

advice might be regarded as civilian interference.⁸⁵

The Consultation Service rendered "psychiatric first aid" to Wacs, advised commanding officers and classification officers, and gave mental hygiene lectures. It was discovered that women showed less resentment than men to psychiatric referrals, which Major Preston attributed to "the fact that in women the socially acknowledged and permitted emotionalism is accepted and not judged as a conflict, stigma, or weakness, as in men." About 25 percent of the women treated by the Consultation Service were discharged; the remainder were salvaged with some degree of success.

The success of the unit prompted the WAC's National Civilian Advisory Committee to recommend, at its meetings in October of 1944 and again in February of 1945, that more mental hygiene facilities of the same type be provided, with mobile units to reach those companies too small to merit permanent consultation service. This measure was believed impracticable for either men or women by The Surgeon General, who reported that "this office is unable to see clearly the need for mobile mental hygiene units."⁸⁶

Material collected by the Des Moines unit convinced psychiatrists that "women faced definite psychological factors of significance" in attempting to adjust to military life, where they must "subordinate traditional feminine attitudes and functions." By the "adoption of a severely masculine and identical style of dress," women were believed to have lost one traditional feminine means of "individuality, competition, and gratification," a problem not experienced to a like degree by men, who were customarily more regimented in dress and expressed their individuality by

other means. Because of their early training, women were also believed to require a greater effort at adjustment to the lack of privacy in bathing, dressing, and other living arrangements.

Most important, General Menninger believed, was the conflict with public opinion. Inconsistently enough, the approved feminine role was "a passive and dependent one . . . even in our own democracy," while at the same time "the modern girl child in America is not taught to be the passive, dependent individual our culture has conceived of as the normal of adult femininity." This conflict, although existing for all American women, was intensified for Wacs, even as contrasted with the Army Nurse Corps, whose military status might meet public disapproval but whose profession was at least "universally regarded and accepted as a feminine function." On the other hand, military service was believed to offer some psychological compensation through an opportunity for women to release many feminine frustrations and become active, independent individuals.

Psychiatrists also noted that the Corps as a whole faced one special problem because of its volunteer nature. Volunteers, as contrasted to draftees, included more "unsuitable individuals such as the maladjusted and those seeking glamour." They were also apt to feel "some inherent right to have some choice in their assignments, duties, and locations." If improperly assigned they were more likely to be

⁸⁵ Memo, Well-Being Off for Dir WAC, 3 Jan 44, and atchd file. Personal papers of Dep Dir WAC, in OCMH.

⁸⁶ (1) Memo, G-1 for CofS, 13 Oct 44. WDGAP 334, in CofS 324.5 WAC. (2) Min, Conf, 16-18 Feb 45. WD Lib and Hobby files. (3) Comment 4, to memo not found, Dir Per ASF to G-1, 28 May 45. WDWAC 720.