

You Did WHAT?

Generational Shifts in Attitudes Towards Sex and Drugs and Implications for Public Safety Hiring Processes

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Financial Disclosure

- Your presenter derives a portion of her income by providing professional psychological consulting services to law enforcement agencies.

Learning Objectives

1. Gain an understanding of historical base rates of admitted sexual behaviors in applicant populations
2. Be able to identify two areas of sexual activity that appear to be increasing in frequency
3. Be prepared to have a discussion with HR and command staff around departmental policies on how to treat these admissions

This guy.....



And this guy.....



And way back when...
There was this guy....



Historical thoughts and trends

- Admissions of using prostitutes, masturbation at work, viewing pornography etc. used to be automatic disqualifiers

Carroll et al (2008):

- 87% of male college students admitted to viewing pornography every day
- 31% of female college students admitted to viewing pornography on the Internet

Nelson, Padilla-Walker, & Carroll (2010)

- 35% of religious male college students admitted to viewing pornography on the Internet

Corey & Stewart (2005)

- Less than 5% of applicants admitted to:
 - Sex on duty while at work or in uniform
 - Masturbation at work
 - Sex or sexual contact with animals
 - Masturbation in a public place
 - Being accused of forcing or attempting to force sexual contact
 - Obscene phone calls
 - Sexual exploitation
 - Voyeurism, videotaping, or photographing another person without their consent for purposes of sexual gratification
 - Using the services of a prostitute

Corey & Stewart cont.

- Viewed, downloaded or sold child pornography

Warnings from their study:

- Low base rates did not mean that the inquiries are without merit – history can yield important discoveries
- Do not presume that polygraph examinations and background investigations cover the full array of risk factors associated with sexual misconduct

Corey & Stewart (cont)

- Sex act in a public place (5.0%)
- Indecent exposure (mooning, flashing, urinating in public) (18.5%)
- Sexual contact with anyone under the age of 18 (34.0%)
- Viewing internet pornography (51.0%)

Sexting

- Very prevalent behavior in both applicant population and general population
- Stasko & Geller (2014)
 - “Sexting” – defined as “sending or receiving of sexually suggestive or explicit content via text message, primarily via mobile device
 - N=870, ages 18-82, 57% female
 - 82% endorsed sexting within the last year
 - 43% said they had “sexted” in the context of a casual relationship
 - 75% said that they had “sexted” within the context of a committed relationship and reported that they felt it improved their relationship

Sexting cont.

- Strassberg, et al (2012)
 - n=606, high school students at a private high school
 - 20% admitted to having sent a sexually explicit image of themselves
 - 49.7% of males admitted to receiving a sexually explicit images v. 30.9% of females
 - 11.8% of males reported forwarding pictures they received to someone else v. 4.5% females

Take away: Sexting is very common behavior!

Sexual contact with animals

- Used to be automatic disqualifier
 - Still almost always is.....
 - Hensley, et al (2010):
 - Found that inmates who engaged in childhood bestiality v. those who did not were more likely to commit adult interpersonal crimes (murder, robbery, rape, aggravated/simple assault) on two or more occasions than those who did not

Psychological evaluation process

- Background history (self-reported) along with review of any background investigation and polygraph report
- Psychological testing – confirm or mitigate concerns in applicants
- Presentation in interview – consistency, attitude toward admitted behaviors and explanations for behaviors of concern
- Risk rating assigned using POST dimensions

Survey of Public Safety Screening Psychologists

- n=37, Psychologists who are members of the IACP Psychological Services Section
- Asked what behaviors of concern they ask about and how they treat those admissions

Results

Masturbating in any work setting (their own or another's place of employment)	38.9%	7
Masturbating in a public place	33.3%	6
Sending sexually explicit pictures	44.4%	8
Sending sexually explicit text messages or email messages	33.3%	6
Sending sexually explicit text messages, emails or pictures to someone they had not met in person	22.2%	4
Engaging in sexual behavior with animals (masturbation of them, or oral or sexual intercourse with them)	27.8%	5
Engaging in sexual activity with another person in any work setting (their own or another's place of employment)	66.7%	12
Engaging in sexual activity (intercourse, oral sex) in a public place	44.4%	8
Viewing pornography while at work (on a work or personal computer/cellphone)	50.0%	9
Viewing child pornography	88.9%	16
Viewing pornography that includes animals	16.7%	3
Paying for illegal sexual services from another person (intercourse, oral sex, sensual message/happy ending, etc.). NOTE: To include "lethal" prostitution in violation of the UCMJ.	72.2%	13

Results

- Very early data suggests that there is a great deal of variation in how psychologists treat these admissions; HOWEVER,
- For most..... Frequency, recency and circumstances are heavily weighed in the decision making process

Slippery slope or changing times

- Just because everyone is doing it, doesn't mean we (YOU) should lower your standards
- What is legal to ask and what isn't....
 - Great discussion for HR and Command Staff
 - Department Culture Differences
 - Recruiting Needs
- Training, Review of current literature, consult with your team's psychological expert

And now... Reefer Madness

- Roberts & Roberts (2014):
 - n=66,479 applicants to police, fire, corrections, probation and communication dispatch positions (LEO = 53%)
 - Used PsyQ data analysis
 - PsyQ question: "During your entire life, how often have you tried, used, or experimented with marijuana other than as a prescription drug or treatment legally prescribed to you?"

Never: 52%

Less than 20 times: 43%

21-50 times: 3%

51-100 times: 1%

101-500 times: 1%

More than 500 times: < 1%

Roberts & Roberts, cont.

- Fewer than 5% of applicants had admitted to using more than 20 times
- Clear pattern of greater likelihood of a pre-hire history of negative background behavior among the 5% of applicants who have used marijuana more than 20 times
 - Increase in admissions of blackouts after drinking, use of cocaine, use of hallucinogens, having received a GED and having considered suicide, fired 2 or more times, reprimanded 3 or more times, 2+ arguments at work with raised voices, 2+ personality conflicts at work, military discipline, domestic violence concerns, DUI, etc. (frequency of admission increased with higher rates of usage)

Discussion and Case Studies

- Female applicant CS – sexual contact with animals
 - Suicide attempt
- Male applicant SA/CR – sexual contact with animals
- Masturbation at work
 - Mitigating circumstances, e.g. “Combat jack”
 - # of times, where occurred (public bathroom v. other), attitude toward occurrence(s)
- Gender differences
 - They exist but tread lightly

Questions?

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CALIFORNIA POST COMMISSION DIMENSIONS:

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCREENING DIMENSIONS: The rating dimensions used in the SAR report are the product of a professionally conducted job task analysis that has been found useful in the selection of police and other public safety employees (CA POST Commission).

Cluster 1: Interpersonal Behavior

1. SOCIAL COMPETENCE: Involves communicating with others in a tactful and respectful manner, and showing sensitivity and concern in one's daily interactions. Can interact and deal effectively with people from varying social and cultural backgrounds. Attempts to resolve conflicts through persuasion rather than force.
2. TEAMWORK: Involves working effectively with others to accomplish goals, as well as subordinating personal interests for the good of the working group and agency. It involves establishing and maintaining effective, cooperative working relationships with fellow officers, supervisors, community partners, representatives of other agencies, and others tasked with serving and protecting the community.
3. ASSERTIVENESS/PERSUASIVENESS: Involves unhesitatingly taking control of situations in a calm and appropriately assertive manner, even under dangerous or adverse conditions.

Cluster 2: Judgment and Adaptability

4. DECISION-MAKING AND JUDGMENT: Involves common sense, "street smarts," and the ability to make sound decisions, demonstrated by the ability to size up situations quickly and take the appropriate action. It also involves the ability to sift through information to glean that which is important, and, once identified, to use that information effectively.
5. ADAPTABILITY/FLEXIBILITY: Involves the ability to change gears and easily adjust to the many different, sudden, and sometimes competing demands inherent in law enforcement work. Can apply knowledge and reasoning to make prompt and effective decisions quickly in both routine and non-routine situations; can make sound decisions in a timely manner; can size up a situation quickly and take appropriate actions.

Cluster 3: Emotional Control

6. EMOTIONAL REGULATION AND STRESS TOLERANCE: Involves the ability to maintain composure and stay in control, particularly during life-threatening, time-critical events and other stressful situations. It includes taking the negative aspects of the job in stride and
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maintaining an even temperament, as well as accepting criticism rather than becoming overly defensive or allowing it to hamper job performance. Refrains from overreacting when subjected to physical or verbal abuse; exercises restraint and uses the minimum amount of force necessary to handle a given situation.

7. AVOIDING SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND OTHER RISK-TAKING BEHAVIOR: Involves avoiding participation in behavior that is inappropriate, self-damaging, and can adversely impact organizational functioning, such as alcohol and drug abuse, domestic violence, sale of drugs and gambling.

8. IMPULSE CONTROL/ATTENTION TO SAFETY: Involves taking proper precautions and avoiding impulsive and/or unnecessarily risky behavior to ensure both public and personal safety. Refrains from overreacting when subjected to physical or verbal abuse. Can maintain composure and performs effectively in stressful situations.

Cluster 4: Work Attitudes

9. CONSCIENTIOUSNESS/DEPENDABILITY: Involves diligent, reliable, conscientious work patterns; performing in a timely, logical manner in accordance with rules and regulations and agency policies. Follows orders; is reliable, thorough, punctual, accurate; can assume responsibility for share of the workload; works with minimal supervision. Can proceed on assignments without waiting to be told what to do; is consistently productive.

10. INTEGRITY/ETHICS: Involves maintaining high standards of personal conduct. It consists of attributes such as honesty, impartiality, trustworthiness, and abiding laws, regulations and procedures.

Cluster 5: Communication/Learning Skills

11. COMMUNICATION SKILLS: Writes clearly and concisely; uses acceptable grammar, punctuation and spelling; writing is well organized, complete and accurate.

12. PROBLEM SOLVING/LEARNING: Comprehends new information and applies what has been learned to on-the-job situations.

Dr. Cerise Vablais

Dr. Vablais received her MBA from the University of Washington's Executive program in 2000 and her doctoral degree in clinical psychology from Fielding Graduate University in 2007. Her doctoral dissertation focused on the varied presentation of psychopathy in female offenders received an award from the Society for the Scientific Study of Psychopathy. She has extensive experience in forensic assessment which she gained working for the Maryland Department of Public Safety and the Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene. Prior to returning to Washington in 2011, she worked as a psychologist and the Director of Mental Health for the Anne Arundel County Detention Center in Annapolis, Maryland. From 2011 – 2015, she was a member of the executive leadership team at Fairfax Hospital, an acute crisis stabilization inpatient facility. She is currently a consulting psychologist for Public Safety Selection providing pre-employment evaluations and consulting services to over 50 public safety agencies on the West Coast. She has provided expert witness testimony in both Maryland and Washington for matters including competency to stand trial, determining criminal responsibility and involuntary civil commitment. She holds membership in the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Society for Police and Criminal Psychology and the International Critical Stress Foundation. She is currently licensed in Maryland, Washington, Oregon, Alaska and California.