

examiners or by qualified research personnel. The research director was not able to provide a record of the successes and failures of his organization.

Therefore, although the polygraph enjoys wide usage, we are not able to estimate its value. It is possible that the regard in which it is held is due largely to the ability of the examiners to conduct effective interviews and only slightly to the polygraph instrument itself; or the reverse. We do not know. Unless performance data are kept and analyzed, we cannot benefit from experience and recognize the areas in which improvement is possible. This cannot be desirable to the agencies which employ this method or to the polygraph operators who are responsible for providing an effective program. No useful purpose can be served here by providing still another testimonial of faith in the lie detector. Objective data and not testimonials are required. The simple fact is that the necessary data have not been kept and that an impartial appraisal of the polygraph has not yet been accomplished.

This implies no lack of respect for polygraph examiners. The author was impressed by the apparent sincerity, conscientiousness, and integrity of the examiners who conduct the interrogations and supervise the use of the polygraph. The author joins them in believing that the polygraph "works," and that it has been employed in a scrupulous manner. However, belief in the value of the polygraph or in the integrity of its practitioners is not evidence that the polygraph is an effective instrument.

The following claims, made verbally, show the result of nine visits to five Government organizations in search of data. Most of the data reflect experience in security screening. No records were offered for inspection; the numbers are based on notes made during the visits:

[In percent]

	Verified acceptances	Verified rejections	Inconclusive determina- tions	Demon- strated failures
Organization A.....	85	12	3	-----
Organization B.....	-----	-----	-----	3.0
Organization C.....	-----	-----	-----	-----
Organization D.....	-----	-----	5	-----
Organization E.....	-----	-----	-----	.1

Blank entries indicate that no data were provided in some interviews; two organizations (B and D) appear not to keep performance data. "Inconclusive determinations" refer to cases in which the polygraph tracings did not permit the examiner to infer whether or not a person was deceptive (all other determinations are considered "conclusive"). "Verification" indicates that the judgment made from the polygraph record was supported by independent evidence. When the polygraph is used as part of the preemployment procedure for security screening, the term "verified acceptance" indicates that the polygraph-derived conclusion agrees with an independent background investigation and that the candidate was hired; "verified rejection" indicates confirmation of a decision not to hire. The distinction between acceptance and rejection is not considered significant for purposes related to accuracy of the polygraph since the percentage found in either category depends upon the type of applicants who appear for employment and the current criteria for acceptability; the percent of rejections is affected by the examiner's tendency to "play safe" by rejecting applicants whose record might in other circumstances be judged "inconclusive."

The total of verified judgments was reported to range from about 95 to 97 percent. "Failures" represent individuals who were hired but later found to be unacceptable or to have been deceptive. In these data, the failure rate is given as 0.1 percent; the report of 3 percent in organization C is not regarded as typical because it represents a single individual in a sample of 37 cases.

A private research organization, which works solely for one of the military services, instituted a program of semiannual polygraph examinations for its employees. The purpose of the program was to detect and to deter the illegal disclosure of classified information; on an initial examination, employees were asked questions concerning possible falsification of the personal history form and about homosexuality. Preemployment examinations were not given and it was not mandatory to take the test.