

Sex Offender Denial: Are We Really Measuring Treatment Readiness?





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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 ¼ of programs require full disclosure to successfully complete²
- In Canada, ¾ of programs require some disclosure to successfully complete³

¹Levenson (2011)

³McGrath et al. (2010)

²Happel & Aufferly (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)

⁴Tierney & McCabe (2002)

⁵Seto & Barbaree (1999)

⁶Terry & 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)

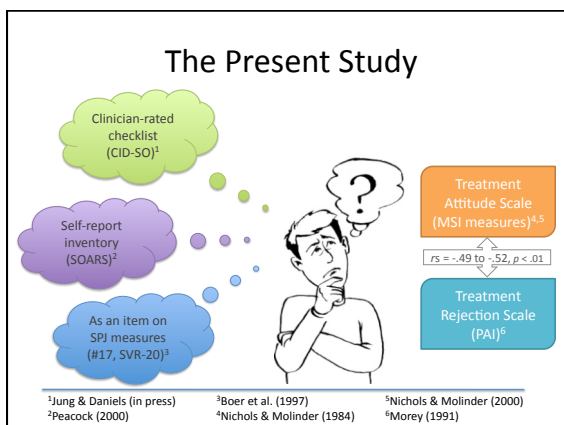
The Present Study



- 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.

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Results

Clusters of the CID-SO	MSI-original	MSI-II	PAI
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

SOARS Subscales	MSI-original	PAI
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

Item #17: Extreme minimization or denial

MSI-II only: **-.575*****

As an item on SPI measures (#17, SVR-20)³: **.215**

Treatment Attitude Scale (MSI measures)^{4,5}

Treatment Rejection Scale (PAI)⁶

*** $p < .001$

Relationship between Denial and General and Specific Sex Offender Treatment Perceptions

	CID-SO Clusters			SOARS Scales					SVR-20
	A	C	D	ASO	AOP	AVH	JSO	ASI	#17
MSI Items									
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*
PAI Items									
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)

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