Associations between Denial, Identity, and Attitudes among Sexual Offenders against Children
Gabrielle B. Lucente and Kevin L. Nunes

**Introduction**
- Denial has been commonly addressed in sexual offender treatment programs.
- However, the relationship between denial and the risk of sexual re-offending is not clear.
- There are many questions about the role and relevance of denial. For example, some have speculated that denial may reflect an attempt to distance oneself from a sexual offender self-concept or identity.

**Objective**
- Explore the extent to which denial is associated with identity and attitudes towards sexual offenders.

**Participants**
- 30 men charged with a sexual offense against a child.

**Methods**

**Measures**
- **Denial and Minimization**: Comprehensive Inventory of Denial – Sex Offender Version (CID-SO)
  - Clinician scored measure. Higher scores indicate greater denial and minimization overall (total score) and in specific areas (clusters; see Table).
  - **Identification of Self as a Sexual Offender**
    - **Explicit**: Self-report ratings of self as a sexual offender vs. not a sexual offender. Higher scores indicate more identification as a sexual offender.
    - **Implicit**: Implicit Association Test (IAT) measure. Higher positive scores indicate more identification of self as a sexual offender.
  - **Evaluative Attitudes Towards Sexual Offenders**
    - **Explicit**: Self-report ratings of sexual offenders as negative vs. positive. Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes towards sexual offenders.
    - **Implicit**: IAT measure. Higher positive differences indicate more positive evaluations of sexual offenders.

**Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Identity as a Sexual Offender</th>
<th>Attitudes towards Sexual Offenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CID-SO total score</strong></td>
<td>-.36*</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cluster A: Denial of sexually deviant behavior and arousal</strong></td>
<td>-.56**</td>
<td>-.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cluster B: Deny need for treatment and management of sex offending</strong></td>
<td>-.35</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cluster C: Deny responsibility</strong></td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cluster D: Minimize harm</strong></td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M (SD)</strong></td>
<td>5.62 (1.28)</td>
<td>0.62 (0.54)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion**

- Greater denial moderately associated with less explicit identification of self as a sexual offender, but generally not correlated with implicit identity.
- This discrepancy between explicit and implicit identity consistent with at least four possibilities:
  - The CID-SO and explicit identity measure assess something similar (e.g., denying being a sexual offender), and the implicit identity measure assesses something distinct.
  - Denial is partly motivated by explicit—but not implicit—identity.
  - More deceptive or otherwise biased responding on the explicit than the implicit measure.
  - The IAT measure did not accurately assess implicit identification of self as a sexual offender.

**References**


gabriellelucente@cmail.carleton.ca