Implicit and Explicit Attitudes Towards Rape, Rape Outcome Expectancies, and Sexual Aggression

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Overview

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Introduction

- Past research has found 4.3% to 15% of community and college men commit rape and 11% to 64% commit sexually aggressive acts (e.g., Abbey, Koss, Kingree, Goree, & Rice, 2010)
- Research suggests cognition supportive of offending is an important factor associated with sexually and non-sexually violent behaviour (e.g., Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Ward, Gannon, & Keown, 2006)

Definition of attitudes

- Attitudes have typically been defined as summary evaluations (e.g., positive vs. negative of psychological objects) (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993)
  - Attitudes towards rape are evaluations of rape
- Implicit attitudes: immediately automatically activated evaluations of a psychological object (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006)
  - response latency measures (i.e., IAT)
- Explicit attitudes: deliberative propositional reasoning about a psychological object (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006)
  - self-report measures
- Implicit and explicit attitudes are distinct constructs (e.g., Nosek & Smyth, 2007) and independently predict behaviour (Cameron, Brown-Imagine, & Payne, 2012)

Past Research

- Only two studies to date have examined implicit attitudes towards rape using response latency measures
  1. Nunes, Hermann, & Ratcliffe (2013):
     - Found implicit and explicit attitudes towards rape were independently associated with past sexually aggressive behaviour
  2. Widman & Olson (2012):
     - Found implicit attitudes towards rape were positively associated with past sexually aggressive behaviour among student and community men
**Purpose and Hypotheses**

- **Purpose:**
  - Replicate and further examine the relationship between implicit and explicit attitudes towards rape and sexual aggression by implementing implicit attitude measures.

- **Hypotheses:**
  - Implicit and explicit attitudes towards rape will be:
    1. Intercorrelated (associated with one another)
    2. Are associated with self-reported sexually aggressive behaviour (past and future likelihood)
    3. Explicit attitudes will moderate the relationship between implicit attitudes and sexually aggressive behaviour

**Measures**

### Implicit Attitudes Towards Rape

1. **Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998)**
   - **Categories:**
     - “Rape + Positive” and “Consenting Sex + Negative”
     - “Rape + Negative” and “Consenting Sex + Positive”
   - Measures response latencies
   - Faster response latencies when sorting words for categories that share greater association
   - Compute difference score = [Rape + Negative] – [Rape + Positive]
   - Internal consistency = .58

### Implicit Attitude Measures (cont.)

2. **Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP; Payne, Cheng, Govorun, & Stewart, 2005)**
   - **Procedure:** Show a prime word (e.g., rape) for 200 ms, blank screen for 125 ms, then neutral Chinese character for 100 ms, and then a grey screen
   - Evaluate whether Chinese character is positive or negative
   - Expect that prime will influence the evaluation of Chinese character
   - Those who view rape positively will evaluate the Chinese character more positively following a rape prime word
   - Higher scores indicate a more positive evaluation of the prime word

### Explicit Attitudes Towards Rape

1. **Semantic Differential Measure (SDRAPE)**
   - Five 7-point bipolar scales assessing rape (i.e., rape is...)
     - negative to positive
     - bad to good
     - not enjoyable to enjoyable
     - wrong to right
     - immoral to moral
   - The index used is the average of the scales assessing rape.
   - Higher SDRAPE scores indicate more positive evaluations of rape
   - Internal consistency was .90

### Behavioural Outcome Measures

1. **Past Sexual Aggression:**
   - **Coercive Sexuality Scale (CSS; Rapaport & Burkhart, 1984)**
     - Used modified CSS (as described previously)
     - Used continuous scores rather than grouped

2. **Future Likelihood of Sexual Aggression:**
   - **Date Rape Analogue (DRA; Pullman, 2011)**
     - Measures of self-reported future likelihood of sexual aggression
     - Read a story describing date-like interaction between man and women (POV of male)
     - Higher scores indicate greater likelihood of future sexual aggression
   - **Likelihood to Rape Question (LR; Malamuth, 1981)**
### Method

- **Sample used**
  - Initial sample was 86 heterosexual male Carleton undergraduates
  - Excluded:
    - Those most sexual attracted to men or both men and women and (n = 6)
    - Who could not understand written English (n = 0)
    - Who could understand written and/or spoken Chinese (n = 5)
    - Those who had response latencies faster than 300 ms on more than 10% of the IAT trials (n = 4)
  - This left a final sample of 72 males

### Results

#### Pearson’s r Correlations

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<td>9. DRA</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>-.45**</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>.52***</td>
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* *p < .05
** *p < .01
*** *p < .001

* Inversely transformed

### Results (cont.)

- Examined interactions between implicit and explicit attitudes towards rape
  - Determine whether explicit attitudes towards rape moderates the relationship between implicit attitudes towards rape and sexually aggressive behaviour
  - Moderator: Relationship between 2 variables is different at different levels of a 3rd variable
  - Q 1: Does the relationship between implicit attitudes towards rape and sexually aggressive behaviour differ depending on one’s explicit attitude towards rape?
Results (cont.)

- Interactions between implicit and explicit attitudes:
  - Rape Evaluation IAT × Semantic Differential (SDRAPE)
  - Rape Evaluation IAT × Rape Outcome Expectancies (ROE)
  - AMP × Semantic Differential (SDRAPE)
  - AMP × Rape Outcome Expectancies (ROE)
- No meaningful significant results were found using DRA, LR, or CSS as outcome

Summary of Results

- Intercorrelated?
  - Implicit and explicit attitudes (SDRAPE) - No
  - Implicit and outcome expectancies (ROE & ROEVAL) - Yes
  - Implicit measures - No
  - Semantic differential scale and outcome expectancies - Yes
- Associated with sexual aggression?
  - Explicit evaluations of rape (semantic differential)
    - associated with past and future self-reported likelihood of sexual aggression
  - Rape outcome expectancy scale (ROE)
    - Associated with past sexual aggression only
  - Implicit evaluations of rape (i.e., IAT)
    - Not associated with past or future likelihood of sexual aggression
  - AMP not associated with anything

Interpretations

- Consistent with previous research we found that implicit and explicit attitudes towards rape are significantly associated with one another
- However...
- Inconsistent with previous research
  - Only explicit attitudes towards rape were significantly associated with sexually aggressive behaviour
- Therefore...
  - Attitudes towards rape (explicit) appear to be important factors associated with sexually aggressive behaviour
  - Consistent with research suggesting attitudes influence various behaviours

Limitations

- Study used a sample of male undergraduate students who reported little past sexually aggressive behaviour
- Cross-sectional nature of the data (data on all measures collected at same time)
- The fact that there were so few sexually aggressive participants

Future Directions

- Look at the association between attitudes towards rape and sexually aggressive behaviour among a more sexually violent sample
- Examine potential causal relationships between attitudes towards rape and sexually aggressive behaviour

Thank you

Questions?


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