Men in mixed-race relationships were more likely to report the assault as rape than men in same-race relationships (Mengeling et al., 2014) regardless of whether reporting their own victimization experience (Mengeling et al., 2014) or reporting someone else’s experience (Mengeling et al., 2014). Therefore, it is possible that the same factors that influence reporting of personal rape victimization also influence reporting of the experience of a friend or acquaintance. In this case, the potential for mixed-race relationships to be under-represented in the relevant literature, combined with the potential for a wider range of experiences to be under-represented in the relevant literature, may mean that the findings of the current study are an underestimate of the true effects of mixed-race relationships on reporting of sexual assault.

Design & Procedures

The multiple-segment vignettes approach was used to carefully control for confounding variables such as gender, relationship, and race. As hypothesized, the race of the victim, the race of the perpetrator, and the presence or non-presence of physical evidence were found to be significant predictors of respondents’ tendency to report the assault. These findings are consistent with previous research that has found that both the race of the victim and the race of the perpetrator influence respondents’ tendency to report sexual assault (Hargrove et al., 2014). The current study extends this research by finding that both the race of the victim and the presence of physical evidence are significant predictors of respondents’ tendency to report the assault.

Analytic Approach

The data were analyzed using logistic regression analyses for predicting respondents’ tendency to report the assault. Respondents were first assigned to one of two conditions: a condition in which the race of the victim was White and the race of the perpetrator was Black, and a condition in which the race of the victim was Black and the race of the perpetrator was White. The race of the victim was manipulated using a 2 (race of victim: White vs. Black) x 2 (race of perpetrator: White vs. Black) between-subjects design. The presence or non-presence of physical evidence was manipulated using a 2 (physical evidence: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. Therefore, there were four experimental conditions: White victim/White perpetrator with physical evidence, White victim/White perpetrator without physical evidence, Black victim/Black perpetrator with physical evidence, and Black victim/Black perpetrator without physical evidence. Respondents in each condition were presented with a vignette that varied according to the manipulation of race and physical evidence.

Results

Logistic regression analyses were conducted for each experimental condition. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 1. The results indicate that the race of the victim and the presence of physical evidence were significant predictors of respondents’ tendency to report the assault. The results also indicate that the race of the perpetrator was not a significant predictor of respondents’ tendency to report the assault.

Conclusion

As hypothesized, the race of the victim, the race of the perpetrator, and the presence or non-presence of physical evidence were found to be significant predictors of respondents’ tendency to report the assault. These findings suggest that respondents are more likely to report the assault when the victim is White and the perpetrator is Black, and when there is physical evidence of injury. These findings are consistent with previous research that has found that both the race of the victim and the race of the perpetrator influence respondents’ tendency to report sexual assault (Hargrove et al., 2014). The current study extends this research by finding that both the race of the victim and the presence of physical evidence are significant predictors of respondents’ tendency to report the assault.

It is important to note that the current study was conducted with a sample of university students, and therefore the findings may not be generalizable to other populations. Additionally, the current study was conducted in a laboratory setting, and it is possible that the findings may not generalize to real-world situations. Further research is needed to replicate these findings in different settings and with different populations.