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Validation of the SAAJE: A Measure of Rape-Supportive Cognitions

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Rape-Supportive Cognitions

- ▶ Cognitions supportive of sexual aggression are considered important risk factors in the initiation and maintenance of sexually aggressive behaviour
- ▶ Many measures have been developed to assess rape-supportive cognitions (e.g., RAPE scale; Bumby, 1996)
- ▶ *Rape-supportive cognition* is commonly defined as encompassing several constructs such as:
 - ▶ Attitudes, Excuses, Justifications, etc...

Defining These Cognitive Constructs

- ▶ 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...

Are These Cognitions Distinct?

- ▶ Research suggests that these cognitions may be distinct.
- ▶ For instance, Nunes, Hermann, White, Pettersen, & Bumby (2015) found:
 - ▶ A widely used measure of rape supportive cognition was found to be distinct from a measure of attitudes
 - ▶ Both were independently associated with indicators of sexually aggressive behaviour
- ▶ Distinctions may be useful for understanding sexually aggressive behaviour (i.e., different cognitions may play different roles).

Sexual Aggression: Attitudes, Justifications, and Excuses (SAAJE; Hermann & Nunes, 2012)

- ▶ Experienced clinicians (N = 52) completed sentence stems reflecting each type of cognition regarding rape using statements frequently articulated by their clients
- ▶ "How would your clients respond to the following..."
 - ▶ Positive Attitudes towards Rape
 - "One POSITIVE thing about forcing a woman to have sex is..."
 - ▶ Negative Attitudes towards Rape
 - "One NEGATIVE thing about forcing a woman to have sex is..."
 - ▶ Excuses for Rape
 - "Forcing a woman to have sex is NOT REALLY YOUR FAULT IF..."
 - ▶ Justifications for Rape
 - "Forcing a woman to have sex is NOT THAT BAD IF..."

SAAJE Questionnaire

- ▶ Self-report scale designed to assess the following cognitions regarding rape
 - Excuses
 - Justifications
 - Positive Attitudes
 - Negative Attitudes
- ▶ Scores for each item range from (1) *completely disagree* to (5) *completely agree*
- ▶ Items summed to create total scores for each scale

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Research Questions

Are the SAAJE subscales distinct from one another?

If so, are they each independently associated with sexually aggressive behaviour?

Method

- ▶ **Participants**
 - 452 heterosexual, male participants
 - Recruited from community (through Qualtrics)
 - Median age of 50-59 and 82.5% White
- ▶ **Measures**
 - SAAJE questionnaire (Hermann & Nunes, 2012)
 - Modified version of the Sexual Experience Survey Tactics First-Revised (SES-TFR; Abbey, Parkhill, & Koss, 2005)

Sexual Experience Survey Tactics First-Revised (SES-TFR)

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
- ▶ Original scales assessed past sexual aggression and were modified to also assess future likelihood of sexual aggression
 - $\alpha = .73$ for past SA in community male sample (Hermann, 2015)
 - $\alpha = .96$ for likelihood of SA in community male sample (Hermann, 2015)

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

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Never Nine times or more

- ▶ Scores split up into:
 - (1) No prior sexual aggression
 - (2) Prior verbal SA
 - (3) Prior physical SA

SES-TFR: Likelihood of Sexual Aggression

- ▶ Asked about likelihood of perpetration (sample item below)

How likely would you be to...

Overwhelm a woman with arguments and pressure, although she indicated she didn't want to, in order to...

a) make her have sexual intercourse with you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Unlikely Very likely

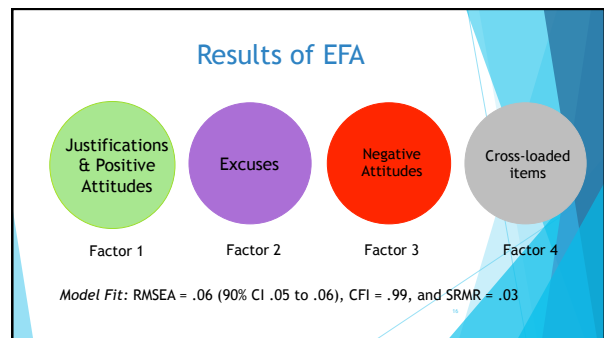
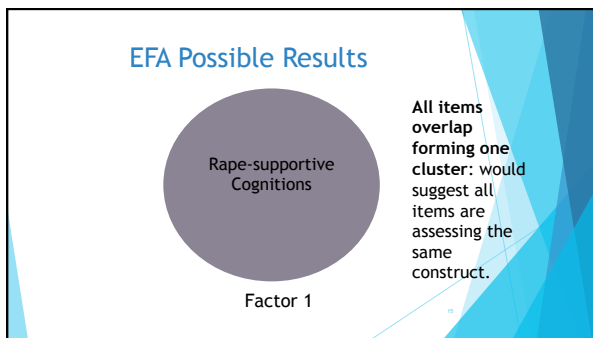
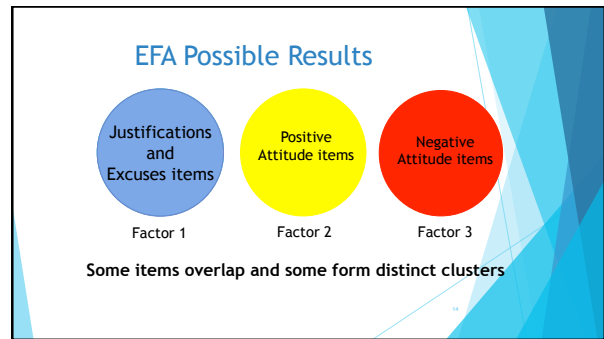
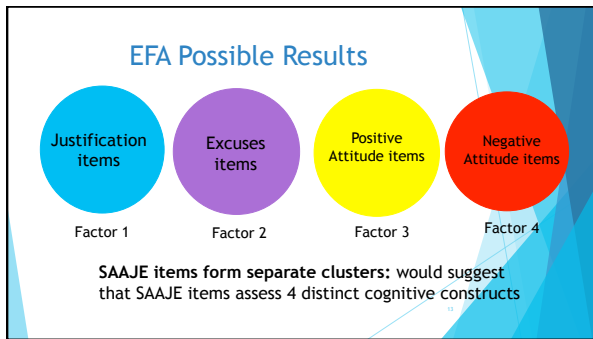
- ▶ Scores split up into:
 - (1) No likelihood
 - (2) Likelihood of verbal SA
 - (3) Likelihood of physical SA

Distinctiveness of the SAAJE Items

Research Question #1: *Are the SAAJE subscales distinct from one another?*

- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)
- EFA is used to identify clusters of variables
- Variables that belong to the same cluster are assumed to be related, or driven by the same underlying construct
- Examined whether the SAAJE subscales are distinct

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- ### Revised SAAJE Scales
- ▶ 3 scales according to EFA results (33 Items)
 - Factor 1: Justifications/Positive Attitudes (14 items)
 - Scores range from 14 to 70
 - Factor 2: Excuses (11 items)
 - Scores range from 11 to 55
 - Factor 3: Negative Attitudes (8 items)
 - Scores range from 8 to 40

Reliability of Revised SAAJE Scales

Means, Standard Deviations, and Internal Consistencies for SAAJE factors

| SAAJE factors | Mean | SD | Cronbach's α |
|---------------------------------------|-------|------|---------------------|
| Justifications and Positive Attitudes | 19.41 | 9.66 | .96 |
| Excuses | 16.65 | 8.33 | .95 |
| Negative Attitudes | 35.66 | 6.39 | .92 |

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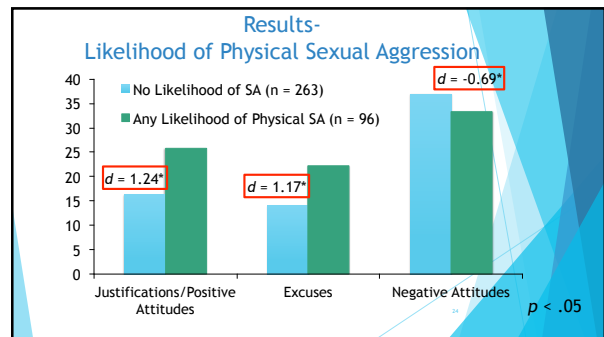
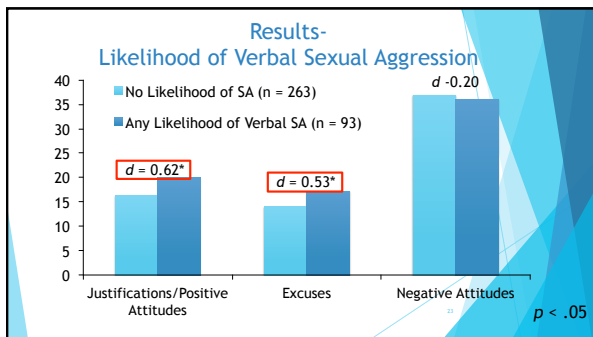
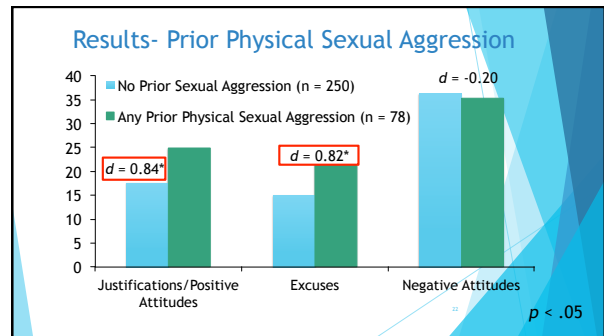
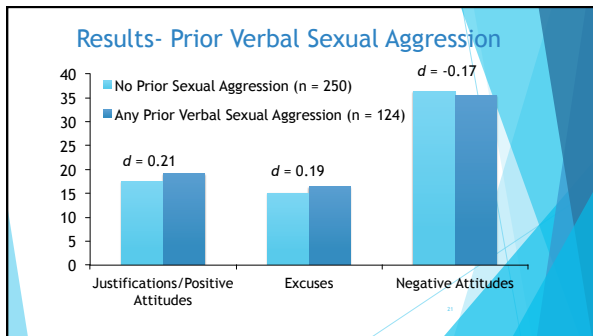
Correlations between SAAJE Factors

Pearson's r correlations between revised SAAJE scales

| SAAJE Factor | Justifications /Positive Attitudes | Excuses | Negative Attitudes |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Justifications /Positive Attitudes | - | .82* | -.30* |
| Excuses | | - | -.26* |
| Negative Attitudes | | | - |

$p < .001$

Research Question #2:
Are the SAAJE factors independently associated with sexually aggressive behaviour?



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Results

Logistic Regression
Comparison = No Prior Sexual Aggression vs. Any Prior Physical SA

| Predictor | Nagelkerke R ² | B | SE | Odds Ratio (OR) | 95% CI for OR | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| | .16 | | | | | |
| Justifications/PA | | .04 | .03 | 1.04 | .994 | 1.096 |
| Excuses | | .05 | .03 | 1.05 | .990 | 1.106 |

Note. $\chi^2(2, N = 328) = 35.66, p < .001$

Results

Logistic Regression
Comparison = No Likelihood of Sexual Aggression vs. Any Likelihood of Verbal SA

| Predictor | Nagelkerke R ² | B | SE | Odds Ratio (OR) | 95% CI for OR | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| | .11 | | | | | |
| Justifications/PA | | .06 | .03 | 1.06 | .994 | 1.137 |
| Excuses | | .05 | .03 | 1.05 | .980 | 1.121 |

Note. $\chi^2(2, N = 345) = 26.82, p < .001$

Results

Logistic Regression
Comparison = No Likelihood of Sexual Aggression vs. Any Likelihood of Physical SA

| Predictor | Nagelkerke R ² | B | SE | Odds Ratio (OR) | 95% CI for OR | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| | .37 | | | | | |
| Justifications/PA | | .07* | .03 | 1.07 | 1.01 | 1.13 |
| Excuses | | .08* | .03 | 1.08 | 1.02 | 1.15 |
| Negative Attitudes | | -.09** | .03 | 0.92 | .87 | .96 |

Note. $\chi^2(3, N = 349) = 101.58, p < .001$
*p < .05, **p < .001

- ### Summary
- ▶ SAAJE items assessing *justification for rape* and *positive attitudes towards rape* formed one factor
 - ▶ SAAJE items assessing *excuses for rape* and *negative attitudes towards rape* formed separate factors
 - ▶ All three distinct SAAJE factors were independently related to likelihood of physical sexual aggression

- ### Limitations
- ▶ Reliance on self-report measures of sexual aggression
 - But, antisocial behaviours can accurately be assessed with self-report measures (e.g., Mathie & Wakeling, 2011; Thornberry & Krohn, 2000; Woods, Hermann, Nunes, McPhail, & Sewell, 2011)
 - ▶ Poor measurement of constructs or are *justifications for rape* and *positive attitudes towards rape* the same thing?
 - ▶ Cross-sectional and correlational design
 - prevents interpretation of direction of influence

- ### Future Directions
- ▶ Validation of the SAAJE factors with offenders
 - ▶ Use more diverse measures of behaviour (i.e., criminal records) rather than solely self-report
 - ▶ Replication with more sophisticated research methodology
 - E.g., Longitudinal designs

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

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