

Introduction

- Nunes et al. (2018) have suggested that evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending may have been largely overlooked in past theory and research
- Evaluative attitudes refer to the extent to which a person views sexual offending positively or negatively

Current Study

- We surveyed professionals who work with people who have committed sexual offences to explore the extent to which, and how, evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending may be addressed in assessment and practice

Methods

35 professionals recruited through the ATSA listserv and Twitter completed an anonymous online survey

- Mostly White (88.6%), female (60%), aged 35-44 (28.6%)

We presented participants with the following definition of evaluative attitudes towards violence before asking them questions about their opinions and practice:

- **“Evaluations of sexual offending refer to the extent to which a person views sexual offending positively (e.g., positive, good) or negatively (e.g., negative, bad)...”**

Results

Do you think that how positively (or negatively) a person views sexual offending plays a role in influencing his or her likelihood to sexually offend?

- 91.4% said yes

Do you think it is important in assessment to consider how positively (or negatively) a person who has sexually offended views sexual offending?

- 85.7% said yes

Do you think it is important in treatment to try to make a person who has sexually offended view sexual offending more negatively?

- 94.1% said yes

Do you try to assess how positively (or negatively) a person who has sexually offended views sexual offending (e.g., through questionnaires, interviews, etc.)?

- 91.4% said yes

In what ways do you try to assess how positively (or negatively) a person who has sexually offended views sexual offending (select all that apply)?

- 60% said self-report scales
 - Only 5.3% of the scales mentioned clearly fit our definition of evaluative attitudes
- 88.6% said interviews
 - Most descriptions of interview questions were too vague to determine whether they fit our definition of evaluative attitudes
- 68.6% said clinician-scored measures
 - None of the measures mentioned fit our definition of evaluative attitudes

Do you do anything to try to make a person who has sexually offended view sexual offending more negatively?

- 51.4% said yes

What do you do to try to make a person who has sexually offended view sexual offending more negatively?

- A few of the descriptions of interventions clearly fit our definition of evaluative attitudes, but most were too vague to determine whether they fit

Discussion

- Most professionals said evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending are important and relevant, and that they address them in assessment and treatment
- However, few of the assessment measures and interventions described clearly fit our definition of evaluative attitudes; and these appeared to be “homespun” without any published evidence of their validity

Limitations

- Small sample size limits confidence in the stability and representativeness
- Ambiguity in open-ended descriptions of assessments and interventions limits confidence in our classifications

Future Directions

- Develop and validate measures and interventions that address evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending

References

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, 30*(1), 43-62. doi: 10.1177/1079063215625489

LaPierre, A. R., & Nunes, K. L. (2018, October). *Professionals' opinions and practice regarding evaluative attitudes towards sexual offending*. Poster presented at the 37th Annual Research and Treatment Conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

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