Kent Academic Repository
Full text document (pdf)

Citation for published version

Lister, Victoria P. M. and Bartels, Ross M. (2019) Using a Cognitive Bias Modification Task to Reduce Rape-Supportive Cognition in Men. In: ATSA 2019 – 38th Annual Research and Treatment Conference, 06-09 Nov 2019, Atlanta, GA. (Unpublished)

DOI

Link to record in KAR

https://kar.kent.ac.uk/82107/

Document Version

Presentation

Using a Cognitive Bias Modification Task to Reduce Rape-Supportive Cognition in Men

Victoria P. M. Lister, MSc[1]; Dr Ross M. Bartels, PhD[2]
[1]University of Kent, [2]University of Lincoln

University of **Kent** | Centre of Research and Education in Forensic Psychology (CORE-FP)

UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Introduction

Rape-Supportive Cognition (RSC)

- RSC = cognitive distortion; beliefs that justify or excuse sexually aggressive behaviour (Gerger et al., 2007; Hermann et al., 2012)

- RSC is highly prevalent in the general population, with men > women (Canto et al., 2014)

- RSC negatively impacts jury decision-making (Wilmott et al., 2017) and is linked with reduced conviction rates of rape (Temkin, 2010)

- One model of cognitive distortions is the sequential information processing model (Haaga, 1997; Gannon, 2009; Ward et al., 1997):

Cognitive Structure	Implicit; indirect measurement
Cognitive Processing	Interpretation; ambiguous stimuli
Cognitive Product	Accessible beliefs; self-report

Cognitive Bias Modification (CBM) Task

- Aim: to implicitly associate a benign response with a target stimulus, instead of a negative (or rape-supportive) one at cognitive processing level (Hallion & Ruscio, 2011)

- Useful with anxiety and depression (Hallion & Ruscio, 2011) but not used in a forensic context so far!!

Aim: To examine the extent to which a CBM task can reduce RSC in a general population of men

Method

- 40 heterosexual men
- Mean age = 27.62; range = 19-56
- IV: Task
- DV: RSC (via MT, vignette, RAPE scale)

Pre-task measures (randomised) → **Task** → **Post-task measures (randomised)**

- Mousetracking task (structure)
- Amb. vignette (processing)
- Bumby RAPE scale (product)

- CBM task OR
- Control task

- Mousetracking task (structure)
- Amb. vignette (processing)
- Bumby RAPE scale (product)

- Stimuli = 121 sentences with word-fragments that could be interpreted only in a benign or rape-supportive manner
- Participants completed the word-fragments
- If rape-supportive = Negative feedback
- If benign = Positive feedback
- Control task = no feedback

Results

Cognitive Structure – Mouse-tracking task
- Reaction Time (RT)
- No sig. main/interaction effects

Cognitive Processing – Ambiguous vignette
- 'Female to blame for rape' scores
- No sig. main/interaction effects

Cognitive Product – Bumby RAPE scale
- Data = Excusing and Justifying subscale scores
- 2-way mixed ANOVA for each subscale;
- Task (between; CBM vs control)
- Time (within; pre- vs post-task)

Analyses conducted separately for each cognitive level

Justifying subscale:
- Interaction effect approaching sig. (p = .053)
- Comparing pre- and post-task scores, sig. reduction for the CBM task but not control task

Excusing subscale:
- No sig. main effect of Task
- Sig. main effect of Time
- Interaction effect
- For both tasks, sig. decrease in scores post-task

Discussion

Cognitive Structure
- Since the implicit level precedes processing, it was expected to be non-significant, supporting the use of the CBM task for RSC.

Cognitive Processing
- Expected to see a reduction at post-task on this measure, but this was _not_ the case
- Due to the measure itself?
- BUT measure correlated strongly with the Bumby RAPE scale

Cognitive Product
- As expected, the CBM task reduced RSC
- Implications for use with jurors & offenders, as it can alter their cognitively accessible beliefs.

Alternative Explanation
- The findings of this study can be better explained by a dual-processing theory of cognition.

- One example is the Multi-Mechanism Theory of Cognitive Distortions, which focuses on men who have sexually offended (Szumski et al., 2018)

Conclusions
- Findings support a dual-processing model of cognition rather than a sequential processing model

- CBM task may be useful for reducing explicit RSC

- This might have implications for use with jurors and possibly individuals with high RSC e.g., individuals who have committed rape

Email: vpml2@kent.ac.uk | Twitter: @VPMLister | Linkedin: victoriapmlister | Profile: https://www.kent.ac.uk/psychology/people/listerv