

PSYCHOLOGICAL PROCEDURES EMPLOYED IN THE ARMY'S SPECIAL TRAINING UNITS

SAMUEL GOLDBERG, CAPT., AGD

Troop Training Division, ASF Headquarters

In the course of three years of operation, the special training units have taught many thousands of soldiers to read and do arithmetic at approximately a fourth grade level. The educational characteristics of this program have been described in previous articles.^(1,2) This paper will describe various psychological techniques which have been utilized to insure the successful functioning of these units.*

Stated briefly, the mission of the special training unit is to prepare illiterate, non-English speaking, and slow learning men to pursue regular basic training and to serve usefully in the Army. To accomplish this mission, these units operate under a mobilization training program which includes both academic and military subject matter. Newly-inducted selectees, who are illiterate, non-English speaking or slow learning are forwarded to these units soon after they are processed at the reception center. The average length of stay at the reception center for these men is about 3 to 5 days, during which time they are clothed, inoculated, and given preliminary orientation. At the special training unit, these men are given appropriate instruction in reading, use and understanding of language, arithmetic, and

* The psychological techniques described are those which are currently in operation. Although the tests used now in screening procedures in the induction stations and in the evaluative techniques in special training units are different from those which have been employed, the general psychological principles involved have been the same. Special training units themselves have undergone changes in organization in the last three years. This paper deals with the current organization, which has been in effect since June 1, 1943.

military subjects. For most men, the time allocation is approximately 60 percent for academic and 40 percent for military instruction. If necessary, a man can be retained in this type of unit for 12 weeks of instruction, before a decision is reached on the desirability of either forwarding him for regular training or discharging him from the Army. In actual practice, the majority of men in these units achieve desired standards within 8 weeks of training. Men are forwarded for regular basic training just as soon as they give evidence of being able to read and do arithmetic at a fourth grade level and show by their accomplishments in military subjects that they are capable of becoming soldiers. Conversely, men are discharged from special training units and are returned to civilian life just as soon as it becomes apparent that they are incapable of attaining prescribed standards of proficiency required in the Army.

TESTING TECHNIQUES

For Screening. Not all illiterate and non-English speaking men are accepted for assignment to the special training unit. Screening procedures are used in the induction stations throughout the country in order to select only those illiterate and non-English speaking men who demonstrate that they have sufficient intellectual capacity to make satisfactory soldiers. Those inductees who demonstrate that their lack of learning accomplishment is in effect a consequence of a feebleminded intellect are rejected at the induction station. Briefly,

the screening procedures currently in operation in the induction stations follow:

Those men who can show satisfactory evidence of having completed a high school course are accepted for induction without having to meet other intellectual standards. To all other men, the Mental Qualification Test is administered. Those who score above 9 are accepted for induction. Those who score below 9 are considered illiterate by Army standards. Non-English speaking men are among those who score less than 9 on the Qualification Test. The man who scores below 9 must then demonstrate, either on a group non-verbal test or an individual non-language examination, that he has sufficient ability to warrant his being accepted into the service. All men who score below 9 on the Mental Qualification Test and are inducted into the Army, by virtue of having successfully passed the non-verbal tests, are forwarded to a special training unit.

Those men who are accepted because of their being high school graduates and those who score above 9 on the Mental Qualification Test are tested in the Reception enter with the Army General Classification Test. All those men who score in Grade V on the AGCT, (in the lowest group of the curve of ability distribution) are also forwarded to a special training unit.

For Determining Initial Placement in the Special Training Unit. The method used in identifying illiterate, non-English speaking and Grade V men has been indicated. It is readily apparent that these men do not all possess the same degree of illiteracy despite the fact that they are all forwarded for special training. Accordingly, upon their entrance into the special training

unit, they are all tested further in order to determine their general level of literacy. The tests used for this purpose are the Army Illustrated Literacy Test (DST-11a) and the appropriate unit test (DST 12, 13, 14, or 15), depending on the scores obtained on the DST-11a. On the basis of scores secured on these tests, men are correctly assigned within the unit.

For example, those men who are able to read only slightly but can use and understand English are placed in that level which is indicated on the basis of their scores. Critical scores on the placement tests determine whether they will be placed in level 1, 2, 3, or 4 for academic instruction. These levels are synonymous with grade placements. If very poor in reading but reasonably understanding of English, they may be placed in the preparatory level—which is a pre-reading below level 1. Men at the different levels then proceed to take approximately 5 hours a day of academic instruction and 3 hours a day of military training. This is the regular program of special training.

Those men (mainly among the Grade V men), who are able, upon entrance into the unit, to pass or almost pass the final academic tests for graduation, are put into a special program. These men spend 6 hours of the day in military training and 2 hours in academic. The two hours a day for academic training are intended to orient these slow learning men in the reading of military material and in the performance of such arithmetic work as they will need in making up their laundry, purchasing in the PX, etc. These men are usually forwarded for regular training within 3 or 4 weeks of special training.

Those men, who are not only illiterate but also non-English speaking and

understanding, are also put in a special program. These men receive 6 hours a day of language instruction and 2 hours of military training. This program is continued (usually from 4 to 6 weeks) until it is felt that the men are ready to be put into the regular program of 5 hours a day for academic and 3 hours for military training.

Although academic training is provided in arithmetic as well as reading and language, the placement of men in the academic program is effectuated on the basis of reading level. This is so for two reasons: In the first place, reading is considered as the major objective of the academic program. In the second place, many of the men who enter the special training unit are able to do much better in number work than in reading, so that their accomplishment of the desired standard in arithmetic is seldom a detriment to their being "graduated" from special training units. The fact that men are grouped homogeneously for reading and heterogeneously for arithmetic does not greatly impede the efficiency of instruction. Since the average size of academic classes is about 15, it is possible for instructors to individualize their instruction to a high degree.

The men start at the same level of military training since this is relatively new for all. The program is a progressive and well-balanced one and the men progress at their own rate.

For Determining Progress in The Unit. In the academic phase of the program, unit tests are available for each level to aid the instructor in determining whether the trainee is ready to go on to the next level. Men in level 1 are advanced to level 2 when they are able to secure the critical score on unit test DST-12. Similarly, trainees go on to

each successive level when they pass the appropriate unit test—DST-13 for entrance into level 3 and DST-14 for entrance into level 4. Trainees are not given the unit test for the level until the instructor judges that they have completed the work of their present placement and are ready to go on with the work of the successive level.

No standardized tests, comparable to those which are available for the academic program, have been developed to determine when the trainee has satisfactorily completed the work of a particular military subject. However, simple objective and performance tests are being used by commissioned and non-commissioned officer personnel to determine when a trainee is ready for the next military subject. For example, in subjects like Military Courtesy and Discipline, Organization of the Army, etc., the test is a simple one of the true-false or completion type. If the test is being administered to level 3 and 4 men, it may be a written one. If intended for men at a lower level, it may be of a true-false type in which the questions are presented orally and the trainee indicates the truth or falsity of the statement by punching an answer card appropriately. In subjects like Infantry Drill, Manual of Arms, and First Aid, the test is of a behavioral type with the officer personnel rating the efficiency of the soldier's performance.

For Determining "Graduation" from the Unit. Units tests DST-15 and 16a have been developed to aid in determining when the trainee is ready to graduate from the academic phase of the program. DST-15 is a test of the trainee's comprehension of silent reading and DST-16a is a measure of his ability in arithmetic computation and reasoning. Attainment of a score of

21 on DST-15 and 45 on DST-16a is required before a man is judged ready to graduate from the academic program. To evaluate a man's readiness for graduation from the military phase of the program, many special training units give performance tests to the trainees. If a man demonstrates a manner of performance in various subjects, which is acceptable to the examining officer or officers, he is considered ready for graduation from the unit.

Cumulative records which are kept, showing the trainee's academic and military progress from the time he entered the unit, prove very helpful in making a final estimate of the man's readiness for graduation.

The program is sufficiently flexible so that modification can be made for individual needs. For example, should a man pass the academic tests for graduation and still require instruction in military subjects, then he is given 6 hours a day of military training and only 2 hours of academic instruction, i.e. one in reading and one in arithmetic. Conversely, if a man needs further help in academic work, after he has satisfactorily completed the military subjects, then he is given 6 hours a day of work in reading, language work, and arithmetic and 2 hours in military training, i.e. one in physical conditioning and one in infantry drill. In this way, men are qualified as rapidly as possible for assignment to regular training.

In the greater majority of cases, men are forwarded for regular training, only upon satisfactory completion of the academic and military phases of the program. In a small percentage of cases, men are assigned for regular training, even though they have not achieved the critical scores on DST-15 and 16a. Such men are generally sent

on because they are very efficient in military subject matter, are good physical specimens, and possess some civilian occupational skill, of which the Army has need. Such men, however, continue to be classified illiterate, and though they are graduated from the special training unit, their Qualification Card (Form 20, Soldier's Qualification Card) continues to show them illiterate.

Prior to Forwarding from Special Training Units. Prior to the forwarding of the "graduate" of the special training unit to his regular training organization, he is tested with the Army General Classification Test and with the Mechanical Aptitude Test. For many of the special training unit graduates, this is their first experience with both of these tests. With those, who were initially forwarded to the special training unit because they were rated as Grade V, this is their second experience with the test. The AGCT is administered at the end of the man's literacy training period, because it is felt that a much more accurate rating of his ability can be obtained if the effects of his language and reading limitations are reduced to a minimum. Similarly, it is felt that a man can give a fairer representation of his true ability in the Mechanical Aptitude Test after he has been made literate—since the test does require some reading ability.

COUNSELING PROGRAMS

For the Unit as a Whole. A counselor program for trainees exists in many units. In some, a counselor program has been in operation since the inception of the unit. In others, programs were developed in the last half year, as a result of impetus given to it by a letter from the Office of the Director of Military Training of the

Headquarters, Army Service Forces, which indicated that the feasibility of such programs in some units and training centers makes it desirable that similar programs be developed in those units which do not have any. The organization of the program may differ slightly from unit to unit but it is essentially the same in its psychological approach. Non-commissioned officers in the company are assigned as counselors, to whom the trainees may come with problems—personal, familial, or military. Trainees learn to have confidence in these counselors because the latter are also enlisted personnel and are a part of the company organization. Counselors are carefully selected on the basis of their past educational experience and maturity of judgment. These counselors are also given indoctrination training by a psychiatrist, if he is available in the unit. If a psychiatrist is unavailable, the personnel consultant serves to co-ordinate the program. This training helps the counselor to understand problem situations, acquaints him with simple procedures of attitude and relationship therapy, and orients him as to the types of difficulties which should be referred for solution to the trained therapist—psychiatrist or personnel consultant. The type of work done with individual men who are referred will be described in the succeeding division.

The counselor program serves to accomplish several objectives. In the first place, men with simple problems are straightened out directly because of the simplicity with which they can make contact with the counselor. In some instances, the counselor can readily make contact with men judged to be unadjusted by the academic and military instructors. In this way, problems are apprehended early. Trainees, who be-

lieve their problems to be distinctive and burdensome, find readier solutions to their difficulties than anticipated when they are referred expeditiously by counselors to the proper individual on the post—chaplain, personnel consultant, Red Cross worker, company commander, etc. The counselors in the companies, working through the other non-commissioned officers, are also able to keep a check on the general morale of the organization. Through this medium, it is possible for the company commanders and battalion commanders, in turn, to keep their units at a high level of efficiency.

Two other aspects of the general counseling program should be noted. In practically all units, there is a processing period set aside at the time men are assigned to the special training unit. During this period, men are given orientation talks by the commanding officer, chaplain, Red Cross worker, etc., on what they will find in the unit and what the unit commanding personnel expects of them. They are told of their privileges and obligations, where they can bring their problems and of other related matters in order to facilitate their adjustment.

The second aspect is that phase of the counseling program which is made mandatory by War Department policy. A recent War Department Circular, dated February 3, 1944, made it necessary for all trainees to receive three hours of instruction in personal adjustment. Commissioned and non-commissioned officer personnel must receive six hours of instruction in personnel problems. Some of the topics to be discussed with the trainees follow: personal adjustment in the Army; job placement; need for regimentation and discipline; separation from home; living with a

group; lack of female companionship; difference in viewpoint of civilians and soldiers; the difference between fear and cowardice; provision for the solution of personal problems in the Army, etc. Among the topics to be included in the 6 hour course of commissioned and non-commissioned personnel are the following: modern conception of personnel adjustment and its importance to the Army officer; personalities and the adjustment process; the mechanics and motivation of behavior; specific factors of stress in the Army affecting adjustment; signs, symptoms, and types of breakdowns; measures to maintain the mental health of the command, etc. Instruction in these subjects is to be given by a psychiatrist. If the psychiatrist is unable to give the instruction, because of pressure of other work, he is to designate a trained person (usually the personnel consultant) to do the job. Assigned personnel and trainees in special training units are now receiving appropriate instruction along the mental hygiene lines described.

For Individuals Referred as Problems. If an individual trainee is experiencing difficulty in his academic and/or military work, or is encountering hardship in his general adjustment, he is usually referred to the personnel consultant for study. To evaluate the etiological factors which have been producing or contributing to the adjustment difficulties, the personnel consultant may resort to interview and test techniques. In this way, he can obtain a better estimate of the trainee's capacities, aptitudes, and problems. The personnel consultant, in addition to his interviews, may observe the trainee in a variety of situations—or he may obtain a report on the trainee from the academic and military instructors. Through appro-

priate tests of personality, making use of projective and other techniques, the personnel consultant is able to make an estimate of the trainee's personality structure and adjustment difficulties. Diagnostic analysis of the trainee's performance on educational tests yields an inventory of the man's academic limitations. When indicated, the trainee is referred to the station hospital for psychiatric and medical work-up and to the Red Cross worker or assigned psychiatric social worker for appropriate formulation of developmental and personal material. What amounts to a complete case study is made of the individual who is referred as a problem.

On the basis of the findings, recommendations are made either for the improvement of the trainee's adjustment or for his separation from the service. If it is at all possible to retain the man in the service, every effort is made to do so. The co-operation of psychiatric and medical officers, line officers and academic instructors, Red Cross worker, and Chaplain are solicited in a program, co-ordinated by the personnel consultant, in an attempt to help the man with his problems. If it is apparent, on the basis of the clinical study, that the trainee is inapt, lacks the required degree of adaptability, or possesses undesirable habits or traits of character, he is recommended for separation from the service. A disposition board, composed of at least 3 officers, then meets in order to evaluate the data completely and to make appropriate recommendation for the disposition of the individual. Men discharged from special training units for inaptness or because they lack the required degree of adaptability are given honorable discharges from the Army.

CURRICULAR TECHNIQUES

Development of Materials. A complete set of materials has been developed for the special training program. Instructional materials have been written for the academic program, *i.e.*, Army Reader (Technical Manual 21-500), Army Arithmetic (Technical Manual 21-510), Your Job in The Army (War Department Pamphlet 21-3), Our War (monthly publication), Newspaper—Special Edition (weekly publication), etc. For important aspects of military subject matter, simplified materials have also been produced, *i.e.* A Soldier's General Orders (Filmstrip 12-2), Military Courtesy and Discipline (Filmstrip 12-3), How to Wear Your Uniform (Filmstrip 12-4), etc. And teaching guides have also been written for the instructors, *i.e.* Teacher's Guide to Instructional Materials (DST M-3), Instruction in Special Training Units (War Dept. Pamphlet 20-8), Teaching Devices in Special Training Units (War Dept. Pamphlet 20-2) etc. Appropriate objective tests for placement, progress, and graduation purposes, and accompanying manuals, have also been developed.

The content of the materials prepared for the trainees is highly functional in character. It is intimately related to the man's Army experiences and needs. Furthermore, it is designed to orient him to the objectives for which we are fighting. The material is also well graded and the difficulty of the vocabulary and sentence structure has been checked against word tests and with the Lorge formula for estimating the difficulty level of reading material. Not only is most of the basic and supplementary reading material richly illustrated but a number of filmstrips have been pre-

pared to present visually certain language and experiential concepts.

The teaching guides developed for the instructors represent a well-rounded series of publications. *Instruction in Special Training Units*, War Department Pamphlet 20-8, contains a number of chapters dealing with the objectives of special training units, types of personnel in special training, the teaching of reading, language, and arithmetic, the use of tests and other evaluation procedures, and the value of statistics in organizing and interpreting classroom data. *Teaching Devices in Special Training Units*, War Department Pamphlet 20-2, discusses the value of aids and devices in teaching and in making drill and review periods more meaningful and worthwhile. This publication also presents the most common reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic difficulties and errors that the teachers will find among their men and what remedial techniques can be employed to overcome them. *Teachers Guide to Instructional Materials*, DST-M3, presents a series of specific recommendations for the teacher to use in teaching the Army Reader.

A number of additional guides have been prepared for the instructor personnel. For example, an illustrated instructor's reference has been prepared for each of the filmstrips. Each reference describes the purpose of the filmstrip, general pedagogical techniques for teaching the special content of the strip, and specific recommendations for the presentation of each frame in the strip. A number of the references also contain tests which can be used to determine how well the men have mastered the material of the strip.

Organization of the Program. The program has been organized to accom-

plish the objectives which have been set for these units. Although the fundamental purpose of these units is to qualify illiterate, non-English speaking, and Grade V men for regular basic training and to serve usefully in an Army job, it is possible to state the following more specific aims of the training program:

1. To teach the men to read at a fourth grade level so that they will be able to comprehend bulletins, written orders and directives, and basic Army publications.

2. To give the men sufficient language skill so that they will be able to use and understand such everyday language as is necessary to get along with officers and men in the Army.

3. To get the men to do number work at a fourth grade level so that they can understand their pay accounts and deductions made from it, laundry bills, conduct their business in the PX., etc.

4. To facilitate the adjustment of the men to military training and Army life.

5. To have the men understand in a general way the reasons which made it necessary for this country to fight Germany, Japan and Italy.

These objectives are accomplished through the organized program of training, which in addition to instruction in basic military subject matter, makes provision for regular instruction in the following subjects: Reading, language expression, arithmetic, orientation and current events.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the program of special training, many illiterate, non-English speak-

ing, and slow learning men have been better prepared to serve as soldiers. The program of special training is a well-rounded one, characterized by those educational, military, and psychological provisions deemed necessary to insure the successful adaptation of the marginal soldier in the Army.

It has been organized at the reception center level, so that the marginal soldier will get this special guidance and direction soon after induction. In this way, he does not impede the progress of the regular training organization in the field, nor does he find it necessary, initially, to compete with men more adept than he. In other words, every effort is made, through the program of special training, to develop the marginal soldier to a level that will make it possible for him to take his place along with the other men. When it is judged that he has reached that level, he is forwarded to a regular training organization in the same way that other recruits are forwarded from the reception center. Though handicapped upon induction, the illiterate, non-English speaking, and slow learning man can hold his own in regular training much better than he otherwise could, by virtue of the 8 or 12 weeks of training which he has already had.

There are many aspects of the program of special training which, with modification, could be applied to civilian programs dealing with handicapped personnel.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. WITTY, P. A. and GOLDBERG, S. The army's training program for illiterate, non-English speaking, and educationally retarded men. *Elem. Eng. Rev.* XX, 1943, 306-311.
2. WITTY, P. A. and GOLDBERG, S. The use of visual aids in special training units in the army. *J. Educ. Psychol.*, 1944, 82-90.