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Standing on the shoulder of a giant: Remembering Scott Lilienfeld

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I think we all agree that 2020 will not easily be forgotten, and not only because of the pandemic. Our field also lost many great scholars and colleagues this year. And when you think it just cannot go worse, it does: 2020 will also be remembered as the year we lost another giant, Prof. Dr. Scott Lilienfeld (Emory University). He was only 59 years old when he lost his battle against pancreatic cancer.

Some ATSA members might not be familiar with the work of Scott Lilienfeld, given that his primary research focus was psychopathy. Notwithstanding, he did publish several papers related to sexual violence. As a personality researcher, he was mainly interested in how personality traits, and mainly, psychopathic traits were related to [sexual violence](#) and relevant correlates, including [attitudes toward rape victims](#) and [sexual objectification](#).

But he did not only spend his time on exploring the psychopathic mind. He also liked to question things, ... many things. No psychological theory, no practice was safe for him. He made it his life's work to expose pseudoscience in psychology by tackling [numerous myths](#) in popular psychology and by [encouraging critical thinking](#) in students, researchers, and practitioners.

No doubt that Scott Lilienfeld was viewed as a troublemaker by many. He was not afraid of questioning concepts and theories that psychologists tended to take for granted, including repressed memories of trauma (see David Prescott's [contemplations](#) on this issue), and he was very critical about the evidence-base of psychotherapy. Although he might have touched a few nerves here and there, his aims were noble: He wanted to [expose](#) therapies that do more harm than good and to raise the bar for [evidence-based practice](#).

We could sum up the probably uncountable number of papers, chapters, and essays he has written. We could list the number of presentations he has given worldwide – although I'm afraid that is just a



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SAJRT Bloggers' Profile

We are longtime members of ATSA dedicated to furthering the causes of evidenced-based practice, understanding, and prevention in the field of sexual abuse.

The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers is an international, multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to preventing sexual abuse. Through research, education, and shared learning ATSA promotes evidence based practice, public policy, and community strategies that lead to the effective assessment, treatment, and management of individuals who have sexually abused or are risk to abuse.

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hopeless task. But Scott Lilienfeld was more than these numbers. He was a mentor many could lean on, a trustworthy colleague, and a warm friend, who was always available for others who needed him or just wanted to pick his brain about a new idea, paper, or research project.

So let's honor the impressive works of Scott Lilienfeld and the many pathways he paved for us by continuing to question our practice and our research, by continuing to address all the issues we are uncomfortable with, and by never assume we are there. Because we are not.