

**Under the radar: Assessing attitudes toward child sexual abuse using the Implicit Association Test**

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**Introduction**

- Child sexual abuse is both legally and ethically proscribed, and imposes physical and psychological harms upon its victims (Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, 2001)
- Deviant attitudes toward child sexual abuse (CSA) help initiate the sexual abuse of children (Finkelhor & Araji, 1986; Hall & Hirschman, 1992; Ward & Beech, 2006; Ward & Siegert, 2002)



**Attitudes and crime**

- Child molesters report more positive attitudes toward CSA than other criminal groups on measures of attitudes toward CSA (Bumby, 1996; Hanson, Gizzarelli, & Scott, 1994; Mann, Webster, Wakeling, & Marshall, 2007)
- Attitudes toward CSA are commonly assessed using explicit measures. However, more implicit means of assessment may also prove useful



**Attitude Assessment**

- Explicit and implicit measures are complementary
- Explicit and implicit measures can provide a comprehensive account of attitudes by tapping into and consolidating their explicit and implicit elements
- Explicit and implicit measures of attitudes toward CSA were administered to a group of child molesters and non-sex offenders



*Attitudes toward CSA IAT*

Stimulus Words



**Stimulus words representing Sex with Adult and Sex with Child**

Item #	Words	SEX WITH ADULT	SEX WITH CHILD
1.	MAN	100%	0%
2.	WOMAN	100%	0%
3.	MARRIAGE	100%	0%
4.	WIFE	100%	0%
5.	HUSBAND	100%	0%
6.	UNDERAGE	2.8%	97.2%
7.	UNDEVELOPED	0%	100%
8.	CHILD	2.9%	97.1%
9.	ILLEGAL	2.8%	97.2%
10.	MOLEST	3%	97%



<i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i>	
Combined trial	
	

SEX WITH ADULT	SEX WITH CHILD
or	or
Good	Bad
ILLEGAL	

SEX WITH ADULT	SEX WITH CHILD
or	or
Good	Bad
ILLEGAL	

SEX WITH ADULT	SEX WITH CHILD
or	or
Good	Bad
poison	

SEX WITH ADULT	SEX WITH CHILD
or	or
Good	Bad
poison	

<i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i>	
Reversed-combined trial	
	

SEX WITH CHILD	SEX WITH ADULT
or	or
Good	Bad
ILLEGAL	

SEX WITH CHILD	SEX WITH ADULT
or	or
Good	Bad
ILLEGAL	

SEX WITH CHILD	SEX WITH ADULT
or	or
Good	Bad
paradise	

SEX WITH CHILD	SEX WITH ADULT
or	or
Good	Bad
paradise	

	<p><b>General Hypotheses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>1)</b> Child molesters were expected to display more positive attitudes toward CSA than non-sex offenders on the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i></li> <li>▪ <b>2)</b> Child molesters were expected to report more deviant attitudes toward CSA than non-sex offenders on a self-report measure of attitudes toward CSA</li> </ul>
 <p>Carleton UNIVERSITY Canada's Capital University</p>	

	<p><b>General Hypotheses (Cont.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>3)</b> Participants' performance on the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i> was expected to be related to their performance on the self-report measure of attitudes toward CSA</li> <li>▪ <b>4)</b> Child molesters' performance on both the IAT and the self-report measure of attitudes toward CSA was expected to be related to their risk of sexual recidivism</li> </ul>
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	<p><b>Participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 34 child molesters             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Individuals whose index offences were sexual in nature and against children under 12 years of age</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ 21 non-sex offenders             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Individuals who had no charges, convictions, or self-reported history of sexual offences</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	

	<p><b>Primary Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implicit measure:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Explicit measure:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sex with Children (SWCH) scale (Mann, Webster, Wakeling, &amp; Marshall, 2007)                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Factor 1: Sex with children as harmless</li> <li>▪ Factor 2: Children as responsible for their own abuse</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	

	<p><b>Secondary Measures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR; Paulhus, 1984)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Assesses the extent to which participants are answering in a socially desirable fashion                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Impression management (IM)</li> <li>▪ Self-deception (SD)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Clarke Vocabulary Test (CVT; Paitich, 1977)             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Assesses vocabulary skills</li> <li>– Participants who did not obtain a satisfactory score on the Clarke Vocabulary Test were removed from the sample</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	

	<p><b>Secondary Measures (Cont.)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Risk of sexual recidivism             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Static-99                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assesses static factors</li> </ul> </li> <li>– Stable-2000/2007                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assesses stable dynamic factors</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ For purposes of statistical analyses, participants' scores on the Static-99 and the Stable-2000/2007 were combined into one risk score (according to rules by Hanson, Harris, Scott, &amp; Helmus, 2007)</li> </ul>
	

	<p><b>Statistical Analyses and Results</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Research Question #1:</b> Do child molesters display more positive attitudes toward CSA than non-sex offenders on the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i>?</li> <li>▪ <b>Result:</b> Child molesters' attitudes toward CSA were not significantly different from those of non-sex offenders on the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i>, <math>F(1, 54) = .12, p = .73</math>, Cohen's <math>d = -0.08</math> (CI: -0.46 - 0.63)</li> </ul>
	

	<p><b>Statistical Analyses and Results (Cont.)</b></p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th rowspan="2"></th> <th rowspan="2">Age</th> <th rowspan="2">CVT</th> <th colspan="3">BIDR</th> </tr> <tr> <th>IM</th> <th>SD</th> <th>Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><b>CSA-IAT</b></td> <td>-.28*</td> <td>-.29*</td> <td>.01</td> <td>.17</td> <td>.09</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>*<math>p &lt; .05</math></p>		Age	CVT	BIDR			IM	SD	Total	<b>CSA-IAT</b>	-.28*	-.29*	.01	.17	.09
	Age				CVT	BIDR										
		IM	SD	Total												
<b>CSA-IAT</b>	-.28*	-.29*	.01	.17	.09											
																

Statistical Analyses and Results (Cont.)

- **Research Question # 2:** Do child molesters report more deviant attitudes toward CSA than non-sex offenders on the SWCH scale?
- **Result:** Child molesters reported significantly more deviant attitudes toward CSA than non-sex offenders on:
  - the SWCH scale total,  $F(1, 54) = 9.99, p < .01$
  - Factor 1,  $F(1, 54) = 7.48, p < .01$
  - And Factor 2,  $F(1, 54) = 11.09, p < .01$



Statistical Analyses and Results (Cont.)

	Child molesters		NS Offenders		Cohen's <i>d</i>	Lower <i>CI</i>	Upper <i>CI</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
SWCH F1: Sex with children harmless	3.91	5.77	.43	.98	.76	.20	1.32
SWCH F2: Children responsible for abuse	2.77	3.43	.24	.63	.93	.35	1.50
SWCH Total	6.65	8.87	.48	1.12	.88	.31	1.45



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Statistical Analyses and Results (Cont.)

- **Research Question # 3:** Are participants' scores on the *Attitudes toward CSA IAT* correlated with their scores on the SWCH scale?
- **Result:** Participants' scores on the *Attitudes toward CSA IAT* were not significantly correlated with:
  - their total scores on the SWCH scale,  $r = -.12, p = .40$
  - or either of its factors,  $F1: r = -.13, p = .32; F2: r = -.01, p = .48$



	<b>Statistical Analyses and Results (Cont.)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Research Question # 4:</b> Are child molesters' scores on the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i> and the SWCH scale correlated with their risk scores?</li><li>▪ <b>Result:</b> Child molesters' scores on the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i> and their scores on the SWCH scale were not significantly correlated with their risk scores<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i>: <math>r = .09, p = .70</math></li><li>– SWCH Total: <math>r = .16, p = .48</math></li><li>– SWCH F1: <math>r = .10, p = .64</math></li><li>– SWCH F2: <math>r = .18, p = .41</math></li></ul></li></ul>
	

	<b>Statistical Analyses and Results (Cont.)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Correlations with <i>Attitudes supportive of sexual assault</i> item of the Stable-2000:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i>: <math>r = -.35, p = .19</math></li><li>– SWCH Total: <math>r = .30, p = .25</math></li><li>– SWCH F1: <math>r = .26, p = .32</math></li><li>– SWCH F2: <math>r = .38, p = .14</math></li></ul></li></ul>
	

	<b>Summary</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Implicit attitudes toward CSA, as measured by the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i>, are not related to criminal group membership</li><li>▪ Explicit attitudes toward CSA, as measured by the SWCH scale, <u>are</u> related to criminal group membership</li></ul>
	

	<b>Summary (Cont.)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Implicit and explicit attitudes toward CSA, as measured by the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i> and the SWCH scale, are not related constructs</li><li>▪ Implicit and explicit attitudes toward CSA, as measured by the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i> and the SWCH scale, are not related to risk of sexual recidivism</li></ul>
	

	<b>Discussion</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i> scores were significantly correlated with two extraneous variables: age and vocabulary skills</li><li>▪ Controlling for both variables did not alter the significance or direction of the results</li><li>▪ Yet, previous research has demonstrated that attitudes toward CSA are indeed related to criminal group membership</li></ul>
	

	<b>Discussion (Cont.)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ If external factors cannot account for the findings, perhaps internal factors are responsible</li><li>▪ Is it possible that the <i>Attitudes toward CSA IAT</i> could not tap into the desired construct due to some design flaw?</li></ul>
	

Discussion (Cont.)

- Participants' "primary task in the IAT is to identify the category membership of stimulus items as quickly as possible," and so "each stimulus item must be identifiable as representing just one of the four categories" (Nosek, Greenwald, & Banaji, 2007, p.269)
- Perhaps the *Attitudes toward CSA* IAT did not comply with this basic tenet of IAT construction



Stimulus words representing *Sex with Adult* and *Sex with Child*

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Discussion (Cont.)

- Child molesters appear to differ from non-sex offenders in terms of extent of disagreement with pro-CSA statements, and not disagreement per say (Tierney & McCabe, 2001)
- Perhaps the *Attitudes toward CSA* IAT was not sensitive enough to perceive this difference



Thank you for your time and attention

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have

