

Viewpoint

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By Robert John Zagar, Ph.D.

Proponent of Internet tests contends they eliminate bias

There is a nationwide inadequacy of current pre-employment and promotion tests for public safety officers, firefighters and emergency medical technicians.

In Chicago clinical psychologists use paper and pencil tests like PAI, Millon, Bender and ability tests without any empirical basis that these are related to the job of a public safety officer, firefighter or emergency medical technician.

The Chicago, city treasurer shared the last contract with me. These psychologists also employ an interview-judgment, a background check and review of the unstructured physical-psychiatric exam. As I've shown the Chicago Police Department oversight committee alderman, the finance alderman and Mayor Emanuel for decades, there is a MMPI-2-PI (Personality Inventory) report.

This is far superior to the paper and pencil approach most currently used. Consistently, the MMPI Restructured Form (MMPI-RF) has "under estimated" psychopathology. The MMPI-RF also does not have the 80 years of research supporting its reliability and validity.

Another issue is that Internet testing takes out the bias of the tester, scorer, interpreter and report writer. The Internet test instantly compares the male police or promotion candidate with 18,365 job applicants and 9,427 police candidates or female 6,006 job applicants and 1,813 police candidates. This is valid and reliable testing that the courts approve.

An interview or judgment has a miss rate of 54 percent. A background or credit check misses 75 percent to 80 percent. An unstructured physical-psychiatric exam has a miss rate of 51 percent. Flipping a coin is more sensitive and specific. There is no way the current ways can match a computer algorithm that is nondiscriminatory and



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objective.

The value in using the MMPI is that it includes many atlases that employ the results of 19,000-plus empirical studies and 250 appellate court cases. The seven validity scales of the MMPI in a Poissons' distribution of $7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2$ give 40,300 ways a person can deceptively self-present.

None of the other psychological tests have so much research on deceptive self-presentation, a considerable concern when there is money involved, i.e., a job or a pending lawsuit. When these 40,300 ways are multiplied by 1,000 neurological and psychiatric conditions in the International Classification of Diseases there are

40,300,000 ways a candidate self-presents.

People naturally try to present themselves in the best light when applying for a job or trying to collect in a lawsuit. Just like IBM's Watson always beats the world chess champion, no human using conventional ways (interview-judgment, background credit check, unstructured physical-psychiatric exam report and paper and pencil tests) can match the computer algorithm Internet tests of the MMPI and Standard Predictor.

In my testimony before the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department in Chicago in August, 2016, I stated that one must screen for deception, mental illness and substance abuse with a proven instrument like the MMPI in Internet testing and a report generating way.

I also said that using the Standard Predictor of Violence Potential, a measure of abuse or violence, is need-

ed. There have been eight decades of research on measuring "dangerousness" or "repeat offending" and "abuse or violence potential."

For years now all the media is talking about is police violence, the greatest concern of not only the public and the media but also leadership. Only an Internet report using tests that foren-

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sic and industrial psychologists would employ is scientifically justifiable.

If clinical psychologists are going to work in the area of industrial and organizational psychology, perhaps they should obtain the training necessary and read the literature carefully and thoroughly.

In my testimony I said, "One cannot train out deception, mental illness, substance abuse and violence. Diversification of the police departments is also needed. Finally, training and retraining, as New York City has demonstrated for decades, can lower violence in the community."

Until clinicians start employing actuarial assessment in every at-risk person that appears before clinics, hospitals, courts, jails or human resource intake, there will continue to be a 61 percent miss rate. This current way is considerably less than chance.

Perhaps financial decision makers should just flip a coin rather than employ the conventional ways. Then we would have a better hit rate. And perhaps there would be a drop in the 11,000 homicides, 17,000 suicides and 300 mass murder victims, the 153 police deaths, 150 police suicides and the 871 police involved homicides we have every year. **CE**

References available from author

Robert John Zagar, Ph.D., is a clinical psychologist with a private practice in Chicago, Ill. He has been a professor or assistant professor at several professional schools of psychology and is a staunch advocate of Internet testing as a means of eliminating bias in psychological evaluations. His email address is: doctorzagar@gmail.com.

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