

Do drinkers let other drinkers off the hook?

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Research Questions

- How do people make judgements about deviant acts (physical assault, theft, robbery) and the role of the people involved (offender, victim)?
- How does the use of alcohol by an offender and/or a victim influence those judgements (attributions)?

Hypotheses

- **Below-average drinkers-** intoxicated offenders more responsible
- **Offender intoxicated-** less responsibility
- **Victim intoxicated-** more responsibility
- **Neither Intoxicated-** more offender responsibility, file a police report high, low forgiveness
- **Both intoxicated-** more victim responsibility, high forgiveness
- **Assault-** file a police report low, forgiveness high
- **Robbery-** file a police report high, forgiveness low
- **Theft-** file a police report high, forgiveness low

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Attribution Theory

- Causal interpretations
- Attribution to the person- high consistency, low consensus, low distinctiveness
- Attribution to an environmental stimulus- low consistency, high consensus, high distinctiveness

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Alcohol and Deviance

- **Selective Disinhibition-** alcohol disinhibits deviance
- **Just World Hypothesis-** decreases responsibility of an intoxicated offender
- Intoxication of the offender may be used as an excuse for their actions because of the belief that alcohol, as a disinhibitor, causes bad behavior, disregarding individual motivation.



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Dependent Variables

- To what extent did alcohol influence the offender?
- To what extent did alcohol influence the victim?
- Should a police report be filed against the offender for what happened?
- How responsible is the offender for what happened?
- How responsible is the victim for what happened?
- To what level should the victim forgive the offender?

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Methods

- **Vignettes examples:**
- **Physical Assault-** Jon is at a crowded house party. He is not drinking alcohol on this particular night. Dan, who is an acquaintance of Jon's, is also at the party. Dan is intoxicated to the point of being drunk. They bump into each other and get into an argument. Dan insults Jon in a cocky manner. Jon is really aggravated and he hits Dan.
- **Robbery-** Matt is at a crowded house party. He is intoxicated to the point of being drunk. Mike, who is an acquaintance of Matt's, is also at the party. Mike is intoxicated to the point of being drunk. Mike's wallet is peeking out of his front pocket. Matt notices the wallet and pushes Mike to the ground. Then, Matt forcibly takes Mike's wallet and runs out the door.
- **Theft-** Jack is at a crowded house party. He is not drinking alcohol on this particular night. Don, who is an acquaintance of Jack's, is also at the party. Don is intoxicated to the point of being drunk. Don set his jacket on the couch and went downstairs. Jack noticed Don's wallet in the jacket pocket. Jack took Don's wallet without anyone seeing and left. Brooke Haugen (2005) SRI, University of Minnesota

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Interesting Results

- **Offender intoxicated-** police report should be filed rated low.
- **Victim intoxicated-** higher responsibility to the victim.
- **Neither intoxicated-** the offender should not be forgiven on a personal level rated high.
- **Both intoxicated-** higher responsibility to the victim.
- **Offender sober / Victim intoxicated-** higher responsibility to the victim.

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Conclusions

- Legal implications
- Limitations- number of participants, offender and victim are both male, attribution biases
- Future Research