

A Rejoinder to the APA's Response

Meta-Analytic Survey of Criterion Accuracy of Validated Polygraph Techniques. (2011) Report Prepared For The American Polygraph Association Board of Directors, Nate Gordon, President (2010-2011), *Polygraph*, 40, 4, 193-305.

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I appreciated the response from the APA regarding my comments on the Meta-analysis report. It is to be noted, however, that my letter was sent on February 14, 2012; the response to me, sent on July 2, came only after many pestering telephone calls and email messages asking about the status of my request. I mention that not because the delay itself is of particular importance but because it appears to reflect something of a change, or maybe an uncertainty, in the APA's thinking about the Meta-analysis report. When that report was presented at the 2011 APA seminar those who were in attendance will recall that much of the business meeting discussion, many of the informal conversations and most of the special-call meetings focused on what was going to happen as a result of the report; this was, it appeared, an urgent issue. Most, I feel sure, were persuaded by what they heard; the APA was going to take action to enforce the clear purpose of Bylaw 3.9.1 that states: "A member polygraph examiner shall use a validated testing technique...." Enforcement of that bylaw, it was expected, would be consistent with the listing of the "validated techniques" included in the report. If a technique was not listed examiners would be forewarned that its use would constitute a violation of the bylaw. Because of such an expectation I wrote to the APA in order to ensure inclusion in the listing a testing process ("technique") that met all of the criteria established by the APA Ad Hoc Committee and yet was not included in the Meta-analysis report's listing for reasons unknown to me.

At the business meeting in San Diego, September, 2012, I learned from the public announcements that my request had been approved by the Board; the MSU-MGQT was now a "validated" technique. It was also stated that the other matter I commented on in my letter, the Reid Technique, was now, by Board action, included in the "validated" techniques list. I did not request such action. I offered comments only to point out some clearly erroneous statements in the Meta-analysis report. (As I write this, mid-October, 2012, I have not yet been notified officially that that action was taken by the Board. Nor, according to Joe Buckley, President of J.E. Reid and Associates, has he been told of any action by the APA concerning the Reid Technique.) It may seem odd, given my initial inquiry asking for "approval" of another named technique, that I would be in agreement with the comment in APA's response to my request (Nelson, July 2, 2012) "that continued emphasis on named techniques offers no advantage or difference in test performance in field settings...." That is, I do not now believe, and for many years have expressed the view that the differences between "techniques" within the traditional Comparison Question Testing (CQT) family are of little consequence, the claims of the individual promoters notwithstanding.

The reason the confusion regarding techniques has come about is because of the way "technique" was defined by the APA and its Ad Hoc Committee on Validated Techniques. The initial approach apparently was as specified by the Chair of that Committee, Mike Gougler: "A polygraph technique consists of a combination of: 1) a polygraph testing protocol that conforms to evidence-based principles for target selection, test question construction, and test administration; and, 2) a test data analysis model for which there exists a published and replicated body of at least two empirical studies that provide evidence of their diagnostic or screening accuracy for those dimensional aspects specified in section 3.9.1." In my view this is an inadequate and unsatisfactory approach.

In my presentation at the APA in 2011 I offered what was for my purposes a more satisfactory definition: "... a 'technique' consists of all of the activities, procedures, instructions and testing protocols (physiological data collection) that are applied methodically, systematically and regularly in the conduct of a polygraph examination." The authors of the new edition of the Terminology Reference [by Krapohl, Handler and Sturm (2012)] have now, for the first time, considered this issue. They offer another definition, seemingly closer to mine than the one that was used to guide the Meta-analysis; this is: "All practices taking place in a polygraph examination, including pretest procedures, question formulation, format, number of tests, test sequencing, and scoring and decision rules."

While I agree that another "named technique" within the CQT family isn't essential, the APA bylaw and the Meta-analysis report exacerbated the problem; they made it more, not less, advantageous for idiosyncratic approaches to CQ testing to be recognized. In the APA's response, for instance, it is stated that the MSU-MGQT was a "variant of the Reid Technique" in spite of the fact that it was pointed out clearly that while the format was similar (to the Reid procedure) other aspects of the testing processes were different. Like the Meta-analysis report the APA's response made it appear that it was only "format" and a specific mode of data analysis that constituted a "technique." To put all of this into other words, the Meta-analysis report implies that the use of a particular format and a certain, format-specific mode of data analysis will lead one to an "accuracy" as specified in the report. That, in my view, is demonstrably false.

I believe the APA ought to revisit this entire issue. If there is a real need for a provision such as Bylaw 3.9.1, and I'm not sure there is, then I would suggest there are less divisive, less confused and more acceptable ways to ensure members' acceptance and support than what was done.

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