

Cognitive Distortions May not be Attitudes Towards Rape

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Cognitive Distortions and Sexual Aggression

- ❖ Potential *dynamic* risk factors/targets for treatment (Andrews & Bonta, 2010; Olver & Wong, 2011).
- ❖ Most past research has used self-report scales
 - ❖ "If a man has had sex with a woman before, then he should be able to have sex with her any time he wants" (Bumby, 1996).
- ❖ Scores on these kinds of scales are associated with sexual aggression (Bumby, 1996; DeGue, et al., 2010; Helmus et al., 2013; Malamuth, 2003; Marshall & Barbaree, 1990; O' Ciartha & Ward, 2013).

Attitudes and Sexual Aggression

- ❖ Although these scales were designed to assess cognitive distortions, they are often referred to and thought of as "attitude scales".
- ❖ However, it is not obvious whether the items within these self-report scales assess attitudes towards rape or some other construct.
- ❖ If the items are assessing another construct it would be important to know this because different cognitions may serve different functions in the offense process (Gannon & Polaschek, 2006; Maruna & Mann, 2006).

Research Questions

Does a widely used self-report scale (i.e., RAPE Scale; Bumby, 1996) assess attitudes towards rape?

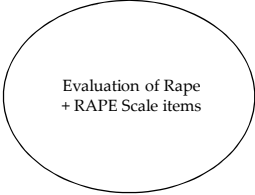
Are attitudes and the cognitions assessed by the RAPE scale independently associated with sexually aggressive behaviour?

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Research Question: *Does the RAPE scale assess attitudes towards rape?*

- ❖ EFA is used to identify clusters of variables.
- ❖ Variables that belong to the same cluster are assumed to be related, or driven by the same underlying construct.
- ❖ Our underlying construct of interest was attitudes (i.e., evaluation of rape scale).

Exploratory Factor Analysis



Evaluation of Rape
+ RAPE Scale items

One factor: would suggest both scales measure attitudes

Results

Hierarchical Regression for the Likelihood to Rape Outcome

	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	ΔR ²	B	B SE	β
Block 1	.35	.12	.12*	.12*			
RAPE scale					.02*	.002	.27
Block 2	.42	.17	.17	.05*			
RAPE scale					.01*	.002	.27
Eval of Rape scale					.61*	.097	.24

* $p < .05$

Summary

- ❖ The RAPE scale and Evaluation of Rape Scale formed separate factors suggesting the RAPE scale may not measure attitudes towards rape.
- ❖ Hypothesis 2 was supported:
 - ❖ Both the RAPE scale and Evaluation of Rape scale were independently associated with sexually aggressive behaviour, and were more strongly associated with sexual aggression together than apart.
- ❖ These results suggest that the RAPE scale and Evaluation of Rape scale may provide complementary information relevant to sexual aggression.

Limitations

- ❖ Student sample
- ❖ RAPE scale typically used on sex offenders
- ❖ Unknown validity of the Evaluation of Rape scale
 - ❖ Osgood et al., (1957) Factor Analysis
 - ❖ Found that similar anchors (e.g., good-bad, pleasant-unpleasant, all loaded onto an evaluative factor)
- ❖ Reliance on self-report measures
 - ❖ Although some participants may not have answered honestly studies show antisocial behaviour can be accurately assessed using self-report measures (e.g., Mathie & Wakeling, 2011; Thornberry & Krohn, 2000; Woods, Hermann, Nunes, McPhail, & Sewell, 2011)
- ❖ Cross-Sectional Study

Future Research

- ❖ Replication with another student sample, a community sample, and an offender sample
- ❖ Explore implicit and explicit attitudes (i.e., not solely relying on self-report)
- ❖ Replicate findings with a longitudinal design
 - ❖ Provide more insight into the direction of the relationship between constructs

Conclusion

- ❖ A greater emphasis on precision and clarity in measuring the cognitions associated with sexual offending will facilitate a more thorough understanding of these constructs.
- ❖ This will lead to improvements in theory, research, assessment, and treatment of sexually aggressive behaviour.

Thank you!

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Questions?

More about our research
Aggressive Cognitions and Behaviour Research Lab
<http://www.carleton.ca/acbrlab/>

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