

Tests Violate Privacy

Personal privacy is being invaded unnecessarily by psychological tests for employment that elicit opinions on sex, religion and politics

► **PSYCHOLOGISTS** have been urged to design personality tests that are free from privacy-invading questions on sex, religion, political ideology and similar subjects.

Dr. Alan F. Westin, a lawyer and professor at Columbia University, told psychologists attending the American Psychological Association meeting in New York that current tests do violate a vital area of privacy. Their use by employers in personnel selection "is inappropriate," he said.

Dr. Westin, who, with the New York Bar Association, is engaged in a major study called "The Impact of Technology on Privacy," does not believe laws forbidding involuntary personality testing are the answer.

Continued wiretapping, though illegal, illustrates the difficulty in enforcing such privacy laws, he said. The best solution is self-regulation by psychologists and new tests, he recommended.

Many testing advocates say they

cannot create a test that measures job capability without violating private aspects of the personality. But this has never been proved, said Dr. Westin.

If psychologists can work diligently on designing a "culture-free" test to measure intelligence without discriminating against minority groups, they should be able to give as much time and money to developing a "privacy-respecting" personality test, he said.

A vital element of privacy is that the individual be able to choose the time and place for revealing his innermost secrets, Dr. Westin said. Otherwise he is "seared by the hot light of selective, forced exposure" and his real self is bared to the world while other people remain safely cloaked.

Existing personality tests when used without the individual's full consent invade this innermost core, Dr. Westin stated.

The basic aim of test psychology is to find "normal" conduct and performance. Intellectuals know how far they are from any type of "bland" normality, Dr. Westin said. They know how many conflicts and personal disturbances lie behind their social masks and yet how useful they are in their area of work. Although psychologists protest that the tests also reward imagination and other such traits, the intellectual is not always willing to trust the psychologist on that point.

Personality tests may also precipitate emotional crises in people rejected for jobs after taking them. Dr. Westin remarked that these same people may have been able to live their lives through with the conflicts never coming to the surface.

One can argue, he said, "that it is healthy to bring such problems to the surface and to lead the disturbed individual to professional help." Perhaps the age is approaching when people will get emotional check-ups, just as they get their bodies, eyes and teeth checked.

But Dr. Westin warned that "before we accept this trend in American life, we had better be more certain than we are now that we can cure the wounds opened by such a process, or that awareness is a good thing even though a cure is not always possible."

Dr. Westin noted that some legal measures against personality tests have already been taken and there may well be more in the next decade.

If psychologists cannot find a solution, the challenge will then be:

"What kinds of law and how wise will these regulations be?"

Liquid Plastic Used In Real Heart Models

See Front Cover

► **AUTOPSIED** human organs, such as the heart, lungs or brain can be preserved in plastic for study by scientists and medical students.

Blue and red liquid plastic was injected into the veins and arteries of the heart shown on the cover. The heart was placed in an acid solution that dissolved away the walls and muscle tissue, leaving an accurate model of the vascular system in plastic.

The background material shown in the cover photograph is diffused plastic, not heart tissue.

Exact models of diseased human organs are a valuable aid to the study of disease processes. Neurologists, for example, hope to learn more about arteriosclerosis by comparing normal and diseased brains to determine, if possible, where a breakdown in blood circulation through the brain's tiny capillaries occurs.

A kit including a partially polymerized liquid plastic monomer, a catalyst and a promoter which hardens the plastic into a solid polymer at room temperature after injection and a supply of red and blue pigment colors is available from Polysciences, Inc., Bethayres, Pa.

Such liquid plastics are among materials scientists use in making models by the corrosion method.

Specimens may subsequently be imbedded in clear plastic blocks for permanent protection and for display in museums, laboratories and classrooms.

Blue and red fluid plastics are injected in the veins and arteries of the sinus, nose, throat, gastro-intestinal tract, bronchial tree or any organ with a cavity and opening into which the plastics can flow.

Yellow, white and radio opaque dyes can also be used to trace the paths of other body fluids.

The procedure for obtaining real organ models for study is based on a method originated by Prof. Oscar V. Batson, former head of the department of anatomy, University of Pennsylvania graduate school of medicine.

The idea of studying anatomy by preserving parts of the human body for examination has been around for many centuries. In 1672, a scientist called Swammerdan first used a hot wax stained with cinnabar, a mercury compound, as a means of delineating the path of the coronary artery.

At times hot metals have also been used.

However, these materials do not give as precise a model of the vascular system as modern plastic.

(Cover photograph by Polysciences, Inc.)

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