

PROFESSIONALISM VERSUS TRANSPARENCY

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Taunting of the Client by the Polygraph Examiner and the Therapist

Recently I was told by a client that the polygraph examiner had made the statement to them that “nobody has only one victim.” Another client shared not too long ago that a therapist had made a similar remark. Both of these comments came from SOMB/SOTMP Providers practicing inside the Colorado Department of Corrections. However, the polygraph examiner who made this statement most likely practices both inside and outside of CDOC, so it is not the fault of The Department of Corrections that this happened. My opinion is that some therapists and polygraphers on the outside have made this statement also, although no client has directly reported to me that it happened to them.

An e-mail to Amich and Jenks and Accountability (the two polygraph companies that have contracts with CDOC) produced a response from Jeff Jenks who did not know that I had also queried Accountability regarding whether one of their employees made this comment. He said he felt personally accused and thought that I should have been more professional. I wrote back that I had contacted another company as well, and that I believed that professionalism (and I would add political correctness at times) frequently get in the way of transparency!

I also told Mr. Jenks in that e-mail that I felt this kind of comment likely came from a therapist and polygrapher who were familiar with the roundly criticized “crossover research” of Kim English and Peggy Heil etc. and were influenced in their comment by these publications. A number of journal articles have discussed the poor design of their studies and other technical issues related to their “research.” To his credit, he agreed with me that the statement “nobody has only one victim”, in my opinion likely designed to taunt and goad the client into confessing more (see the Outside Evaluators’ Study of 2013 re: 80% of clients saying they were coerced into admitting more than one victim), is not true. There are people who have only one victim who are continually pressured to “cough up” more to the satisfaction of polygraph examiners and therapists. I did not hear back from Accountability.

Being professional and always politically correct (of course there is an appropriate place for both) make it challenging to bring out ultimate truth in a statement or a situation. They are a shield one can frequently stand behind to protect themselves from having to change a behavior or way of thought that truly deserves to be questioned. In this case, it is clear that some clients have victimized multiple times, and others have not. Every client should not be coerced into admitting victims they don’t have in order to get through treatment, and eventually out of prison, treatment and parole! While therapists believe that this moving beyond “denial” of those they have victimized is an important part of the healing process, there are programs that do not push truth telling to get clients into treatment or through treatment (i.e. see the work of Dr. William Marshall in Canada for a glimpse of his treatment process at the end of which he states that most have told the truth without being pushed).

It is frightening for clients to step forward and share with me that they have been taunted in this way, as their freedom and chance to live a safe and productive life in the future are much affected by whether they pass polygraphs and admit an “appropriate” number of folks they have personally victimized.

Even if a client admits every single person they can remember that they believe they have victimized (one man told me during a disclosure that he had been “generous” in naming people victimized), there is still no guarantee that the world is going to be safe from sexual offending behavior as the vast majority of people committing these offenses have not yet been confronted, reported and stopped. Our men and women who have been caught and convicted and gone through treatment and supervision have the lowest recidivism rates amongst felonies except for murder.