Does Denial Predict Sexual Offender Recidivism?

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Introduction

- Denial of responsibility is often construed as a responsivity issue, a hindrance to effective treatment, and a risk factor for sexual recidivism (Harkins, Beech & Goodwill, 2010).

- Overall, meta-analytic findings have indicated that denial is not an important risk predictor (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2004; 2005). However, subsequent studies have found evidence that denials relationship with sexual recidivism may vary due to actuarial risk level (Nunes et al., 2007).

- The purpose of the current study was to examine whether denial predicts sexual recidivism and whether it is moderated by overall actuarial risk or its subdomains of antisociality or sexual deviance.
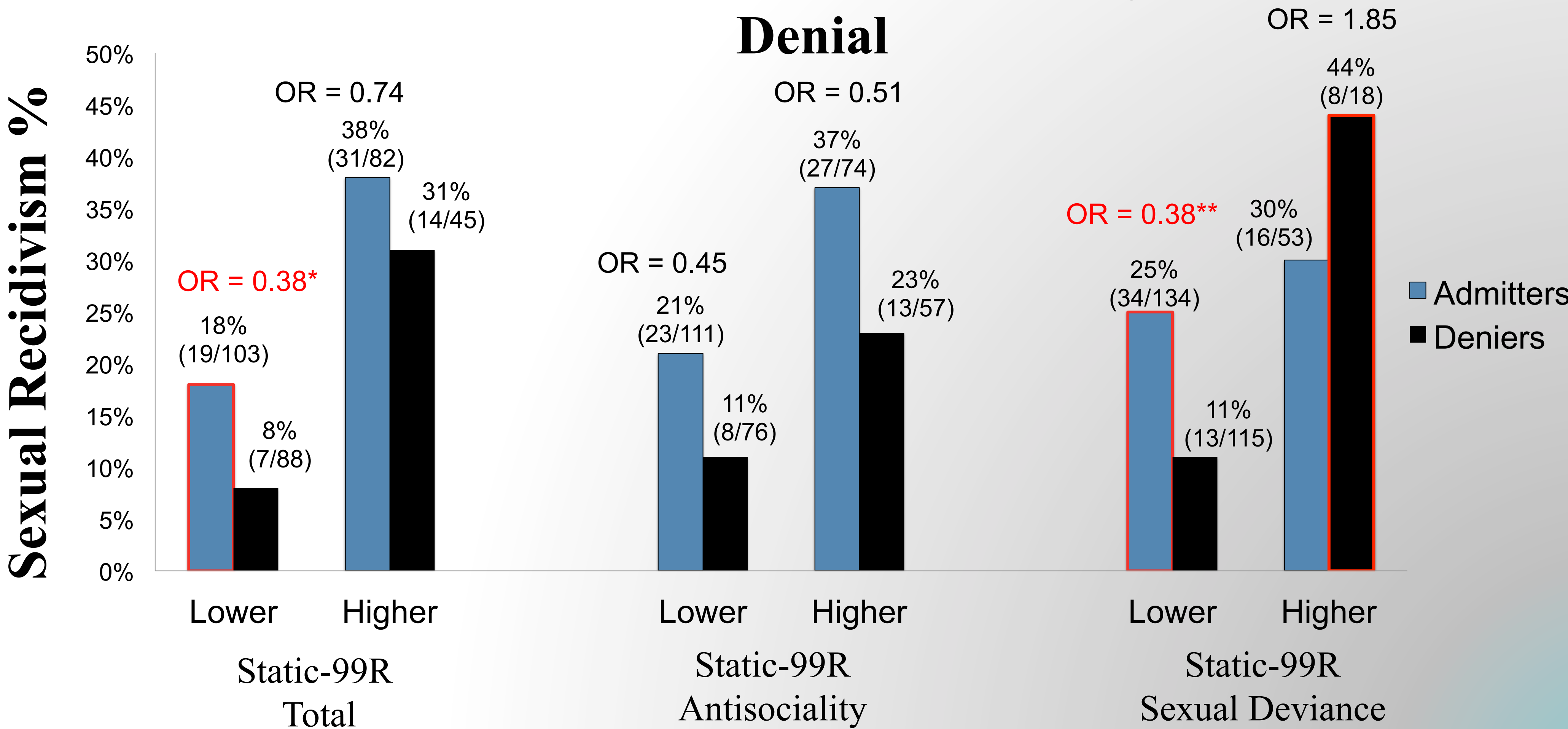
Method

- Participants were 320 adult male sexual offenders incarcerated and released from Canadian federal prisons in the 1990s (see Motiuk & Porporino, 1993).

- Actuarial risk: Static-99R Total, antisociality, and sexual deviance wee assessed via a modified Static-99R (Helmus, Thornton, Hanson & Babchishin, 2011).

- Denial was coded in the original dataset under "Offender has admitted responsibility for any previous sex offence." (see Item 161 in Appendix of Motiuk & Porporino, 1993). Options included 'yes', 'no', or 'not known.' Only offenders who admitted or denied were examined.

- Sexual recidivism and violent (including sexual) recidivism was coded in a binary manor as any post-release convictions from Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC).
- Average follow up period of 19 years.

Level and Domain of Risk by Denial

OR = Odds ratio, *p < .05, **p < .01. Significant ORs highlighted in Red*

Results

- In each sequential logistic regression analysis, denial was entered in the first block and significantly strengthened the model in predicting sexual recidivism ($p = .05$). As can be discerned by the ORs (Odds Ratios), denial was associated with decreased levels of sexual recidivism.

- In the second block of each model the addition of the Static-99R significantly strengthened the predictive capacity of the models ($p = .001$).

- A significant interaction occurred in the Denial & Static-99R Sexual Deviancy Risk regression:

A subsequent post hoc regression was conducted. In this model the OR for the lower sexually deviant offenders was significant. More specifically, among the lower sexually deviant offenders, denial was associated with a 62% lower odds of sexual recidivism. A non-significant trend appeared for the higher sexually deviant offenders' denial associated with 85% higher odds of sexual recidivism.

- Overall when the analyses were repeated with violent including sexual recidivism denial was no longer significant in any block of the Static-99R Total or Static-99R antisociality regressions.

- However, a similar pattern occurred in the third Block of the Static-99R Sexual Deviancy regression with significant ORs for lower risk offenders (44% lower odds of violent including sexual recidivism) and higher risk offenders (fourfold increase in recidivism; 83% of deniers reoffending and 50% of admitters).

Discussion

- Denial was a significant independent predictor of sexual recidivism in several sequential logistic regression analyses (with ORs in the small to moderate range; Sánchez-Meca et al., 2003).

- Deniers consistently reoffended sexually at lower rates relative to admitting offenders, except in the case of higher sexually deviant offenders, recidivating both sexually as well as violently (including sexual) at higher rates than admitters.

- These findings are generally inconsistent with many past studies that have failed to find denial predictive of recidivism.

- Furthermore, the findings are in the opposite direction of the results by Nunes et al., (2007), whom utilized the Rapid Risk Assessment of Sexual Offense Recidivism, an actuarial risk measure whose items primarily reflect sexual deviance (RRASOR; Hanson, 1997). These previous findings, in conjunction with the current results, may suggest that denial among sexual offenders who are higher on sexual deviancy may serve a unique purpose, raising the likelihood of sexual and violent recidivism.

- Future research can aim to clarify and extend upon these findings by exploring further the apparent interaction between denial and sexual deviant risk specifically.

References

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Hierarchical Logistic Regression Analyses Predicting Sexual Recidivism From Denial and Domains of Risk

Analysis		OR	95% CI
	Block 1		
Denial and Total Static-99R	Denial	0.51*	[0.28, 0.89]
	Block 2		
	Denial	0.56*	[0.31, 1.01]
	Static-99R (Total)	1.30*	[1.16, 1.48]
	Block 3		
	Denial	0.29*	[0.09, 0.95]
	Static-99R Total	1.24**	[1.07, 1.43]
	Interaction	1.20	[0.91, 1.59]

Analysis		OR	95% CI
	Block 1		
Denial and Antisociality[a]	Denial	0.50*	[0.29, 0.89]
	Block 2		
	Denial	0.49*	[0.28, 0.88]
	Static-99R (Antisociality)	1.33***	[1.13, 1.56]
	Block 3		
	Denial	0.49	[0.22, 1.08]
	Static-99R (Antisociality)	1.33**	[1.08, 1.62]
	Interaction	1.00	[0.72, 1.40]

[a]Antisociality refers to a subset of Static-99R items reflecting antisocial risk

Analysis		OR	95% CI
	Block 1		
Denial and Sexual Deviance[b]	Denial	0.51*	[0.29, 0.91]
	Block 2		
	Denial	0.59	[0.33, 1.06]
	Static-99R (Sexual Dev.)	1.375***	[1.14, 1.66]
	Block 3		
	Denial	0.23**	[0.08, 0.67]
	Static-99R (Sexual Dev.)	1.20	[0.97, 1.50]
	Interaction	1.63*	[1.05, 2.55]

[b]Sexual Deviance refers to a subset of Static-99R items reflecting sexual deviance risk.