalent intoxication is among sexual assault victims. According to Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, and McAuslan (2001), approximately half of all sexual assault victims reported being intoxicated at the time of the assault and half of all sexual assaults are committed by intoxicated men. Furthermore, approximately half of reported sexual assault cases against women include intoxication of the victim, the offender, or both (Abbey et al., 2001). If the intoxicated victims in Ruback et al. (1999)'s study were less likely to be advised to contact the police, then it may be because intoxication diminishes the victim's credibility.

## **Victim Blaming**

One factor that could be contributing to this phenomenon is victim-blaming. There have been many studies regarding the concept of victim blaming and rape myths. In a review article regarding victim blaming, the authors explored factors that impact victim blaming, including the victim's gender, sexuality, and degree of resistance (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). According to van der Bruggen and Grubb (2014), the victim's gender has only recently been manipulated in rape studies. When males are victimized, they receive blame for the rape seemingly due to their gender and the ideology that they should be able to fight back. Female victims of rape seem to receive blame more based on their characteristics, such as being too careless and too trusting (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014).

The victim's sexuality has played a role for male victims such that male victims receive more blame when they are homosexual as opposed to when they are heterosexual. In scenarios in which the perpetrator is always a male, homosexual males and heterosexual females receive similar amounts of blame for the rape. This is due to the victim being potentially attracted to the perpetrator (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014).

The amount of victim resistance plays a large role in how much the victim is blamed. In situations where the victim shows some resistance, it is more likely to be considered rape. Furthermore, victims who do not resist are blamed the most, and male victims are blamed more than female victims due to the belief that they are more capable of resistance (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014).

Alcohol can also play a role in victim blaming. In a study conducted by Richardson and Campbell (1982), participants were provided a scenario depicting rape in which the female victim, the male offender, both, or neither were intoxicated. They were then asked to assign blame and responsibility to the victim and the offender. The results from this study showed that when the female victim was drunk, she was assigned more blame for the rape than when she was sober (Richardson & Campbell, 1982). In contrast, the offender was assigned less responsibility for the rape when he was drunk as opposed to when he was sober (Richardson & Campbell, 1982).

The finding by Richardson and Campbell (1982) regarding responsibility given to intoxicated offenders has also been investigated in more recent studies. Maurer (2015) noted that, in general, individuals hold intoxicated offenders less responsible for rape situations and blame them less than sober offenders because intoxicated male offenders are perceived to be less in control of their actions, and therefore not responsible for them (Maurer, 2015). In Maurer (2015)'s study, the participants were provided a sexual assault vignette that varied by intoxication of the offender, victim-offender relationship, and whether the offender stayed or left after the intercourse. The results from this study showed that the intoxication level of the offender did not have an effect on how participants assigned responsibility, how the incident was perceived as rape, or whether his actions were deemed acceptable (Maurer, 2015). Thus, these results suggest that the offender's intoxication levels may not always have an effect on how participants assign responsibility.

### **Victim-Offender Relationship**

In Maurer (2015)'s study, one of the variables that did significantly affect the results was the victim-offender relationship. In the study, participants attributed more responsibility to the offender when he was a boyfriend as opposed to a stranger (Maurer, 2015). These findings are consistent with those in Tetreault and Barnett's 1987 study. In order to determine how the victim-offender relationship plays a role in victim blaming, 40 female and 40 male college students were provided with two scenarios: one depicting a woman raped by a stranger, and the other depicting a woman raped by an acquaintance. The findings of this study indicated that women were more likely to blame the victim when the offender was an acquaintance. This is due to women having potentially experienced this kind of male sexual aggression and as a result have a heightened sense of responsibility for such interactions (Tetreault & Barnett, 1987). In contrast, men were more likely to blame the victim when the offender was a stranger. This is because men tend to perceive women as responsible when the rape occurs outside the terms of a legitimate relationship (Tetreault & Barnett, 1987). These results show that women and men tend to differ in terms of assigning responsibility in cases of rape by either an acquaintance or a stranger. Females find the

victim more responsible for acquaintance rape because they believe that the victim could have resisted the rape and that they themselves would have done so. Males find the victim more responsible for stranger rape because the interaction does not occur within a relationship.

Previous research has also shown that the relationship between the victim and the offender has had an impact on whether the victim reports the sexual assault to the police. Fisher, Daigle, Cullen and Turner (2003) administered a survey to 4,446 female college students regarding their experiences with sexual assault. The main dependent variable in this study was whether or not the victim reported the assault to the police. One of the primary independent variables was offender characteristics, including the relationship between the victim and the offender. This independent variable was operationalized using six different levels, with the offender either being a current or ex-intimate, a fellow student, a known other, a stranger, or a friend (Fisher et al., 2003). Results showed that there was a significant difference in whether victims reported depending on the relationship with the offender: incidents involving strangers were more likely to be reported than incidents involving friends (Fisher et al., 2003).

This finding is consistent with the results found by Gartner and Macmillan in their 1995 study examining the victim-offender relationship. This study used data collected by the Violence Against Women Survey and focused on victims who reported a sexual assault since the age of 16. The variables that were considered included whether the victim reported the assault to the police and the victim-offender relationship, which was coded in one of five categories: (1) spouses and ex-spouses, (2) dates and boyfriends, (3) relatives, (4) men known through work, friendship, or other means, and (5) strangers (Gartner and Macmillan, 1995). Results showed that victim-offender relationships that are close, involve interaction on a day to day basis, and wish to be continued by the victim result in more informal means of dealing with the crime and a lack of involvement by police. These “informal means” include when family members, friends, and neighbors are called upon to intervene in or mediate disputes between these people who are within their networks (Gartner and Macmillan, 1995).

The reasoning behind reporting strangers more than friends could also lie in the victim's denial of the sexual assault. Based on self-report questionnaires by a sample of 6,159 students, Koss, Dinero, Seibel, and Cox (1988) found that acquaintance rape is less likely than stranger rape to be considered rape at all and is less likely to be disclosed to anyone. These findings could explain why so many sexual assaults go unreported, as approximately 70 percent of rapes are committed by someone known to the victim (Department of Justice, 2015).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

Participants were 225 undergraduate students enrolled in four criminology classes at the Pennsylvania State University. Of these 225 participants, 93 were female (41%) and 132 were male (59%). There were several different race/ethnicities identified in the study (75.1% White, 8.4% Black, 5.8% Asian, 4.4% Hispanic, 5.3% Mixed, and 1% identified as “Other”). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 28 with a majority of participants (85%) being between 18 and 21 years old.

This study was considered to be exempt by IRB review. Implied informed consent was obtained by all of the participants. That is, participants completion of the questionnaire implied that they consented to participating in the study. Participants were informed by being provided with a consent form that included all necessary information about the study. The consent forms explained the reasoning behind the study as well as the variables that they would be asked about within the questionnaire (See Appendix B).

#### **Questionnaire**

Each questionnaire (see Appendix C) began with a brief introduction stating that victims of crime usually rely on the advice of others when deciding whether or not to report a crime. The participants were then directed to read the sexual vignette provided and to rate on a scale from 1 to 9 how strongly they approved of the victim calling the police. Each sexual vignette described a male offender raping a female victim.

The study was a 2 (Male Intoxication) x 3 (Female Intoxication) x 2 (Victim-Offender Relationship) factorial experiment. The male offender’s intoxication level was depicted as either drunk or sober. The female victim’s intoxication level was depicted as either sober, drunk, or unconscious from

being drunk. Finally, the victim-offender relationship was described as the offender being either a stranger or a friend.

The participants then read a series of items regarding blameworthiness, for which they were to rate their opinion on a scale from 1 to 9. Several of these items were presented in a negative format, such as “Although what her male friend did was wrong, he is not fully to blame for the situation.” These reverse-scored items were used in order to increase the likelihood that the participants were actually reading the questions. There were three items that measured victim blame. These items were combined into a composite Victim Blame measure, which had high internal reliability ( $\alpha = .781$ ). There were three items that measured offender blame. These items were combined into a composite Offender Blame measure, which also had high internal reliability ( $\alpha = .825$ ).

The blameworthiness items were followed by several demographic questions. The first question asked participants to report their age. The next question asked participants to circle their gender from the choices of Male, Female, and Other. The final demographic item asked participants to circle their race/ethnicity from the choices of White, Hispanic, Black, Asian, Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups, and Other.

The next group of items asked about the participants’ drinking habits (general frequency, binge drinking occurrences, alcohol intake at last social event) and sexual attitudes. One of the items asked respondents, “During the last social drinking event you attended, how many drinks did you consume?” The response scale for this item ranged from 1 to 8, with a mean of 5.16, a median of 5.00, and a mode of 8 (27% of respondents). A median split was used on this variable to create a dichotomous indicator of drinking: those at 5 or below on the scale were classified as Low Drinkers, and those above 5 on the scale were classified as High Drinkers.

The sexual attitude scale was taken from Hendrick, Hendrick, and Reich (2006)’s Brief Sexual Attitudes Scale (BSAS). Participants were asked to record how strongly they agreed with the given statements on a scale that included Strongly Agree, Moderately Agree, Neutral, Moderately Disagree, and



Strongly Disagree. Participants were also told that if they had never had a sexual relationship, they were to answer in terms of what they think their responses would most likely be. The questions on the original BSAS were in four categories: permissiveness, birth control, communion, and instrumentality. For this study, we focused on permissiveness and selected items from that category. These items included statements such as “Casual sex is acceptable” and “I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him/her.” Participants moderately agreed with the statements a majority of the time (34.7%) and were least likely to strongly disagree with the statements (7.6%).

### **Procedure**

The data for this study were collected using questionnaires, each depicting a sexual situation that varied by intoxication of the offender, intoxication of the victim, and the victim-offender relationship. There were 12 different questionnaires included in the study.

Questionnaires were distributed to four criminology classes at The Pennsylvania State University. Two of these classes were introductory criminology classes, and the remaining two classes were 400-level advanced criminology classes. Students in each class were able to earn extra credit for participating in the study. For individuals who did not wish to participate, or who were under the age of 18, an alternative extra credit assignment was provided.

In order to reduce bias, the questionnaires were randomized within replicates. That is, one of each of the 12 different scenarios was put together into a unit (a replicate). The order of the scenarios within the replicate was random. Then, a second replicate consisting of all 12 scenarios was randomly ordered. This process of randomizing within replicates was used for all of the questionnaires in the study.

The reason for randomizing within replicates is to control, as much as possible, for factors relating to research participants. For example, research participants who sit at the front of the classroom might be significantly different (e.g., in GPA) from research participants who sit at the back of the room. By randomizing within replicates, I was able to reduce this possible bias. Thus, there would be an equal

number of questionnaires from the 12 conditions completed by participants at the front of the room and an equal number of questionnaires from the 12 conditions completed by participants at the back of the room.

If I had not randomized within replicates but had simply passed out all of the questionnaires in a random order, it could have been possible, for instance, that all of the questionnaires from one condition would have been filled out by people at the front of the room. If that had occurred, factors related to research participants (e.g., where they sat in the classroom) would have been confounded with experimental condition, and therefore it would have been impossible to determine whether any differences for that experimental condition were due to the scenario described or to the participants who completed those questionnaires.

Questionnaires were distributed and collected during class time in order to ensure a high completion rate and to maximize the number of participants. Before handing out questionnaires, the participants were briefly told about the study and how to complete it. The participants were instructed to sign the top consent form, tear it from the packet, and temporarily keep it separate from the questionnaires. They were also told to tear the second consent form from the packet and keep it with them permanently. The participants were then instructed to complete the questionnaire anonymously. Once each questionnaire had been completed, the top consent forms were collected first, in order to keep signed consent forms and questionnaires separated. The signed consent form was used to give credit to individuals who participated in the study. Once every consent form was collected, the questionnaires were then collected and kept separate from the consent forms.

## Chapter 4

### Results

The results section consists of two parts. First, I provide bivariate analyses of the variables, including t-tests and correlations. Second, I present in detail the analyses of variance of the primary dependent measure in the study – Advice to Report – and the two other dependent measures (Victim Blame and Offender Blame) including the ANOVA table for each dependent variable. I also present tables giving the means by predictor variables for all of the significant effects.

#### **Bivariate associations**

Correlational analyses were run in order to examine whether the variables were significantly associated with each other. There was a negative, but not significant, correlation between Advise Report and Victim Blame ( $r = -.126$ , n.s.), but there was a significant positive correlation between Advise Report and Offender Blame ( $r = .261$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, the more that the offender was blamed, the more likely it was that participants advised reporting to the police. There was also a significant negative correlation between Advise Report and Participant's Drinking ( $r = -.160$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This correlation suggests that the more the participant drinks, the less likely it is that the participant advised reporting to the police. Focusing next on the Victim Blame measure, there was a nonsignificant correlation between Victim Blame and Advise Report ( $r = -.126$ ), indicating that there was no significant relationship between victim blaming and advice to report. There was a strong negative correlation between Victim Blame and Offender Blame ( $r = -.461$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This correlation suggests that when the offender was blamed more, the victim was blamed less. There was also a significant negative correlation between Participant Drinking and Victim Blame ( $r = -.162$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which suggests that when the participant drinks more, they are less likely to blame the victim. These correlations are shown below in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Advise Report	-							
2. Age	0.047	-						
3. Gender	-0.085		-					
4. Race	0.019			-				
5. Sex Attitudes	0.026	0.008	0.157*	-0.15	-			
6. Victim Blame	-0.126	0.157*	-0.245**	0.012	0.108	-		
7. Offender Blame	0.261**	-0.009	0.008	-0.079	-0.035	0.461**	-	
8. Drinking	-0.116	0.056	-.279**	-0.077	-0.288**	-0.162*	0.115	-

\*  $p < .05$ \*\*  $p < .01$ 

In addition to correlational analyses, independent sample t-tests were run to test for equality of means. The two variables for which these tests were run were Gender and Drinking Level. There were significant differences by gender for three variables (See Table 2): Sex Attitudes, Victim Blame, and Drinking. For Sex Attitudes, this difference indicates that Male participants reported having more casual sex attitudes than Female participants. For Victim Blame, the difference indicates that Female participants blamed the victim less than Male participants. Finally, the gender difference for Drinking indicates that Male participants reported higher drinking than Female participants.

**Table 2.** T-tests by Gender

	Male	Female	t-test
Advise Report	8.47	8.29	1.277
Sex Attitudes	25.14	27.41	2.37*
Victim Blame	4.25	2.96	3.78*
Offender Blame	21.22	21.26	0.11
Drinking	0.61	0.32	4.34*

\*  $p < .05$

Next, focusing on the tests for Drinking Level (either being High Drinkers or Low Drinkers), there were significant differences found for two variables (See Table 3): Sex Attitudes and Victim Blame. The differences for both of these variables indicate that Low Drinkers (1) reported less casual Sex Attitudes and (2) blamed the victim more than High Drinkers.

**Table 3.** T-tests by Drinking

	Low	High	t-test
Advise Report	8.51	8.27	1.74
Sex Attitudes	28.08	23.98	4.47*
Victim Blame	4.12	3.29	2.45*
Offender Blame	20.96	21.53	1.74

\*  $p < .05$

### Analyses of Variance

**Advise to report.** Advice to report was analyzed by a 3 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 (Victim Intoxication x Relationship x Offender Intoxication x Respondent Gender x Respondent Drinking Amount) analysis of variance. The analysis of variance results are shown below in Table 4. Results indicated only one significant effect: Respondent Drinking Amount,  $F(1, 178) = 6.293$ ,  $p = .013$ . Respondents who drank below the median number of drinks more strongly recommended reporting ( $M = 8.540$ ) than did respondents who drank above the median number of drinks ( $M = 8.115$ ).

**Table 4. Analysis of variance for the dependent variable Advise Report**Advise Report

<u>Source of Variation</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Victim Intoxication (VI)	2	0.918	0.401
Relationship (R)	1	0.563	0.454
Offender Intoxication (OI)	1	1.287	0.258
<b>Drinking (D)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6.293*</b>	<b>0.013</b>
Gender (G)	1	2.814	0.095
VI x R	2	1.816	0.166
VI x OI	2	0.203	0.816
VI x D	2	1.437	0.240
VI x G	2	0.076	0.927
R x OI	1	0.474	0.492
R x D	1	0.089	0.766
R x G	1	0.01	0.920
OI x D	1	0.043	0.836
OI x G	1	0.301	0.584
D x G	1	0.67	0.414
VI x R x OI	2	1.184	0.308
VI x R x D	2	2.845	0.061
VI x R x G	2	1.483	0.230
VI x OI x D	2	0.698	0.499
VI x OI x G	2	0.233	0.792
VI x D x G	2	0.094	0.910
R x OI x D	1	0.015	0.901
R x OI x G	1	0.377	0.540
R x D x G	1	3.693	0.056
OI x D x G	1	0.097	0.756
VI x R x OI x D	2	0.847	0.430
Error	178		

***Victim intoxication and offender intoxication.*** Although there was only one significant effect found, there was a marginally significant Victim Intoxication x Relationship x Respondent Drinking Level interaction,  $F(2, 178) = 2.845, p = .061$ . This interaction was due to High Level drinkers being less likely to advise calling the police when the victim was sober and the victim and offender were strangers. High Level drinkers were also less likely to advise calling the police when the victim was unconscious and the victim and offender were friends. There were no significant interactions regarding offender intoxication and advice to report.

***Victim-offender relationship.*** Table 5 presents the means regarding Victim-Offender Relationship. There was a marginally significant Relationship x Respondent Drinking Level x Respondent Gender interaction,  $F(1, 178) = 3.693, p = .056$ . This interaction was due to Female High Drinking Level Respondents evaluating sexual assault between friends. Female High Drinking Level Respondents in this condition were less likely than all other combinations to advise calling the police.

**Table 5.** Means for Victim-Offender Relationship and Respondent Drinking Level when controlling for gender.

<u>Advice to Report</u> $F(1, 178) = 3.69, p = .056$				
	FRIEND		STRANGER	
Drinking Level	Below Median	Above Median	Below Median	Above Median
Male	8.37	8.46	8.88	8.19
Female	8.51	<b>7.62</b>	8.40	8.11

**Victim Blame.** The second dependent variable was Victim Blame. The analysis of variance results, shown below in Table 6, indicate there were five significant effects: Drinking,  $F(1, 201) = 8.516$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , Gender,  $F(1, 201) = 16.46$ ,  $p < .000$ , Relationship x Drinking x Gender,  $F(1, 201) = 4.212$ ,  $p = 0.042$ , Offender Intoxication x Drinking x Gender,  $F(1, 201) = 8.297$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , and Victim Intoxication x Relationship x Offender Intoxication x Drinking,  $F(2, 201) = 3.393$ ,  $p = 0.036$ .

**Table 6.** Analysis of variance for the dependent measure Victim Blame.

<u>Victim Blame</u>			
Source of Variation	df	F	Sig.
Victim Intoxication (VI)	2	0.871	0.420
Relationship (R)	1	0.062	0.803
Offender Intoxication (OI)	1	0.299	0.585
<b>Drinking (D)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8.516*</b>	<b>0.004</b>
<b>Gender (G)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18.089*</b>	<b>0.000</b>
VI x R	2	1.436	0.241
VI x OI	2	0.435	0.648
VI x D	2	1.091	0.338
VI x G	2	0.619	0.540
R x OI	1	0.203	0.653
R x D	1	0.029	0.865
R x G	1	1.753	0.187
OI x D	1	0.61	0.436
OI x G	1	0.423	0.516
D x G	1	1.144	0.286
VI x R x OI	2	3.021	0.051
VI x R x D	2	0.06	0.942
VI x R x G	2	0.026	0.974
VI x OI x D	2	2.06	0.131
VI x OI x G	2	1.183	0.309
VI x D x G	2	0.99	0.374
R x OI x D	1	0.004	0.948
<b>R x OI x G</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2.616</b>	<b>0.108</b>
<b>R x D x G</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.212*</b>	<b>0.042</b>
<b>OI x D x G</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8.297*</b>	<b>0.004</b>
<b>VI x R x OI x D</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.393*</b>	<b>0.036</b>
VI x R x OI x G	2	2.258	0.108
VI x R x D x G	2	1.049	0.353
VI x OI x D x G	2	0.059	0.942
R x OI x D x G	1	0.068	0.794
VI x R x OI x D x G	1	0.837	0.361
Error	178		



***Victim Blame and Gender.*** Table 7 shows the means for Victim Blame by the Gender of the Participant. The main effect indicates that male participants blamed victims more than females did.

**Table 7.** Victim Blame means by Gender.

<u>Victim Blame</u> F (1, 201) = 16.46, p < .000		
	Male	Female
Victim Blame	4.245	3.714

***Victim Blame and Gender x Relationship.*** Table 8 shows the means for the interaction between Gender x Relationship. These findings show that males blamed the victim more when the offender was a friend, while females blamed victims more when the offender was a stranger.

**Table 8.** Means for the interaction between Gender x Relationship.

<u>Victim Blame</u> F (1,201) = 4.68, p = .032		
	Friend	Stranger
Male	4.593	3.995
Female	2.371	3.319

***Victim blame and gender x offender intoxication.*** Table 9 shows the means for the interaction between Gender x Offender Intoxication. Results show that males blamed victims more when the offender was sober, while females blamed victims more when the offender was drunk.

**Table 9.** Means for the interaction between Gender x Offender Intoxication.

<u>Victim Blame</u> F (1, 201) = 4.79, p = 0.03		
	Sober	Drunk
Male	4.639	3.949
Female	2.408	3.282

***Victim Blame and Victim Intoxication x Relationship x Offender Intoxication.*** Table 10 shows the means for the interaction between Victim Intoxication x Relationship x Offender Intoxication. Results show that when the victim was sober, more blame was assigned to the victim if the offender was a sober friend or a drunk stranger. If the victim was drunk, the most blame was assigned to the victim if the offender was a drunk friend. Finally, if the victim was unconscious, the most blame was given to the victim if the offender was a sober stranger.

**Table 10.** Means for the interaction between Victim Intoxication x Relationship x Offender Intoxication.

<u>Victim Blame</u> F (2, 201) = 3.84, p = .023				
	Friend		Stranger	
	Offender Sober	Offender Drunk	Offender Sober	Offender Drunk
Victim Sober	4.016	2.845	2.570	4.347
Victim Drunk	3.125	4.379	3.587	3.321
Victim Unconscious	3.306	3.219	4.538	3.579

**Victim Blame and Participant Drinking Level.** In addition to the four two-way interactions described above, there was a significant three-way interaction between Gender, Relationship, and Participant Drinking Level. The results of this interaction show that male Low Drinkers blamed the victim of a friend the most. The means for this interaction are shown in Table 11.

**Table 11.** Means for the interaction between Victim Blame, Gender, Relationship, and Participant Drinking Level.

Victim Blame $F(1, 178) = 4.21, p = .042$				
	Friend		Stranger	
	Below Median	Above Median	Below Median	Above Median
Male	<b>5.79</b>	3.68	4.45	3.66
Female	2.50	2.05	3.68	2.10

**Offender Blame.** The third dependent variable was Offender Blame. The analysis of variance results, shown below in Table 12, indicate there were four significant effects: Victim-Offender Relationship,  $F(1, 201) = 7.592, p = 0.006$ , Offender Intoxication,  $F(1, 201) = 8.478, p = .004$ , Victim Intoxication x Relationship,  $F(1, 201) = 3.127, p = 0.046$ , and Relationship x Drinking x Gender,  $F(1, 201) = 8.479, p = 0.004$ . The results for Offender Intoxication are such that when the offender was sober, there was a mean of  $M = 21.85$ . When the offender was drunk, there was a mean of  $M = 20.75$ . This indicates that the offender was seen as less blameworthy if he was drunk.

**Table 12.** Analysis of variance results for the dependent variable Offender Blame

<u>Offender Blame</u>			
<u>Source of Variation</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
Victim Intoxication (VI)	2	2.175	0.117
<b>R (R)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7.592*</b>	<b>0.006</b>
<b>Offender Intoxication (OI)</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8.478*</b>	<b>0.004</b>
Drinking (D)	1	3.108	0.080
Gender (G)	1	0.595	0.442
<b>VI x R</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3.127*</b>	<b>0.046</b>
VI x OI	2	0.54	0.584
VI x D	2	2.21	0.113
VI x G	2	0.436	0.647
R x OI	1	0.64	0.425
R x D	1	0.527	0.469
R x G	1	0.947	0.332
OI x D	1	0.198	0.657
OI x G	1	0.23	0.632
D x G	1	0.023	0.879
VI x R x OI	2	1.131	0.325
VI x R x D	2	1.333	0.266
VI x R x G	2	0.584	0.559
VI x OI x D	2	2.333	0.100
VI x OI x G	2	0.418	0.659
VI x D x G	2	1.093	0.337
R x OI x D	1	0.254	0.615
R x OI x G	1	1.938	0.166
<b>R x D x G</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8.479*</b>	<b>0.004</b>
OI x D x G	1	0.188	0.665
VI x R x OI x D	2	0.742	0.477
VI x R x OI x G	2	0.707	0.494
VI x R x D x G	2	0.749	0.474
VI x OI x D x G	2	0.035	0.965
R x OI x D x G	1	1.075	0.301
VI x R x OI x D x G	1	0.264	0.608
Error	178		

The significant interaction between Gender, Victim-Offender Relationship, and Participant Drinking Level indicates that male Low Drinkers blamed a friend offender the least of all the eight combinations. The means for this interaction are shown in Table 13.

**Table 13.** Means for the interaction between Offender Blame, Gender, Victim-Offender Relationship, and Participant Drinking Level.

Offender Blame $F(1, 178) = 8.48, p = .004$				
	Friend		Stranger	
	Below Median	Above Median	Below Median	Above Median
Male	<b>19.35</b>	21.47	22.22	21.49
Female	21.24	20.96	21.03	22.51

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The goal of this study was to determine whether the intoxication of the victim, the intoxication of the offender, and the victim-offender relationship significantly affect individuals' decision to advise sexual assault victims to report to the police. I had hypothesized that individuals would be more likely to advise contacting the police when the victim was sober or unconscious as opposed to drunk, when the offender was sober as opposed to drunk, and when the offender was a stranger as opposed to a friend. The lack of significance for many of the analyses in this study leave me to consider my hypotheses as incorrect or inconclusive. It is possible that there was a lack of significance due to the small sample size leading to low statistical power. This possibility is discussed further in the limitations.

In contrast to the hypothesized effects of the experimentally manipulated variables, this study found that respondents' drinking habits affected victim blame, offender blame, and advice to report. The results of this study indicate that how individuals assigned blame to victims and offenders was affected by their own drinking habits. High Drinkers assigned less blame to the victim as opposed to the offender. In contrast, individuals who were Low Drinkers tended to blame the victim more. In other words, High Drinkers tended to be more understanding of sexual assault victims and more likely to blame offenders. However, these main effects were qualified by the gender of the respondent and the victim-offender relationship, such that males who were Low Drinkers blamed the victim most when the offender was a friend, and females who were High Drinkers were the least likely to advise reporting when the offender was a friend. Finally, although apparently more understanding of sexual assault victims, High Drinkers were less likely overall to advise reporting the rape to the police.

Previous research has focused on victim and offender blame while considering the victim-offender relationship and intoxication level of the victim and/or the offender, as well as advice given to

victims of crime. The findings in this study are inconsistent with those of Ruback et al. (1999), such that female participants were the least likely to advise reporting to the police. In their 1999 study, Ruback et al. found that for sexual assault, male students who were under the age of 21 were the least likely to advise reporting to the police. It is possible that both the female participants in this study and the underage male students in Ruback et al. (1999)'s study were less likely to report for the same reasons.

The results of this study indicate that female participants who were High Drinkers and who were advising a victim whose offender was a friend were the least likely to advise reporting. This could be due to a fear of reporting to the police because of their own alcohol habits, or it is possible that these individuals disagree with reporting an offender who is the victim's friend. As for Ruback et al. (1999)'s study, it is also possible that the underage male participants were less likely to advise reporting due to a fear of reporting to the police. In order to further explore this possibility, future research should focus on relationships with the police and victim advising.

The findings regarding victim and offender blame are inconsistent with previous research such that there was not a significant difference in how individuals assigned blame based on the victim and offender's intoxication level. Richardson and Campbell found in their 1982 study that when the victim was drunk, individuals were more likely to assign blame to the victim. In contrast, when the offender was drunk, individuals were less likely to assign blame to the offender (Richardson & Campbell, 1982). Although this study did not produce significant results regarding intoxication level and victim/offender blame, drinking still played a key role in assigning blame.

In the current study, the drinking habits of the participants are what had the most effect on assignment of blame to the victim or offender. Individuals who drank above the median number of drinks and were therefore classified as High Drinkers were the least likely to blame the victim. Individuals who drank below the median number of drinks and were classified as Low Drinkers were more likely to blame the victim. In addition to the drinking habits of the participants, gender played a role in assigning blame, such that female participants were less likely than males participants to blame the victim.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations to this study. The first limitation relates to the sample size and characteristics. Although it was hoped that a large number of participants would fill out the questionnaires, therefore increasing the sample size, this was limited by the number of students who decided to attend class that day. If more students had participated in the study, there would have been more statistical power to detect effects.

Furthermore, the participants in this study were all students within Criminology classes at The Pennsylvania State University, which restricts the diversity of the study. The inclusion of other departments in the study may have increased diversity in terms of opinions towards sexual assault and reporting. Students within the Criminology department are presumably more familiar with sexual assault and the process of reporting to the police than students in other departments. Therefore, it is possible that students within other academic department have different opinions regarding sexual assault and reporting. Thus, it is possible that if the sample had included other departments that I would have found more significant results regarding my hypotheses.

Another limitation of this study is that the manipulated vignettes were impoverished compared to situations in the real-world. We were limited in the amount of detail we could provide in comparison to real-life situations, and individuals are under much more pressure in real-life situations. Although this limitation makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the data collected, the data still show that there are some significant differences and these differences are important for future research.

## **Future Research**

Future research needs to examine the relationship between High Drinkers and advice to report other crimes, prior victimization, prior reporting of past victimizations, and membership in High Drinking organizations. To my knowledge, there is no prior research that focuses on these variables. Prior research on binge drinking among college students has focused on the primary and secondary effects that binge drinking creates. The primary effects include an increased likelihood of experiencing injuries, unplanned



sexual behavior, and other alcohol-related problems (Wechsler & Nelson, 2001). The secondary effects of binge drinking among college students who are not binge drinkers are an increased likelihood of experiencing problems such as being pushed, hit, assaulted, or of experiencing unwanted sexual advances by intoxicated individuals (Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens, & Castillo, 1994).

It would be interesting to see whether individuals who are High Drinkers have similar attitudes towards reporting for other types of violent crimes. If, for example, a study were to replicate the current one but include an additional set of vignettes that describe a robbery taking place, we would be able to determine whether individuals who are High Drinkers view reporting all violent crimes the same way regardless of the specific type of crime. This would help to decide whether an individual's drinking habits truly have an effect on how they advise reporting.

Focusing next on the idea of past victimizations, I think that research would benefit from determining whether individuals who are High Drinkers have been previously victimized themselves. This could help to explain why these individuals are less likely to advise reporting, but also less likely to blame the victim. These individuals may have been through the reporting process themselves and may not have received sufficient help for their situation. Finally, it would be beneficial to ask about individuals' membership in High Drinking organizations (such as sororities, fraternities, and other social clubs) because it is possible that they have different views toward reporting sexual assault than other members of the population. This could be due to a higher exposure to incidents of sexual assault among their peers, and therefore having different opinions about reporting and assignment of blame for sexual assault.

### **Policy Implications**

The results of this study have several policy implications. Considering that our results depended heavily on the drinking level of the participant, future policy changes should focus on increasing knowledge about reporting crimes, especially for college students who report moderate to heavy drinking. Furthermore, all students should receive annual training regarding sexual assault that involves the use of alcohol. It is possible that many students are not aware of the laws in place to protect minors who have

been drinking and have been victims of sexual assault. Pennsylvania's Medical Amnesty Law holds that if an individual is in need of medical assistance and a bystander is the first to call 911 for the emergency and remain with the individual, the bystander will not be sanctioned for illegal use of alcohol. Furthermore, The Pennsylvania State University has a Responsible Action Protocol that provides amnesty for students who are reporting a crime for themselves or on behalf of another individual. Therefore, if an individual were to have illegally consumed alcohol and then was sexually assaulted, they would not be punished for illegal consumption if they were to report the assault. Both of these policies are presented to incoming students their freshman year, but are not further stressed in an individual's remaining years of college. If these laws are better known, it is possible that college students will have different attitudes towards reporting crime.

Finally, future policy should also focus on education regarding consent. Considering that previous research has shown that individuals are actually more inclined to blame the victim when she has been drinking, I believe that if knowing the legal definition of consent is more widespread among individuals, their opinions towards responsibility and blame for cases of sexual assault involving alcohol may change. This is necessary in order to reduce the amount of blame being placed on the victims in cases of rape and sexual assault, and could result in an increased rate of victims seeking help.

## Appendix A

### IRB Approval

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**Notification of Approval**

**To:** Meghan Moorhouse  
**Link:** [STUDY00007156](#)  
**P.I.:** [Meghan Moorhouse](#)  
**Title:** Advising Victims of Crime

This submission has been approved. You can access the correspondence letter using the following link:

**Description:** [Correspondence for STUDY00007156.pdf\(0.01\)](#)

To review additional details, click the link above to access the project workspace.

## Appendix B

### Consent Forms

#### Consent Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title of Project:** Advising Victims of Crime

**Principal Investigator:** Meghan Moorhouse  
 Department of Sociology and Criminology  
 211 Oswald Tower  
 University Park, PA 16802  
 (410) 699-6571; [mmm6195@psu.edu](mailto:mmm6195@psu.edu)

**Co-Principal Investigator:** Barry Ruback  
 Department of Sociology and Criminology  
 211 Oswald Tower  
 University Park, PA 16802  
 (814) 865-1307; [rbr3@psu.edu](mailto:rbr3@psu.edu)

1. **Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to examine people's beliefs about giving advice to crime victims. We are asking you to participate in this research study because you are a student in one of the courses whose instructors have allowed us to conduct this study.
2. **Procedures to be followed:** This study takes place in a classroom setting. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete a short questionnaire asking you about a sexual interaction. You will also be asked to answer some questions regarding standard demographic background and some questions regarding your drinking habits and sexual attitudes.
3. **Duration:** This questionnaire should take about 10 minutes to complete.
4. **Statement of Confidentiality:** All data collected for this study remain anonymous. Your name will not be recorded nor connected to your questionnaire in any way. All information is to be stored electronically without identification so that your responses cannot be traced back to you.
5. **Right to Ask Questions:** Please contact Meghan Moorhouse at [mmm6195@psu.edu](mailto:mmm6195@psu.edu) or Barry Ruback at (814) 865-1307 or [rbr3@psu.edu](mailto:rbr3@psu.edu) with any questions or concerns about this study.
6. **Risks or Discomfort:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. If you experience any distress, you can contact the University's Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) office at 814-863-0395 or <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>
7. **Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may stop at any point in time during the study. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.
8. **Compensation for Participation:** Professor Yevchak has agreed to provide 1% of extra credit towards your lowest exam grade as compensation for filling out this questionnaire. If you choose not to complete the questionnaire, you will have an alternative extra credit option. The assignment requires you to complete a "No Judgment Day Challenge" and write a 500-word essay about your experience in trying to take the challenge. In order to complete the assignment, carefully read the blog post titled "For Your Next Personal Transformation" located on the NonJudgment Day Project website. Essays must be thoughtful and at least 500 words in length to receive credit. Submit your essay by **midnight on \_\_\_\_\_**. \* Email as a word document attachment to [mmm6195@psu.edu](mailto:mmm6195@psu.edu). Contact Meghan Moorhouse if you have any questions about this alternative extra credit assignment. Here is the link to the blog entry for the challenge:  
<http://www.nonjudgmentday.org/judgment-card-gallery-blog/for-your-next-personal-transformation>

\*Date will depend on when the study receives IRB approval

9. **Study Requirements:** You must be 18 or older to participate in this study.

### Consent Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Title of Project:** Advising Victims of Crime

**Principal Investigator:** Meghan Moorhouse  
 Department of Sociology and Criminology  
 211 Oswald Tower  
 University Park, PA 16802  
 (410) 699-6571; [mmm6195@psu.edu](mailto:mmm6195@psu.edu)

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  6. **Risks or Discomfort:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. If you experience any distress, you can contact the University's Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) office at 814-863-0395 or <https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>
  7. **Voluntary Participation:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may stop at any point in time during the study. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer.
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<http://www.nonjudgmentday.org/judgment-card-gallery-blog/for-your-next-personal-transformation>
- \* Date will depend on when the study receives IRB approval
9. **Study Requirements:** You must be 18 or older to participate in this study.

## Appendix C

### Questionnaire

Victims of crime often rely on advice of others when deciding whether or not they should report a crime to the police. Consider the situation described below and indicate the degree to which you would advise the victim to report her situation to the police. On the scales provided below, circle the number that best represents your response.

*Situation: Your female friend says that she was sober and was forced to have sexual intercourse without her consent with a stranger who was drunk.*

Indicate the degree to which you would advise your female friend to report the incident.

Very strongly disapprove of calling the police    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9    Very strongly approve of calling the police

To what extent do you think your female friend is responsible for the situation?

Female friend is not at all responsible.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9    Female Friend is fully responsible

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Your female friend should not have put herself in that situation.

Very Strongly Disagree    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9    Very Strongly Agree

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Although the male stranger is at fault, your female friend should also take some blame for the situation.

Very Strongly Disagree    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9    Very Strongly Agree

To what extent do you think the male stranger is responsible for the situation?

Male stranger is not at all responsible.    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9    Male stranger is fully responsible

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Although what the male stranger did was wrong, he is not fully to blame for the situation.

Very Strongly Disagree    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9    Very Strongly Agree

To what extent do you agree with the following statement: The male stranger is fully to blame for the situation.

Very Strongly Disagree    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9    Very Strongly Agree

Please answer the following questions.

What is your age?

\_\_\_\_\_ years old

What is your gender?

- Male  
 Female  
 Other

What is your race?

- White  
 Hispanic  
 Black  
 Asian  
 Mixed/Multiple Ethnic Groups  
 Other

How often do you drink?

- Never  
 Rarely, only on special occasions  
 Only on weekends  
 3-5 times a week  
 Everyday

During the last social drinking event you attended, how many drinks did you consume? Circle your response below.  
 (One drink ≈ one beer or one shot of alcohol)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

How many times in the past month have you consumed 5 or more drinks in one sitting? Circle your response below.

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

Listed below are several statements that reflect different attitudes about sex. For each statement mark the response on the scale that indicates how much you agree or disagree with that statement. If you have never had a sexual relationship, answer in terms of what you think your responses would most likely be.

	Strongly Agree	Moderately Agree	Neutral	Moderately Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I do not need to be committed to a person to have sex with him/her.					
Casual sex is acceptable.					
I would like to have sex with many partners.					
One-night stands are sometimes very enjoyable.					
It is okay to have ongoing sexual relationships with more than one person at a time.					
Sex as a simple exchange of favors is okay if both people agree to it.					
The best sex is with no strings attached.					
Life would have fewer problems if people could have sex more freely.					
It is possible to enjoy sex with a person and not like that person very much.					
It is okay for sex to be just good physical release.					

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## ACADEMIC VITA

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#### **Education:**

- The Pennsylvania State University – University Park, PA
- Bachelor of Arts in Criminology
- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
- Honors in Criminology, Schreyer Honors College
- Thesis Title: Advising Victims of Sexual Assault

#### **Honors and Awards:**

- Paterno Liberal Arts Undergraduate Program Fellow (Fall 2014- Present)
- Dean's List (Fall 2014- Present)
- Liberal Arts College Endowment (Spring 2017)
- Susan Welch Dean's Chair Liberal Arts Scholarship (Fall 2017)
- Volk & Marsh Crime, Law, and Justice Scholarship (Fall 2017)

#### **Professional and Research Experience:**

- Student Intern – Penn State Justice and Safety Institute
- Shift Manager – Baby's Burgers and Shakes, State College
- Poster Presentation - American Society of Criminology Annual Conference – Philadelphia, PA
  - Title: Victim and Offender Blame in Sexual Assault: The Role of Alcohol (November 2017)

#### **Skills:**

- Proficient in Spanish
- Skilled in the Microsoft Office suites
- Strong written and oral communication skills