

Alcohol mediates the relationship
between alcohol and reporting rape
to the police

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ALCOHOL AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

- Sexual violence often occurs in and around drinking establishments (e.g., Anderson, Hughes, & Bellis, 2007)
- Rape perpetrators seem to target people who are alcohol-intoxicated (Lisak & Miller, 2002)



ALCOHOL AND REPORTING RAPE

- Survivors are more likely to be held responsible for rape if they had voluntarily consumed alcohol (Sims, Noel, & Maisto, 2007)
- Alcohol can reduce the odds rape is reported to the authorities (Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2011)
- How might survivor's alcohol-intoxication during rape impact whether the attack is reported?



ALCOHOL AND RAPE REPORTING

- Women who were alcohol-intoxicated might be less likely to report rape because they are less likely to *perceive* the sexual contact as nonconsensual
 - People negatively judge the character of women who voluntarily consume alcohol in potentially risky situations (Grubb & Turner, 2012) – **women may internalise this view**
 - Women's alcohol consumption is stereotypically associated with sexual availability (e.g., Abbey, Zawacki, & McAuslan, 2000) – **women may internalise this view**
 - Alcohol impairs women's ability to detect sexually aggressive cues (Loiselle & Fuqua, 2007; c.f. Pumphrey-Gordon & Gross, 2007)—**this may impact on how they remember the event**

ALCOHOL AND RAPE REPORTING

- Women might be less likely to report rape because they are less likely to *interpret and remember* the sexual contact as nonconsensual
- Her behaviour during the attack and the events leading up to it could lead her to conclude the sexual contact was consensual (Flowe et al., 2017)

ALCOHOL AND RAPE REPORTING

- Women who were alcohol-intoxicated during the rape might be less likely to report it because they don't think others will believe them
- Community women (i.e., sex workers, those working as exotic dancers) just as likely to perceive nonconsensual sexual intercourse as rape but are far less likely to say they would report it to the police (Flowe, Ebbesen, & Putcha-Bhagavatula, 2007)
- Women may blame the assault on their own character or behaviour (Finkelson & Oswald, 1995; Janoff-Bulman, 1979)

BELIEFS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND BEHAVIOUR

Alcohol expectancies can bias evaluations of sexual situations

- Women who expect to be more sexually responsive after consuming alcohol are:
 - More likely to have a history of severe sexual victimisation (Testa & Dermen, 1999)
 - Less likely to indicate they would resist when they evaluate a hypothetical rape (Pumphrey-Gordon & Gross, 2007)

PREDICTIONS

Women who consumed or who expected to consume alcohol

- 1) will be less likely to perceive the non-consensual sexual intercourse depicted in the scenario as rape;
- 2) will be less likely to report it to the police as rape; and
- 3) will be more likely to blame the assault on their own behaviour.

Further, it was hypothesized that self-blame would mediate any significant association found between alcohol consumption/expectancy and rape reporting.

PARTICIPANTS



- 79 women between the ages of 18 and 32 ($M = 20.38$)

DESIGN

- We ran a 2 beverage (alcohol or tonic) x 2 expectancy (told alcohol or told tonic) factorial design
- Women were randomly assigned to a condition

To control beverage:

- In the alcohol group, women received vodka, tonic and limes, and they were dosed to achieve an average BAC of .075%
- In the tonic group, women were given tonic water and limes that were soaked in vodka

To control expectancy:

- Half of the participants in each beverage group were told they had received vodka, and the other half were told they had received tonic.

DESIGN

- Measures
 - Rape Attribution Questionnaire (RAQ) (Frazier, 2003)
 - Five-point Likert-type scale that is anchored from 'Never' to 'Very Often'
 - Characterological self-blame subscale measures the belief that one has contributed to the sexual assault (e.g., 'I am just the victim type.')
 - Behavioural self-blame subscale measures the belief that one's behaviour led to the sexual assault ('I just put myself into a vulnerable position.')
 - Rape perception (7 point Likert-type scale)
 - Rape reporting (7 point Likert-type scale)
- Full ethical approval
 - Followed BPS ethics requirements
 - Informed consent procedures utilised

SCREENING



- Medical conditions
- Medication
- Problem drinking behaviours
- Pregnancy

Stage 1

Screening

Stage 2 Experiment

Beverage
And
Expectancy
Manipulation

Interactive
Scenario

Stage 3

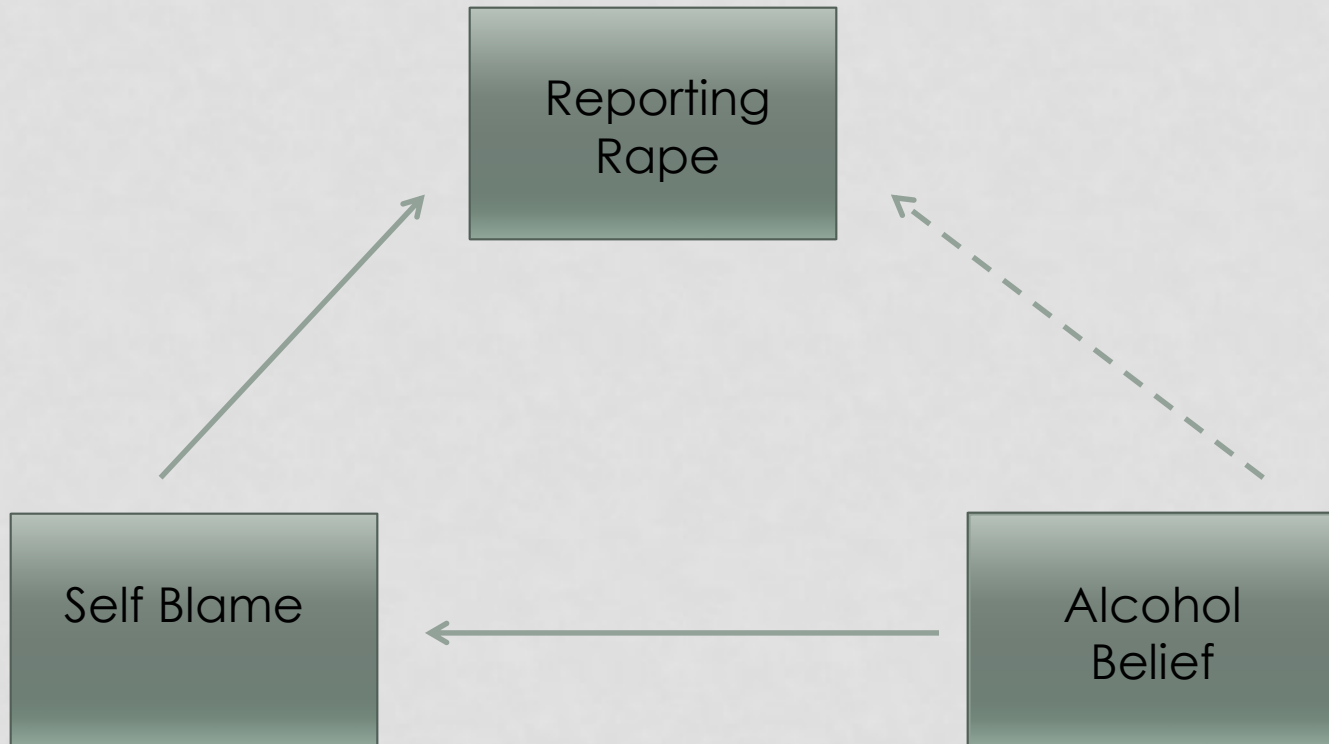


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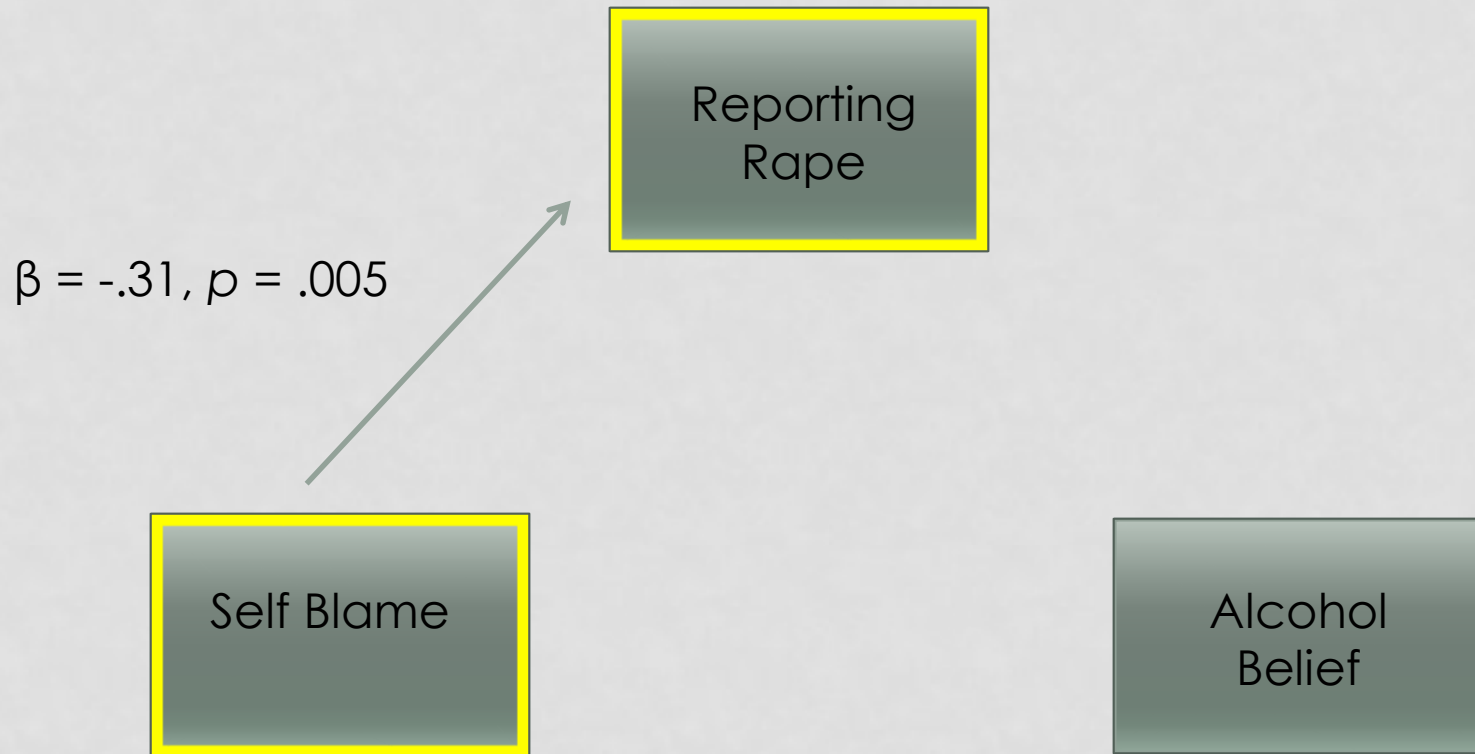


Finally, all participants were fully debriefed regarding the aims of the study.

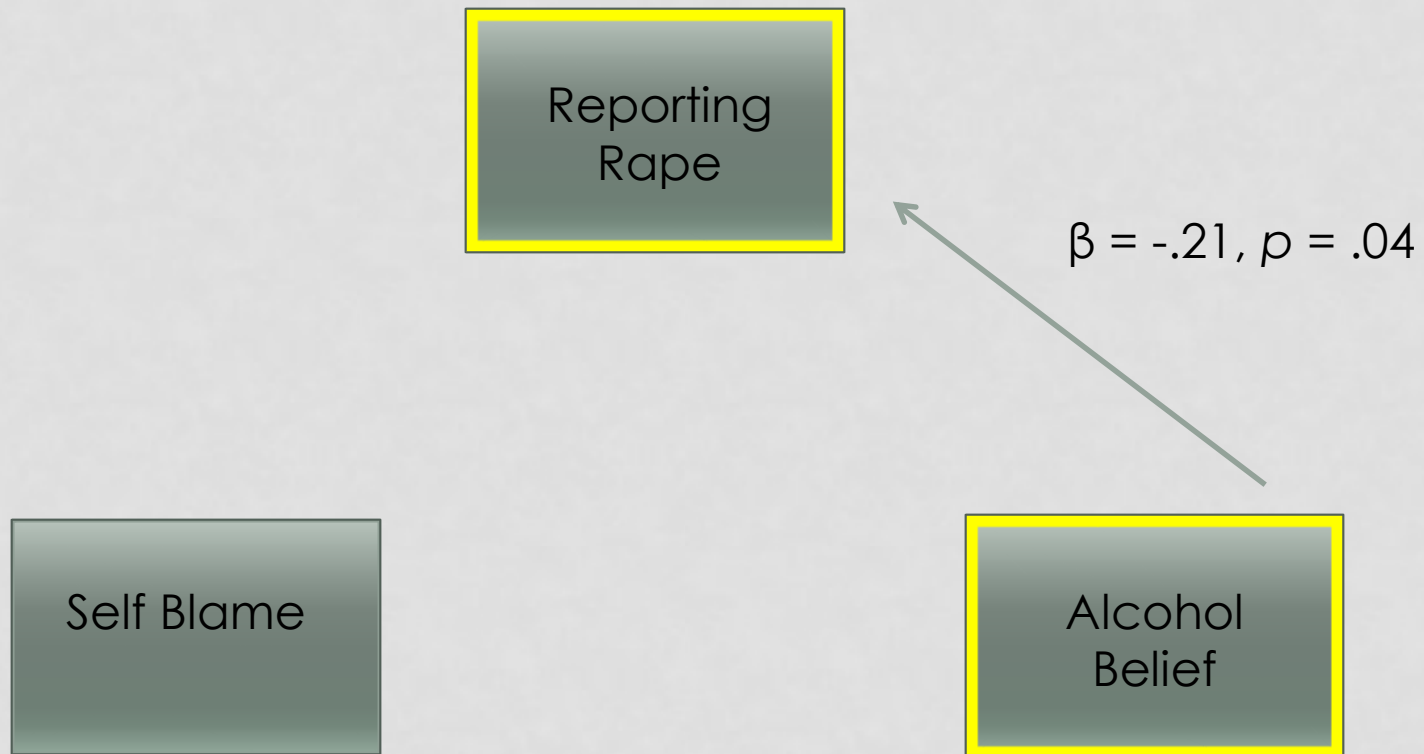
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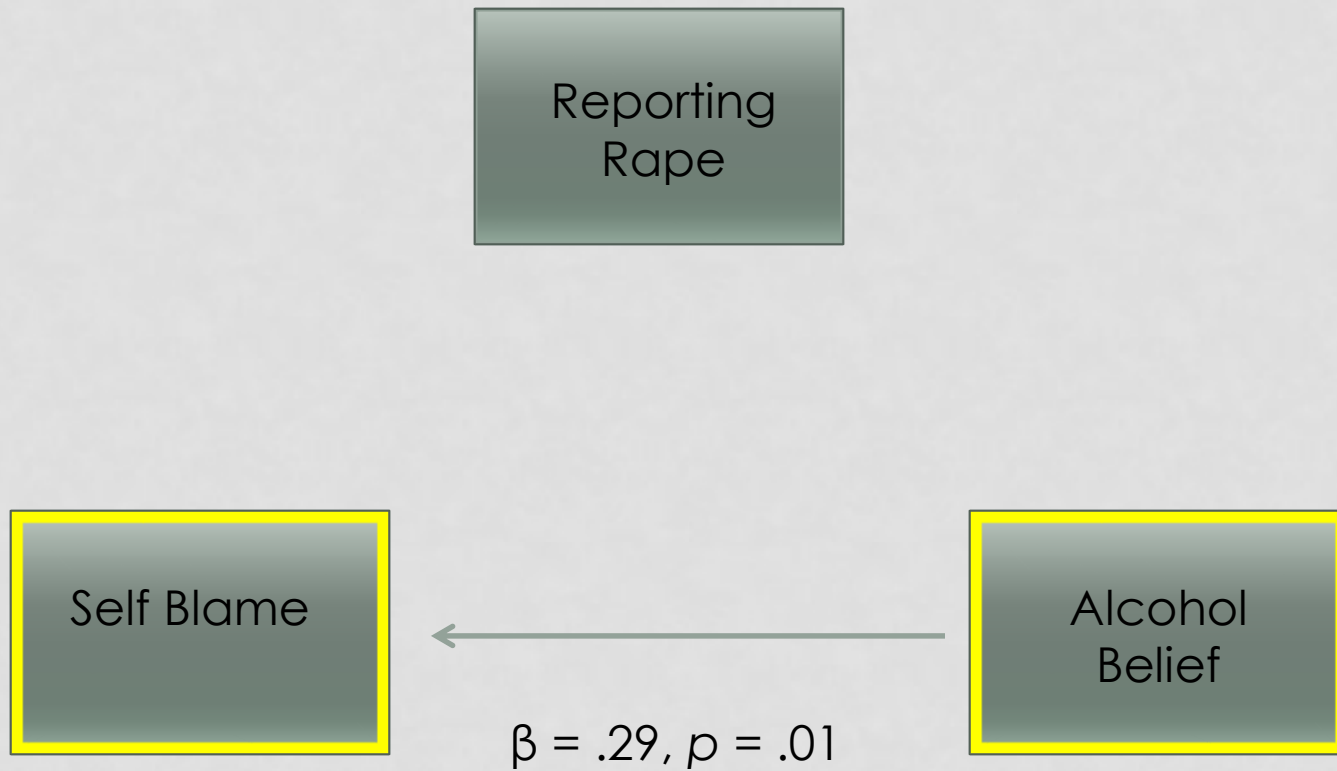
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MEDIATION ANALYSIS

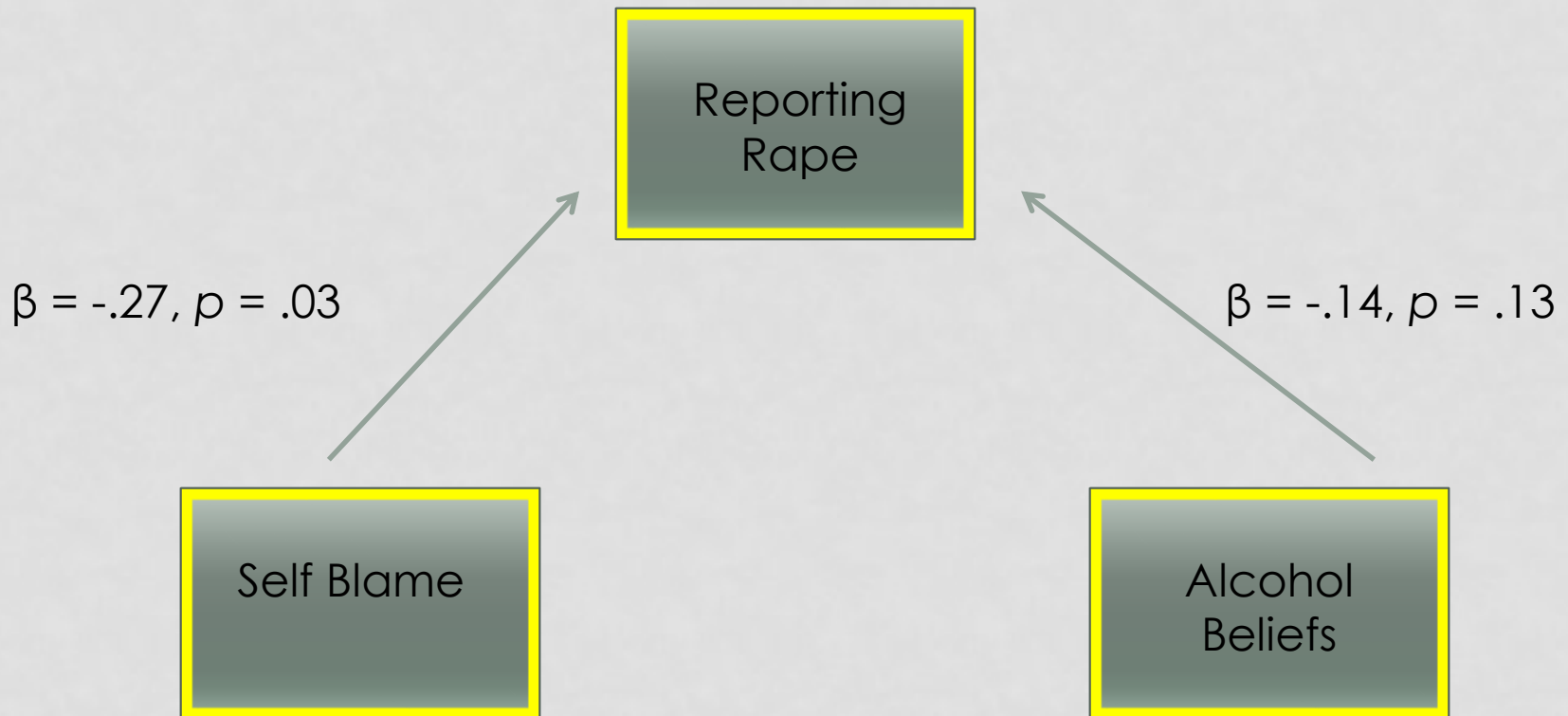


MEDIATION ANALYSIS



MEDIATION ANALYSIS

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Thus, self-blame mediates the relationship between alcohol consumption beliefs and rape reporting.

CONCLUSION

- Participants who believed that they had consumed alcohol rather than a non-alcoholic beverage engaged in more self-blame and, consequently, indicated that they would be less willing to report rape to the police in response to a hypothetical rape scenario

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Self-blame is particularly common soon after victimization (Ullman, 2010), and therefore, education about the self-blame seems particularly important for first responders (e.g., police, medical and mental health professionals), who are likely to shape the victims' perceptions of self-blame and whether legal remedy should be pursued.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Further research is needed to understand how first responders and others can best support victims who disclose that they were raped while alcohol-intoxicated.
- Those who work with complainants may also benefit from training on how to be supportive following rape disclosure, and the importance of being supportive rather than reacting negatively with respect to complainant recovery.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- The results could be used to develop educational programmes about the role of alcohol in rape victim self-blame.
- The results of the current research imply that attributional retraining (see Murdock & Altamier, 1991) as a part of treatment and recovery programmes may be important for victims who were alcohol-intoxicated during rape, and research in this regard seems warranted.

NEW EVIDENCE FOR PRACTICE CONFERENCE

Conference:

- *Interviewing Intoxicated Victims: New Evidence for Practice*
- July 17th @ Leicester Police HQ

Get in touch if you would like further information about the paper:

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Email me if you would like to attend the conference
(Space is limited)