

The American Soldier Volume IV

Chap. 14: The Screening of Psychoneurotics: Comparison of
Psychiatric Diagnoses & Test Scores at all
Induction Stations

All inductees for the month of August, 1945 were both examined by psychiatrists and screened by NSA. The physicians who examined the inductees were permitted to make as full use of the NSA as they wished, so a comparison is far from scientifically objective. Nevertheless an examination of these scores does offer corroborative evidence as to the effectiveness of the NSA.

There was an extreme difference in rates of psychiatric rejects. National average = 14.0% of all ~~rejects~~ inductees rejected for psychiatric reasons. But the rate at Camp Beale, Calif. was 0.5%, as contrasted to 50.6% at Manchester, N.H. It is very unlikely that these extreme differences represent actual differences in rates of psychoneurosis, because there are greater differences between stations in one region than the variability between regions. Thus we must conclude that the psychiatric diagnoses are not an adequate yardstick against which to measure the effectiveness of the NSA (on a national basis).

However, the NSA, which screened 31.1% of all inductees, showed relatively little variability from station to station. As contrasted with the 0.5% to

50.6% differences in psychiatric diagnoses, the extremes in rates screened by NSA were 21.1% and 44.5%, a difference of 23.4%. Moreover, the differences in NSA rates were decidedly due more to differences between regions than to differences between stations within regions. The largest proportion screened by the NSA were in the South, the smallest proportions in the middle West and New England.

Now these 2 sets of facts (1) that psychiatric diagnoses varied widely from station to station and (2) that NSA scores had much less variation still may have little significance unless it can be shown that, in spite of these overall differences, the men screened by the NSA did tend to include a majority of the psychiatric rejects.

Proportions screened by NSA

- 1- All men examined 31.10%
- 2- " " accepted for service 21.8%
- 3- Non-psychiatric rejects 30.3%
- 4- all psychiatric rejects 69.5%

Breaking down "psychiatric rejects" category

- 1- psychoneurotic rejects 80.8%
- 2- psychopathic rejects 68.2%
- 3- psychotic rejects 70.8%
- 4- all other psychiatric rejects 56.4%

NSA was successful, in spite of the variability in psychiatric diagnosis, in picking 4 out of 5 men subsequently diagnosed as psychopaths at a cost of also screening 21.8% of the men subsequently passed as fit for military service. But only 68.2% of psychopaths screened, and 56.4% of "all others" — partially because of defects of the test & partially because of the psychiatric diagnoses (e.g. boys without beards rejected as emotionally immature).

Value of "critical signs" uncertain — seem to have been useful for detecting psychopaths & psychotics, but it is impossible to determine amount of use made of test by psychiatrists.