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Content Validity and Murphy's Angst

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Murphy (2009) spends an entire article agonizing over whether the words ''content validity'' are appropriate to use. Throughout the article, he acknowledges over and over again the fact that batteries of tests that match up with the contents of the job ''will almost certainly turn out to be valid predictors of job performance (p. 458).'' Even in his concluding recommendations, he indicates industrial–organizational (I–O) psychologists should pay careful attention to the match between tests and jobs. And that this enhances acceptability, legal defensibility, the apparent fairness, and so forth. He then concludes again that this will almost certainly result in a valid predictor of job performance.

Murphy then notes his agreement with Guion that there is no such thing as content validity. We thought our field had evolved much further than that. Our 2003 *Principles* (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Inc., 2003) explicitly refers to the view of validity as a unitary concept and notes the different sources of evidence that can contribute to an understanding of the inferences that come from our selection procedures. We all know there are many tools that we have for establishing the validity of our techniques. Murphy notes that sometimes there is a flaw in the methodology in test development and that can disrupt inferences based on content validity. We agree with that concern, and it is why we explicitly tried to list the many issues involved in establishing content validity (Goldstein, Zedeck & Schneider, 1993).

But there are also flaws in the use of criterion-related strategies such as when the criterion measure is contaminated or sample sizes are too small to utilize that procedure in a reliable manner. Our job as noted in our 2003 *Principles* is to utilize the best methods and strategies available. We don't think Murphy's angst over the words ''content validity'' advances our understanding of the conditions where a content validity strategy would or would not be useful.

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