



Online Turn- On, Off-line- Injustice

Vanities of vanities, there is nothing new under the sun!! What was - is, and what is, will be. So, what's new about dating, dating rituals and sex? Really nothing, yet everything! As long as humans have occupied this earth there have been dating and mating rituals. Meeting psychosocial and psychosexual needs along with “just plain procreation” of the species, the objective has remained virtually the same...or has it? Virtual reality and our technological advances and imaginations have significantly changed the way we think, act, communicate and engage in sexual relations – virtually or otherwise.

For better or worse, modern dating has not only changed our behaviors, but has also changed and impacted the criminal justice system in a profound way. This presentation will address modern dating rituals; current cultural beliefs about sex, dating, and sexual assault; advancements in communication that are leading to phenomenon such as sexting, leakage of sext's and on-line dating.

Texts, instant messaging and on-line profiles have almost completely replaced the love letter. This may or may not have had an impact of judging the validity of a report of rape or sexual assault. This modern form of communication has most certainly created a permanent trail of potential evidence for both sides of the criminal justice system. Thus, presenting a significant problem for both the system and the justice it strives to deliver.

Historically, predators used to thrive predominately in the bars and bedrooms flowing with alcohol or other perceived vulnerabilities. Over the past decade, many offenders have migrated to the new watering hole of technology. It is within this technological watering hole the prey is more vulnerable not only due to the predatory behaviors but also because the criminal justice system may not be able to differentiate between fantasy and flirting or sexual assault and rape.

This presentation will also focus on the impact of these modern-day dating practices on the criminal justice system in terms of victims seeking justice along with communities seeking safety. Within this new technological water hole, predators thrive! It is the presenter's hypothesis that many members of the criminal justice system discover, document and often misinterpret some of these modern-day dating rituals as consent for the criminal acts committed upon them. Victims are often deemed non-credible because on-line dating culture is not widely understood or discussed. There may be a trail of sexts, emails, instant messages or chat room dialogues that wrongly compromise the victim's credibility. This cesspool has a grave impact because the very system designed to hold offenders accountable for their criminal actions often fails to do so.

Finally, the presenters will provide some concrete suggestions and promising practices in hopes of overcoming barriers to disclosure and seeking a better understanding of the reality of the reported criminal act. The presenters will also address strategies for increasing victim access to the criminal justice system along with changes the criminal justice system must consider in a rapidly changing culture.

Learning Objectives:

- Recognize that relationship seeking in our culture has changed dramatically
- Discuss how sexting, on-line dating and other modern day dating methods are now more normal than not
- Recognize that the criminal justice response towards modern day dating practices often have a negative effect and increases victim blaming while decreasing offender accountability
- Evaluate additional strategies for increasing victim access to the criminal justice system in an increasingly changing culture