

Carleton UNIVERSITY

MACEWAN Psychology

Sex Offender Denial:
Are We Really Measuring Treatment Readiness?

Sandy Jung, PhD
Grant MacEwan University

Kevin Nunes, PhD
Carleton University

Denying Sex Offenders and Treatment

- Denial and treatment motivation go hand-in-hand
- Admittance to programs require some acknowledgment of responsibility¹
- In the U.S., over 1% of programs require full disclosure to successfully complete²
- In Canada, 1% of programs require some disclosure to successfully complete³

¹Levenson (2011) ²McGrath et al. (2010)
²Happel & Auffrey (1996)

Denial

- Some degree of refuting facts related to an offence
- Variety of methods
 - Varying concepts and definitions of denial
 - Evolved from a dichotomous construct¹ to a multifaceted view^{2,3}
 - Inconsistency may lead to different empirical outcomes
 - e.g., denial and sexual recidivism^{4,5,6,7,8}
- 91% of program view as a core treatment target⁹
- Need for consistent and valid measures

¹Barbaree & Marshall (1988) ⁴Hanson & Morton-Bourgon (2005) ⁷Langton et al. (2008)
²Gibbons et al. (2003) ⁵Barrett et al. (2003) ⁸Harkins et al. (2010)
³Kennedy & Grubin (1992) ⁶Nunes et al. (2007) ⁹McGrath et al. (2010)

Perceived Need for Treatment

- Dynamic variable that leads to a readiness to change sexual behaviours^{1,2}
- Motivation to change is used as a criterion for treatment selection²
- Like denial, various measures of treatment attitudes
 - General self-report: MMPI-2, PAI
 - Specific self-report: MSI-II, Stages of Change Q're³
 - Behavioural: Clinician ratings⁴
- Contrasting definitions of treatment motivation may lead to different empirical outcomes^{4,5,6}

¹Jones et al. (2006) ²Tierney & McCabe (2004) ³Parhar et al. (2008)
²Tierney & McCabe (2002) ⁴Seto & Barbaree (1999) ⁵Terry & Mitchell (2001)

Impetus for the Present Study

- Denial and treatment attitudes
 - Conceptually tied together
 - Only a few empirical studies conducted that supports relationship^{1,2,3}
- Examined relationship between the construct of denial and treatment perceptions

¹Levenson & Macgowan (2004) ²Harkins et al. (2010) ³Wright & Schneider (2004)

The Present Study



- 185 male sexual offenders assessed between 2001-2009¹
- $M = 39.0; SD = 12.33$
- Types of offences:
 - 62% offended against children
 - 24% offended against adults
 - 10% non-contact offences

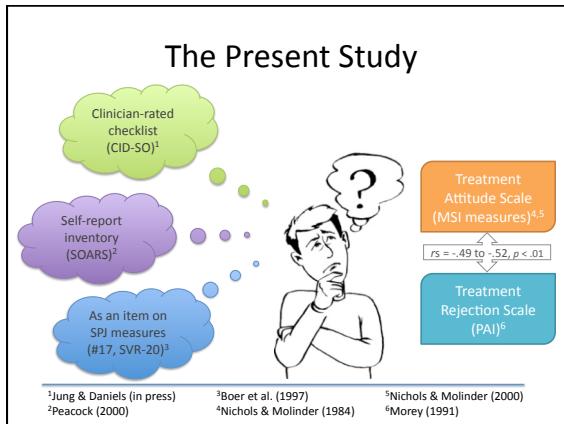
¹All of the measures were not always available for each case.

Sandy Jung, PhD., Grant MacEwan University

JungS@MacEwan.ca

Kevin Nunes, PhD, Carleton University

Kevin_Nunes@Carleton.ca



Results

¹Clinician-rated checklist (CID-SO)
²Clusters of the CID-SO
³MSI-original ⁴MSI-II ⁵PAI

Cluster A: Denying sexually deviant behaviours and arousal -.431** -.543** .314***
 Cluster B: Denying need for treatment or management .629*** -.496** .343***
 Cluster C: Denying responsibility for the offence -.571*** -.446** .368***
 Cluster D: Minimizing harm done by the offence -.516*** -.636*** .393***

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Results

¹Self-report inventory (SOARS)
²SOARS Subscales ³MSI-original ⁴PAI

Acceptance of sexual offence .502* -.360*
 Acceptance of offence planning .253 -.142
 Acceptance of victim harm .386 -.532***
 Motivation to change .637** -.456**
 Justifications for sexual offending .108 -.313*
 Acceptance of sexual interests .484* -.295*

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Results

¹Item #17: Extreme minimization or denial ²MSI-II only ³Treatment Attitude Scale (MSI measures)
⁴PAI

MSI-II only -.575***
 Treatment Rejection Scale (PAI) .215

***p < .001

Relationship between Denial and General and Specific Sex Offender Treatment Perceptions

¹MSI Items ²PAI Items

ASO AOP AVH JSO ASI #17

	CID-SO Clusters			SOARS Scales			SVR-20		
	A	C	D	ASO	AOP	AVH	JSO	ASI	#17
Even without any treatment I know that I can control my sexual behavior (299/278)	.11	.05	.07	-.30	.00	-.29	-.09	-.07	.22
I need help because I am not able to control my sexual behaviors (300/158)	-.19	-.23*	-.30*	.49*	.22	-.43*	.09	.15	-.39*
I need and want counseling (510)	-.41*	-.55*	-.45*	-	-	-	-	-	-.47*
I need to make some important changes in my life (42)	-.22*	-.16	-.13*	.19	-.04	.37*	.37*	.16	-.12
I need to change some things about myself, even if it hurts (82)	-.17	-.22*	-.25*	.50*	.13	.56*	.32*	.30*	-.21
I need some help to deal with important problems (122)	-.16	-.15*	-.22*	.18	-.07	.39*	.31*	.11	-.15

*p < .05. If unable to calculate, denoted by a dash (-).

Differences in Construct

- Denial and treatment attitudes are related
- Construct of denial is not singular in nature and depends on the measure
- Choosing a method that assesses denial as a core treatment target
 - Clinician-rated method for sex offence-specific denial

Limitations: (a) good overall sample size but not all overlapped in measures available, (b) sample primarily child molesters, limiting generalizability.

Implications

- Need to consistently employ measures of core treatment targets^{1,2}
 - Assesses treatment change (i.e., dynamic)
 - Relation of treatment attitudes and other behavioural indicators of treatment change (e.g., completion, engagement, transferable success)
- To ensure adequate measurement of denial and minimization, should encompass various methods of assessment (e.g., composite score)

¹McGrath et al. (2010)

²Grady et al. (2011)



References

- Barbaree, H. E., & Marshall, W. L. (1988). Deviant sexual arousal, offense history and demographic variables as predictors of reoffense among child molesters. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 6, 267-280.
- Barrett, M., Wilson, R. J., & Long, C. (2003). Measuring motivation to change in sexual offenders from institutional intake to community treatment. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 15, 269-283. DOI: 10.1177/107906320301500404
- Boer, D. P., Hart, S. D., Kropp, P. R., & Webster, C. D. (1997). *Manual for the Sexual Violence Risk—20: Professional guidelines for assessing risk of sexual violence*. Vancouver, Canada: British Columbia Institute Against Family Violence.
- Gibbons, P., de Volder, J., & Casey, P. (2003). Patterns of denial in sex offenders: A replication study. *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, 31, 336-344.
- Grady, M. D., Breden, M., & Abramson, J. M. (2011). The state of psychological measures for adult sexual offenders. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 16, 227-240.

References

- Hanson, R. K., & Morton-Bourgon, K. (2005). The characteristics of persistent sexual offenders: A meta-analysis of recidivism studies. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 73, 1154-1163.
- Happel, R. M., & Auffrey, J. J. (1995). Sex offender assessment: Interrupting the dance of denial. *American Journal of Forensic Psychology*, 13, 5-22.
- Harkins, L., Beech, A.R., & Goodwill, A.M. (2010). Examining the influence of denial, motivation, and risk on sexual recidivism. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 22, 78-94.
- Jones, N., Pelissier, B., & Klein-Safran, J. (2006). Predicting sex offender treatment entry among individuals convicted of sexual offense crimes. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 18, 83-98. doi: 10.1007/s11194-006-9005-4
- Jung, S., & Daniels, M. (in press). Conceptualizing sex offender denial from a multifaceted framework: Investigating the psychometric qualities of a new instrument. *Journal of Addictions & Offender Counseling*.
- Kennedy, H. G., & Grubin, D. H. (1992). Patterns of denial in sex offenders. *Psychological Medicine*, 22, 191-196.

References

- Langton, M. C., Barbaree, H. E., Harkins, L., Arenovich, T., McNamee, J., Peacock, J. E., et al. (2008). Denial and minimization among sexual offenders: Post treatment presentation and association with sexual recidivism. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35, 69-98.
- Levenson, J. S. (2011). "But I didn't do it!": Ethical treatment of sex offenders in denial. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 23, 346-364.
- Levenson, J. S., & Macgowan, M. J. (2004). Engagement, denial and treatment progress among sex offenders in group therapy. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 16, 49-63.
- McGrath, R.J., Cumming, G.F., Burchard, B.L., Zeoli, S. & Ellerby, L. (2010). *Current practices and emerging trends in sexual abuser management*. Brandon, VT: Safer Society Press.
- Morey, L. C. (1991). *The Personality Assessment Inventory professional manual*. Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Nichols, H. R., & Molinder, I. (1984). *Multiphasic Sex Inventory Manual. A test to assess the psychosocial characteristics of the sexual offender*. Tacoma, WA: Nichols & Molinder.

References

- Nichols, H.R., & Molinder, I. (2000). *MSI II: Multiphasic Sex Inventory II Handbook. Nichols & Molinder Assessments*. Tacoma, WA: Nichols & Molinder.
- Nunes, K. L., Hanson, R. K., Firestone, P., Moulden, M. H., Greenberg, M. D., & Bradford, M. J. (2007). Denial predicts recidivism for some sexual offenders. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 19, 91-105.
- Parhar, K. K., Wormith, J. S., Derkzen, D. M., & Beauregard, A. M. (2008). Offender Coercion in Treatment: A Meta-Analysis of Effectiveness. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35, 1109-1135. doi:10.1177/0093854808320169
- Peacock, E. J. (2000, November). *Measuring readiness for sex offender treatment*. Paper presented at the Annual Research and Treatment Conference of the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, San Diego, CA.
- Seto, M. C., & Barbaree, H. E. (1999). Psychopathology, treatment behavior, and sex offender recidivism. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14, 1235-1248.

References

- Seto, M. C., & Barbaree, H. E. (1999). Psychopathology, treatment behavior, and sex offender recidivism. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 14, 1235-1248.
- Tierney D. W., & McCabe, M. P. (2002). Motivation for behavior change among sex offenders: A review of the literature. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 22, 113-129.
- Tierney D. W., & McCabe, M. P. (2004). The assessment of motivation for behaviour change among sex offenders against children: An investigation of the utility of the Stages of Change Questionnaire. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 10, 237-249. doi:10.1080/13552600412231289041
- Wright, R.C., & Schneider, S.L. (2004). Mapping child molester treatment progress with the FoSOD: Denial and explanations of accountability. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 16, 85-105.



Contact Info: Sandy Jung, PhD, RPsych
Assistant Professor / Forensic Psychologist
Grant MacEwan University
10700 – 104 Avenue, Edmonton, AB
Email: JungS0@MacEwan.ca (zero follows name)

*Acknowledgment to Northern Alberta Forensic Psychiatry Services,
Grant MacEwan University and the assistance of Melissa Daniels, Lisa
Jamieson, John DeCesare, and Shayla Stein.*