

Evaluative Attitudes of Sexual Aggression Towards Women
from Men Who Commit Sexually Aggressive Acts Towards Women

by

Alison Croke

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Carleton University

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Alison Croke

Abstract

It is well-documented in theory and in research that evaluative attitudes predict subsequent behaviour, however the association of evaluative attitudes and sexually aggressive behaviour have been scarcely researched, and where they are researched, they lack consistent definitions/measures. The given research investigated the association of evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women and the perpetration of sexual aggression towards women using a newer version of an evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women measure (the EASAW). Data were collected from 259 men at the Missouri Sex Offender Program at the Farmington Correctional Center in Jefferson City, Missouri. EASAW mean scores of those with a history of sexual violence towards women and those without a history of sexual violence towards women were compared, with no significant differences and small effect sizes found, implying lack of an association between evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women and the perpetration of sexual aggression towards women. Future research should continue to investigate this relationship that address shortcomings of this study, such as: more diverse samples and experimental manipulation. If the findings of this study can be duplicated, measures of evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women should not be added to risk assessment batteries or addressed in treatment programs of sexual offending towards women, and instead should focus on constructs that are better-demonstrated in research.

Keywords: evaluative attitudes, sexual offending, sexual offending against women, sexual aggression, sexual aggression against women, sexual violence, sexual violence against women

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Evaluative Attitudes of Sexual Aggression towards Women
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Sexual assault has been a prevalent issue in North American societies for years, with women disproportionately being victimized (Statistics Canada, 2017; 2019). In 2018, Statistics Canada reported that 1 in 3 women had experienced an unwanted sexual behaviour in public in the past year, and 52% of women made changes to their behaviours or routines following these incidents (Statistics Canada, 2019). Further, 3 in 10 women in Canada are expected to experience some sort of sexual assault in their lifetime, and indeed, in 2018, 30% of women had experienced at least one incident of sexual assault since the age of 15 (Statistics Canada, 2019). There are several negative consequences associated with sexual assault such as anger, anxiety, depression, distrust of others, and victim blaming following the assault (e.g., Choudhary et al., 2012; Elliot et al., 2004; Harber et al., 2015; Resick, 1993; Statistics Canada, 2019). There is an ongoing need for research regarding factors that can help us understand sexual assault perpetration in order to address the high rates of victimization.

Given social psychological evidence that demonstrates attitudes predict behaviour (e.g., Ajzen, 1991; 2001; Kraus, 1995; Glasman & Albarracín, 2006), there is an opportunity to assess the role of attitudes towards sexually aggressive behaviour in the perpetration of sexually aggressive behaviour. One of the most common definitions of an attitude in social-psychological research is defined as, “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1). However, some forensic-psychological attitude research utilizes definitions that focus on a wider variety of thoughts and feelings, such as the Webster’s Dictionary (<https://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/Attitude> - July 14, 2021) definition of an attitude as, “a complex mental

state involving beliefs and feelings and values and dispositions to act in certain ways.” To emphasize the importance of the evaluative component of attitudes, and to further distinguish the social-psychological definition of attitudes from the definition more commonly used in forensic literature, Nunes and colleagues have used the term evaluative attitudes (Nunes et al., 2013, 2015, 2018). Thus, the social psychological term attitudes will be referred to as evaluative attitudes in this paper.

Further, although the construct can be divided into either explicit or implicit evaluative attitudes, the focus of this thesis will be on explicit evaluative attitudes. Explicit evaluative attitudes are ones we consciously contemplate, while implicit evaluative attitudes happen automatically (e.g., Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006). Implicit evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression have sometimes been seen to predict, or be associated with sexual aggression perpetration (Hermann & Nunes 2018; Hermann et al., 2018; Nunes et al., 2013), however, this thesis focuses only on explicit evaluative attitudes due to the practical constraints of the study; the data were collected from a site that only had capacity for paper surveys, so implicit measures would not be possible to collect. See Hermann and Nunes (2018), Hermann et al. (2018), Nunes et al. (2013), and Widman and Olson (2013) for research on implicit evaluative attitudes.

Several theories can explain why evaluative attitudes can predict subsequent behaviour, such as the theory of planned behaviour and the MODE model (Ajzen 1991; 2001; Fazio, 1990). Ajzen’s (1991; 2001) theory of planned behaviour suggests that behaviour can be predicted by intentions and one’s perceived behavioural control, with intentions being influenced by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of behavioural control, while perceived behavioural control is the person’s interpretation of their level of control over the behaviour. Greater intention and perceived behavioural control will make individuals more likely to perform the behaviour.

Fazio's (1990) MODE model proposes two methods by which attitudes can predict behaviour: a spontaneous and a deliberate attitude-behaviour model. The MODE model describes attitudes as positive or negative associations people have toward the attitude object, and the stronger the association is between the attitude and the attitude object, the attitude will be more automatically activated, and will therefore better predict behaviour.

Some theories are particularly relevant in explaining how evaluative attitudes can predict more specific types of behaviour. While not all of these theories presented are specifically about evaluative attitudes, the theories are still useful in explaining the behaviour. For example, social norms theory, the confluence model, and other theories of cognitive distortions can specifically help explain and/or predict sexual aggression. Social norms theory (Berkowitz, 2003; Berkowitz & Perkins, 1986) explains that individuals' decisions and behaviours are heavily influenced by their peers, in that individuals will engage in behaviours they believe their peers view as norms. This can be particularly problematic, especially in the case of sexual aggression, as it has been seen that perpetrators of sexual assault sometimes hold inaccurate beliefs regarding their peers' evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression as well as their level of engagement in sexually aggressive behaviours (Dardis et al., 2016). The confluence model, which says sexual aggression is a result of several factors converging, can also be useful in explaining the role of attitudes predicting sexually aggressive behaviour, and even predicting sexually aggressive behaviour (Malamuth et al., 1996; Malamuth et al., 2021). The model says that sexual aggression comes from two paths - hostile masculinity and impersonal sexuality, with the hostile masculinity path containing a focus on favourable attitudes of violence and negative attitudes of women. When testing the model, attitudes supporting violence have been found to be a significantly unique predictor of sexually aggressive behaviour when compared to arousal to sexual aggression,

dominance as motive for sex, hostility toward women, psychoticism, and sexual experience (Malamuth et al., 1996). The importance of attitudes predicting sexually aggressive behaviour through the confluence model still holds true today (Malamuth et al, 2021), though it should be noted the definition of attitudes used by Malamuth et al. (1996; 2021) does not follow the definition of evaluative attitudes used in this paper.

Similar to theories that identify a role of attitudes in predicting sexually aggressive behaviour, there are theories with a focus on cognitive distortions in explaining and/or predicting sexually aggressive behaviour. While evaluative attitudes refer to evaluating an attitude object with a certain degree of favour or disfavour, cognitive distortions are beliefs supportive of, or condoning a specific behaviour; particularly sexual offending in this case. There are several cognitive distortion theories that seem to be relevant in explaining sexual offending like the theory of cognitive distortion (Abel et al., 1984), the implicit theories theory (Ward, 2000; Ward & Keenan, 1999), the schema-based model (Mann & Beech, 2003), the judgment model of cognitive distortions (Ward et al., 2006; Ward et al., 2007), and the extended mind theory of cognitive distortion (Ward & Casey, 2010). O Ciardha and Ward's (2013) review appoints the implicit theories theory the strongest based on their criteria of empirical adequacy, external consistency, explanatory depth, and other factors, however, given the focus of cognitive distortions opposed to evaluative attitudes, these theories will not be discussed in depth.

Though similar theories can be useful in explaining how various types of cognitions (e.g., evaluative attitudes and cognitive distortions) are associated with behaviour, research suggests a clear distinction between evaluative attitudes and other cognitions and their relationship with sexually aggressive behaviour (Nunes et al., 2015; 2018; Pedneault et al., 2020). With this comes challenges in accurately capturing evaluative attitudes versus other cognition-related constructs.

As noted in Helmus and colleagues' (2013) meta-analyses of cognitions supportive of sexual offending and their association with sexual recidivism, ambiguous definitions and lack of validated measures is a major gap in this area of research. They recommended the use of traditional attitude definitions (e.g., object evaluations; Fazio, 2007) and definitions from the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010) for future research on sexual offending attitudes and behaviours. In line with suggestions from Helmus and colleagues (2013), Nunes and colleagues (2013) attempted to measure evaluative attitudes of rape with the Rape Outcome Evaluation Scale that used semantic differential scales to assess explicit evaluative attitudes towards rape by measuring expected outcomes of rape, based on the notion by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) that attitudes are based on expected outcomes of a behaviour. However, this measure assessed evaluative attitudes towards rape outcomes rather than evaluative attitudes towards rape itself.

Moving from this, Hermann and colleagues (2018) modified a frequently-used self-report measure of sexual perpetration in another attempt to capture evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression (the Sexual Experience Survey; see Koss & Gidycz, 1985; Koss et al., 1987; Koss & Oros, 1982). The Evaluations Sexual Experience Survey-Tactics First Revised (Evaluations SES-TFR) was modified to now measure evaluative attitudes toward sexually coercive and aggressive behaviour. They found strong evidence for a relationship between evaluative attitudes toward sexually coercive and aggressive behaviour and subsequent sexually coercive and violent behaviour, as less negative evaluative attitudes toward sexual coercion and aggression were significantly associated with more self-reported perpetration of sexually coercive and aggressive behaviour (Hermann et al., 2018). Additionally, those with less negative evaluative attitudes toward sexual coercion and aggression were more likely to have been sexually coercive and

aggressive, and more likely to have perpetrated rape, and participants reporting higher levels of physical sexual coercion has significantly less negative evaluative attitudes toward sexual coercion and aggression compared to those reporting no sexual coercion/aggression. In addition to the strong support for a relationship between these evaluative attitudes and the corresponding behaviour, there was also support for an association between evaluative attitudes toward sexually coercive and aggressive behaviour and sexually coercive and aggressive behaviour in that men who had currently coerced/assaulted had significantly less negative evaluative attitudes toward sexual coercion and aggression than those with past coercion/assaults, and those who were non-coercers/assaulters.

Considering the empirical support of the Evaluations SES-TFR in measuring evaluative attitudes towards sexually coercive and aggressive behaviour, Hermann and Nunes (2018) used the Evaluations SES-TFR to form the Evaluative Attitudes of Sexual Aggression Towards Women (EASAW) scale. The EASAW remained unchanged from the Evaluations SES-TFR in terms of question framing and response options, however, included changes in wording and removing or adding items. For example, the EASAW now evaluated three sexual acts rather than six, and added one more sexual coercion tactic relative to the SES-TFR. Pedneault and Nunes are currently revising the EASAW and the most current version at the time of data collection was used for this study.

It is important to note that in the research presented, on average, men with less negative evaluative attitudes toward sexual coercion and aggression are not “positively” endorsing sexual coercion and aggression, rather, their responses indicate “less negative” evaluative attitudes (e.g., “a bit negative” compared to “very negative”). Overall, the direction of their responses (i.e., “positive” compared to “negative”) are not differing, rather, the difference lies within the

strength of their evaluation. Regardless, there appears to be a relationship between these slight differences in evaluative attitudes toward sexual coercion and aggression and the perpetration of sexually coercive and aggressive behaviour.

Current Study

As demonstrated in literature, evaluative attitudes predict future behaviour (Ajzen, 1991, 2001; Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Kraus, 1995), yet, the role of evaluative attitudes applied to sexual aggression has been researched by few (Bouffard, 2002; Hermann & Nunes, 2018; Hermann et al., 2018; Nunes et al., 2013, 2018; Pedneault et al., 2020; O'Donohue et al., 1996). The current study aimed to investigate the role of evaluative attitudes toward sexual aggression in the perpetration of sexual aggression. The study surveyed men who have committed sexually aggressive offences towards women on their personal evaluative attitudes toward sexually aggressive behaviour towards women. Their scores were compared to men who have not committed sexually aggressive offences towards women. Only scores of men indicating sexual attraction to women were considered, as the study used a measure about sexual acts specifically involving women. Evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression were measured using the most current version of the EASAW and both current and prior offences were considered. Broadly, it is hypothesized that men who commit sexual aggression towards women would have less negative evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women than men who do not commit sexual aggression towards women.

Method

Participants

The data were collected from 259 consenting participants in the Missouri Sex Offender Program at the Farmington Correctional Center in Jefferson City, Missouri. To be included in

analyses, participants had to be a man, had to be sexually attracted to women, had to have no current or prior sexual offences towards a man, had to pass the attention check item, and had to complete all items of the EASAW. The final sample ($n = 212$; 81.9%) consisted of 198 straight men (93.4%) and 14 bisexual men (6.6%). The average age of the sample was 40.1 years old ($SD = 13.3$), ranging from 20 to 84 years old. Participants were mostly white ($n = 168$; 79.2%), see Table 1. Participants also reported their current and prior convictions, see Table 2.

Table 1*Ethnicity of Participants*

Ethnicity	<i>n</i>	%
White	168	79.2%
Black	38	17.9%
Indigenous	6	2.8%
Hispanic	4	1.9%
Other	3	1.4%
Asian	1	0.5%

Note. Based on participants included in the main analysis ($n = 212$). Participants could select more than one ethnicity.

Table 2*Current and Prior Convictions of Participants*

Offence Type	Current		Prior	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Violent	10	4.7%	25	11.8%
Non-sexual non-violent	6	2.8%	67	31.6%
Sexual against a female over 18 years old	18	8.5%	7	3.3%
Sexual against a female aged 16 to 17 years old	19	9.0%	4	1.9%
Sexual against a female or male aged 15 years old or younger	164	77.4%	23	10.8%
Child pornography	22	10.4%	2	0.9%

Note. Based on included in the main analysis ($n = 212$). Participants could select more than one current and/or prior conviction.

Measures

Demographics

Participants were asked a variety of demographic questions such as age, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and prior and current convictions (see Appendix A).

Evaluative Attitudes of Sexual Aggression Towards Women (EASAW) Scale

The EASAW was used to measure evaluative attitudes toward sexual coercion and aggression against women. Respondents evaluate three sexual acts (attempted kissing and/or sexual touching; kissing and/or sexual touching; and making a woman have some sort of sex), using seven sexual coercion tactics (telling a woman you'll make something bad happen; blocking a woman from getting away; intimidating a woman; giving a woman or pressuring a woman to take drugs or alcohol; taking advantage of a woman when she is too drunk or high; threatening to physically harm; and physically forcing a woman). The scale originally contained 21 items that combined the various sexual acts with the various sexual coercion tactics (see Hermann & Nunes, 2018), but has since been narrowed down to 13 items that yield the most variability. Individual items are measured on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "very bad", "pretty bad", "not that bad", and "not at all bad". The 13 items are averaged to create a total score, with higher scores meaning less negative evaluative attitudes toward sexual coercion and aggression against women. Sample items include, "You kissing or sexually touching your date/girlfriend/wife when she is too drunk or high to know or stop what is happening," and, "You're with a woman you just met who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. You grab her butt, but she pushes your hand away. You grab her butt again." The order of the EASAW items was randomized three times to create three different versions of the survey to

combat item order effects. See Appendix B for the current version of the EASAW at the time of data collection.

Currently, there is no psychometric data available for the EASAW, however, it shares many features with the Evaluations SES-TFR, which demonstrates high internal consistency in male community samples ($\alpha = .94-.97$; Hermann et al., 2018), and has shown small to moderate correlations with similar measures assessing evaluative attitudes toward sexual aggression (ROE-Evaluation scale, $r = .13-.45$; Evaluation of Rape Scale, $r = .45-.57$; Hermann & Nunes, 2018). The EASAW demonstrated high internal consistency in the current sample (Cronbach's alpha = .93).

Quality Control Item

A quality control item was randomly added into each of the randomized versions of the EASAW. The item, "Please select 'not that bad'," was used to ensure participants were paying attention and understanding the questions.

Procedure

Upon getting ethics approval from the university, formal permission was granted from the Farmington Correctional Center in Kansas City, Missouri. Paper copies of the consent form (see Appendix C), questionnaire, debriefing form (see Appendix D), and instructions for the collaborator at the Missouri Sex Offender Program (see Appendix E) were then shipped to the data collection site. A copy of the consent form, survey, and debriefing form were packaged into individual envelopes, so that each participant received their own envelope and the on-site collaborator could not see whether participants had completed the survey or not. The order of the envelope packages was also randomized based on what survey version they included so that they were distributed in random order (i.e., not all envelope packages with survey version 1 were

given out first). Our collaborator, a clinical psychologist at the center, distributed the envelopes to participants, and by completing the survey, participants implied their consent to participate. Participants could withdraw from the study at any point during data collection by drawing an “X” through the survey and returning their incomplete envelope to the collaborator, or by simply returning a blank survey. Participants returned the envelopes to the on-site collaborator whether they were completed or not, and the collaborator shipped the envelopes back to the researchers.

Results

An independent-samples *t*-test was used to examine whether those with a history of sexual violence towards women had less negative evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women compared to those who do not commit sexual violence towards women. EASAW mean scores of those with current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women against those who did not report sexually violent offences towards women were compared. Participants were included in the current and/or prior sexually violent offence group if they selected a current and/or prior sexually violent offence against a woman whether they had other offences (e.g., violent offences or sexually violent offences against children under the age of 15) or not. Contrary to the hypothesis, those with current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women ($n = 42$; $M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.42$) did not score significantly different on the EASAW compared to those with no current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women ($n = 170$; $M = 1.38$, $SD = 0.41$), $t(210) = -0.7$, $p = .48$, $d = -0.12$, 95% CI [-0.46, 0.22]. For Cohen’s *d*, an effect size of 0.20 is generally considered small, while 0.50 is generally considered medium, and 0.80 is generally considered large (Cohen, 1992). See Table 3 for individual item descriptives compared between groups, see Figure 1 for the distribution of average scores for those with current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women, see

Figure 2 for the distribution of average scores for those without current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women, see Figure 3 for comparison of average scores between groups, and see Appendix F for response frequencies by item.

Another independent-samples *t*-test was run with only current sexually violent offences towards women compared against those who did not report sexually violent offences towards women. That is, would comparing only those with current sexually violent offences towards woman ($n = 36$; $M = 1.27$, $SD = 0.34$) against those with no current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women ($n = 170$; $M = 1.38$, $SD = 0.41$) yield a different result? Participants were included in the current sexually violent offences group if they selected a current sexually violent offence against a woman whether they had other offences (e.g., violent offences or sexually violent offences against children under the age of 15) or not. Still, the groups did not differ significantly, $t(204) = -1.49$, $p = .14$, $d = -0.27$, 95% CI [-0.63, 0.09].

Though the Levene's tests for equality of variances were not significant in either parametric tests run, the data appear very positively skewed (see Figure 1 & Figure 2), so an independent-samples Mann-Whitney U test was run on each set of comparison groups to compare the results of the parametric test to a non-parametric test. Those with current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women ($n = 42$; $Mdn = 1.15$) did not score significantly different on the EASAW compared to those with no current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women ($n = 170$; $Mdn = 1.31$), $U = 3764.5$, $p = .578$. Similarly, when comparing those with only current sexually violent offences towards woman ($n = 36$; $Mdn = 1.12$) against those with no current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women ($n = 170$; $Mdn = 1.31$), the groups still did not significantly differ, $U = 3400.5$, $p = .286$.

Table 3*Item Means and Standard Deviations by Group*

EASAW Item	Sexually Violent Offence Towards Women (<i>n</i> = 42)	No Sexually Violent Offence Towards Women (<i>n</i> = 170)
1. You have sex with a woman who was flirting with you and wearing a sexy dress when she is too drunk or high to know or stop what is happening.	1.21 (0.52)	1.37 (0.63)
2. Your date/girlfriend/wife refuses to let you kiss or sexually touch her, so you intimidate her by yelling, swearing, or breaking stuff until she lets you kiss or sexually touch her.	1.26 (0.54)	1.26 (0.49)
3. Your date/girlfriend/wife refuses to give you oral sex, so you physically force her (for example, by holding her down) to give you oral sex.	1.19 (0.63)	1.12 (0.39)
4. You're with a woman who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. She refuses to give you oral sex, so you tell her that you'll make something bad happen to her reputation or employment if she doesn't give you oral sex.	1.19 (0.63)	1.22 (0.48)
5. You're with a woman who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. She's refusing to let you kiss or sexually touch her, so you block her from getting away from you (for example, by blocking the doorway) until she lets you kiss or sexually touch her.	1.26 (0.59)	1.3 (0.56)
6. You have oral sex with your date/girlfriend/wife when she is too drunk or high to know or stop what is happening.	1.69 (0.98)	1.56 (0.75)
7. You're with a woman who is drunk or high. She's having sex with you but refuses to let you take sexual pictures of her. You take sexual pictures of her anyway.	1.4 (0.7)	1.42 (0.64)
8. You're with a woman you just met who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. You grab her butt, but she pushes your hand away. You grab her butt again.	1.45 (0.71)	1.53 (0.67)
9. You're talking with a woman you just met. You put your hand on her leg, but she pushes it away. You put your hand back on her leg.	1.74 (0.73)	1.67 (0.7)

10. Your date/girlfriend/wife agrees to have sex with you, but only if you wear a condom. You put a condom on. While you're having sex, you purposely break or remove the condom without her knowing and continue to have sex with her without a condom.	1.43 (0.8)	1.59 (0.74)
11. You're having vaginal sex with your date/girlfriend/wife. You push your penis against her anus to have anal sex with her, but she moves your penis away and says she doesn't want to have anal sex. You have anal sex with her anyway.	1.21 (0.65)	1.24 (0.53)
12. You're with a woman who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. She's giving you oral sex but refuses to have sexual intercourse with you, so you tell her that you'll spread rumours about her if she doesn't have sex with you.	1.4 (0.7)	1.45 (0.63)
13. Your girlfriend/wife is refusing to have sex with you, so you tell her that you'll post sexual pictures of her on the internet if she doesn't have sex with you.	1.21 (0.47)	1.27 (0.5)

Note. Both current and/or prior sexually violent offences towards women included in the

“Sexually Violent Offence Towards Women” group presented above.

Figure 1

Average Scores of Participants with Sexually Violent Offences Towards Women

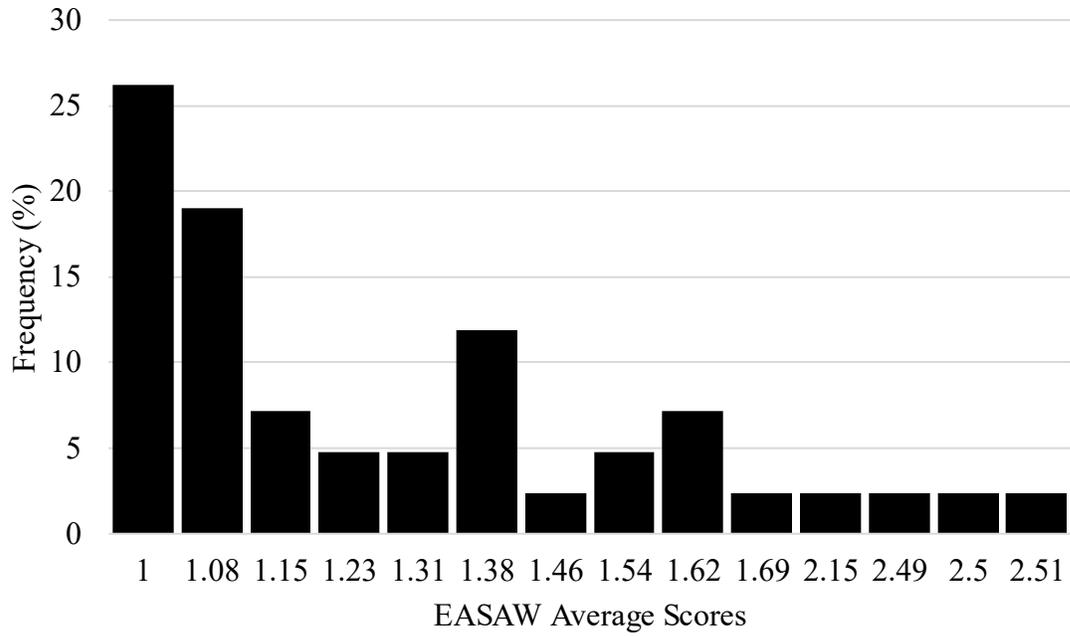


Figure 2

Average Scores of Those Without Sexually Violent Offences Towards Women

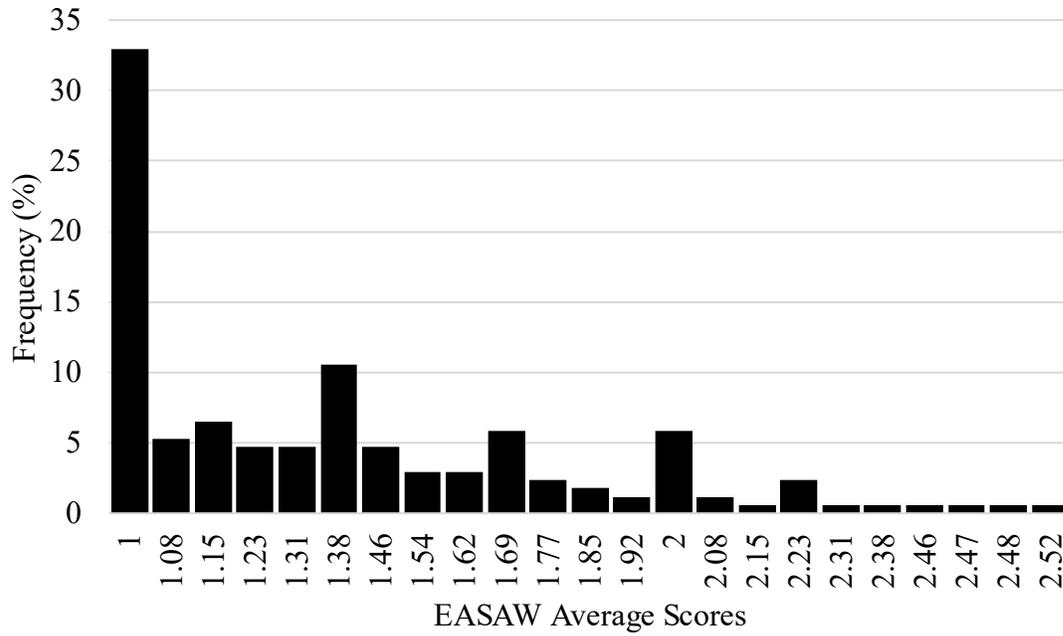
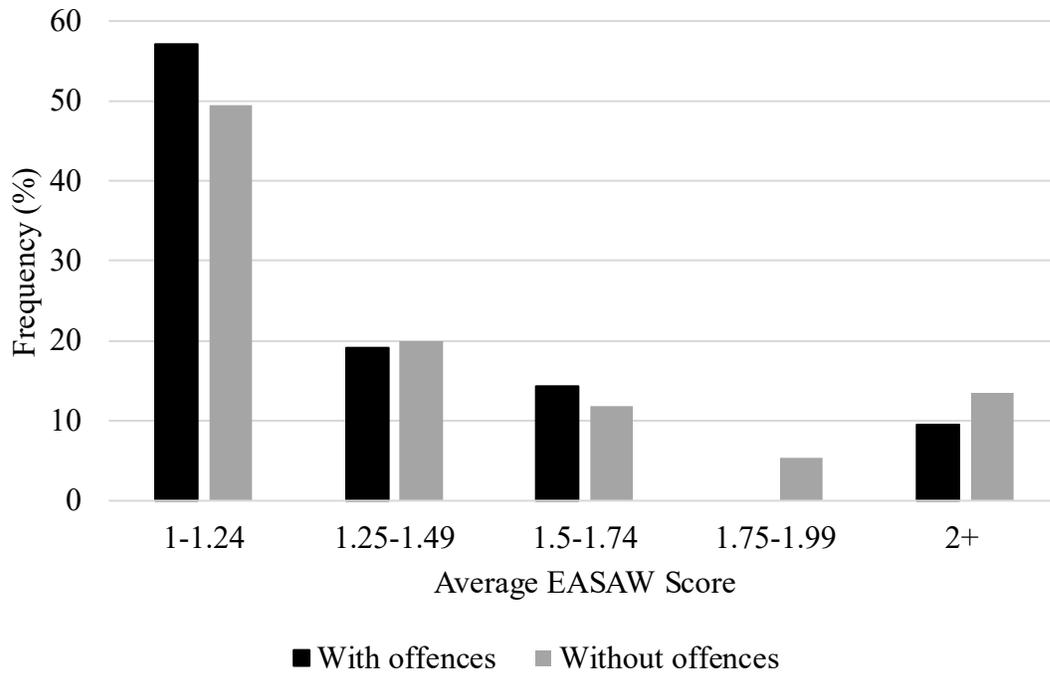


Figure 3

Comparison of Average Scores Between Groups



Discussion

The current study explored whether evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women were associated with the perpetration of sexual aggression towards women. Since evaluative attitudes seem to predict behaviour (e.g., Kraus, 1995; Glasman & Albarracín, 2006), and even more specifically evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression seem to predict perpetration of sexually aggressive behaviour in some cases (e.g., Hermann & Nunes, 2018), it was expected that those with a history of sexually aggressive offences towards women would have less negative evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women. However, this relationship was not found to be true in the sample used in the current study. If anything, it seemed the relationship worked in the opposite way, with those without a history of sexually aggressive offences towards women having less negative evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women and yielding a small effect size, however, since the relationship was not significant, it will be treated as no difference between the groups.

To take this research at face value would mean we did not find support that evaluative attitudes were associated with behaviour in this study. Specifically, evaluative attitudes of sexually aggressive behaviour towards women were not significantly associated with sexually aggressive behaviour towards women. Though there is limited research to compare, the findings in this study are generally not aligned with theory or those of similar research. There is reasonable hesitation to make any conclusive statements regarding the relevance of evaluative attitude theories in sexual aggression research, however, the results of this study are not consistent with traditional attitude/behaviour theories like the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen 1991; 2001) or the MODE model (Fazio, 1990). Further, unlike Hermann and Nunes (2018), Hermann et al. (2018), Nunes et al. (2018), and Pedneault et al. (2020), the given study

did not find evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression to be associated with sexually aggressive behaviour. While there certainly is evidence that evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression are associated with sexually aggressive behaviour, some studies find this relationship to only be true for explicit evaluative attitudes, and not implicit evaluative attitudes (Hermann et al., 2018), while others in related areas of violence find this relationship to only be true for implicit evaluative attitudes, and not explicit evaluative attitudes (e.g., intimate partner violence studies by Eckhardt & Crane, 2014; Eckhardt et al., 2012). Nonetheless, the relationship was not found in this case. Given theory (Ajzen 1991; 2001; Fazio, 1990), previous research done on evaluative attitudes predicting behaviour generally (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Kraus, 1995), and newer research on evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression predicting, or being associated with sexually aggressive behaviour (Hermann & Nunes, 2018; Hermann et al., 2018; Nunes et al., 2013; Nunes et al., 2018; Pedneault et al., 2020; Widman & Olson, 2013), it is reasonable to believe there is something else explaining the results of this study, rather than the simple conclusion that these types of evaluative attitudes are not associated with this type of behaviour.

It is possible the comparison groups had an influence on the results since the comparison group in this study largely consisted of men who have committed sexual violence towards children (i.e., child molesters; see Table 2). While it would have been ideal to compare men with a history of sexual violence towards women to men with no history of sexual violence at all (i.e., not towards women or children), the data for the study were collected during the Covid-19 pandemic which made in-person data collection challenging and the project had to limit the number of prisons they collected data from. While the studies outlined in the given literature review do not breakdown their findings by offence types (e.g., Bouffard, 2002; Hermann & Nunes, 2018; Hermann et al., 2018; Nunes et al., 2013; Widman & Olson, 2013), some studies

have investigated concepts similar to this study with the addition of comparisons between offence types (Feelgood et al., 2005; Helmus et al., 2013). Though they studied rape-supportive cognitions rather than evaluative attitudes, Feelgood and colleagues (2005) did not find rapists to support rape-supportive cognitions significantly more than violent offenders. Further, attitudes supportive of sexual offending have been found to better predict recidivism in child molesters than in rapists (Helmus et al., 2013). It is possible we did not achieve the expected findings in this study due to the types of offences in the sample.

While differences may exist in the extent to which evaluative attitudes are associated with behaviour in rapists versus child molesters, it is possible that the treatment program may impact the two groups separately as well. Recall that all participants in this study were currently undergoing the Missouri Sex Offender Program at the time of data collection. This program is required for those convicted of sexual offences before they can be released back into the community. Another potential explanation for the lack of findings between groups is the possibility that rapists versus child molesters also differ in their treatment success. When measuring treatment success by recidivism rates of sexual offences, some studies have found that child molesters have higher sexual recidivism compared to rapists (Rettenberger et al., 2015; Rice & Harris, 1997), while others have found the opposite (Palermo, 2015). However, it would be difficult to conclude that the findings in this study are due to a difference between treatment success of rapists versus child molesters.

A final point regarding potential underlying differences between the comparison groups that might have impacted the results is the consideration of the prison social hierarchy (Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Jacobs, 1977). For years, it has been understood that a social order exists within prison walls, and the crimes you commit will land you in a certain rank among the hierarchy. As

one can imagine, among the lowest ranks within the prison social hierarchy are sex offenders (Ricciardelli & Spencer, 2014), and within the ranks of sex offenders, child molesters place even lower than rapists (Ricciardelli & Moir, 2013). We speculate that being immersed in the prison hierarchy for their sentences prior to participating in the Sex Offender Program has greatly reinforced that the actions of the child molesters are the worst of the worst. Potentially, this reinforcement has made those who had committed child sexual offences view any actions other than child molestation offences as “not that bad,” as no other actions, even sexual violence against women, compare to the terrible actions they have done. As such, we believe our hypothesis might have held true if the comparison group did not consist mostly of child sex offenders.

As indicated in the previous paragraphs, a clear limitation of this research is the potential for third variables, as we suspect there were other underlying differences between our comparison groups that potentially caused us to get the results we did. Specifically, we believe the comparison group consisting mainly of child sex offenders influencing our results, and if we were able to obtain a comparison group that had non-violent non-sexual offences (i.e., a comparison group more similar to those in the research presented that had findings in line with our hypotheses; see Hermann & Nunes, 2018; Hermann et al., 2018; Nunes et al., 2018), we would have more likely seen our expected results. Unfortunately, since the data were collected during the Covid-19 global pandemic, we were limited with the number of prisons we could collect data from due to either research-related restrictions at facilities, or time restrictions that prevented us from waiting for more sites to become available as data collection was time sensitive. There is an opportunity for future research to continue to investigate the relationship of evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression and sexually aggressive behaviour in more diverse

offender samples. In addition to controlling for confounds within sample demographics, other risk assessment measures could be added in future research to determine if the EASAW provides unique information above and beyond well-established risk measures for sexual offending [e.g., Static-99 (Hanson et al., 2010; Helmus & Hanson, 2007)].

Further, since the study was not experimental, we are unable to infer any causation between evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression and sexually aggressive behaviour even if we did find results in line with our hypothesis. There is an opportunity for more complex studies to be done in future research to further investigate the order of this relationship, such as expanding on current studies that investigate if evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression are independently associated with sexually aggressive behaviour (e.g., Hermann & Nunes, 2018), or if they play a moderator or mediator role in the perpetration of sexually aggressive behaviour. Further, there is the potential to explore the manipulation of evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women to help determine if any causal relationship exists between these evaluative attitudes and sexually aggressive behaviour. Like what was done by Nunes and colleagues (2021) with evaluative attitudes towards violence, an experimental manipulation of evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression can be created based on attitude-change procedures from social psychological research on persuasiveness and attitude change (see Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006; Hofmann, De Houwer, Perugini, Baeyens, & Crombez, 2010; Petty & Briñol, 2012; Rydell, & McConnell, 2006; Stiff & Mongeau, 2016). The ESAW-R could be administered before and after the experimental manipulation to verify its intended effect, and the procedure would require presentation of calming/restoring materials at the end to combat the experimental manipulation of evaluative attitudes towards sexual aggression.

Finally, there may be limitations within the measure(s) used in this study. Given the EASAW measure is still under development, another possible limitation is that the items on the EASAW are not accurately measuring evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women, which could also explain why we did not achieve our anticipated results. In some cases, in this particular field of forensic psychological research, evaluative attitude measures have been found to not measure what they were expecting to measure (Nunes et al., 2018), which could just as easily be the case in this study. However, this is unlikely for a couple reasons; as noted prior, it shares many features with other scales that have good measurement validity and further, based on preliminary findings by Pedneault et al. (2020), the EASAW seems to be performing well statistically. Further to the validity of the measure, it should also be noted that the responses to the EASAW were positively skewed. However, this pattern is common in previous versions of the EASAW (Hermann & Nunes, 2018; Pedneault et al., 2020). Finally, the offence data (previous and current convictions) collected were self-reported which could raise concerns about whether sexually aggressive behaviour is completely being captured (i.e., perhaps participants engage in sexually aggressive behaviour they have not been convicted for), as well as issues around the accuracy of this data. To correct these issues, official records could be used in the future, as well as a mixture of conviction records and more general sexually aggressive behaviour measures (e.g., SES-TFR; see Pedneault et al., 2020).

In the case that future research addresses the limitations of this research, and does find a relationship exists between evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women and the perpetration of sexually aggressive behaviours towards women, the EASAW measure can be added to risk factor measures for perpetration of sexual aggression towards women and included in treatment programs of male sex offenders who commit sexual aggression against women.

However, if future research can duplicate the results of this study and demonstrate beyond some level of doubt that evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women do not play a role in the perpetration of sexually aggressive behaviour towards women, these types of measures should not be added to risk assessment batteries or addressed in treatment programs of this type of offending, and should focus on other cognitions that are seen to contribute to this type of offending. Further, though the findings of this study were not conclusive, if the results are duplicated with the limitations of this study corrected for, there is a need to revisit the role of theories of evaluative attitudes and subsequent behaviour for sexual offending behaviour towards women specifically. Ultimately, the goal is to be able to predict this type of behaviour, and therefore prevent this behaviour from occurring, or at least to improve treatment for those who do commit these types of offences so they can be prevented from reoccurring.

Overall, this research has provided a meaningful addition to the growing body of research around evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression and their role of sexually aggressive behaviours. Though this paper did not find the expected association between evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression and the perpetration of sexually aggressive behaviour, this research provided important new findings in the role of evaluative attitudes and behaviour for different types of offences (e.g., rape versus child molestation), and potentially the overall importance of evaluative attitudes of sexual aggression towards women in relation to the perpetration of sexual aggression towards women. It is important for future research to continue investigating this relationship, while considering the learnings from this study, to keep learning about risk factors of sexual aggression with the goal of lessening the presence of sexual aggression in Canada and even globally.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Demographic Questionnaire

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): _____	How old are you? _____ years old.
What is your gender? (check one)	
<input type="radio"/> Male <input type="radio"/> Female <input type="radio"/> Other	
Who are you most sexually attracted to? (check one)	
<input type="radio"/> Males <input type="radio"/> Females <input type="radio"/> Both males and females <input type="radio"/> Other	
What is your ethnicity? (check all that apply)	
<input type="radio"/> White <input type="radio"/> Black <input type="radio"/> Indigenous <input type="radio"/> Asian <input type="radio"/> East Indian <input type="radio"/> Hispanic <input type="radio"/> Arab	
<input type="radio"/> Other (please specify): _____	
What kind of offences are you in prison or on parole/probation for <u>now</u>? (check all that apply)	
<input type="radio"/> Violent (for example, assault, robbery, making threats) <input type="radio"/> Non-violent non-sexual (for example, theft, break and enter, drug possession)	
<input type="radio"/> Sexual against a female over 18 years old (for example, sexual assault) <input type="radio"/> Sexual against a male over 18 years old (for example, sexual assault)	
<input type="radio"/> Sexual against a female aged 16 to 17 years old <input type="radio"/> Sexual against a male aged 16 to 17 years old	
<input type="radio"/> Sexual against a female or male aged 15 years old or younger <input type="radio"/> Child pornography	
Not counting the offences that you are in prison or on parole/probation for now, what kind of offences were you convicted of <u>before</u>? (check all that apply)	
<input type="radio"/> Violent (for example, assault, robbery, making threats) <input type="radio"/> Non-violent non-sexual (for example, theft, break and enter, drug possession)	
<input type="radio"/> Sexual against a female over 18 years old (for example, sexual assault) <input type="radio"/> Sexual against a male over 18 years old (for example, sexual assault)	
<input type="radio"/> Sexual against a female aged 16 to 17 years old <input type="radio"/> Sexual against a male aged 16 to 17 years old	
<input type="radio"/> Sexual against a female or male aged 15 years old or younger <input type="radio"/> Child pornography	

Appendix B

Evaluative Attitudes of Sexual Aggression Towards Women (EASAW)

<p>Please rate how you think or feel about each item below by checking the circle to the left of the response option. For example, how good or bad do you think it would be to kiss a woman when she doesn't want you to?</p> <p>Answering these questions does not mean that you have done or will do the things described in the questions. Please just say what you think about the idea of doing each of these things, even if you have never done them or never will do them.</p>
<p>You having sex with a woman who was flirting with you and wearing a sexy dress when she is too drunk or high to know or stop what is happening.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>Your date/girlfriend/wife refuses to let you kiss or sexually touch her, so you intimidate her by yelling, swearing, or breaking stuff until she lets you kiss or sexually touch her.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>Your date/girlfriend/wife refuses to give you oral sex, so you physically force her (for example, by holding her down) to give you oral sex.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>You're with a woman who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. She refuses to give you oral sex, so you tell her that you'll make something bad happen to her reputation or employment if she doesn't give you oral sex.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>You're with a woman who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. She's refusing to let you kiss or sexually touch her, so you block her from getting away from you (for example, by blocking the doorway) until she lets you kiss or sexually touch her.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>You having oral sex with your date/girlfriend/wife when she is too drunk or high to know or stop what is happening.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>You're with a woman who is drunk or high. She's having sex with you but refuses to let you take sexual pictures of her. You take sexual pictures of her anyway.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>You're with a woman you just met who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. You grab her butt, but she pushes your hand away. You grab her butt again.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>You're talking with a woman you just met. You put your hand on her leg, but she pushes it away. You put your hand back on her leg.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all</p>
<p>Your date/girlfriend/wife agrees to have sex with you, but only if you wear a condom. You put a condom on. While you're having sex, you purposely break or remove the condom without her knowing and continue to have sex with her without a condom.</p>

<input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all
<p>You're having vaginal sex with your date/girlfriend/wife. You push your penis against her anus to have anal sex with her, but she moves your penis away and says she doesn't want to have anal sex. You have anal sex with her anyway.</p>
<input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all
<p>You're with a woman who is wearing a sexy dress and has been flirting with you. She's giving you oral sex but refuses to have sexual intercourse with you, so you tell her that you'll spread rumours about her if she doesn't have sex with you.</p>
<input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all
<p>Your girlfriend/wife is refusing to have sex with you, so you tell her that you'll post sexual pictures of her on the internet if she doesn't have sex with you.</p>
<input type="radio"/> Very bad <input type="radio"/> Pretty bad <input type="radio"/> Not that bad <input type="radio"/> Not bad at all

This research has been cleared by Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (CUREB-B

Clearance #112602).

Appendix C

Consent Form

A consent form tells you what we want you to do as a participant and allows you to make an informed decision about whether you want to be involved in the study or not. Consent forms also list any potential bad consequences and they tell you who to contact in case you have any questions or concerns after the research is finished or in case you have any questions or concerns that cannot be answered by the researcher.

Present study: Opinions About Sexual Aggression Towards Women

Research personnel. Dr. Kevin Nunes (Professor, Department of Psychology, Carleton University, 613-520-2600, ext 1545; kevin.nunes@carleton.ca).

Purpose. We are trying to learn what men think about sexually aggressive behavior, and if that thinking is related to a history of sexual offences.

Task requirements. In this anonymous questionnaire, you will be asked questions about the types of offences on your record and your opinion about sexually aggressive behaviours. The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes.

Benefits/compensation. There is no payment or other benefit to you for doing this study. Whether or not you participate will **NOT** affect your treatment by the institution/organization in any way.

Potential risk/discomfort. Because the questions ask about offence record and sexual aggression, some people feel angry, embarrassed, or distressed. You are free to refuse to answer any of the questions or stop the questionnaire at any time.

Anonymity/confidentiality. Your answers on the questionnaire will **NOT** be shared with correctional staff **UNLESS** you write down information that we would have to report, such as plans to hurt yourself or others, or information about unknown abuse of a woman. Please do not write down any information like that or any information that could identify you, like your name or a victim's name. You are safe as long as you stick to the information we ask for, so please only answer the questions we ask and do not add any other information that we do not ask you for.

The information you provide will be used only for research and teaching purposes, such as presentations at conferences and articles in scientific journals.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the completed questionnaires will be temporarily kept at the researcher's home before being permanently stored in a locked filing cabinet in Kevin Nunes' lab at Carleton University and on password-protected computers, and will be accessible only to the researchers working on this project and related future research.

Right to withdraw. Whether you decide to do this study or not is your choice. At any point during the study, you have the right to not complete certain questions, or to stop. If you want to withdraw at any point, just draw an X through your answers, leave the rest of the questionnaire blank, put the questionnaire in the envelope, seal it, and return it to Dr. Griffith. Please note that it is not possible to withdraw your data after you have returned the questionnaire because we will not be able to find which responses were yours.

Concerns. If you have any questions or concerns about this study please contact Kevin Nunes. Should you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact the REB Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 4085 or by email: ethics@carleton.ca). For all other questions about the study, please contact the researcher.

Covid-19. Because this study involves in-person interactions, there is some risk that you may be infected with the COVID-19 virus during study participation. Researchers will take precautions in accordance with provincial, federal, Carleton University and other public health guidelines to minimize the risk.

This study has been approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board – B (CUREB-B Clearance #112602).

If you agree to participate in the study, please answer the questions on the next pages, put them in the envelope, seal the envelope, and give it to Dr. Griffith.

If you do not want to do the study, just leave the questionnaire blank, put it in the envelope, seal the envelope, and return it to Dr. Griffith.

Appendix D

Debriefing Form

Thank you very much for participating in our study. We hope the following information addresses any questions or concerns you may have.

Present study: Opinions About Sexual Aggression Towards Women

What are we trying to learn in this research?

The purpose of this study is to test whether attitudes toward sexual aggression are related to sexually aggressive behaviour. Attitudes are measured by the opinion questions and behavior is measured by the offence record questions. We expect that attitudes will be related to a record of sexual offences against women.

Why is this research important?

Attitudes toward sexual aggression are thought to be important for sexual offending, but there is still a lot to learn (Nunes et al., 2018). This line of research will help us better understand attitudes toward sexual offending against women, and may help people to reduce sexual offending.

Who to contact if you have questions:

If you have any questions or concerns about this study please contact Dr. Kevin Nunes (Professor, Department of Psychology, Carleton University, 613-520-2600, ext. 1545; kevin.nunes@carleton.ca). Should you have any ethical concerns with the study, please contact the REB Chair, Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (by phone: 613-520-2600 ext. 4085 or by email: ethics@carleton.ca). For all other questions about the study, please contact the researcher.

This study has been approved by the Carleton University Research Ethics Board – B (CUREB-B Clearance #112602).

Mental health resources if you found this study emotionally draining:

If you experience any distress (e.g., feel sad or mad) as a result of this study, please seek help from a staff member.

Thank you very much for making this research possible.

Appendix E

Site Facilitator Instructions

This research has been cleared by Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (CUREB-B Clearance #112602).

Amy,

Thank you again for your help with this project! Below are the instructions and script (in italics) for recruitment and data collection.

Please arrange the desks in the large classroom far enough apart to protect the privacy of participants' responses. Once the inmates from a given wing have arrived at the classroom, please read the following:

For those of you who don't already know me, my name is Dr. Amy Griffith. I'm a psychologist and the Clinical Director of the Missouri Sex Offender Program.

A university professor and one of his students are looking for people to complete a questionnaire for a research study. I'm helping them out by asking people here if they want to do the study. I'm going to quickly tell you a bit about it and then you can decide if you want to do it.

The study is on opinions about sexual offending against women. He needs people with sexual offences against women to participate, but also people who have never committed sexual offences against women—so doing the study doesn't mean you've done or would do any of the things asked about in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire takes about 15 minutes and asks about the types of offences on your record and your opinion about sexual aggression against women.

Your participation and answers on the questionnaire will be anonymous—your name won't be written down and nobody will be able to know who said what on the questionnaires or even who completed the questionnaires. Your answers will only be seen by the researchers—they won't be shared with prison staff.

I'll hand out the questionnaires now. I'll also give you a consent form, debriefing form, and an envelope. Please read the consent form—it tells you more about the study. If you're interested in doing the study after reading the consent form, please answer the questions on the questionnaire. Then once you're done with the questionnaire, please put it in the envelope, seal the envelope, and give it back to me. You can keep the debriefing form, which is on the last page.

The envelope is to protect your privacy. I'll send the sealed envelopes directly to the researchers and nobody at the prison—including me—will look at your responses. Even

if I did somehow see somebody's answers—maybe if someone asked me for help with one of the questions—I would keep that information private and it would not be used against anyone. I am a licensed psychologist committed to a code of ethics that includes protecting your privacy, and I've signed a confidentiality agreement.

If you decide you don't want to do the questionnaire, you can just leave it blank, put it in the envelope, seal the envelope, and give it back to me. That way, I won't know that you didn't do the study—I wouldn't know whether the questionnaire you returned was done or blank. But if you prefer not to bother with the envelope, you don't need to put the blank questionnaire into the envelope.

Because this study involves in-person interactions, there is some risk that you may be infected with the COVID-19 virus during study participation. Researchers will take precautions in accordance with provincial, federal, Carleton University and other public health guidelines to minimize the risk.

Whether you do the study or not is up to you. Doing it or not doing it won't help or hurt you in any way. For example, whether you do it or not won't change the way you're treated in the prison. However, doing the study will help build knowledge that will help people to stop sexual offending against women.

Any questions?

I'll hand out the material now.

As people begin to hand in their envelopes, please remind them to seal their envelopes before giving them back to you. Repeat the reminder as needed.

Please pack up the returned envelopes in the courier box. If any envelopes were returned unsealed, please seal them. Please store the returned envelopes somewhere secure. Once you have completed data collection, we will send the courier to pick everything up.

Appendix F

Response Frequencies by Item

Figure F1

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 1

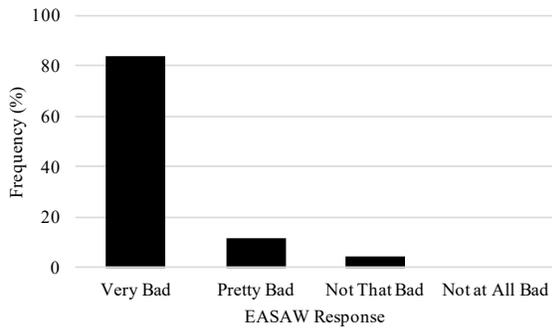


Figure F2

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 2

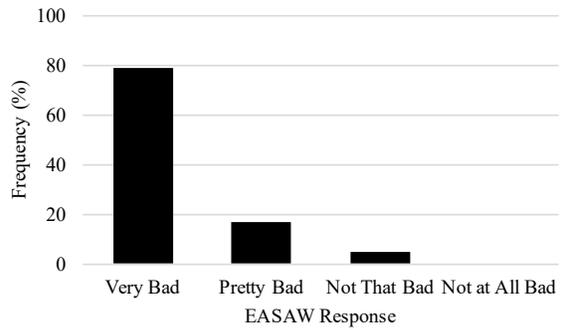


Figure F3

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 3

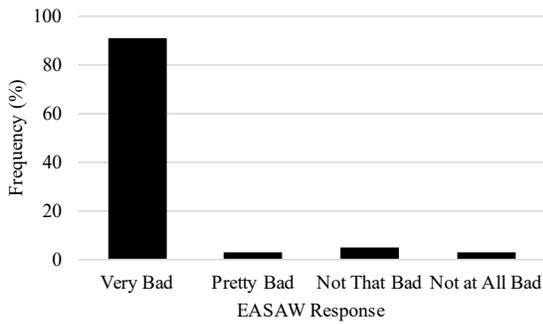


Figure F4

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 4

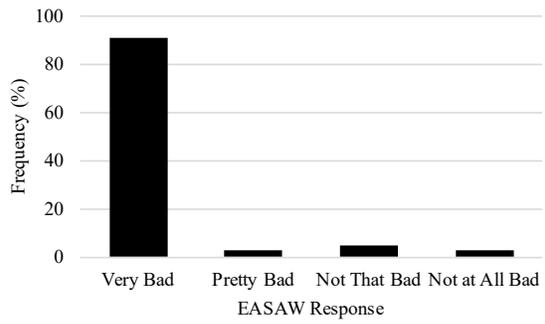


Figure F5

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 5

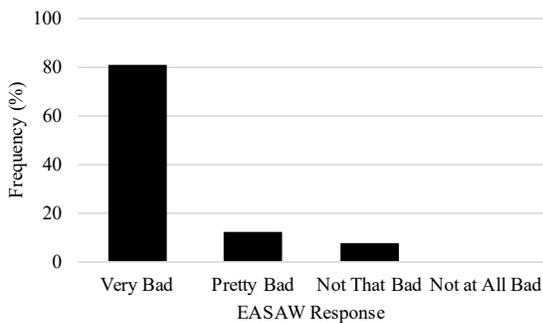


Figure F6

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 6

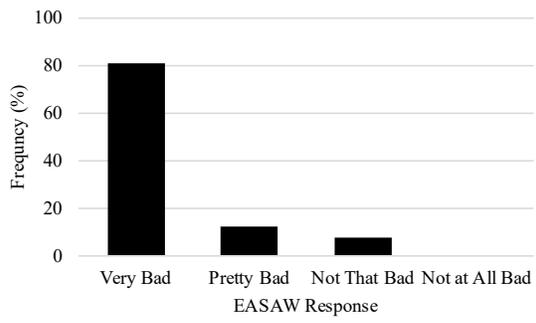


Figure F7

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 7

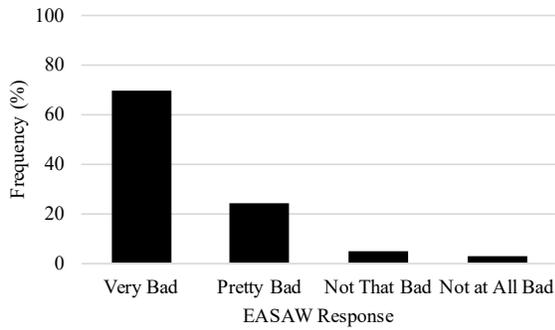


Figure F8

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 8

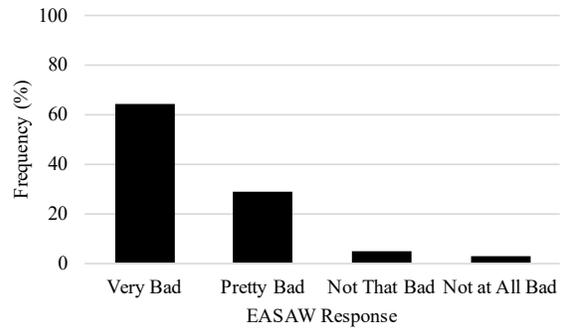


Figure F9

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 9

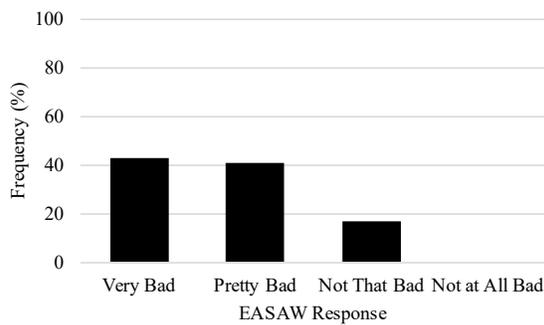


Figure F10

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 10

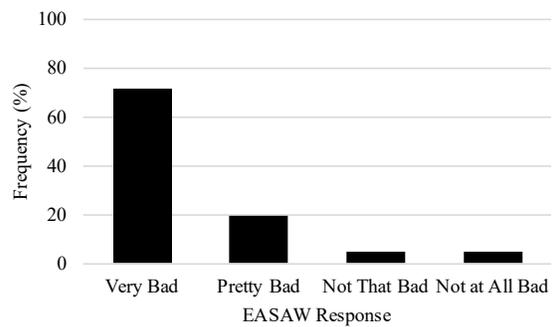


Figure F11

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 11

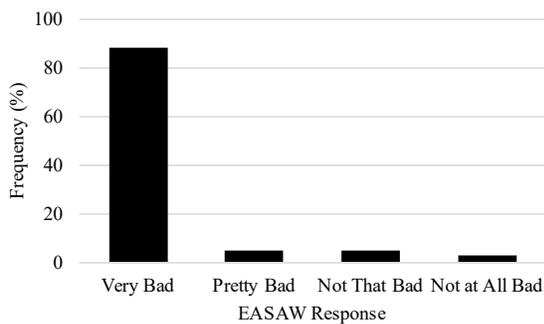


Figure F12

Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 12

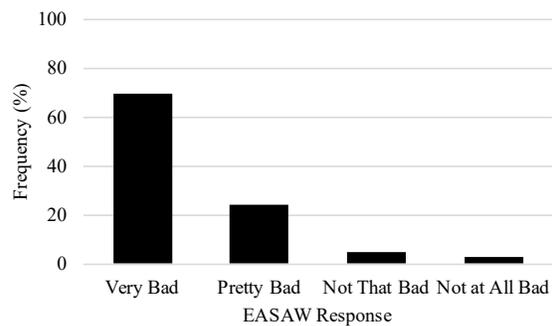


Figure F13*Response Frequencies for EASAW Item 13*