Implicit and Explicit Cognition Associated with Rape

Symposium Chair: Chantal A. Hermann, Ph.D. Candidate

This symposium addresses questions about cognitions regarding rape and their relationship with sexually aggressive behavior. The first paper examines the content, likelihood, and evaluation of expected outcomes of sexual aggression generated by male university students. The second paper examines the relationship between implicit attitudes towards rape, explicit attitudes towards rape, outcome expectancies for rape, self-reported proclivity to rape, and past sexually coercive behavior. The third paper examines the effectiveness of a video-based rape prevention program developed for students in changing attitudes, outcome expectancies, and proclivity to rape, as well as whether treatment effectiveness is moderated by psychopathy and past sexually coercive behavior.

Expected Outcomes of Rape

Mandie E. Woods, B.A. Honours
Cathrine Pettersen, B.A. Honours
Chantal A. Hermann, Ph.D. Candidate
Kevin L. Nunes, Ph.D.

Researchers have found that expected likelihood of positive and negative outcomes of rape is related to sexually aggressive behavior (Bouffard, 2002; O’Donohue et al., 1996). However, these studies have generally not provided information about the specific outcomes generated by participants. For example, in some studies participants are given a list of outcomes assumed to be positive or negative and asked to rate the likelihood of each (e.g., O’Donohue et al., 1996). In other studies, participants are asked to generate possible outcomes on their own, but the researchers (understandably) report only very general outcome categories (e.g., Bouffard, 2002). Knowledge of the outcomes men expect for outcomes and their perceived likelihood and evaluation may provide insight into facilitating and inhibiting factors, which could inform strategies for preventing sexual aggression. The purpose of the current study was to document specific outcomes of rape that men spontaneously generate, as well as assess the perceived likelihood and evaluation of these outcomes.

Male undergraduate students (N = 140) were asked to report “three things that could happen if you were to force a woman to have sex with you”. They also rated how likely it is that each outcome would happen and how positive or negative each outcome would be for them. A total of 77 distinct outcomes were reported; these were organized into broader categories. The most common outcomes reported were “going to jail/prison” (37.1% of the sample; n = 52), personal feelings of guilt (27.14%, n = 38), arrest (15%, n = 21), and emotionally damaging the victim (12.14%, n = 17). These outcomes
were rated, on average, as likely to occur and negative. The next most frequently reported outcome was being charged or accused of the rape (10.71%, n = 15), which was rated as likely and negative. The most positively evaluated outcomes involved sexual gratification or pleasure for either the participant or the victim. Sexual gratification for the victim (2.85%, n = 4) was rated as likely to occur and positive, and sexual gratification for the participant (10.71%, n = 15) was rated as likely to occur but neither positive nor negative.

Our findings shed light on the perceived possible outcomes of committing rape. Many respondents said going to jail and feelings of guilt were likely to occur if they committed rape. Most of the outcomes generated were perceived as negative, however, participants did identify some positive outcomes of rape. Future studies are warranted to explore if self-generated outcomes in other populations are similar, as well as if, and how, these outcomes impact sexually aggressive behavior. Identification of any outcomes of rape associated with sexually aggressive behavior could aid intervention efforts, such as date rape prevention programs, in determining the most effective program targets.

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

Sacha A. Maimone, B.A. Honours
Chantal A. Hermann, Ph.D. Candidate
Maya Atlas
Julia Berliant, M.A.
Kevin L. Nunes, Ph.D.

Research has found that implicit and explicit attitudes towards rape and outcome expectancies for rape are associated with sexual aggression (Bouffard, 2002; Nunes, Hermann, & Ratcliffe, 2013; O’Donohue, McKay, & Schewe, 1996; Widman & Olson, 2012). The purpose of the current study was to further explore the relationships between implicit and explicit attitudes towards rape, rape outcome expectancies, past sexual aggression, and likelihood to rape. Implicit attitudes are defined as affective reactions to relevant stimuli causing automatic activation of pre-existing associations in memory, whereas explicit attitudes are deliberative evaluative judgments of attitude-objects (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006).

Participants were 72 male university students. We adapted versions of the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) and Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP; Payne, Cheng, Govorun, & Stewart, 2005) in order to measure implicit attitudes towards rape. Various self-report measures were used to assess explicit attitudes towards rape, rape outcome expectancies, past sexual aggression, and likelihood of sexual aggression. We found that explicit attitudes towards rape were associated with greater past sexual aggression and greater likelihood of sexual aggression. In addition, more positive outcome expectancies for rape were associated with greater past sexual aggression and likelihood of sexual aggression. More positive outcome expectancies for rape were also associated with more positive implicit attitudes towards rape on the IAT measure and more positive explicit attitudes towards rape. Turning to some notable non-significant results, the AMP was not significantly associated with the IAT measure of implicit attitudes towards rape, explicit attitudes
towards rape, or rape outcome expectancies. In addition, implicit and explicit measures of attitudes towards rape were not intercorrelated and the implicit attitude measures did not independently predict past sexual aggression after controlling for explicit attitudes and outcome expectancies, nor did they predict future sexual aggression after controlling for past sexual aggression, explicit attitudes, and outcome expectancies. Interestingly, the relationship between implicit attitudes towards rape on the IAT measure and future sexual aggression was moderated by past sexual aggression. More specifically, implicit attitudes towards rape were associated with greater likelihood of future sexual aggression for participants who had been sexually aggressive in the past, but not for participants with no past sexual aggression.

These findings are consistent with research indicating a link between attitudes and sexually aggressive behavior (Bouffard, 2002; Malamuth, 2003; Miller, 2010; Ward et al., 2006; Widman & Olson, 2012). The interaction between past sexual aggression and implicit attitudes towards rape suggests that the combination of past sexual aggression and positive implicit attitudes towards rape may increase the likelihood of future sexual aggression beyond a history of sexual aggression alone. Several limitations were present, such as the cross-sectional nature of this study and relatively small sample size. Future research should replicate and extend these findings with more sophisticated designs and offender samples.

Rape-Prevention with Students: Moderating Effects of Psychopathy and Sexual Coercion

Chantal A. Hermann, Ph.D. Candidate
Cathrine Pettersen, B.A. Honours
Mandie E. Woods, B.A. Honours
Natasha Lorincz
Julia Berliant, M.A.
Kevin L. Nunes, Ph.D.

Research estimates that 4.3% to 15% of community and college men commit rape and 11% to 64% commit sexually aggressive acts (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Abbey et al., 2007; Thompson et al., 2010). These statistics highlight the need for rape prevention programs in student populations. O’Donohue and colleagues (2003) developed and empirically tested a video-based rape prevention program for college males and found their program increased victim empathy, increased negative outcome expectancies of rape, reduced endorsement of rape myths, and reduced self-reported proclivity to rape.

In the current study we attempted to replicate and extend O’Donohue and colleagues’ (2003) findings. Specifically, we examined the impact of the date rape prevention videos on implicit and explicit attitudes towards rape, outcome expectancies for rape, victim empathy, and self-reported proclivity to rape. Male undergraduate students (N = 176) were randomly assigned to one of four video conditions: rape myths (n = 46), consequences for victims (n = 43), consequences for date rape perpetrators (n = 47), or a control condition (nature video; n = 40). Participants who viewed the consequences for victims video had significantly more negative implicit attitudes towards rape than participants in the control condition. Participants who viewed the consequences for victims video also
had greater empathy for rape victims than participants in the control condition and participants who viewed the *consequences for date rape perpetrators* video. No other significant differences were found between these two video conditions or between any of the other videos and the control video.

We also examined whether psychopathy moderated the effectiveness of the videos. We hypothesized that the *rape myths* and *consequences for victims* videos would be less effective for the more psychopathic participants compared to the less psychopathic participants, but that the *consequences for perpetrators* video would be similarly effective regardless of the level of psychopathy. The results for outcome expectancies for rape were consistent with this hypothesis, however the same pattern of results was not observed for the other dependent measures.

We also explored whether a history of engaging in past sexually coercive behavior moderated the effectiveness of the videos. For the most sexually coercive men the *rape myths* video relative to the control video made explicit attitudes towards rape *less* negative and *increased* proclivity to rape, whereas the same effects were not found for men who had not been sexually coercive. We also found for the most sexually coercive men that the *consequences for perpetrators* video relative to the control video made outcome expectancies for rape *more* negative, whereas the same effect was not found for men who had not been sexually coercive.

We were generally unable to replicate O’Donohue and colleagues’ (2003) results. It is possible that these generally null findings were due to floor effects on the dependent measures. Nevertheless, we did find the *consequences for victims* video made implicit attitudes towards rape more negative and increased empathy for rape victims. In addition, we found that psychopathy and past sexual coercion moderated the effects of the videos, which suggests that rape-prevention efforts may be most effective with more psychopathic and more sexually coercive men when they emphasize the potential consequences for perpetrators. These findings are consistent with more general speculation about potentially effective interventions for psychopathic offenders (e.g., Lalumière et al., 2005; Vien & Beech, 2006; Wong & Hare, 2005) and with the risk principle (Andrews & Bonta, 2010).