

# Polygraphy

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## What is treatment?

- Reducing risk?
- Assisting those harmed
- Preventing future victimization?
- “Outing” people who have not disclosed their victimization?
  - Do all who have been harmed want our help?

## What is disclosure?

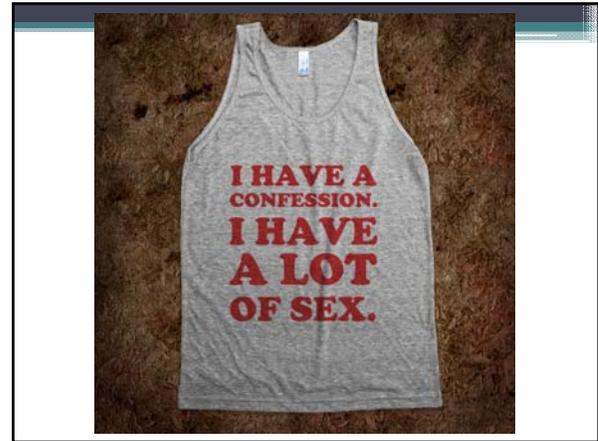
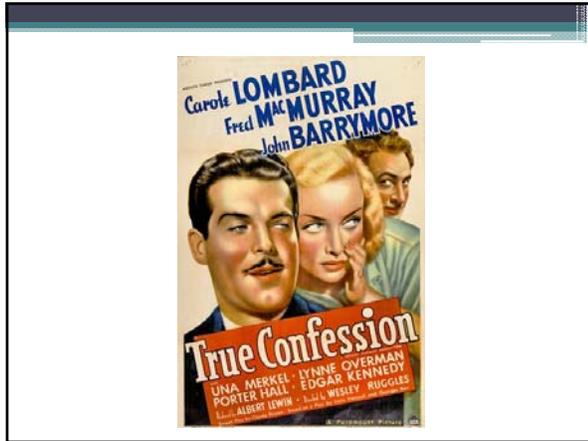
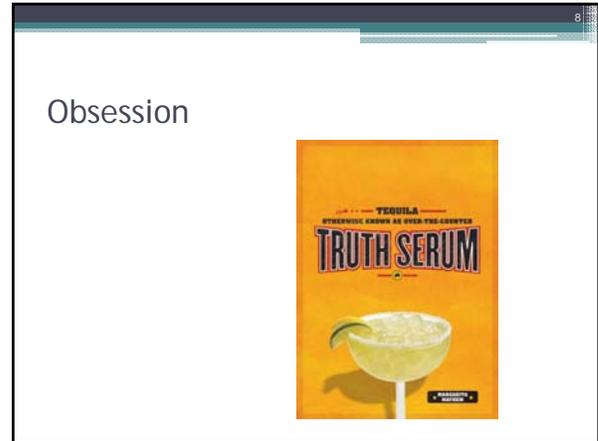
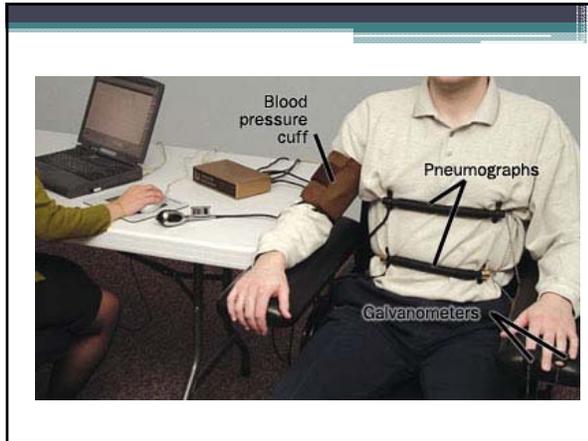
- A process?
- An event?
  
- Can it be encouraged, forced... or nudged?
- We can force kids to disclose, but can we force them to become honest people?
  
- How do people view themselves after they disclose? Or are compelled to disclose?

## Finally...

- Do we have the right to force someone to disclose?
  
- At what point does forcing someone become an abuse dynamic itself?
  
- Despite our efforts, is our message “you must... or I’ll hurt you?”

## Polygraph





## Polygraphy

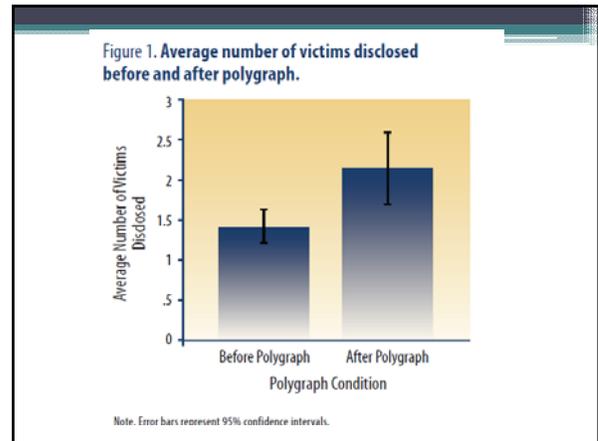
- Safer Society 2009 survey
  - Over 50% of the responding programs claim to use polygraphy with adolescents.
- Lack research to recommend use with adolescents beyond number of victims (data to follow)

## Why not polygraph?

- Hindman & Peters, 2001
- adolescents who had sexually abused and participated in polygraph examinations reported twice as many victims as those who didn't.
- Touted "the power of the polygraph to elicit withheld information."
- Findings were less dramatic than the results for adults, who reported five to six times as many victims as their adolescent counterparts.
- Results similar to those of an earlier study by Emerick & Dutton, 1993.

Van Arsdale, Shaw, Miller & Parent, 2012

- Increase in the number of victims disclosed.
- Victims disclosed tended to be younger and male
- 1.42 victims before polygraph (average)
- 2.15 victims after polygraph (average)



Cook, 2011



- Offenders admitted more male victims, stranger victims, and unrelated victims than previously admitted in official records as evidenced by the Static-99 scores.
- However, this additional information did not significantly improve the predictive accuracy of the Static-99.
- when the polygraph was used in its traditional manner to determine whether or not the offender has reported all of his victims, the SHPE did not predict recidivism.

Chaffin, 2010



- Suggests that we should only use polygraphy IF it can be proven to:
  - lead to better treatment outcomes,
  - prevent future victimization, and
  - protect abusers from the all the consequences of abusing again.
- However, such research is currently lacking.

Chaffin, 2010

- Procedures to extract confessions seem to hold a particular sensitivity in the health care ethics literature, especially if the procedures are coercive or harsh. The World Medical Association (WMA; 1975) held that a breach could exist for health care providers by simply being present during harsh interrogations...

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Rosky, 2012

- “Correctional quackery”
- “(f)utility




## 1979: Edward S. Bordin



- Therapeutic alliance:
  - Agreement on relationship
  - Agreement on goals
  - Agreement on tasks
  - (Norcross, 2002, would add client preferences)
- Over 1,100 studies have emphasized the importance of the alliance in psychotherapy since (Prescott & Miller, in press; Orlinsky, 1994)

## Ask yourself

- How good is our therapeutic alliance with clients, really?
- If a client fails to progress because we adopt a more intrusive approach, how would we explain this to future victims?

## Trauma (Ford et al., 2012)

- Approximately 90% of youth in juvenile detention facilities reported a history of exposure to at least one potentially traumatic event in two independent surveys of representative samples
- E.g., being threatened with a weapon (58%), traumatic loss (48%), and physical assault (35%)

## Trauma (Ford et al., 2012)

- Two complex trauma sub-groups:
- 20% of the reported some combination of sexual or physical abuse or family violence
- 15% emotional abuse and family violence but not physical or sexual abuse
- The resultant combined prevalence estimate of 35% for complex trauma history is about three times higher than the 10-13% estimates of polyvictimization from epidemiological study of children and adolescents

## Trauma (Ford et al., 2012)

- Sexual offending in adolescence has been linked with complex trauma exposure in several studies. Interviews with the clinicians treating 40 JSOs found that 95% of these youths had a documented history of at least one past traumatic event, and 65% were determined to have met diagnostic criteria for PTSD.
- Notably, clinicians viewed the trigger(s) for sex offending as related to a prior trauma in 85% of the youth, including intense trauma-associated fear for 37.5% of the youth, helplessness for 55%, and posttraumatic horror for 20%.
- 1 in 7 JSOs were found to meet criteria for a dissociative disorder, with physical abuse associated with elevated levels of dissociative symptoms.

## Polygraphy: cautions



- Youth are different in their treatment needs and willingness to disclose information.
- More information is not always better information
- Polygraph examinations have the potential to be re-traumatizing and may contribute to dysfunctional beliefs
- Young people may have long-term treatment needs, but the polygraph may only have short-term utility
- Disclosure is not always the same as honesty

## Implications

- **More research and discussion is needed.**
- Professionals will want to ensure that they are protecting the rights of their clients as well as those of people the client may have harmed.
- There are many considerations in using the polygraph....

## Considerations

- Think twice before using a polygraph
  - **Kids are more vulnerable than adults**
- Consider the potential downside impact (e.g., Are we undermining our own efforts to build rapport and provide guidance?)
- Explore what other alternatives may be available
- Decide whether it is clinically appropriate

## Perhaps most importantly

- **Acquiescence**
  - Kids sometimes make things up in order to get through an interview
  - This can be a problem with or without the polygraph

## Conclusion

- There is almost no research on the polygraph and its most effective use with adolescents. Just because professionals can use it with a given adolescent does NOT mean that they should use it. Policies that require polygraph examinations for every adolescent will likely do harm by neglecting the individual differences and vulnerabilities of each adolescent.