

## Does Rape-Related Cognition Predict Subsequent Sexually Aggressive Behavior?

Sacha Maimone<sup>1</sup>, Chantal A. Hermann<sup>2</sup>, and Kevin L. Nunes<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Carleton University  
<sup>2</sup>Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services

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## COGNITIONS REGARDING RAPE

- Considered important risk factors in the initiation and maintenance of sexually aggressive behavior
- Attitudes
  - Evaluations of psychological objects (Ajzen, 2001; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fazio, 2007)
  - E.g., Rape is positive
- Excuses
  - Cognitions that minimize offenders' responsibility for the event (Scott & Lyman, 1968)
  - E.g., Rape is not my fault because...
- Justifications
  - Cognitions that minimize the harm or wrongfulness of the event (Scott & Lyman, 1968)
  - E.g., Rape is not that bad because...

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## CURRENT STUDY

*Do cognitions regarding rape predict subsequent sexually aggressive behavior*

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## METHOD

### Participants

- Recruited from the community through Qualtrics (\$2.00 compensation)
- Wave 1:  $N = 617$  heterosexual, males
- Wave 2:  $N = 263$  heterosexual, males
- Final sample (who completed scales of interest):  $N = 122$  participants with follow-up data
- 64.7% ( $N = 41$ ) were 60 years of age or older, 85.2% ( $N = 104$ ) were white, and 1.6% ( $N = 2$ ) completed university/college

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## SEXUAL AGGRESSION: ATTITUDES, JUSTIFICATIONS, AND EXCUSES (SAAJE)

- SAAJE (Hermann & Nunes, 2012) subscales:
  1. Justifications for Rape/Positive Attitudes Towards Rape subscale (14 items)
    - Scores range from 14 to 70
  2. Excuses for Rape subscale (11 items)
    - Scores range from 11 to 55
  3. Negative Attitudes Towards Rape subscale (8 items)
    - Scores range from 8 to 40
- Scores for each item range from (1) *completely disagree* to (5) *completely agree*
- Items summed for a total score for each subscale

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## SEXUALLY AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR (SES-TFR; MODIFIED SCALE FROM ABBEY, PARKHILL, & KOSS, 2005)

The revised scales asked about the following:

- Six Sexual Acts
  - Ranging from kissing to oral/vaginal/anal penetration
- Six Sexually Aggressive Tactics
  - Ranging from verbal pressure to physical assault
- Used to assess sexually aggressive behavior
  - $\alpha = .97$  in community male sample (Hermann, Nunes, & Maimone, 2016)

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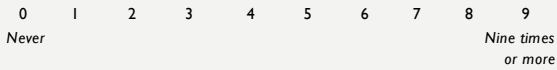
### SES-TFR: PRIOR SEXUAL AGGRESSION

- Asked about frequency of previous perpetration (sample item below)

How many times since you were 16 years old...

When a woman was passed out or too drunk to give permission or stop what was happening...

- a) have you ever fondled, kissed, or sexually touched her without her permission



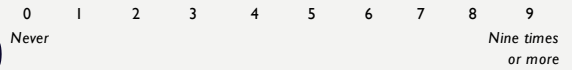
### SES-TFR: SUBSEQUENT SEXUAL AGGRESSION

- Asked about perpetration in the 4 months since first administration (sample item below)

How many times in the last four months...

When a woman was passed out or too drunk to give permission or stop what was happening...

- a) have you ever fondled, kissed, or sexually touched her without her permission

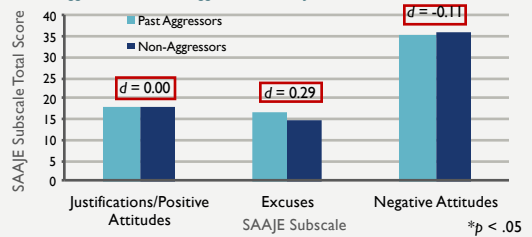


### PARTICIPANT GROUPS

- Non-aggressors (n = 63)
  - Reported no sexually aggressive behavior at Wave 1 and Wave 2
- Past aggressors (n = 42)
  - Reported sexual aggression at Wave 1 but NOT at Wave 2
- Current aggressors (n = 17)
  - Reported sexual aggression at Wave 2

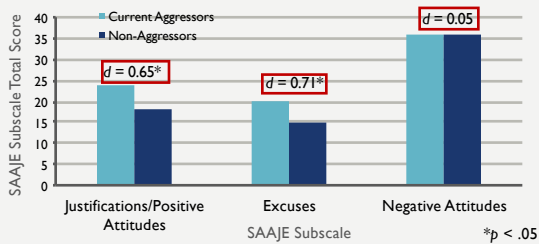
### RESULTS

- Conventions for Cohen's d are 0.2 = small, 0.5 = moderate, and 0.8 = large
- Past Aggressors and Non-Aggressors on SAAJE Subscales



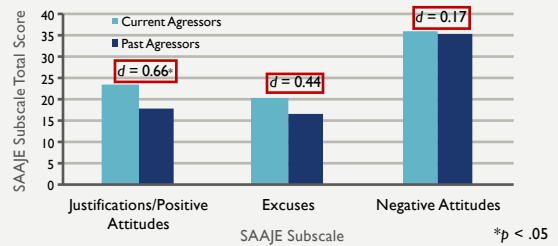
### RESULTS

- Current Aggressors and Non-Aggressors on SAAJE Subscales



### RESULTS

- Current Aggressors and Past Aggressors on SAAJE Subscales



## SUMMARY

- Past aggressors did not differ from non-aggressors on justifications/positive attitudes or negative attitudes towards rape
- Past aggressors endorsed slightly more excuses for rape than non-aggressors
- Current aggressors endorsed moderately more justifications/positive attitudes towards rape and excuses for rape than non-aggressors and past aggressors
- None of the groups differed in negative attitudes towards rape

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## LIMITATIONS

- *Reliance on self-report measures of sexual aggression*
  - But, antisocial behaviors can accurately be assessed with self-report measures (e.g., Mathie & Wakeling, 2011; Thornberry & Krohn, 2000; Woods, Hermann, Nunes, McPhail, & Sewell, 2011)
- *Small sample size*
  - Low power
  - Generalizability?
- *No manipulation of variables*
  - Does not permit causal inferences

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## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- *Replication of results with larger samples and offenders*
- *Use more diverse measures of behavior (i.e., criminal records) rather than solely self-report*
- *Replication with more sophisticated research methodology*
  - E.g., Experimental designs

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## CONCLUSIONS

*Justifications/positive attitudes towards rape and excuses for rape may be predictive of sexually aggressive behavior*

*And...*

*these cognitions may be important to consider when estimating risk of future sexual aggression.*

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## THANK YOU!

sachamaimone@cmail.carleton.ca

### Questions?

More about our research  
Aggressive Cognitions and Behaviour Research Lab  
<http://www.carleton.ca/acbrlab/>

Maimone, S., Hermann, C.A., & Nunes, K.L. (2017, April). Does Rape-Related Cognition Predict Subsequent Sexually Aggressive Behavior? In K. L. Nunes (Chair), *Research on Violent Cognitions from the ACBR Lab Symposium* to be presented at the Forensic Psychology in Canada Conference, Ottawa, Ontario.

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