

## ***SHAPING THE FUTURE***

2019 ATSA Conference | Friday November 8 | 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

**F-47**

### **Attachment and How it Relates to Sexual Offending Behavior in Adolescent Males**

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Over the last 15 years, researchers at the Program in Human Sexuality have been exploring the application of attachment theory to understanding the perpetration of sexual abuse and sexual aggression by adolescent males. These studies have included comparisons of various categories of adolescents who have perpetrated sexual offenses: those with child victims, those with peer/adult victims, and those with only hands off offences; and have compared these groups with boys who committed non-sexual crimes and boys in treatment for substance use or other mental health disorders. This presentation will start with a description of attachment theory and related concepts of attachment behavior, attachment style and internal working models. The findings from our studies will be presented which provide a model for how parental behavior, attachment style, and adolescent social interactions influence the development of sexually abusive and/or sexually coercive behavior. The findings form the basis for exploring the structure and targets for interventions aimed at treatment of adolescents. We have found that, while there are some differences between sexual offending adolescent boys and boys with other problems, there are many more similarities. We have also found that there are differences in risk factors across boys who have committed different types of sexual offenses and that those with child victims differ from those with peer/adult victims on many of the same factors in which they differ from boys whose crimes were non-sexual. Our work builds on the meta-analysis by Seto and Lalumière (2010) in that we have fleshed out the contribution of attachment theory, further explored issues of social interaction and social involvement, and can discuss how sexuality and early childhood sexual trauma may influence different types of acting out or problematic behavior.

The presentation will focus on the therapeutic implications of our research. I hope to challenge some long-standing assumptions and use our findings to provide a basis for thinking about adolescent sexual offending behavior within the context of adolescent development. A more broad-brush concept that sets adolescent sexual offending within the context of other problematic sexual behavior, other delinquent behavior, and internalizing problems of youth will be presented.

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### **Learning Goals**

- Understand the difference between attachment style, attachment disorder, and attachment behavior.
- Be able to explain how your behavior either confirms patient's attachment style or sets the stage for modification of their internal representational model.
- Challenge traditional models for offense specific treatment.

**Dr. Miner** is Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health and Research Director for the Program in Human Sexuality at the University of Minnesota Medical School. His career has involved the application of psychological methods and statistics in the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, cardiovascular disease, child sexual abuse, and HIV infection. He began his research in sexual aggression as the experimental psychologist for the Sex Offender Treatment and Evaluation Project at the California Department of Mental Health and has continued exploring causes of sexual perpetration in adolescent males since joining the faculty of the Program in Human Sexuality. Dr. Miner is immediate Past President of ATSA and past Vice President of the International Association for the Treatment of Sex Offenders.