Race and Rape Blame

By: Amber, Caitlin, Christian, Katherine and Piper
Previous Research

Article Reviews
**Tawana Brawley Case 1987**

- African American 15-year-old female
- Wappinger Falls, New York
- Raped by 6 Caucasian men
- Jury verdict – insufficient evidence to charge defendants
Purpose

* Examined rape blame as a function of alcohol presence and resistance type

Design

* 2 X 2 X 2 Between Groups Factorial
Hypotheses

1. Alcohol would affect rates of blame of victim and perpetrator
2. Interaction of resistance level and participant gender
3. Female victim and male perpetrator responsibility would correlate with AWS and AEQ 3
Independent Variables

- Alcohol (present vs. absent)
- Resistance type (high vs. low)
- Participant gender (M vs. F)

Dependent Variable

- Responsibility for sexual assault
Participants

* 213 (70 M, 143 F)
* Age - 18-23
* Southeastern University
* Offered 1 Credit Hour
Method

- Given written scenarios
  - Emily and Larry
- Answered 9 questions
  - Q 1-7 = 7 point Likert scale
  - Q 8-9 = continuous line marked (0-7)
Results

1. Responsibility varied by alcohol presence
2. Amount of resistance not a factor in responsibility
   - Gender of participant was also not a factor in assigning blame to female target
3. Female victim rape blame correlated to AWS

Sims, Noel, Maisto (2007)
Race and Rape Blame

Current Study
Purpose

* Examined the effect of race on rape blame
  * African American vs. Caucasian

Hypothesis

* African American women will be given more responsibility for rape and will lead the perpetrator on more than Caucasians
Methods

* **Variables**
  * **Independent Variable: Race**
    * 2 Levels: African American or Caucasian
  * **Dependent Variable: Responsibility Attribution**
    * 3 Levels in the form of 3 questions
1. “How responsible is Christina for this?”
2. “How responsible is Ryan for this?”
3. “Do you think Christina was leading Ryan on?”

* Measured on 7-point Likert scale
  * Q 1-2 Absolutely None – Completely
  * Q 3 Absolutely Not – Completely
Participants

* Undergraduate Students at UNCW
* N = 49 (21 M, 28 F)
* Age range: 19-53
* Demographics: African American, Caucasian, Asian
Materials

- Printed sheet with 2 scenarios & 3 questions
- Writing utensil (e.g. pen)
- Coin (e.g. quarter)
Procedure

- Randomization = coin flip
- Given sheet A (African American) or B (Caucasian)
- Filled in demographic info: age, race, gender
- Read vignette, then answered 3 questions
You are walking to your apartment when you see a [race (Caucasian, African American)] girl who looks upset and disheveled. You approach her and ask if she is okay. She introduces herself as Christina and continues to tell you what had just occurred.

Ryan met Christina at a bar while she was celebrating her friend’s 21st birthday. He bought Christina several drinks after they talked for a while and at the end of the night he asked her to leave with him.

Christina left with Ryan and they went back to his apartment. Immediately they begin to make out and Ryan began to take her clothes off. Christina told him no, but Ryan continued to force himself on her and removed her clothes. Christina continued to tell him to stop, but Ryan did not comply. Ryan and Christina had sex.
Results

- **Objective:** add dimension of race to determine if there is a difference in amount of blame

- Two independent samples $t$-tests conducted, one with Asian-Americans included, and one without

- Third paired samples $t$-test conducted for questions 1 & 2
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean(SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.36 (1.50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cauc</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.83 (2.01)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>6.24 (1.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cauc</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.33 (0.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>AA</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1.60 (1.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cauc</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1.92 (1.99)</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Question #</td>
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<td>Mean (SD)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cauc.</td>
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<td>1.38 (1.50)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As. Am.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.0 (2.65)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cauc.</td>
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<td>1.76 (1.99)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>As. Am.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.0 (2.0)</td>
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Results of Independent $t$-tests

- **Asian-American Included**
  - $t(47) = -0.94, p = 0.35$
  - $t(47) = -0.27, p = 0.79$
  - $t(47) = -0.62, p = 0.54$

- **Asian American Excluded**
  - $t(42) = -0.05, p = 0.96$
  - $t(42) = -0.65, p = 0.52$
  - $t(42) = -0.31, p = 0.76$
Graph

Mean Rating

Question

1

2

3

1

Caucasian

African American
## Results of Paired samples t-test

### Questions 1 & 2 (only)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Question #</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.59 (1.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.29 (1.23)</td>
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\[ t(47) = -13.27 \ p < 0.001 \]

* All participants are significantly more likely to blame Ryan more than Christina, regardless of her race
Two independent samples t-tests conducted

1st t-test:
- Included all participants
- Insignificant – no correlation between race and rape blame
Discussion

- **Two independent samples t-test conducted**
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} t-test:
    - Excluded Asian Americans
    - Insignificant – no correlation between race and rape blame
* Paired samples t-test conducted

* 3rd t-test
  * Included all participants
  * Participants significantly more likely to blame Ryan over Christina regardless of race
Discussion

- **Attribution Theory** (Workman & Freeburg 1999) - blame before responsibility and responsibility before cause
  - 1. Current study

- **Social Justification Theory** (Stahl et al. 2010) – “threat to status quo”
  - 1. Sims et al. (2007)
Hypothesis – not supported

* African American women will be given more responsibility for rape and will lead the perpetrator on more than Caucasians
Limitations

- Social desirability bias
- Race in scenario not apparent
- Assumed race of perpetrator
- Mostly white college girls (Psychology major)
Future Research

* Perpetrator as a different race or gender
* Manipulating more than one independent variable
* Stereotypes and gender roles
References


