

WHAT IS IN THE CRIMINAL'S MIND? A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

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Measurement is very useful when meaning is provided. For instance, in describing rapists' attitude towards women, it is vague if one concludes with a numerical answer, such as the average questionnaire score. It is more helpful to describe the specific attitudes he possesses.

To illustrate, a Rasch analysis of a "Hostility Towards Women" inventory was performed for Rapists and Non-Rapists separately. The item calibrations of each group are compared on an X-Y Plot in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Item-identity plot of the "Hostility Towards Women" inventory, comparing Rapists and Non-Rapists.

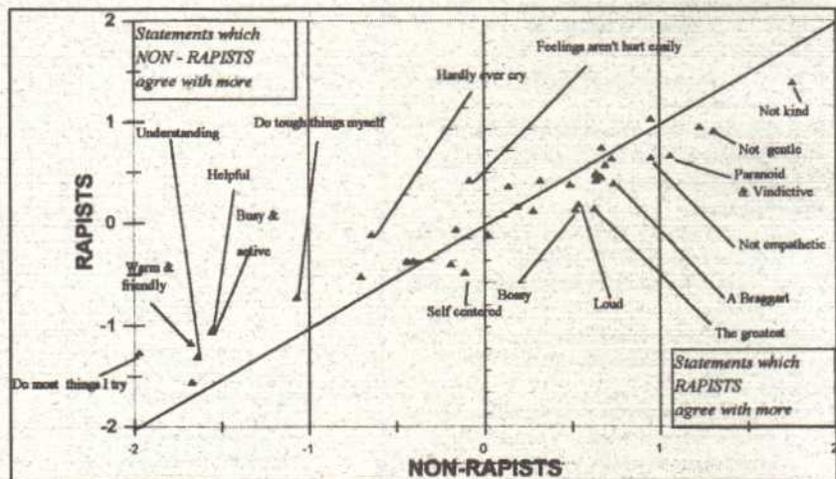
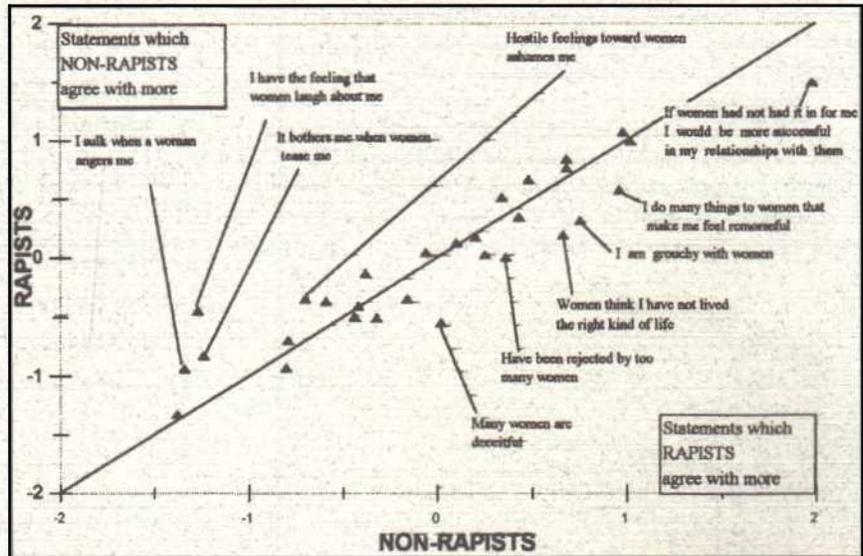
Items in the upper left triangle of the graph represent statements which Non-Rapists agree with more than Rapists. The lower right triangle contains statements which Rapists agree with more than Non-Rapists.

Figure 1 is very informative. Rapists appear to feel criticized, abandoned, and rejected by women. Also, they distrust and hold animosity towards the opposite sex. Non-Rapists are more likely to feel teased by women, and shame over hostile feelings. These findings provide evidence that Non-Rapists have more sense of shame and guilt than their counterparts.

Figure 2. An item identity plot of the "Androgyny Scale" which compares Rapists and Non-Rapists.

What do rapists think of themselves? To answer this question, the same procedure was applied using a different questionnaire. Figure 2 shows that rapists, compared with the control group, are more paranoid, asocial, revengeful, insecure, immature, presocial, and narcissistic. These findings support the theory that sexually aggressive men have infantile traits of dominance, tend to be self-serving, are self-centered, vindictive, and not concerned with the welfare of other people. On the other hand, Non-Rapists are more confident, in control of their emotions, social, mature, and responsive to other's needs.

With two pictures alone, we have been able to learn so much. Although objective measurement is the cornerstone of good science, it is the meaning attached to measurements which generate and refine useful theories.



George is a Ph.D. student in the Measurement, Evaluation, Statistical Analysis (MESA) program at the University of Chicago. He is researching the connections between Rasch measurement and Axiomatic Measurement Theory, particularly the application of the Rasch model to measure non-additive representations.

His previous work with Rasch measurement involved the validation of a quality-of-life questionnaire for Multiple Sclerosis patients, research into the measurement properties of a sex crime survey, and the investigation of the factors that lead to sexual aggression and victimization.

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