

PSYCHOLOGY

Personality Tests Queried

Personality tests have been taken over by government and industry to be used on prospective employees and in this capacity represent a potential invasion of privacy.

► A COMPREHENSIVE 200-page summary of Congressional hearings on the use of personality tests will be released in November by the American Psychological Association.

The report will include condensed testimony, an analysis of the events leading up to Congressional concern over tests, and a copy of the new Civil Service directive restricting the use of psychological tests.

The journal, *American Psychologist*, has also invited comments from Sargent Shriver, Peace Corps Director, and John Macy, U.S. Civil Service Commissioner.

Dr. Forrest L. Vance, whose testimony before House and Senate committees will be included in the November issue of *American Psychologist*, said that he thinks Congress has a legitimate right to be concerned over the use of particular personality tests to make personnel decisions.

Personality tests can represent an invasion of privacy, said Dr. Vance at the American Psychological Association convention in Chicago.

Originally, tests were developed by psychologists for clinical use on a voluntary basis. A problem arose when they "were taken over by industry and government

agencies" to be used on prospective employees. Administration of the tests then became somewhat involuntary, he said.

Some tests ask very detailed personal questions on private subjects such as sex and religion, appropriate in a clinical situation. Dr. Vance said he personally considers it wrong to "ask someone seeking a Government office to answer the question, 'Do you believe in God?'"

Use of the 566-question Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory has been a central issue in the current conflict.

Psychologists are worried on two accounts, explained Dr. Vance. They fear that public indignation may provoke Congress into passing rigid legislation. Psychological research would be dangerously curtailed if each administration of a test had to be approved by government.

The profession is concerned, on the other hand, with misuse and mishandling of personality inventories. Sloppy filing of test results, and their inappropriate use (giving clerical employees a test for no practical reason), help erode the last vestiges of privacy left to an individual, observed the psychologist.

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PSYCHOLOGY

Peace Corps Volunteers Fool Psychiatrists

► FORTY-FOUR PEACE CORPS volunteers performed their jobs in Ghana with a success that apparently confounded the predictions of psychiatrists.

Results of a competence study conducted by Dr. Brewster Smith of the University of California, Berkeley, were revealed at the convention of American psychologists in Chicago.

On the basis of extensive interviews, Dr. Smith and an assistant evaluated each volunteer's performance in Ghana. Their observations bore no relation to the predictions of a team of psychiatrists who had rated the volunteers before they left.

Dr. Smith believes that the lack of correlation can be partially accounted for by the "over concern" of psychiatrists for "adjustment and mental health." This emphasis can blind psychiatrists as well as psychologists to aspects of personality such as commitment and courage.

One volunteer, for instance, had not impressed the psychiatrists or the training staff. He was a "loner," quiet and awkward in social situations. However, he found a perfect vocation in teaching, said Dr. Smith, and did a "splendid job" in Ghana. He is currently engaged in a "very promising" career.

The California psychologist feels that psychiatrists in this case paid too much attention to the man's social handicap and too little to his "guts" and ability to respond to a challenge.

Volunteers fell into six basic personality patterns, developed by rating and organizing the volunteers' own assessments of their experience and competence. There was little correlation between this evaluation and judgments of Peace Corps administrators as well as psychiatrists.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Reporting Child Abuse Is Law in 46 States

► CHILD ABUSE LAWS have now been adopted in 46 states. Only Alabama, Hawaii, Mississippi, Virginia and the District of Columbia do not now have laws that require reporting of physical abuse of children.

Mrs. Katherine B. Oettinger, chief of the Children's Bureau, said the laws are designed to protect doctors and hospitals from civil and criminal law suits resulting from their reports of suspected cases of child abuse.

"Persons all up and down the social and economic scale have been found to be child beaters," Mrs. Oettinger said. "The only common denominator that we can find is that the child beater is determined to take out his personal frustrations on one or more of his children because he lacks the emotional maturity to deal with his own conflicts."

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Philco

ARTIFICIAL ARM—A working model of an artificial arm bends at the elbow and turns its hand, all by remote electric signals from living human muscles. Serge Minassian of Philco Corporation, Willow Grove, Pa., simulates a handshake, showing how the artificial arm bends at the elbow as he performs the same motion.