

Criminal Thinking Patterns Among Sex Offenders Based on Victim Age

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As the annual count of sexual assaults reported in the United States continues to rise, it becomes necessary to find ways of improving the correctional programs intended for those who perpetrate these crimes. Most programs are cognitive-behavioral and primarily target criminal thinking, a trait that mediates sexual assault perpetration. This facilitative relationship varies in strength among program participants according to their victim's age group, a circumstance which can serve to guide curriculum adjustment. The current study supplies empirical research of six thought patterns (Entitlement, Justification, Power Orientation, Cold Heartedness, Criminal Rationalization, and Personal Irresponsibility) measured by the Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scales (CTS) to show how their presence may vary across subtypes of individuals convicted of sexual assault.

Within a prison rehabilitation program containing a sample of this population, it was found the participants with child victims had significantly higher composite (scale-wide average) CTS scores compared to the participants with adult victims. Therefore, the CTS can indeed differentiate subgroups of individuals convicted of sexual assault, and further research on the variation of individual subscales is warranted.

Alec Rothman earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology with a minor in Criminology from Florida State University in 2018. He later received a Master of Science degree with a concentration in Substance Abuse from Northwestern State University of Louisiana in 2020. Through this latter program, Alec completed a clinical practicum at two correctional centers that housed evidence-based substance abuse and sex offender treatment programs, respectively. There, he taught classes, administered assessments, and conducted group/individual therapy sessions.

Alec presented research in June 2019 at a conference hosted in New Orleans, LA by the Louisiana Psychological Association. He also presented a virtual paper in April 2020 at the Southeastern Psychological Association's annual conference. Later, he spoke about the paradoxical effects of sex offender registry and notification laws at a research event hosted at his university in April 2020.

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