

though in the nature of the device no answers are "correct" or "incorrect", as we shall see.

Then:

The MMPI was developed at the University of Minnesota to assist in the classification of persons to whom various labels were attached denoting degree of psychological or emotional instability. The test consists of 566 questions to which answers given by a cross section of people present a different profile from those obtained from people who are believed to be emotionally unstable or potentially so. In fact, the test was developed by careful observation and experiment with the use of many more questions, including the 566, on 2 distinct groups of people at the University of Minnesota Hospital. One group comprised visitors to the hospital—presumably a cross section of the population—and the other consisted of patients who were being treated after diagnosis for certain emotional or mental disorders.

No one contends that every question in the MMPI is critical nor that better questions may not be developed. However, the 566 questions have proved satisfactory in practice, have been the subject of a great quantum of data and experience, and could be rephrased or replaced only at great cost and without assurance that the end product would be so successful a tool.

The answer one gives to one question—indeed, the answers to dozens of questions on the MMPI—are not critical in the evaluation of personality. Indeed, no answer is "correct" or "incorrect." Experience alone shows that certain constellations of answers are given by people possessing certain characteristics. People of similar characteristics, however, may answer many questions quite differently—so nothing is necessarily determined by isolated answers. The test is valid because experience validates it, though no answer is itself valid. For those reasons, the persons who evaluate or score the MMPI couldn't care less about what answer is given to a particular question. Such information is absolutely meaningless whether the question is whether one likes sailing in a boat or whether one wished as a child to be a locomotive engineer.

However, a constellation of certain answers has meaning—not because the developers of the MMPI were supermen but because they were careful empiricists. The test was, in effect, developed by the corollation of replies of a cross section of America with those of a group who were having emotional difficulty. The test therefore was proved before it became a test, and it has been proving itself ever since.

Now I should like to discuss the uses and abuses of tests. The MMPI is not a test to determine who should be employed in a job. No test should be the absolute criterion in such an evaluation. The job of selection for employment still is done best by humans and in my judgment this will always be so. That is not to say that useful psychological and testing tools have not been developed which can and do greatly assist the personnel or selection officer. But the task of selection must be performed by skilled, trained, and conscientious men and women using the best tools available. The MMPI is such a tool. It does not purport to be a test of a person's skills, education, or training. It only seeks to measure emotional components to determine the probable state of emotional equilibrium. Furthermore, the MMPI is not infallible, and its results should never be the sole basis for judgment. However, in those circumstances, now of increasing frequency, in Government and business of placing men and women in stressful jobs, some in faraway lands, it is only fair to the employee and the employer that predictable tragedy, be, if possible, averted.

The Peace Corps has had a remarkable success because it has chosen its volunteers and staff so well. When the agency was established, dire predictions were heard that the Peace Corps would be filled with romanticists, zealots, misfits, and escapees from life at home. The Peace Corps personnel have proved to be remarkably stable—far better able to cope with real austerity and adversity in good cheer than most of us. This is due in no small degree to the training of the volunteer and to the administration of the corps. However, nothing could have compensated for poor selection. The selection procedures have been superb. To a considerable extent the selection has been through the training process itself, which tends to weed out the miscast volunteer. But one must not entirely discount the role of the MMPI which every Peace Corps volunteer receives at the training institution.

I can assure you that the burden of the test is worth it to the Peace Corps applicant, who is saved from the embarrassment and loss of self-esteem from failure abroad after acceptance and goodbys to family and friends.