The Implicit Theories of Rapists: What Convicted Offenders Tell Us

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Twenty years of research into sex offenders' cognitive distortions has primarily focused on the measurement of distortions rather than on theorizing about the underlying structures that are responsible for generating and organizing them. Recently T. Ward (2000; T. Ward & T. Keenan, 1999) suggested that offenders have underlying causal theories about themselves, their victims, and broader categories of people (e.g., women and children), and that these implicit theories *enable post hoc explanation as well as prediction of people's actions and reactions. D. L. L. Polaschek and T. Ward (2002) examined rape-related attitudinal scales and constructed and outlined five core implicit theories. Here, we examined whether evidence for these five theories was also found in offense process descriptions generated from interviews with 37 imprisoned rapists. Coding of the descriptions revealed support for all five theories.*

KEY WORDS: implicit theories; schemas; rapists' cognitive distortions.

INTRODUCTION

I love them, I love those girls, dirty girls. Bad girls have more fun. We like those girls but we wouldn't want them for our own. We're constantly surrounded by girls like that, girls *for* that [i.e. sex]. And not understanding what love is, and not understanding that no means no. We hate that, when people say no; man, woman, society, whoever. We have a real hard time handling rejection ... the jealousy of what people have that you haven't, and the helplessness and being able to do nothing, would lead to this mentality of degrading women, them being the weaker sex, just to fucking control something, just for a while. (Quotation from Offender #33 from the present sample)

I don't really think she knew what she wanted. I'm not saying she didn't enjoy [the rape] ... but I'm saying she had an ulterior motive. At that stage I don't even know if the motive was the money but, she wanted somebody in her life ... and I seemed to be all

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the things she was lacking in her life ... She was a slut and she suited my purpose, and it was a game of cat and mouse, . . . and she lost the game, and out of spite she attacked me through the law, the best way that she could. (Quotation from Offender #4 in the present sample)

Both of these quotations come from interviews with incarcerated rapists about their offending. As they indicate, when rapists talk about their offending, they often reveal fascinating aspects of their world views. Intuitively, these perceptions of the world seem related, perhaps causally, to their sexually assaultative behavior. We have found that rapists usually provide insight into their beliefs and perceptions whether or not they admit that their sexual behavior was criminal in nature. The first quotation was about a multiple-offender rape at the "pad" of a local gang. The offender readily admitted that the victim did not consent to the sexual activity forced on her. In contrast, several years into his sentence the second man was adamant that the woman he had sex with had fabricated allegations afterwards. Nevertheless, his description of events highlighted a pervasive perception that he held about women; that women are generally unknowable and deceptive.

Talking to offenders, or rather, listening to them provides frequent observations of perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs that seem obviously offense-supportive. Little wonder that researchers and treatment providers have leaped conceptually into regarding such cognitions as evidence of underlying cognitive structures that guide and support offending. Usually referred to as *cognitive distortions*, researchers have been documenting this offense-supportive thought content in sex offenders since the 1980s (e.g., Abel et al., 1989). Yet most research with rapists is based on scores on relevant questionnaires, such as the Hostility Towards Women Scale (Check, Malamuth, Elias, & Barton, 1985) and the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980). Studies comparing scores for rapists and nonoffenders have not been reliably able to distinguish them (see Polaschek, Ward, & Hudson, 1997, for a review). Until recently, researchers focused on measurement of surface cognitions at the expense of developing an understanding of the underlying architecture responsible for generating and organizing them. It was Ward and colleagues (Ward, 2000; Ward & Keenan, 1999) who made a case for conceptualizing sexual offenders' distorted cognitions as emerging from the operation of a type of schema: implicit theories.

The term *implicit theory* draws on developmental research on how children acquire a theory of mind (e.g., Kuhn, 1989; Wellman, 1990). According to this approach, from early childhood, people derive everyday understanding of their own beliefs, desires, needs and behaviors, and those of people with whom they interact by developing and using causal theories in a quasi-scientific fashion.

Polaschek and Ward (2002) speculated about implicit theories (ITs) that may guide rapists' interactions with their victims. By analyzing existing questionnaire items for common themes, they proposed five ITs.

Women Are Unknowable

Rapists believe that women are fundamentally different from men, with minds so inherently alien that men cannot easily grasp how they work. Because their minds work differently, their needs are also assumed to be at odds with those of men. Therefore, heterosexual encounters are adversarial and women will seek to deceive men about what they really want. A typical attitudinal statement for this IT is "women are usually sweet until they've caught a man and then they let their true self show."

Women Are Sex Objects

Men holding this theory view their own sexual needs as taking primacy over other domains, and view women as constantly sexually receptive. However, women are not always consciously aware that they are interested in sex and so these men understand that women's body language is actually more relevant to ascertaining consent than their speech. Furthermore, because women are sex objects, they cannot be injured by sexual activity unless they are physically damaged. Relatedly, women are largely the gatekeepers to men's access to sexual gratification. Without women's consent men are deprived of adequate sexual outlets. Statements representing this IT would be "a woman can enjoy sex even when it is forced upon her" or "only women who are physically beaten should feel justified in reporting a rape."

Male Sex Drive Is Uncontrollable

This is the theory that men's sexual energy can be difficult to control, and can build up to dangerous levels if women do not provide them with reasonable sexual access. Furthermore, once men start to get sexually aroused, it is difficult for them to contain themselves if a woman then prevents them from continuing on to orgasm. A representative item would be "if a girl engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her."

Entitlement

Entitlement refers to the idea that one's needs should be met on demand, including one's sexual needs. When applied to rape, Polaschek and Ward described this theory as strongly rooted in traditional patriarchal ideas about men being in charge of women because men are perceived to be more psychologically mature and sexually sophisticated. In addition to having sex when they want to, entitled

men are also justified in punishing a woman who is not suitably subservient to their needs. So, "rape serves as a way to keep women in their place" is a representative cognitive distortion for this theory.

Dangerous World

The last of the ITs proposed by Polaschek and Ward (2002) sees the world as a hostile and threatening place, where actors must be constantly on guard against exploitation by others. This theory was not found to be represented in the rape-related attitudinal scales, probably because it has no specific focus on women or sex, but was included because the authors' clinical experience suggested its relevance. It is captured in the phrase "it's just a dog-eat-dog world."

Ward and Keenan (1999) suggested various ways to organize implicit theories. At the most specific level, an offender may develop theories that apply just to a particular victim, or only to himself. At some "middle" level, an IT might apply to a class of people, such as men, or prostitutes. This level of IT appears to be a form of stereotyping, and may be equivalent to *category schemas* (see Mann & Beech, 2003). At the broadest level there may be theories about the way the wider world works, such as the *dangerous world* IT. The ITs of Polaschek and Ward (2002) are all at least at this middle level. This is not to say that offense-specific ITs should be ignored, but more broadly held theories were the focus of this work.

This study sought to examine the fit between the ITs proposed by Polaschek and Ward and the main themes articulated by rapists in descriptions of their own offenses. Specifically, we aimed to establish (1) whether all five ITs from Polaschek and Ward were found in a sample of rapist interviews, (2) the prevalence of each of the ITs found, (3) whether there was evidence of new ITs (i.e., ITs not found in the Polaschek and Ward study), and (4) whether the prevalence of ITs could be used to discriminate between offenders.

METHOD

Materials

Thirty-seven offense process descriptions obtained from offender interviews were the basis of the data analysis for this study. Interviewers first examined the official accounts of offenders' rapes and then individually interviewed participants in order to gain a detailed description of their perspectives, including the offenders' cognitive, affective, and volitional states. Interviews concentrated on four aspects of the offense process: the offender's background life in the months leading up to

the offense, the proximal build-up to the offense itself, the offense, and postoffense reactions. The interviewer typed the resulting descriptions into a portable computer during the interview. Some demographic and offense history data were extracted from institutional files. For more detail, see Polaschek, Hudson, Ward, and Siegert (2001).

Sample Characteristics

Research participants were 37 men currently serving a prison sentence for sexual violation or attempted sexual violation of a person older than 16 years. Of these men, 24 participated in a previous study (Polaschek et al., 2001; Polaschek & Hudson, 2004).

Most participants described themselves as European or New Zealand European. There were five Māori and two Samoan men. Average age of participants at the time of the index sexual violation was 31 years ($SD = 7.8$, range 20–47). Five participants were on indefinite sentences; mean sentence length for the remaining 32 offenders was 6.8 years ($SD = 2.7$, range 18 months to 11 years). Mean age at first conviction was 20.7 years ($SD = 7.7$, range 14–45). Five had no previous convictions. The remaining 32 participants had an average of 22 previous convictions ($SD = 22.8$. range 2–104), most of which were for property, driving, and minor drug offenses. Almost 60% had previous convictions for violence and 19% for sexual offending.

The offenses for which participants were serving their current sentences (the "index" offenses) included 44 sexual violations involving 40 victims (i.e., some offenders were convicted on two or more charges against the same victim). One victim was a male, 9 were current or estranged wives or cohabiting partners, 10 were strangers, and 16 were casual acquaintances. Victims were threatened or injured with weapons in eight offenses and there was more than one offender in seven offenses. Two victims were murdered after their rapes.

Less than half of the men (43%) denied committing their offenses in that they asserted that they had been involved in consensual sexual activity with the victim. Most offenders (77%) had not participated in any psychological treatment.

Implicit Theory Coding Procedure

Two raters examined each offense process description and coded it for the presence or absence of each of the five ITs from Polaschek and Ward (2002). Instead of coding every offense-related statement, raters looked for evidence that appeared to suggest an underlying theory. Clearly this is a difficult distinction. For example, "She's getting a bit loose really, flirting with people, talking loudly" could be evidence of a tendency to overperceive women as behaving in a sexually

inviting way, but on its own it may also be an accurate observation about this particular young woman. However, "I don't prey on women. I make love to them. I've made an art of it, making them feel like they're special. I don't love them. And I don't mind being turned down, I feel sorry for them" indicates that this offender views *women*, not just this victim, as primarily sexual objects.

Where raters found evidence that appeared to indicate the possible presence of new IT material, this was noted for later examination. Raters worked from the descriptions and items outlined for each IT in Polaschek and Ward and used the first five transcripts for training (these were excluded from the reliability analysis). During this training session, discussions highlighted some conceptual confusions in the original work, and we discuss these in the results.

Overall rater agreement was high (88%: $\kappa = .82, T = 10.43, p < .001$). The reliability of the coding was examined in two more specific ways: by offense and by implicit theory. For each of the 32 independently coded offenses, there were five possible points of disagreement, because each of the five ITs was coded as present or absent. There was 100% agreement for 19 offenses (i.e., agreement on whether all five ITs were present or absent), and 80% agreement for the remaining 13 offenses.

For *women are unknowable*, agreement occurred in 94% of ratings ($\kappa = .86$, $T = 4.92, p < .001$). For *women are sex objects*, there was 84% agreement ($\kappa = .66, T = 3.83, p < .001$). For *male sex drive is uncontrollable* the raters agreed 91% of the time ($\kappa = .52, T = 2.98, p < .001$). For *entitlement*, agreement was 94% ($\kappa = .85, T = 4.78, p < .001$). For *dangerous world*, agreement was also reached on 94% of ratings ($\kappa = .80, T = 4.50, p < .001$). According to Fleiss' (1981) criteria, the reliability of ratings for *male sex drive is uncontrollable* was "fair," and for *women are sex objects*, it was "good." Reliability ratings for the remaining ITs *women are unknowable, entitlement*, and *dangerous world* were all "excellent."

After making independent ratings, the two raters met and discussed the disparities. In all cases, these were instances where for an offense, a single IT had been judged present by one judge and absent by the other. In all cases the differences occurred where the evidence for the IT was often only a single phrase. There were no obvious patterns. The differences were easily resolved by discussion.

RESULTS

With respect to our first aim, we found evidence of all five ITs outlined by Polaschek and Ward (2002). Below we describe each IT, refining previous conceptualizations where necessary, reporting prevalence, and giving examples from offense interviews to illustrate each one. Table I shows the distribution of each implicit theory classification across offense descriptions.

Table I. Presence or Absence of ITs by Offense Process Transcripts

Offender	Women are dangerous	Women are sex objects	Male sex drive is uncontrollable	Entitlement	Dangerous world
1	•	•			
2		•	•		
3	•	•		•	
4	•	•		•	
5	•	•		•	
6		•	•	•	•
7	•	•		•	
8	•	•		•	
9	•			•	
10	•	•		•	
11	•				
12				•	
13	•		•	•	
14		•		•	•
15	•	•	•		
16		•	•		
17	•	•			
18	•				
19	•	•		•	
20	•	•		•	
21	•				
22	•	•			
23		•		•	
24				•	•
25	•	•			•
26	•	•		•	
27	•	•			
28					
29	•	•			
30		•			
31		•		•	
32	•	•		•	
33		•		•	
34	•			•	
35				•	
36		•		•	•
37	•			•	•

Women Are Unknowable (Relabeled Women Are Dangerous)

Polaschek and Ward (2002) labeled this IT *women are unknowable* to en-
compass men's view of women as a complex mystery they will never unravel. We
found that offenders did occasionally take this neutral view, but far more often,
they thought that women were out to harm men. They experienced this inherently
malevolent and vindictive quality of women as emerging unpredictably, making
women seem dangerous. Consequently, we renamed this IT *women are dangerous*

to better reflect the importance of this malevolent aspect. This IT was found in 65% of offenses.

> My views of other women changed. I was thinking they were real deviates in how they can manipulate other people, like they can switch and turn me off just like that, hurt my feelings. They control my feelings. (Offender #9)

> Women are evil. They've got too much power ... I've been violent to women. I've never let one get close. If I get to like her or she gets to like me, I bash her off the face of the earth, 'cause you can't trust her not to start exerting her power over me. So I've never had a proper relationship with a woman. (Offender #37)

> She wouldn't open the door and I can't make out why ... In these cases when these silly little lockouts took place, it was always a game to get back in again. And by promising her things and, and saying you love her and all that, she normally would open the door and let you in again ... she's becoming obsessed with it I'm sure. It's a proper act. (Offender #3)

> I suppose I knew I would get a decline first off. Some say that's natural for a woman. (Offender #15, while laughing)

The high prevalence of this particular theory was particularly noticeable among deniers, who mostly portrayed their victims as accusing them of rape to get back at them for some trivial misdemeanor, or because otherwise the victim would be in trouble with her boyfriend for having sex with another man.

> This charge, it was a devastating surprise to me. She *seemed* a perfectly sane person at the time ... I just sort of felt like a scapegoat ... it felt like a real setup. Yeah, the boyfriend had driven past that night, and saw my car. (Offender #15)

Women Are Sex Objects

This is an IT that might be considered axiomatic to the rape of women, and it occurred in 70% of offenses. As with the description in Polaschek and Ward (2002), we found evidence of men thinking of women both as sexual commodities themselves, and as the gatekeepers to sex as a commodity. The first is captured in two examples:

> ... surrounded by females, young females, attractive females, *hundreds* of females, all of a sudden here I was in a so-called cattle market, I *owned* it and there were girls everywhere. (Offender #22)

> Of a group rape, offender 6 said the victim "isn't anything in this ... she's just an instrument ... this just goes on and on, we're passing her around like a rag doll."

The second version, where women are seen to control men's access to sexual gratification is embodied in these examples:

> I remember thinking, "oh, I'm fucked now. I'm going to prison for a long time so I may as well get the most sex out of this that I can." (Offender #34)

> Offender 16 said to his hitchhiker "this is where you get to pay for your trip."

Male Sex Drive Is Uncontrollable

This IT was found in five offenses (16%). Occasionally men explained their offending as resulting from a loss of control over their sexual urges. Unless there was additional evidence, such explanations were treated as offense-specific and not coded as evidence of Polaschek and Ward's more general theory. Examples that were coded included

> This [sexual encounter, not the offense] sort of turns into a sort of "the old [penis] rules the brain" sort of situation. (Offender #15)

> I have heard a lot of people say a standard [penis]'s got no conscience. (Offender #16, while laughing)

> I don't believe in date rape. If she puts herself in that position . . . (Offender #6)

Entitlement

It is easy to view any interpersonal offense as implying feelings of entitlement simply by its definition of imposing something on another human being (Bush, 1995). Here, as in Polaschek and Ward (2002), we limited entitlement coding to those offenses where offenders either insisted on their right to have sex whether the victim was consenting or not, or demonstrated that they accepted their superiority over women and right to control women's behavior, because the victim was a woman. Despite these restrictions, this was a common IT, occurring in 68% of offenses.

> I guess the underlying basis of all this sexual stuff . . . is power domination, psychological conditioning of males to be able to have a God-given right to have sex with a female . . . and the way we were taught the role of our mothers, to cook and shut up, and do everything for us. (Offender #22)

> I grew up seeing the old man telling my mother to do what she was told, and I learned that too. That's how women should be treated. Men are stronger and faster than women, they're genetically superior. Women should be in the kitchen. (Offender #38)

> If I ever see her [after he's released from prison], if I was a proper man, I should kill her. (Offender #26)

Dangerous World

Having made *women are dangerous* much more explicitly malevolent, we then only coded *dangerous world* when there was clear evidence that people in general were viewed as dangerous. This occurred quite rarely, in just 19% of offenses. Distinguished in this way from specific mistrust of women, it can be seen as a form of more generally "paranoid" thinking.

Weeks before his offense, offender #24 got a gun and hid it under the seat of his car: "It's there because you never know, the world's an unpredictable place,

Table II. Conviction History Variables by Implicit Theories

Implicit theory	Dangerous world		t	d
	Yes	No		
Age at first conviction	16.1 (1.6)	21.6 (8.1)	3.4**	.94
Number of previous convictions	25.1 (16.1)	17.9 (23.8)	0.76	.35
Number of previous convictions for violence	5.3 (6.0)	1.3 (2.0)	1.7	.89
	Male sex drive is uncontrollable			
	Yes	No		
Number of previous sexual convictions	1.6 (1.1)	0.6 (2.3)	0.9	.52

Note. Criteria for interpreting effect size statistics (Cohen's d)—.2 = small; .5 = medium; .8 = large.
**$p < .01$.

you never know . . . the worse I got the more I worried about what other people might do." Offender #14 said

> There are kids now too [in our gang], they make you vulnerable, your family could be seized. I haven't got any though. It's just war all the time.

Uncategorized Material

During initial coding there were a few segments of text that a single rater identified as possibly indicating the presence of ITs not yet identified. In most cases, in discussion with the other rater, this cognitive material was recoded into an existing IT. A small amount of material was not dealt with in this fashion. However, there was no evidence that this remaining material comprised a distinct theory. Therefore, in relation to the study's third aim, we found no evidence of a need to create new ITs to accommodate these data.

Implicit Theories and Criminal History Variables

Our fourth aim was to investigate whether ITs could be used to discriminate among rapists in relation to other variables of interest. Although rapists are heterogeneous in many respects, three of the ITs were so prevalent as to contain little potential for discrimination. We made specific predictions about the two less frequently found ITs and criminal history variables. Polaschek and Ward (2002) suggested that the *dangerous world* theory would be common in generally antisocial and violent offenders. From that suggestion we predicted that men articulating this theory would be more likely to have a history of convictions for nonsexual violence, more previous convictions, and an earlier age of first conviction. We also predicted that men with the *men's sex drive is uncontrollable* theory would have more past convictions for sexual offending.

Table II shows the outcome of these predictions. A statistically significant difference was only found for age of first conviction for the *dangerous world*

IT. This was not surprising given the small sample size. However, effect size statistics suggested a large effect in the hypothesized direction for both age of first conviction and number of previous violent convictions and the *dangerous world* IT. Furthermore, a medium effect size was found for the *male sex drive is uncontrollable* IT and number of previous sexual convictions.

Implicit Theories and Denial

A key feature of rapists' accounts of their offenses is whether or not they admit that they committed a rape. Often, men who deny committing rape may not be considered suitable for treatment. Here, deniers are defined as men who admit that they had sexual contact with the victim but insist it was not offensive. In this sample, as we noted earlier, 21 offenders admitted to rape at the time they were interviewed, and 16 continued to deny that they had assaulted their victims.

We hypothesized that some ITs would be more or less common in men who admitted their offending versus those who denied it. Table III shows these results. Men who denied their offending often explained their convictions by referring to the dangers of contact with women. Therefore, we expected that more deniers than admitters would hold the *women are dangerous* IT. The results supported this hypothesis, $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 15.27, p < .001$.

Holding the *women are sex objects* IT makes it difficult for men to understand that women can experience sex as rape. Consequently these men believe that women cannot make a valid accusation of rape except in extreme circumstances. We hypothesized that deniers were also more likely than admitters to theorize that *women are sex objects*. Again this prediction was supported, $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 7.44, p = .006$.

By contrast, we expected admitters would be more common among those coded as discussing the *male sex drive is uncontrollable*, because we thought men who believe this IT can admit but excuse their offending, This prediction was not supported, $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 1.27, p = .26$.

Table III. Percentages of Rape Admitters and Deniers Holding Each Implicit Theory

Implicit theory	Deniers (%)	Admitters (%)
Women are dangerous**	100	38
Women are sex objects**	94	52
Male sex drive is uncontrollable	6	19
Entitlement	56	76
Dangerous world**	0	33

**$p \leq .01$.

We did not have a clear prediction about the *entitlement* theory. On the one hand, if men believe they are entitled to have sexual needs met, then they may deny that what they did was rape because it was legitimate. On the other hand, a man who raped women for rejecting him sexually sometimes explicitly acknowledges that she already declined to give consent in the first place. The results indicated no statistically significant differences: $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 1.65, p = .20$.

Lastly we expected higher rates of admission among men who held a *dangerous world* implicit theory. The rationale for this prediction was that of Polaschek and Ward (2002), who suggested that men who held this IT with entitlement could more easily justify hostile and exploitative behavior toward others. In other words, they are more comfortable with admitting to antisocial motives and acts. This prediction was supported, $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 6.58, p = .01$.

DISCUSSION

Based primarily on analysis of existing questionnaires, Polaschek and Ward (2002) proposed five implicit theories or schemata to underlie many of the distorted cognitive statements associated with rape. The aims of this study were to investigate (1) whether the relevance of these five ITs was supported in an analysis of offender interview data, (2) the prevalence of each IT, (3) whether there was evidence of the need for additional ITs, and (4) whether ITs could be used to discriminate between offenders.

Overall, our results support and extend Polaschek and Ward's (2002) work. We found evidence of all five ITs. Three were very prevalent in rapists' accounts; *women are dangerous*, *women are sex objects*, and *entitlement*. In fact, their presence was noted in at least two thirds of offenses. *Male sex drive is uncontrollable* and *dangerous world* occurred in only a small minority of offenses. We did not find evidence that new ITs were needed to adequately code the themes in these data.

One particularly prominent finding was that many men described women as being malevolent *and* unpredictable. Because of this, we changed the title of the first of Polaschek and Ward's ITs, *women are unknowable* to *women are dangerous* to more explicitly acknowledge the common combination of these two elements in this IT.

An implication of this change is that *women are dangerous* may appear to overlap with *dangerous world*. However, we preserved them as distinct ITs for two reasons. First, *women are dangerous* appears to us to be a form of misogynistic stereotyping, and closely linked to the presence of *women are sex objects*, also a form of stereotyping. In contrast, *dangerous world* may be more related to the kinds of mistrustful, "paranoid" thinking processes that have been widely demonstrated to characterize aggressive individuals (e.g., Bushman & Geen, 1990). The younger age at first conviction and greater number of previous nonsexual violent

convictions found in these men argue for them being chronic serious violent offenders who also rape.

We also kept *dangerous world* and *women are dangerous* distinct because we see an empirical basis for doing so in other researchers' work. Knight and Prentky (1990) found that men who were motivated by vindictiveness and "misogynistic anger" (Knight, 1999, p. 312) could be differentiated statistically from the much rarer pervasively angry (toward all others) subtype. Although Knight and Prentky did not specifically address the issue of the world views that create these motivations, it seems plausible that misogynistic anger is highly linked to a hostile, mistrustful view of women, and that global anger is associated with a more widespread sense of threat.

Malamuth, Heavey, and Linz (1993) found that the longitudinal predictors of sexual and nonsexual aggression against women did not predict violence toward men. The majority of their predictor variables were questionnaire-based, and predicted other gender-specific antisocial behavior, such as a tendency to talk over women in conversation. Thus their research also argues for distinguishing misogynistic theorizing in rapists from more pervasively hostile schemas.

As we noted earlier, Polaschek and Ward's ITs are middle-level theories. That is, they chose to emphasize theories that explain more than just this particular offense or this victim's behavior. Therefore we avoided coding material that appeared to be limited to specific victims (i.e., *this* woman is dangerous) or to the offender himself (e.g., *my* sex drive is uncontrollable). This procedure may explain the low rate of *male sex drive is uncontrollable* coding in this study, in that we specifically sought to exclude cases where the only evidence for this theory was that the offender gave loss of control over his sexual urges as post hoc explanation for his offense. However, in practice this is a difficult distinction to make, and that difficulty may account for the relatively low reliability of ratings for this IT.

In line with our fourth aim, using the two less prevalent ITs, we had some success in differentiating offenders on both criminal history variables and on whether they admitted they had committed an offense. The differences in rates of IT in deniers are particularly interesting. Denial in rapists is more complex than in child sex offenders because a rapist has the option of appealing to sociocultural explanations that he thinks others will find plausible (e.g., "she said yes at the time but afterwards she changed her mind, you know how women can be"). However, other men who deny their offending seem incapable of recognizing their own rape behavior unless it fits some extreme stereotype of abducting an unknown woman off the street and assaulting her in some nearby foliage. There is no reliable way of distinguishing these men from each other when talking to them about their offending. Therefore some accounts may look like they stem from the IT structures we have outlined here, when in fact they do not.

To date, only one study has reported on rapists' schemas as derived from their oral accounts. Mann and Hollin (cited in Mann & Beech, 2003) reported five schemas coded from explanations of offending recorded in 45 rapists' treatment

files. These schemas were (a) *grievance*, in which offenders blamed women for adverse events and felt justified in taking revenge on them; (b) *self as victim* emphasized the offender's self-pitying, helpless response to negative events; (c) *control*, where offenders enjoyed the sense of power over another that offending brought them; (d) *entitlement*, which, as here, centered on the offender's right to disregard others in meeting his own needs, and (e) *disrespect for certain women*, a category schema where women such as sex workers were viewed with contempt and treated accordingly.

Mann and Hollin's unpublished data were described by Mann and Beech (2003) as "statements [the offenders] had made to *explain* their offending" (p. 143) which may not make the material directly comparable with ours in which offenders were given no explicit requirement to explain themselves, merely to describe what happened and what they had been thinking at the time. However, their *entitlement* and *control* schemas closely resemble our *entitlement* and *dangerous world* ITs. Their *grievance* schema does not contain enough detail to adequately compare it to our ITs. It is described as having "a flavor of aggressive self-pity" (p. 143) and appears not to be specifically related to the actions of women. *Self as victim*, a helpless, hopeless outlook on the demands of ordinary life was not found in our study, perhaps because most of our sample were not in treatment and so did not perceive themselves as requiring help. *Disrespect for certain women*, a category schema, overlaps both *women are dangerous* and *women are sex objects*, although our data were characterized by more generalized disrespect than Mann and Hollin's may have been. Our data were all collected by women researchers. Thus the extensive evidence of disrespect toward women was particularly noteworthy, given that it is often assumed that sex offenders are concerned with making a good impression.

As with rape-supportive cognitive distortions, it is important to note that some of the ITs we have found in rapists may also be held by nonoffending members of the community, both men and women. Research using the IT approach is needed to verify this suggestion, but Polaschek and Ward (2002) have argued that ITs are likely to be a necessary, but not sufficient factor in the etiology of rape.

Are there treatment implications for these findings? Given the high frequency and degree of overlap for the ITs *women are dangerous*, *women are sex objects*, and *entitlement*, this study provides yet more evidence of the importance of addressing these schemas in rapists' interventions. Many programs around the world treat rapists alongside those who sexually abuse children. Offender account-based data on child sex offenders' ITs are not yet available, but presumably ITs such as *women are dangerous* may be more prominent in rapists. Because rehabilitation programs are often targeted at child sexual offenders, these rape-specific ITs may not receive adequate attention.

The more challenging issue for rehabilitation is how schemas should best be altered. The jury is still out on this issue, but new approaches use Young's

(1994) schema-based therapy, which goes beyond rational disputation of surface cognitions, by engaging in more affectively based techniques. Beech and Mann (2002) have recently reported the use of these techniques with rapists' schemas. Meanwhile the accurate measurement of change to such structures awaits research attention.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The data used in this study were not specifically collected for this project. Thus some ITs may have been coded as absent because the offense descriptions were insufficiently detailed. Furthermore, this approach, like many retrospective designs, does not offer any answers to the perennial question of whether such theories are simply post hoc explanations provided for the researcher's benefit, or to ameliorate self-referent negative affect generated by talking about the offense, or whether they do indeed have a causal role.

Identifying implicit theories is a far more challenging research endeavor than simply counting the endorsement of belief statements in attitudinal questionnaires. Research using the actual attitudinal material generated by offenders themselves is likely to be a better way of investigating such theories. However, information-processing theory maintains that structures such as ITs are not available to conscious scrutiny and must therefore be measured indirectly. This study suggests that it is possible to reliably infer ITs from qualitative data. Now triangulation of findings through the use of other methodologies, including experimental methods (e.g., Malamuth & Brown, 1994) is an important future step.

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