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## Summary: Predicting Workforce Deviance

**Conclusion:** Counterproductive work behaviors in young adulthood can be predicted by adolescent personality traits, amongst other things.

**Reference:** **Predicting the Counterproductive Employee in a Child-to-Adult Prospective Study** by Brent Roberts, Peter Harms, Avshalom Caspi, and Terri Moffitt. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. For more information, contact Chloe Tatney at [ctatney@batrushollweg.com](mailto:ctatney@batrushollweg.com).

**Why this Article is Important:** Counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs); such as theft, absenteeism, tardiness, drug and alcohol abuse, disciplinary problems, accidents, sabotage, sexual harassment, and violence; are an unfortunate problem for many organizations. In fact, CWBs cost American companies billions of dollars each year. Due to this unwanted occurrence, some organizations try to avoid hiring counterproductive employees by using criminal background checks, integrity tests, and personality tests. This study uses a longitudinal design to test the predictive validity of these selection procedures.

**Major Findings:** This article reported some interesting findings. One surprising finding was that adolescent criminal convictions (adolescent criminal background check) did not predict CWBs in young adulthood. One potential explanation for this finding is that being caught and convicted for criminal activities may have acted as a preventative buffer against future CWBs. Another interesting result of this study was that personality traits assessed at age 18 had consistent predictive relations to CWBs assessed at age 26, even when controlling for background factors. The two most important personality trait domains were from the domains of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. In this study, the aggression and social closeness scales were some of the strongest predictors of total CWBs. In addition, the scales tapping the domain of Constraint, which is strongly related to Conscientiousness, predicted CWBs as well.

### What does it mean to you?

- a. Due to the fact that background checks may not be predictive of counterproductive work behaviors, organizations should not solely rely on them for assessing deviant employees.
- b. Personality measures, especially scales tapping the domains of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness, should be utilized in the hiring process.
- c. Professional psychologists should be consulted about what selection tools can be used to identify and weed out counterproductive employees.