

# Developing a Measure of Criminal Thinking for the General Population

Sakina Ghafoor, Lane Rippey, Lindsey Bliss, Juliana Gomez, Emily Harbin, Teja Sieber, Skye Duncan,  
Magda Ibrahim, Thomas B. Sease, BS, Amanda L. Wiese, PhD, & Kevin Knight, PhD  
*Texas Christian University*



## Background

- Criminal thinking patterns are a set of processes associated with someone's likelihood to engage in criminal behavior.
- Many theories of criminal thinking propose that people exhibiting criminal thinking have a proclivity towards hostility, verbal and physical aggression, and antisocial behavior.
- The objective of this study is to create a measure of criminal thinking for the general population, test the survey for validity, and create normative scores.

## Methods

- Participants were 463 college students recruited from the TCU SONA system.
- Participants completed a survey that contained items measuring three domains: 1) demographic information, 2) criminal thinking, and 3) hostility, anger, physical aggression, and verbal aggression.
- Most of the sample were women ( $n = 349$ , 75.4%), White ( $n = 288$ , 62.2%), in their first year of college ( $n = 185$ , 33.8%), and ranged in age from 18-22 ( $M = 19.7$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ ).

## Figure 1

Measures of Criminal Thinking



## Analytic Plan

- The dimensionality of the revised Criminal Thinking Scales (i.e., TCU CTS 3.0) was analyzed using an exploratory factor analysis.
- The revised Criminal Thinking Scales were examined for validity by comparing scale scores to measures of anger, hostility, verbal aggression, and physical aggression.

## Results

- Exploratory factor analysis showed that the revised instrument measured criminal thinking in five key areas (see Figure 1).
- Measures of criminal thinking had acceptable internal reliability scores ( $\alpha \geq 0.70$ ).
- Importantly, measures of criminal thinking were significantly correlated with measures of verbal aggression ( $r_s \geq 0.31$ ), physical aggression ( $r_s \geq 0.33$ ), anger ( $r_s \geq 0.40$ ), and hostility ( $r_s \geq 0.40$ ).

## Discussion

- Criminal thinking assessments are generally not applicable to the general population but the modified TCU CTS 3.0 provides an opportunity measure criminal thinking in non-justice samples.
- The modified TCU CTS for the general population also provides an important comparison of criminal thinking levels in people without histories of criminality.
- This study could inform future research seeking to understand how criminogenic cognitions impact criminal behavior among people belonging to the general population.