

Questions on Polygraphy

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1) Is Control Question Test polygraphy sufficiently standardized that a meaningful validity rate can be determined? The questions as to whether these tests are "tests" at all is fundamental to your inquiry.

2) What effect might an examinee's knowledge and understanding of the procedure have on the polygraph process? The polygraph process involves numerous deceptions on the part of the polygraph examiner, for example:

- during the stimulation (or acquaintance) test, in which the examinee is led to believe he/she displayed a physiological response when "lying" about the number he/she chose, whether or not such is the case
- exaggerated claims of accuracy
- and, most importantly, the rationale provided to the examinee for the "control" questions is a lie

How have studies purporting to establish the validity of polygraphy controlled for the variable of the examinee's level of knowledge about the procedure?

Can valid results be expected with subjects who understand the deceptions on which the procedure relies?

How should polygraph examiners handle informed subjects? American Polygraph Association president Milton O. "Skip" Webb, Jr. declined to answer this question when I put it to him. For details, see our e-mail exchange at:

<http://antipolygraph.org/read.shtml#informed-subjects>

3) What effects do countermeasures have on CQT polygraphy? Have validity studies adequately considered the effects of faking?

At the committee's meeting in January, Dr. Andrew Ryan of DoDPI claimed "the way we currently score the physiological data" countermeasures attempts tend to result in an outcome of "no opinion" rather than allowing deceptive persons to pass the test. What research supports his conclusion?

4) Dr. Ryan also likened polygraph security screening to a stress test to screen for heart problems. If we are to compare polygraphy to a medical procedure, then can a subject be said to have given informed consent to submit to a polygraph test when he/she is deliberately misled about the nature of the procedure?

How do those subject to polygraph screening react when they discover that they have been lied to about the nature of the procedure?

5) Are the polygraph procedures defined by DoDPI consistent with what's happening in the field? Compare the false positive rates obtained in DoDPI validation studies of the Test for Espionage and Sabotage with the reported false positive rates obtained in practice in the Departments of Defense and Energy. The former are considerably greater than the latter. What accounts for these discrepancies?

6) DOE polygraph program chief David M. Renzelman said at the January meeting with regard to the polygraph testing of Dr. Wen Ho Lee that a Quality Control Review program established in Jan. 1999 (curious timing, considering that Dr. Lee's DOE polygraph test was administered on 23 December 1998) established that Dr. Lee's polygraph test was "not finished." I have found no definition in the scientific literature of what constitutes an "unfinished" polygraph test. The committee should seek a definition of the method used by Quality Control Review in determining whether a polygraph test is "not finished."

7) At January's meeting, Mr. Renzelman also said that the polygraph is not a lie detector. He explained that the polygraph is used to determine if a question "bothers" the examinee, noting, "Polygraph is only a means of...of...of looking at emotion that is taking place at the time a person listens to, thinks about, answers a question that the examiner and the person taking the test has agreed upon originally. And if the answer to that question bothers the person taking the test, then it tends to bother us. And then it's *our* job to find out, 'Why did that bother you?'"

Does a reaction to a relevant question necessarily indicate that it is the *answer* to the question that "bothers" a person (and not, for example, the mere fact of being asked the question in the first place)?

What scientific methodology do DOE (and presumably, other) polygraphers use to find out *why* a question "bothered" a person? What scientific research supports the validity of that procedure?

8) Federal polygraph examiners have taken to calling themselves "forensic psychophysicologists." After completing a 14-week course in polygraphy at DoDPI, can polygraph examiners be qualified as "psychophysicologists" in a general sense that they might be further qualified as specialists in the forensic application of that discipline?