[PDF] The Cult Of Personality: How Personality Tests Are Leading Us To Miseducate Our Children, Mismanage Our Companies, And Misunderstand Ourselves

Annie Murphy Paul - pdf download free book

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Description:

From Publishers Weekly Personality tests are administered to millions of people every year for purposes ranging from career counseling and educational guidance to determining parental fitness in custody battles. But Paul, a former senior editor at *Psychology Today,* contends that the accuracy

of these tests and their diagnostic value have never been convincingly demonstrated; their results are, she says, "often invalid, unreliable, and unfair." This study entertainingly chronicles the often surprising stories behind the creation and promotion of the most popular tests. The Thematic Apperception Test, for example, was developed by the freethinking Harvard psychologist Henry Murray in collaboration with his longtime mistress; its original purpose was to facilitate "deep dives" into the unconscious in search of self-actualization, but today it is used more often by corporations seeking to evaluate job applicants and manipulate consumers. Paul's book is not a closely reasoned assault on the theoretical underpinnings of personality testing (like the critique of IQ testing in books like Stephen Jay Gould's *The Mismeasure of Man*), but its anecdotal account of how personal quirks, intellectual hubris and institutional biases have shaped the use and misuse of personality tests should lead lay readers to ask hard questions the next time they are invited—or required—to submit to such testing.

From Paul, mental health journalist and former senior editor at *Psychology Today*, notes a cyclical pattern in psychologists' devising personality assessments that are widely acclaimed, later debunked, and eventually superseded by the next new tool. She traces the historical roots of personality testing from phrenology in the 1830s to the Rorschach inkblot to the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The personalities behind the tests are as fascinating as the tests they devise: Kenneth Clark, who used dolls to show the psychological damage of segregation on black children, fought his own battles with racism; the highly driven Isabel Myers, who borrowed from Carl Jung, brought her own obsessions to the task of developing her now famous test. Paul intersperses history with current uses of, and overreliance on, personality tests to determine everything from child custody and competency to stand trial to school admission and job placement. Paul advises healthy skepticism regarding the efficacy of the tests and advocates for strict confidentiality of their results. A highly accessible and engrossing book. *Vanessa Bush*

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