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2018 ATSA Conference | Friday October 19 | POSTER

### **Professional's Opinion and Practice Regarding Evaluative Attitudes Towards Sexual Offending**

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Cognitions regarding sexual offending, such as cognitive distortions, are widely considered to be important treatment targets for people who have committed sexual offenses (Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, 2014). However, Nunes, Hermann, White, Pettersen, and Bumby (2018) have suggested that evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending (i.e., the extent to which a person views sexual offending positively or negatively) may be distinct from the cognitions that are typically assessed, but also relevant to sexual offending. Consistent with these hypotheses, Nunes et al. found that a measure of evaluative attitudes was distinct from a measure of cognitive distortions, and both measures were independently associated with sexually aggressive behavior. This preliminary evidence and our reading of the cognition literature in the area of sexual offending suggest that evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending may have been largely overlooked in past theory and research. The purpose of the current study is to explore the extent to which, and how, evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending may be addressed in practice. We will survey professionals who work with people who have sexually offended about their opinion and practice regarding assessing and changing evaluations of sexual offending.

Through the ATSA listserv and Twitter we are inviting professionals who work to assess or reduce sexual offenders' likelihood of further sexual offending to complete an anonymous online survey. Through a series of closed and open-ended questions, we are asking these professionals their opinion about whether evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending play a role in sexual offending and are important in assessment and treatment. We are also asking whether and how they assess or try to change evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending; for example, what general approaches and specific measures are used? We expect that most professionals will view evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending as important and relevant, but will not have formal, validated means with which to assess or change them. This study will provide valuable information about the extent to which evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending are considered relevant and addressed, which will motivate and inform future research and practice.

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### **References**

- Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. (2014). Psychosexual Evaluations. In *ATSA Practice Guidelines for the Assessment, Treatment, and Management of Male Adult Sexual Abusers* (p. 18-24). Retrieved from: [http://www.atsa.com/ATSAmemberDocs/2014\\_ATSA\\_Practice\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.atsa.com/ATSAmemberDocs/2014_ATSA_Practice_Guidelines.pdf)
- Nunes, K. L., Hermann, C. A., White, K., Pettersen, C., & Bumby, K. (2018). Attitude may be everything, but is everything an attitude? Cognitive distortions may not be evaluations of rape. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 30, 43-62. doi: 10.1177/1079063215625489

**Alicia LaPierre** is currently completing her M.A. in Psychology at Carleton University. She received her B.A. Honours and Co-operative Education in Psychology, with highest distinctions from Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. Her research interests are on the topics of cognitions and attitudes of those who commit sexually and non-sexually aggressive acts. The focus of her thesis is to examine the factor structure of the items and the distinctiveness of an analog violence measure called the Violence Propensity Vignette Questionnaire (VPVQ). Other research interests include sexual and domestic violence, perceptions of sexuality and consent, sexual attitudes and behaviour, and prevention.