A HISTORY OF WARTIME COLLEGE ENGLISH IN THE UNITED STATES,

1941-1945

A Dissertation in

English

by

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ABSTRACT

In the United States from 1941-1945, wartime teachers of English faced public and institutional pressure to evaluate, prioritize, and demonstrate the value of English education to the war effort and to higher education’s commitment to the nation’s defense program. During this time, college English teachers published hundreds of articles that focused on how English instruction, including disciplinary aims and curricular priorities, should change in response to wartime. Drawing on articles published in six scholarly periodicals that covered the institutional function and praxis of college English in American higher education between 1941-1945, this dissertation addresses how English teachers reacted to, resisted, and reshaped values of disciplinary identity and purpose during a period of national and educational crisis.

The transition of postsecondary institutions to war oriented American higher education toward a goal of national survival, including intense productivity. Broad changes in higher education and wartime adjustments created a climate of distrust towards a liberal education model and academic subjects deemed non-essential to the war. The inclusion of English in the ASTP and V-12 training programs secured a utilitarian function for English instruction during the war, but one that resulted in two different visions about how English teachers could contribute to the cause of national defense: to produce functionally literate soldiers or to strengthen civilian morale by upholding the cultural tradition and heritage of American democracy. The exigencies of wartime America called for mass productivity and efficiency at all levels of American society. Such intensity created a psychological need for release from these demands, a need that led college English teachers to argue for the value of leisure reading as an antidote to wartime fatigue and stress. A historical understanding of wartime college English in the United States carries implications for how college teachers in the present day engage with crisis.
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<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>American Council of Education</td>
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<td>ASTP</td>
<td>Army Specialized Training Program</td>
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<td>CE</td>
<td>College English</td>
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<td>CEA</td>
<td>College English Association</td>
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<td>EJ</td>
<td>The English Journal</td>
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<td>News Letter</td>
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<td>MLA</td>
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<td>Quarterly Journal of Speech</td>
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<td>V-12</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction: War and the Teaching of English

“The inquiry into war, initiated with a profound realization of its paradoxical nature, thus becomes an essential task for all honest self-knowledge . . . To understand war is to thus understand ourselves.”

—Michael Gelven, War and Existence: A Philosophical Inquiry

“Where do you stand with regard to the war?” Unless this question can be squarely answered all our discussion of aims and values, of courses and methods, seems trivial, drowned out by the tramp of marching men.”


In 1941, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) held an emergency meeting over the Christmas holiday break to discuss the relevance of the field of English studies in a time of war. In their unanimously endorsed report, the Planning Commission subcommittee posited a series of important questions. Can the teaching of English remain unchanged after our entrance into World War II? Should English instruction change? If so, how should it change? And what is the role of the English teacher in war time? (“English Instruction” 564).

These questions are at the heart of this research project, which asks how the teaching of college English at institutions of higher education in the United States was affected by World War II. Wartime liberal arts educators faced serious public pressure to evaluate, prioritize, and demonstrate the value of academic subjects including
communication arts, literature, and composition. And many administrators, educators, and students—convicted by moral, ethical, and intellectual conscientiousness—responded.

As one example of educational response to public skepticism about the value of the liberal arts, when the Stanford faculty in the School of Letters announced their plan to establish the School of Humanities in 1942, *Time Magazine* covered the issue in two articles. The first article sarcastically refers to the decision as “the university’s challenge to profounder troubles than war” (“Humanities” 60); the second article is no less skeptical, observing that Stanford was taking “advantage of a trend by going against it . . . as liberal arts colleges all over the nation rushed to accelerate the arts of war . . . Stanford, which has never had a liberal arts college, will start one next fall” (“Stanford” 62).

Educators at Stanford including Lewis Mumford, who was hired to head the new School of Humanities, argued that the opening of a liberal arts college represented the long-term interests of Stanford as an educational institution that would outlast the exigencies of war.

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1 Harvard President James Conant Bryant wrote in *Education in a Divided World* that, “the war has precipitated a veritable downpour of books and articles dealing with education. In particular the future of the liberal arts colleges has been a subject of widespread discussion both within and without the academic walls. There is hardly a university or a college in the country which has not had a committee at work in these war years considering basic educational questions and making plans for drastic revamping of one or more curricula” (v). Venon E. Lichtenstein of Coe College argued in his article “The Humanities in Time of Crisis” published in the November 1942 issue of the *News Letter of the College English Association* that “the study of humanities will die . . . unless something is done to re-awaken the public and educators to the profound importance of the value-studies, the humanities, to every individual in the democratic world . . . Naturally, during our tremendous efforts to win the war, all studies, like all other activities not contributing directly and immediately to the crushing of our enemies, must be subordinated to others” (1).
As *Time* reports, “one certainty about U.S. universities is that, despite their present absorption with wartime training schemes, they cannot evade the ultimate problem of ‘value.’” Looking beyond the immediacy of the war years, Mumford defended the value of a liberal arts education. “If our free democratic world is saved,” Mumford responds, “it will be saved, not just by machines and guns, but by our capacity to produce a higher type of human being” (“Humanities” 60).

U.S. military conflicts have served as a catalyst for educational activism and brought the commonplaces of democracy, civic-mindedness, and national defense to the forefront of institutional and disciplinary debates about literacy and writing instruction. Despite both real and perceived threats to the future of college English during and after World War II, one of the outcomes of the war was that college English departments actually grew in institutional (and, arguably, cultural) significance. This study documents how war and militarization has figured historically in the collective imagination and disciplinary heritage of college English studies. By militarization I refer to historian Michael Sherry’s definition of this term as “the process by which war and national security become consuming anxieties and provided the memories, models, and metaphors that shaped broad areas of [American] national life” since the late 1930s (xi). Educational policy-makers, living in a climate of “total war” during World War II envisioned college English instruction as a civic virtue, a matter of military advantage, and necessary to the

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2 David Bartholomae defines commonplaces as “a culturally or institutionally authorized concept or statement that carries with it its own necessary elaboration. We all use commonplaces as to orient ourselves in the world; they provide points of reference and a set of ‘pre-articulated explanations that are readily available to organize and interpret experience” (626).
maintenance of peace. College English teachers and administrators reinforced and redefined English as an answer to institutional and public demands for universities to reevaluate the relevance of English studies in wartime America.³

The war years during the early 1940s reflect a particularly pronounced period of introspection in American institutions of higher education. Sociology professor Hans Joas argues that war, punctuated by sustained social and experiential crises, beckons a collective examination of group values and identities because it “compels all the participants to clarify apparently self-evident truths and to produce new arguments” (180). I examine how college English teachers grappled with “self-evident truths” that shaped public debates about collegiate literacy and civic education and produced new arguments about the purpose and praxis of writing and reading instruction during World War II by examining six scholarly periodicals that address the teaching of English during World War II. I also consider how these debates translated into the lived experience of English instructors, students, and administrators.

³ For example, 1942 NBC radio broadcast from the War Department, as documented in Arthur Applebee’s history of English in secondary schools, reduced the value of English studies to preparing soldiers to “communicate clearly” and to “be able to understand the orders they give as well as the orders they receive” (140). In response, the American Association of Colleges meekly responded that “educators are not prepared to assert to military authorities that the ‘intangible values’ of a liberal arts education would make soldiers better fighters” (qtd. in Applebee 140). English departments, accordingly began to narrow the focus of their content in secondary schools. But this refocus itself inspired widespread reactions from progressive educators that reimagined English as a defense against misinformation and propaganda (140-141).
Why This Project Matters to the Study of Composition Today

While the rhetorical solutions that wartime compositionists and literary scholars deployed to address major social changes of their time will differ from the solutions created in response to the serious political and economic challenges college English teachers face in academia today, studying how college English teachers articulated the value of English instruction during a period of national crisis encourages intention about the values we embrace as a community of English teachers and offer to our communities as we move forward into an uncertain future.

For teachers and administrators of college English just trying to get through their next day’s class, or to cope with the changes of the crises of 2020, the relevance of this kind of a historical study may feel removed from more pressing educational exigencies. However, knowing “where we stand with regard to war” may be of more importance than we realize as U.S. international relations grow more tense and increased numbers of student veterans enter our classrooms.4 The results of D. Alexis Hart and Roger Thompson’s two-year, national study of military veterans in college writing classrooms, funded by a 2011 Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) research grant, suggest that practitioners in the field of composition studies as a whole are

4 The U.S. Department of Veterans’ Affairs reports that from 2013 to 2017 one million student veterans enrolled in colleges and universities nationwide each year. From 2014 to 2017, approximately 940,000 student veterans used the post-9/11 GI Bill, which went into effect in 2009. Between 2008 and 2017, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reports paying over $96 billion to colleges and universities. In 2017 alone, the government paid roughly $12 billion for educational programs. In 2010 Hart and Thompson found that 44% of composition faculty noticed an increased presence of student veterans (346).
not well-versed in military culture or history; instructors and program administrators, while well-meaning, lack both professional and historical training and are not adequately prepared to address the specific needs or experiences of veterans or address war-related issues. In her 2010, Chair’s address at CCCC’s, Marilyn Valentino articulated the serious need for greater awareness among English teachers regarding the treatment of military and veterans issues in the writing classroom. She asks, “Do we assign reading or writing on the topic of war? . . . As teachers of writing, we know we are often [student veterans’] first point of contact. In what manner do we respond on paper or in person? . . . We do have an ethical obligation to react responsibly” (368-369). Obviously, the historiographic work of recovering postsecondary wartime college English during World War II cannot replace needful professional training with regard to student veterans. My hope is that the historical perspective provided by this study will encourage college English teachers to evaluate how our relationship to war informs our standpoints as scholars and educators.

In the following section, I will discuss the U.S. civil-military gap in order to foreground my standpoint as a civilian researcher and writer historicizing the war period between 1941 to 1945. Understanding historical and current tensions existing between

5 Hart and Thompson report that “In general, while many writing faculty have some awareness of the presence of student veterans in their classes or on their campuses, few have received formal training on veteran issues, military culture, or military writing conventions” (4). Their survey results also showed that 92% of instructors reported that they had not received any training for understanding veterans’ issues in the writing classroom (8). This survey was conducted as part of a 2011 CCCC Research Grant which also included site visits and interviews with faculty, staff, administrators, students, and Veterans Resource Center staff at more than fifty colleges and universities in the research design.
civilians and the U. S. military is also relevant to this study, which focuses on domestic responses to the war. Although rhetoric and composition as an academic field is replete with disciplinary and institutional histories, there is a relative shortage of historical scholarship on the early 1940s and World War II. The civil-military divide may be an unconsidered factor in this shortage.

Robin Varnum, who has addressed the lack of scholarly attention to the 1940s, argues that specter of current-traditionalism has overshadowed historical readings of writing instruction during the 1940s. This “negative characterization of the period,” Varnum claims, has unfairly “deflected attention from it” (Fencing 7). Varnum challenges the methodologies used by historians of composition, particularly the reliance of composition textbooks as an accurate measure of instructor attitudes toward classroom instruction. By expanding the types of research materials used in her analysis, Varnum reveals that writing instruction in the 1940s was far more dynamic and diverse than has been generally acknowledged. While I agree with Varnum’s claims, the use of source material is not the only critical blind spot that has obscured the 1940s; historical changes in civilian attitudes toward the U.S. military may be contributing to a disciplinary blind spot in our understanding of military issues and our relationship to war.

The U.S. Civil-Military Gap

Reflecting on the experience of college English teachers during World War II, J. N. Hook observes in his history of the NCTE that future generations who have not “lived through” the experience of total war may find the militarized focus of civilian life “barely
conceivable” (132). The civil-military divide has only widened since his 1979 observation. The lack of preparedness in addressing military-related issues and the disconnect from military concerns demonstrated by writing instructors in Hart and Thompson’s study extends to the general American public. As a people, Americans are increasingly separated from war even as war continues to saturate American consciousness. In their study on millennial attitudes among U.S. civilians and non-civilians toward war and the military, Morten Ender, David Rohall, and Michael D. Matthews observe that, “outside of wartime, the military and military matters are vastly ignored by American society and by most scholars” (2). In fact, the social institutions of higher education and the military have a historically significant and mutually-defining relationship in the United States. To overlook this relationship is to close our eyes to the way that militarization and national defense issues have shaped the development of the modern research university and have influenced the often-conflicting public expectations about what a liberal and civic education entails.

6 While the focus of this history is primarily concerned with how the discipline of composition studies has been affected by the military and military engagement, the U.S. military has also been profoundly shaped by institutions of higher education, primarily through the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). In the wake of campus anti-war protests and the move to an all-volunteer force in 1973, mandatory ROTC for male students was virtually eliminated and many schools discontinued ROTC programs altogether. Following the closure of ROTC programs, particularly at Ivy-League schools in the Northeast and West Coast, a number of Southern colleges opened ROTC programs. Because ROTC historically provided the majority of U.S. Army accessions (around 70%), the location of ROTC programs had a major impact on the demographic population of career soldiers (Watson; Ender, Rohall, and Matthews; Feaver and Kohn; Neiberg). In Chapter 8 of Soldiers and Civilians, Michael C. Desch reports that “while only 29.1 percent of the nation’s college students come from the South, 41 percent of military officers do” (295). The reduction of ROTC programs nationwide post-Vietnam also resulted in an increased number of accessions coming from Officer Candidate
The U.S. Government has always approached the education of its citizens and the development of its military force as distinct, but intertwined projects. In fact, the creation of a professional military was itself a challenge in early American history, because, as Robert L. Bateman observes in his article “The Army and Academic Culture,” “anti-militarism is a very old element of the American psyche” (64). Early colonists distrusted professional armies, Bateman continues, as a “threat” to American individualism and feared the potential for the abuse of military force. Bateman writes that “the greatest fear, harbored right at the outset by the new nation, was that the military might break loose from the bonds of civilian control” (64).

In *Making Citizen-Soldiers*, Michael Neiberg argues that in eighteenth-century America there were essentially two schools of thought about how to approach the problem of developing a state-sponsored military program that was accountable to its citizens (3-4). The first line of thought, endorsed by the “Radical Whigs,” suggested that the best way to make armies accountable to the people they serve, is to create an army made up of men whose loyalties to the nation could not be bought off. They argued against a standing army in favor of a militia-style military system, maintained by citizens who engaged in military service as a fulfillment of civic duty rather than professional obligation. The “Moderate Whigs,” on the other hand, valued the patriotic spirit of the militia, but also foresaw its limitations. The Moderate Whigs believed that the evolving dynamics of warfare and the establishment of an autonomous nation state necessitated the

Schools (OCS). Currently, OSC provide just over 40% of U.S. Army accessions with the ROTC providing just under 40% (Soldiers 18).
existence of a standing professional army; however, to check its potential for corruption, this army should be constitutionally limited—and thereby contained and controlled—by the citizens of the United States. The model of a limited military system is based on a presupposition that, in a democracy, citizens and not professional soldiers are best equipped to defend and protect national interests. Ultimately, the Moderate Whigs’ ideology prevailed and their concept of a limited military continues to be the primary model by which the U.S. military is organized today (Neiberg 4).

Drawing on this tradition of maintaining civilian control over a limited professional military system, university educators and administrators have advocated the need for civilian-educated officers in the military throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, the institutional mission of land-grant schools included “military training exercises” in the original language of the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act. In “The U.S. Military and Higher Education: A Brief History,” historian Richard M. Abrams observes that Congressman Justin Morrill, who spearheaded the land-grant bill, argued that “a continuing source of ample military skills among the citizenry would surely be needed as the country grew” (16). In other words, the inclusion of military training as one

7 The institutional mission of land-grant schools was based on the language of the 1862 Morrill Act, which reads as follows: “. . . each State which may take and claim the benefit of this subchapter, to the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life.” See U.S. Code § 304, “Investment of Proceeds of Sale of Land or Scrip,” Cornell U Law School, https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/7/304.
of the civic objectives of land-grant colleges and universities was driven by an interest in maintaining civilian control over the military. The establishment of the Reserve Officers Training Program (ROTC) is another example of educational interest in the production of citizen-soldiers. Neiberg observes that the enduring legacy of ROTC programs on college campuses today is evidence that,

civilian colleges and universities, not the armed services, led the way in creating on-campus military training programs. From the early nineteenth century to the present, the administrators of American higher education have believed firmly that national defense requires skilled young officers, but that these young men should not be prepared exclusively by the military itself. (Making 2)

However, outside of the goal of producing soldiers who are equipped to fulfill civic and military duties and civilian citizens who are capable of checking military overreach, the armed services and higher education are, in many respects, diametrically opposed American civic institutions with few shared values that would inspire cooperation. So, while there are arguably many historical examples of productive collaborations between these two institutions, their relations have often been uneasy and, at times, even bitter.

Increasingly Americans see the military as an independent and specialist institution that is removed from civilian interest or control. National polls report that the military is the most respected and trusted institution in the country, surpassing other democratic institutions including public education and the legislative and judicial
branches of government.\textsuperscript{8} Despite the high trust the public has put in the military, Americans are reluctant to enlist. Paradoxically, civilians in the United States today “possess a great respect for military service and concomitantly want no part of it” (Ender, Rohall, and Matthews 30). During the early nineties, a number of influential public intellectuals and officials interpreted the rise in public confidence despite a decline in personal connections to the military as evidence of an erosion of civilian control over the military and a widening disconnect in civilian-military relations. Secretary of Defense William Cohen worried in a 1997 speech delivered at Yale University that there is a possible “chasm . . . developing between the military and civilian world, where the civilian world doesn’t fully grasp the mission of the military, and the military doesn’t understand why the memories of our citizens and civilian policy-makers are so short, or why the criticism is so quick and unrelenting” (1).\textsuperscript{9}

Cohen’s remarks sparked a 1999 scholarly investigation into the civil-military divide called the Project on the Gap Between Military and Civilian Society. The project was spearheaded by the Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS): a consortium of

\textsuperscript{8} A 2009 Gallup poll showed that 82\% of adults in the U.S. rated the military with a higher degree of confidence than any other institution, including education, medicine, religion, and journalism (“Americans’ Confidence”). This confidence rating has been 50\% or higher since 1975, with a 70\% or higher rating since 2010 (“Confidence”). Comparable results were found in the TISS Project on the Gap between Military and Civilian Society (\textit{Soldiers} 138-139).

roughly two dozen faculty and military experts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, and Duke University focused on issues of national and international security and policy. TISS researchers conducted broad, in-depth national surveys of U.S. civilians, civilian leaders, and military officers that covered a range of military-related issues related to civil-military cooperation. Key findings from these surveys, combined with other political, sociological, and historical studies, were published in *Soldiers and Civilians: The Civil-Military Gap and American National Security* in 2004. Based on their analysis of the TISS dataset on the civil-military gap, Paul Gronke and Peter D. Feaver concluded that a civil-military gap does exist and that national policymakers should not assume that the high degree of public confidence in the military is evidence that existing differences in the civil-military divide are narrowing. In fact, the results from their study suggest that the opposite is more likely to be true. They observe that, “social distance from the military permits shallow and superficial support, the kind that results in affirmative answers to easy questions but masks a deeper alienation that could quickly come to the fore if favorable security conditions change” (130). 10 This conclusion corroborates Hart and Thompson’s finding that college English teachers are generally ignorant of veteran experiences, even as they respect the services offered by women and men in uniform.

10 A more recent source on the attitudes and beliefs of enlisted American Army Personnel is reported in Jason K Dempsey’s *Our Army Soldiers, Politics, and American Civil-Military Relations*. Dempsey designed The Citizenship and Service Survey in 2004 to gather more inclusive and comprehensive data of subgroups serving in the U.S. Army than the earlier TISS surveys.
Scholars and military officials have posited various theories about why the civil-military gap exists and whether this divide poses a serious threat to the future for U.S. policymakers. Most historians agree that although concerns about how to maintain civilian control over the military date back to the nation’s founding, the repeal of conscription laws and the move to an all-volunteer force at the end of the Vietnam War has had the most dramatic impact on how civilians relate to the military (Feaver and Kohn; Downs and Murtazachvili; Ender, Rohall, and Matthews; Mattis and Schake; Neiberg). As Beth Bailey argues in her history of the all-volunteer force, the all-volunteer force is now “a fact of life,” and reinstating the draft—an idea that military and political elites toyed with as Operation Iraqi Freedom waxed into an extended conflict—would require overturning enormous political and popular resistance (“Preface” x). Although the draft is wildly unpopular, one doesn’t have to look far to remember that this wasn’t always so. Still, for members of the “younger” generations, such as myself, who have grown up in a culture free from pressed military service, it’s hard to appreciate just how totalizing the effects of war were prior to 1973. Individuals conscripted into service during World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars have passed away or are aging; current enlistment numbers are failing to fulfill recommended quotas; Americans not only have fewer connections to the military, they are electing fewer politicians who have served in the military (Ender, Rohall, and Matthews 15); active-duty personnel in the armed forces make up only half a percent of the U.S. population (Reynolds and Shendruk).

Poet James Deahl describes the absent presence of war in American public consciousness in his poem “Clay Jars”:
After a year no one seems to remember
the war
our lives go on while our soldiers die
without comment
there is no daily body count
no claim
of victory or defeat, almost no news
at all.
The war is like that final light
of summer
as it fades to autumn, to the silence
of frost
our dead shrivel with the October leaves
to be
crushed under the feet of school children
skipping home . . . (143-144)

In *War at a Distance*, Mary Favret observes that the modern experience of
civilian Americans today, like that of British civilians living during the Napoleonic Wars,
is one of living “through but not in a war” (9). The fact that the United States has been in
a state of nearly constant active military engagement since the founding of the Republic\textsuperscript{11}
is registered as an “object of knowledge,” an intellectual abstraction rather than as an
experiential reality in the “substrate” of American social consciousness (Favret 9). This
is, at least in part, because modern warfare waged by nations of aggression is waged at a
distance, “removed from [the] immediate sensory perception” of those living at home

\textsuperscript{11} See Carpenter, “Introducing Our Special Issue on America at War: The
Nation’s Epic Expanding War Overseas,” and Savell.
In his article “Mapping Contemporary American War Culture,” Patrick Deer argues that,

US citizens seem habituated to the high-tech projection of lethal military force worldwide, the continuing presence of ground troops and bases in foreign countries, covert actions by special forces, intensified domestic surveillance of private communications, the continuing wartime suspension of civil rights, and the maintenance of a climate of fear about impending terrorist attacks. As many have argued, the Iraq and Afghanistan war years have seen a steady and sustained militarization of everyday life that stretches far into the economy, society, and culture. (“Mapping” 49)

Technological extensions of our bodies allow us to gaze on war, to fight “bloodless wars” using unmanned drones, to map out unrest in war-torn areas around the world, to assume the offensive military strategy to indiscriminately “bomb the shit” out of nations suspected of harboring terrorist groups until there is “nothing left.”

12 Responding to the war culture that emerged in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, Patrick Deer emphasizes the significance of spatial distance and the experience of war in modern America. He writes that “bodily and psychic sacrifice is being borne at a great distance, its traumatic effects carefully contained and screened away.” (5). Deer argues that material evidences of war are hushed up in modern America, so that the “the bodily impact of war remains an open yet hidden secret: coffins are shipped back in secret; wounded veterans are sequestered in military hospitals in Germany and in underfunded VA establishments at home” (6).

13 President Trump’s comments were delivered at a campaign rally in Fort Dodge, Iowa and reported in “The Recent History of Bombing the Shit Out of ’Em” by Luke Mogelson in The New Yorker, 20 Apr. 2017. The detonation of a Massive Ordnance Air Blast bomb in Afghanistan in April 2017 without loss of American life—an attack that has been touted as an example of Trump making good on his campaign promises—is just
moving personal narrative, U.S. Brigadier General, Jason R. Armagost writes about his role in bombing Baghdad and the “morality of altitude,” which distances him from the “blood and heat of a battle” (Despain 47). Noam Chomsky bitingly observes that “highly automated [wars waged by the U.S.] are murderous from the point of view of the victims.” (“Interview”).

Meanwhile, we theorize war; we memorialize war; we protest war; we imagine war. Because war is something that happens over there.

And yet, as feminist artist Martha Rosler argues, war cannot be so easily reduced to here or there, or to then or now. Her photomontage collection in House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home emphasizes the absurdity of the “living room war,” a nickname for the nightly news broadcasts that featured combat in real-time (a.k.a. “bang bang coverage”) during the Vietnam War. Through television, Americans experienced war as one of many examples of “a declining tolerance for Western deaths and a parallel declining regard for non-Western lives” (Mogelson). The rising death count of civilian casualties from U.S. aerial strikes is a travesty.

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14 This interview was published as part of a special issue on war in Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric Technology and Pedagogy in 2010.

15 In her series of photomontages House Beautiful: Bringing the War Home, Rosler splices together images from the Vietnam War and American domestic settings—an artistic style she later replicated in later exhibits using images from the Gulf Wars and the War in Afghanistan. She describes her work as a collapse of the psychic abstraction of war from daily life, a visual representation of American consumption of military violence viewed from the comfort of the home. By juxtaposing “disparate” images of militarism and domesticity, Rosler urges viewers to reunify social realities that have been psychically separated in American consciousness. Rosler describes feeling “traumatized” by nightly broadcasts of battles at dinnertime and wondering how she could eat her dinner “watching a war” (Hubber). Her art depicts both the disjuncture and the closeness of war in her home: “what I thought of doing was taking these damn news photographs and putting them on images of our living rooms which is where we actually saw the footage. It was in our homes, which were supposedly safe and far away” (Hubber). Rosler’s art is intended to agitate and raise awareness about war, but it is composed from
both here and there; then and now. The legacy of this groundbreaking broadcasting
tradition is still evident in the mediated way that most U.S. civilians engage with the
lived experience of war—via newsfeeds, tweets, nightly news, and other modern
entertainments. Wartime experience overflows these increasingly digital spaces marking
itself as both an eerily intimate and chillingly distant presence that resides somewhere in
the atmosphere of daily life abstracted by time, space, and technology. It is in these
conditions that we think, we speak, we teach. It’s like Donald Anderson writes in his
article “When War Becomes Personal,” “you’ll find war—or it’ll find you. All our lives
are framed by war” (31). 

War has found college English instructors at many moments in our history,
including on March 19, 2003 at CCCC in New York City—the same day that U.S. forces
invaded Iraq. David Bloom, President of the NCTE, addressed the atmosphere of war in
his welcome speech:

the perspective of a woman living in a nation of aggression. Gohar Dashti’s Today’s Life
and War is an important counterpoint to Rosler’s work that highlights the experiential
difference of living in not through a time of war. Dashti’s photographs, like Rosler’s
collages, juxtapose domestic activity (e.g. marriage, breakfasting, reading the newspaper)
and militarism, but her photos are shot from the perspective of a woman living in a war
zone. Instead of gazing into various interior rooms with images from the war
superimposed in doorways, frames, screens, and eyes, viewers gaze upon a young couple,
engaging in everyday activities set against battlefield backdrops. Datshi’s photo series
begins with the couple’s marriage and follows them as they complete such mundane
domestic activities as hanging laundry on barbed wire and picnicking in a field of
helmets. In a statement on her work, Dashti comments that she wants to represent “the
ongoing duality of life and war without precluding hope . . . though they do not visibly
express emotion, the man and woman embody the power of perseverance, determination,
and survival” (Today’s Life) Survival rather than surveillance may be the distinguishing
line between living in rather than through a war.
[Our] conversations take place in a context of terror and war. It is not just the terror of smart bombs and imminent ‘shock and awe’ bombing but also terror of airplanes crashing into buildings, bombs on buses, helicopter gunships and tanks, bulldozers, and the fact that ordinary people just going about their daily routine may lose their lives and the lives of people they love. And were that all, it would be enough to make your deliberations over the next few days historic and courageous, but the terror is more pervasive. Teachers . . . live under the terror of constant and ubiquitous surveillance and punishment—fail to teach the scripted phonics program, fail to teach from the prescribed list of ‘approved books,’ speak a language other than Standard English, teach writing as culture critique . . . and you put yourself at risk of being taken out of the classroom . . . . What lies behind these terrors—what connects the terror of smart bombs and hand grenades with the terror of curricular alignment and accountability and other forms of educational surveillance, what connects phonics with military fatigues is the drive to make sure that people stay in their place.

(345)

To stay in place, or to not stay in place. Educators and the institutions alike face the question of educational (in)action in wartime. Should institutions of higher education make radical changes to fit with the times, or should they conduct “business as usual,” as bulwarks of stability in a climate of crisis? These questions were of particular significance during World War II, when the reality of total war pervaded nearly every
aspect of American life. Sherry argues that war has cast a shadow over American life since the late 1930s.

To say that Americans lived in war’s shadow is to indulge in a metaphor, but one appropriate to their sensibilities. A 1941 advertisement . . . displaying a bomber’s shadow darkening a suburban home offered a metaphor apt for a half-century of anxiety about the nation’s safety. It showed both the ominous shadow cast by war and the still untouched scene beneath it—both hovering danger and lingering tranquility, external threat and domestic innocence. For that was how most Americans perceived the threat of war. To them, war came from outside America to intrude upon their lives and to wrest them from their pacifist ways . . . And war itself seemed a murky phenomenon. . . And, of course, war’s destruction almost never came to America. (ix)

By exploring the shadow of war in college English departments during World War II, I hope to connect to a wartime past that feels strangely familiar and yet unknowable.

Earlier, I claimed that the 1940s, particularly the war years, have been somewhat overlooked in histories of rhetoric and composition. In this section, I have explored some of the possible reasons for this gap. I have argued that American public attitudes toward the military have evolved over time, that the military is increasingly viewed as a separate and distinct institution from the rest of American society, and that physical proximity to active combat shapes the ways that civilians relate to and understand war. These factors are not only relevant to understanding what has already been written about World War II
and other U.S. military conflicts in histories of college English, but also to deconstructing my own biases as a researcher.

What Does War Have to Do with College English?

In “Drafting U.S. Literacy,” Deborah Brandt argues that “reading and writing standards have risen and fallen with the nation’s shifting military fortunes” (485), a stunning claim that is deserving of more critical attention than it has received. I will come back to Brandt’s argument later, but for now, it’s worth pointing out that Brandt’s claim about the relationship between literacy standards and military interests is not immediately self-evident. If military interests are related to national literacy standards, then how have wars affected literacy training and assessment? Narrowing in on this idea, what do military interests have to do with college English departments, which are still publicly charged with upholding and promoting literacy instruction in postsecondary education? What aspects of collegiate writing and literary instruction are most susceptible to change in the face of national military crises? Is college English instruction fundamentally different in times of war than in times of peace? How might a deeper awareness of the relationship between war and literacy also deepen our understanding of the role of postsecondary writing instruction in citizenship training?

David Bartholomae defined English studies as “an organized attempt to produce readers and writers” (“Producing Adult Readers,” 13).
Brandt’s claims convinced me that I needed to research deeper into the literature to better understand the relationship between war and college English in the United States. Because my focus as a researcher has been in rhetorical historiography, I started by investigating how war, particularly World War II, has been treated in college English instruction in the United States.

**Three Historiographic Approaches to Representations of English Departments in Wartime**

The treatment of World War II in histories of rhetoric and composition and literary studies is varied, so any review of the literature in the field on this subject must rely, to some degree, on generalizations. With that said, I found three historiographic approaches to the representation of war in the early 1940s in histories of college English. This review, which is by no means exhaustive, does account for both major and minor histories and offers a view into how scholars in the field of English studies have understood and interpreted the war years in relation to broader disciplinary concerns.

**The Reactive Model**

The first historiographic approach, which I refer to as “reactive,” is based on an assumption that college English departments are highly responsive to acute external pressures and that during a national crisis, such as World War II, adjustments are made as a reaction to, rather than an anticipation of, the unique institutional or educational needs
that arise from circumstance. This assumption suggests a causal relationship between crisis and educational response: war breaks out—educators react.

Historical accounts that represent disciplinary adjustments in the early 1940s and 1950s as a reaction to educational demands and conditions brought on by the war include Arthur N. Applebee’s *Tradition and Reform*, Hook’s *A Long Way Together*, James Berlin’s *Rhetoric and Reality*, Robert Connor’s *Composition-Rhetoric: Backgrounds, Theory, and Pedagogy*, Sharon Crowley’s *Composition in the University*, and Arthur N. Applebee, Judith A. Langer, and Marc A. Nachowitz’s chapter “NCTE and the Teaching of Literature” in *Reading the Past, Writing the Future*. These scholars link the G.I. Bill, the life-adjustment movement, general education, and the “communications” movement in English studies to World War II.

The G.I. Bill, in particular, has been closely woven into origin narratives about how composition studies emerged as an academic discipline and offers an example of how crisis and educational response have been causally linked in scholarly analyses of collegiate English departments during World War II and the post-war period. According to Edward P. J. Corbett, after President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the wartime G.I. Bill on June 2, 1944, postsecondary English departments across the nation were totally unprepared to “accommodate the legions of hard-working, no-nonsense students” that would enroll in the freshman and sophomore writing courses required at “virtually every college and university” (65). When veterans started returning home from the war in droves and enrolled in colleges, English faculty had to come up with solutions to the federally-subsidized spike in student admissions—and fast. In many departments this meant scrambling to hire faculty, opening additional sections of writing courses, and
creating a new position for writing program administrators tasked with coordinating this harried enterprise. “Desperation,” Corbett remembers, “is the word that describes our disposition in those days” (66).

By 1948, when student enrollments from the G.I. Bill were at almost at their peak, Corbett writes that NCTE organizers created a special session at the annual NCTE convention to address the frenzied postwar climate of college English. The question circling the minds of those in attendance, as recorded by Richard Lloyd-Jones, was what postsecondary practitioners “in desperate need of help” could do to manage the “flood of new students—many of whom were first-generation college students, most somewhat older veterans” (487). Jones describes the G.I. Bill as a critical impetus to the professionalization of composition studies; in response to the educational crisis generated by the G.I. Bill, English teachers collectivized (“Who We Were”). What began as a special session to address the needs of postwar college instructors trying to cope with the influx of student veterans directly led to the formation of an independent professional convention for postsecondary teachers of English: The Conference on College Composition and Communication. The significance of CCCCs to the formation of composition studies as an academic discipline is documented by Corbett and many other scholars in composition histories.

The treatment of war in histories that rely on a reactive approach might be reduced to the following claim: English departments were changed by World War II; the aftershocks of these changes were far-reaching and set the baseline conditions that led to the formation of composition as an academic discipline. The reactionary approach offers
a strong narrative trajectory from which historians have traced historical outgrowths in the field of English studies.

**The Minimalist Model**

I refer to a second historiographic approach as “minimalist.” The minimalist approach assumes that other research subjects should be prioritized over issues of militarism; war is either treated as ancillary to or is elided from these histories altogether. The impact of the war is minimized. If the war is mentioned, it functions as a minor narrative device to provide historical context for an argument.

There are a few reasons that a researcher might exclude or minimize World War II in a disciplinary history. First, there is a question of relevance and if the inclusion of World War II detracts from the primary focus of the analysis. Second, is less a question of relevance, and more a question of the impact of war on classroom instruction and praxis. Despite its social and historical importance, did World War II have a measurable impact on college English? Some historians have argued that the long-term impact of a national crisis, such as World War II, on the field of English studies was minimized by the fact that institutions of higher education were and are, to borrow a phrase from historian Charles Dorn, “conservationist” in nature (3). A deep analysis of World War II, by this logic, is not necessary because the field maintained the status quo during the war years. Robert Connors, for example, argues that “wars seem to create a desire for tradition and stasis where they can be achieved on the home front” (“The New” 2).
Four examples of disciplinary histories that reflect a minimalist approach include David Russell’s *Writing in the Academic Disciplines*, Susan Miller’s *Textual Carnivals*, David Bartholomae’s “Producing Adult Readers: 1930-1950,” and David Fleming’s *From Form to Meaning: Freshman Composition and the Long Sixties, 1957-1974*.

Russell discusses “the cooperation movement,” and the “Great Books movement, but never directly recognizes either of these movements as related to the World Wars. For Russell, the fact that these movements occurred when American college and university campuses were militarized is less important than that these movements represent the inherent difficulty of uniting academic disciplines across the university in the shared goal of improving student writing. Miller uses the term war purely as a chronological marker, as in this passage, “Over the period from 1920 to 1960, we see both an enormous variety of writing courses and their leveling in to the generic forms that replaced them as New Critical literary principles became entrenched after World War II” (67). She does not describe how World War II may have influenced the popularization of New Criticism as a theoretical movement, or how the war shaped literary criticism. Rather, she focuses on how a theoretical movement shaped the field of English studies while World War II happened in the background.

In Bartholomae’s history of adult readers between 1930 and 1950, he argues that the term “adult reader” is a fictional character used by academics to “justify a research agenda, the expense of public funds, or the organization of a curriculum” (13). Apart from the second sentence, which references “the large-scale organization of reading in the United States before, during, and after World War II,” and an indirect reference to Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, Bartholomae is virtually silent about the war for the rest of the
chapter. This omission is an interesting choice, considering the military’s interest in adult literacy during World War II. Illiteracy rates among adult males who were otherwise qualified for service during World War II became a matter of military concern. Consequently, the military sponsored a number of programs and services that targeted adult literacy (Brandt; Wykoff).

Fleming’s history of freshman composition at the University of Wisconsin-Madison includes a historical overview of the English department from 1848 to 1948. Interestingly, his history covers from 1930 to 1940 and from 1946 to 1948, but omits the war years between 1941-1945. Fleming does not offer any rationale for this exclusion, which is curious considering Fleming’s insightful and thorough analysis of how the Vietnam War affected the first-year-writing course at UW-Madison during the long sixties.

The Concession Model

I refer to the third historiographic approach as a “concession.” The term “concession” is based on Skinnell’s theoretical framing in his book Conceding Composition. While this historiographic approach does not discount the “pedagogies, histories, or people” that are usually the mainstays of historical scrutiny in disciplinary histories, it also focuses on “institution-level changes . . . that [are] all but wholly detached from the intellectual considerations that constituted the majority of [institutional histories]” (8). Skinnell bases his model on the business idea of concession, in which the “goods” transacted do not necessarily relate to the larger business enterprise. He argues
that just as concession sales at a baseball game have no direct bearing on the outcome of the game, the way that institutions of higher education have historically leveraged composition for federal funding may also have no direct relationship to “student needs, demographics, disciplinary knowledge, pedagogical best practices, or improved student writing”—the very subjects that historians of composition typically focus on in their analyses. Skinnell developed the concession model because he found that some of the claims made about wartime responses in disciplinary histories were incongruent with his archival findings. He does not dispute that English departments were overwhelmed by the logistical challenges introduced by the G.I. Bill, but he does challenge the claim that colleges and universities were caught off guard by its passage into law and the notion that institutions did not actively prepare to meet the particular needs of postwar campuses at the end of the war. Like Fleming, Skinnell’s account of the war years between 1941 and 1945 is sparse, and he focuses his analysis on how the English department at ASU responded to the G.I. Bill.

Varnum’s history of writing instruction at Amherst College under the direction of Theodore Baird from 1938-1966, offers another example of a concession model of historiography. Varnum conducted extensive interviews with faculty at Amherst who taught during World War II and drew much of her analysis of war from a history of English at Amherst written by Theodore Baird, who oversaw the instruction of the first-year writing (FYW) course. In his history, English at Amherst, Baird recalls that “immediately after the war began, the College had to take on, to survive, one army or air force program after another. The regular student body all but vanished. These were very distressing years” (24). For a men’s liberal arts college to keep afloat, college
administrators and faculty had little choice but to grab the educational programs sponsored by the U.S. Army and Army Air Force as a financial life raft. As at ASU, wartime modifications to composition courses at Amherst were not driven by intellectual or pedagogical motives: they were a concession, an indication of the scarce financial realities of wartime colleges. But just because these courses did not arise from research-based theories does not mean they weren’t pedagogically inspired (Varnum 15). Baird and other faculty took their wartime work “very seriously” (Baird 25). “We had nothing except our own moral force behind us,” Baird writes movingly,

This was our contribution . . . If these people were sent to us, we were going to do the best we could for them. We were not going to short change them, and we didn’t. I felt that I could face anybody at the end of the war morally . . . I felt that we gave every one of these classes the best we had, as good as we ever gave an Amherst class.

So the war years made demands on us but we were ready for them . . . We said, all we need is the student and paper and a mimeograph machine and we can teach them. And that’s what we did . . . And we did this for program after program—we had nothing but a mimeograph machine and our wits. (25)

So, while Amherst as an institution may have conceded composition to keep the college solvent, Baird as a teacher reinvented composition, program after program for the “fellows in uniform” (Baird 25). Part of this reinvention included fostering interdisciplinary relationships and hiring two classicists, an economist, a science historian, and a pure mathematician to teach composition courses (Baird 27).
The idea of concession is also relevant to Brandt’s clear-sighted analysis of the interrelations between military conflict, economic production, literacy, and governmental needs. Brandt argues that when literacy was militarized during World War II, the U. S. Armed Forces recognized its potential as a “resource” that could give the United States a competitive advantage over other world powers—an important distinction from World War I, during which time literacy was recognized as a morally virtuous power that could uphold and sustain the weight of America’s vie for world leadership among nations. In redefining literacy as an economic product, Brandt argues that “literacy was turned into something extractable, something measurable, something worthy of rational investment” (485). Literacy became a “needed raw material in the production of war” (495).

In this sense, the collaboration between the U. S. Army, Navy, and Army Air Force and professional educational associations like the American Council on Education (ACE) and the NCTE “conceded” literacy by claiming that higher levels of literacy were vital to domestic national security and military success abroad. Stricter compulsory education laws, higher education levels nationwide, and public investments in advanced technology, weaponry, and communication systems all contributed to the transformation of mass literacy from an “attribute of a ‘good’ individual” into a public “good” that carried transactional, economic, and military value (Brandt 485). Brandt concludes that the legacy of the World War II-era “cost-benefit” mentality towards literacy is evident in seemingly unrelated educational trends in English instruction today: the standardization of literacy, decreased funding for literacy programs in inner-city and rural schools, and the obsolescence of certain literacy “skills” (501).
As an expansion of and response to Brandt’s analysis, Kelly Ritter counters that the wartime “process of reassociating literacy with governmental needs, primarily civic duty and national security,” did not (and could not) ever wash definitions of literacy clean of their spiritual or moral markers. Because American conceptions of civic duty and national security are themselves fraught with moral, racist, and class-based connotations, when literacy was made over into a public good that could fulfill governmental needs during World War II, the definition of literacy also retained some of its early connotations of moral piety and classism. Ritter’s analysis posits that wartime values divided opinions among English teachers about whether the English classroom should be a “literacy-centered classroom of emulation” or a “writing-centered classroom of participation” (65). Both Brandt and Ritter wonder if this ideological split at the core of literacy, between a “moral imperative” and a “production imperative” has taken the claims of what literacy can do for a nation to their teleological “limit” (Brandt 501); and Brandt worries if “for the first time in history, the school is running behind if not against the dominant cultural imperatives for literacy” (501).

Disciplinary histories that fall into the concession category are based on an assumption that organized responses to wartime issues, such as threat resolution, changes in fiscal policy, and educational identity, are not always negotiated on pedagogical or epistemological terms. This approach is, therefore, particularly useful in teasing out the role of literacy instruction in “achieving institutional goals” (Skinnell 108).

The challenge of historicizing war is evident in the limitations of each of these historiographic approaches. In *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, Stephen North observes that early historical work tends to rely on broad narrative strokes, sacrificing
detail for “gains in dramatic power” (78). These broad strokes gradually become more refined as additional research fills in the gaps and details that were not covered in early histories. Scholarship on the history of English instruction during World War II is still limited and only tells a small part of a much larger history.

Research Methods and Methodology

In this study, I use historical methods, combining traditional library research and limited archival research, to examine six scholarly periodicals in order to better understand how World War II affected college English instruction during the 1940s. Scholarly journals, and the people who edit and contribute to their making, are products of their time and are shaped by cultural, social, and political forces specific to that time. But they are also shaped by individual experiences, emotions, and desires that sometimes elide, transcend, or come into tension with these larger forces. To better conceptualize the wartime conditions and discourses that showed up on the pages of these scholarly periodicals and to understand the lived experiences of 1940s college English teachers, I consulted additional materials such as educational reports; newspapers; academic conference proceedings; military pamphlets and recruitment materials; administrative memos; biographical materials; editorial policies and commentary; and curricular materials, including textbooks, course catalogs, and syllabi.
Microhistories and Historiography

Historians of rhetoric and composition have recently challenged the “grand narratives of composition history published during the 1980s and 1990s” (McComiskey 7) and have shifted the focus of historical scholarship instead to “microhistories,” examining local sites and uncommon archives to dramatize or exemplify broader disciplinary trends or patterns. In their chapter “Pan-Historiography: The Challenges of Writing History Across Time and Space,” Debra Hawhee and Christa J. Olson comment that “most frequently the advice to history writers is to ‘go small,’ to eschew the unmanageable” (92). But, as their chapter makes clear, scope and scale—the interpretative framing devices of historical analysis—are not so easily determined at the outset of any historical endeavor. This study has passed through multiple iterations that tested different levels of scale, scope, and focus; determining boundaries by experimenting with different levels of temporal and geographic scale was a refining process that helped attune me to the need, at least in this particular study, to move flexibly between local and national levels of analysis. My interest in exploring both the abstract concept of war and the concrete experiences of college English teachers who navigated the major social, cultural, and technological shifts propelled by that war, required a methodology that would support me in zooming in and zooming out of different historical contexts. I also wanted to include critical reflection in my description of my research methodology. One historiographic approach that offers flexibility and structural controls for analysis and encourages critical reflection and strategic contemplation is microhistory.
In *Microhistories of Composition*, Bruce McComiskey describes “multiscopic analysis”—the historical method of “shifting back and forth among scopic levels (or levels of abstraction)”—as an essential process in constructing microhistories (16). Microhistories emerged as a corrective to two scopic imbalances in historical analysis. The first, being a tendency in expansive histories to “sweep” complex historical events into tidy, coherent narratives (“the grand narrative”). The wide scope of these histories often leads historians to focus on major visible forces, while individualized experience and local contexts recede in the background. The second, being a tendency in local or cultural histories to devolve into granularity, often leads historians to inaccurately extrapolate trends and patterns from a small data sample size. The narrow scope of these histories can reveal less visible, individualized experience, but risks minimizing the impact of social or political forces. Microhistories are based on an assumption that individualized experience and larger social forces are constantly defining each other. According to McComiskey, microhistories are predicated by the logic that “every act is conditioned by multiple forces at varying levels, some imposed socially (by institutions) and other emerging personally (from desires), all in a complex dialectic” (McComiskey 14). Recent histories in composition studies have attempted to expand, extend, and even revise earlier histories by relying on both concrete detail and theoretical abstraction to collectively create a more comprehensive understanding of the history of the discipline.

McComiskey also argues that a defining characteristic of microhistory is the “self-conscious presentation in the narrative itself of methodological assumptions and difficulties in the evidence” (22). Researcher standpoint and point of view are deliberately integrated into the narrative to draw attention to the limitations of the study.
and biases of the researcher. Making these motivations explicit emphasizes the subjective nature of historical work and the positionality of the researcher conducting the work.

In this study, I draw on the methods of microhistory to trace discursive responses to World War II. My reading of the opinions and responses expressed in scholarly periodicals considers both recognized and unrecognized figures in the field of English studies and operates from an assumption that historical analysis should hold in tension individualized experiences and expressions and institutional systems and external forces that shape these experiences.

**Description and Rationale for Selection of Scholarly Periodicals**

I collected and conducted a close reading and textual analysis of 458 journal articles published in the following journals: *The News Letter of the College English Association, College English, The English Journal, Quarterly Journal of Speech, and South Atlantic Quarterly Review* and *Publications of the Modern Language Association*. I read scholarly periodicals on English teaching between the years of 1938-1949; however, my analysis almost exclusively examines articles published between 1941-1945. The journals were selected based on three criteria:

1. College English instructors formed a significant, if temporary, part of the journal readership and target audience.

2. The journal was “created to serve a broad and diverse readership on a wide range of subjects” (Goggin xvi).
3. Adjustments were made to editorial practices and/or the content of published articles shifted in response to the war (e.g. publishing defense-related materials, advertising for campus military training programs, reprinting public statements on the war, etc.).

My data set represents a range of editorial styles and article selections that I draw upon to reconstruct wartime responses among college English teachers in the United States. The table below breaks down the number of articles reviewed in each scholarly periodical.

Table 1-1: Articles and Journals Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publication</th>
<th>Number of Articles Reviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>The News Letter of the College English Association</em></td>
<td>223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>College English</em></td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The English Journal</em></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Quarterly Journal of Speech</em></td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>South Atlantic Bulletin</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Publications of the Modern Language Association</em></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Articles Reviewed</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As Maureen Daly Goggin observes in her research methodology in *Authoring a Discipline*, the selection criteria used to determine which journals should be considered in a historical analysis of scholarly journals is, to some degree, idiosyncratic and often determined by factors such as access to materials and researcher standpoint. Like Goggin,
I determined early on that I would focus “on periodicals that were created or originally edited by individuals affiliated with departments of English and that were meant to serve primarily those who work within English studies” (xvi). I also selected journals “created to serve a broad and diverse readership on a wide range of subjects” (xvi). Both Goggin and Connors were important scholarly influences in helping me refine and define my research methodology and I am indebted to their scholarship on the importance of scholarly journals and discursive practices in disciplinary formation as well as their rationale for using scholarly journals as objects of study in disciplinary historiographies. Like Goggin and Connors, my justification for analyzing scholarly periodicals is based on the assumptions that academic journals document and legitimize disciplinary values and provide a venue where these values can be “revised, tested, and superseded” (Connors, “Journals” 351).

Important as these influences have been, there are obvious differences between our respective projects. Connors and Goggin are principally concerned with the formation and institutionalization of rhetoric and composition as an academic discipline and focus on patterns and trends in major scholarly journals in the field of English studies published after 1950. My interest in the ways that English teachers were called to fill an immediate, but temporary civic role in supporting civilian defense programs and mobilizing soldiers during World War II, places the temporal focus of my project a decade earlier. I drew upon many of the same strategies employed by Goggin and Connors for this project, but the unique historical conditions of the years between 1941 and 1945 required a number of adjustments to my selection criteria and rationale. Most obviously, the scale of this study is small by comparison. While their analysis took into consideration thousands of articles
published across several decades, my attention to discussions about the war, campus militarization, and reactions to a national crisis resulted in a much narrower temporal scope; unlike the wide-angle, long-range view deployed in those major studies, this study focuses on a limited data set: I examined six periodicals and ten years—with five of those years serving as the primary basis for my analysis—in order to better understand an understudied dimension of the development of English studies in the U.S. higher education system: militarization.

I selected these six periodicals after first conducting preliminary bibliographic research based on current scholarly publications on the teaching of college English during World War II. I referenced many of these sources in my literature review on the treatment of war in composition histories earlier in this chapter. After investigating primary sources cited by other scholars, I conducted a general search of scholarly periodicals published in the field of English or related fields during the 1940s, gradually narrowing my search to periodicals that covered the teaching of college English in wartime America.

I excluded from consideration specialist journals in literary criticism such as *Notes and Queries, Review of English Studies, Modern Language Quarterly, Modern Language Review, American Literature*, and *Journal of English Literary History*. For the most part, academic literary journals remained politically silent during the war; the editors of these journals did not revise their editorial policies in response to the militarization of colleges and universities. For these reasons, the editorial focus of these journals did not meet my third selection criteria and were excluded from this study.

One notable exception to this is *Publications of the Modern Language Association (PMLA)*, the official publication of the Modern Language Association
(MLA). As the oldest professional organization for English studies in the United States, the MLA supported American involvement in the war and pledged its resources to the national war program. A 1949 article on the MLA in World War II by Percy W. Long records that members of the MLA were actively involved in the war effort, and estimated that “several times 500 taught in war courses” with at least a fourth of that number teaching military English (46). Long’s data set is admittedly imprecise and does not include a clear disciplinary breakdown as part of his analysis. Because he reported statistics based on MLA membership as a whole group and not based on disciplinary divisions, it is impossible to determine exactly how many college English teachers were employed in various war-related activities relying on this data alone. However, his summary of the various war activities that MLA members (many of which were college English teachers) were engaged in, suggests that members took the MLA’s position on war very seriously. Although the MLA discontinued its pedagogical section in 1903 and stopped publishing pedagogical articles in 1910, scholarly interest in pedagogical concerns temporarily reemerged in PMLA journal issues between 1942 and 1945.17 To mobilize hundreds of thousands of students for war, sometimes within a few weeks, was a formidable challenge for the higher education community. To make literate soldiers in the short time before student soldiers were reassigned was a major challenge for both

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17 Berlin comments that “by 1920 [the MLA] decided that its main interest was to be scholarship and scholarship only . . . it then publicly acknowledged what had been obvious to any attentive member for at least fifteen years: teaching was no longer to be a concern of the only professional association of college English teachers in America” (Rhetoric and Reality 32). But, in light of the seriousness of the war to the development of the profession, the MLA temporarily broke from this editorial policy.
writing instructors and literature professors. Some literary scholars professed that the best
defense to the national crisis of war was to carry on “business as usual,” making only
minor adjustments to English classes. Others argued that such a tactic was socially
irresponsible and out of touch with the needs of students and the nation. The MLA’s
position, as reflected in the PMLA, was somewhere in between: continue to publish
research-based literary scholarship, but acknowledge and address the real need for
practical pedagogical support.

Regional MLA chapters, such as the South Atlantic Modern Language
Association, also responded to dynamic changes brought about by World War II.
Originally established to cover current research projects, publications, and attitudes in the
field of English studies, under the editorial direction of Sturgis E. Leavitt and Thomas H.
English, the South Atlantic Bulletin (Bulletin) broadened its editorial focus during the war
years to address all aspects of postsecondary English instruction, including composition
courses and basic writing in the campus military training programs. Travel restrictions
led to the cancellation of many regional conferences; the South Atlantic Modern
Language Association, for example, canceled their annual meetings in 1942, 1943, and
1944. Periodicals like the Bulletin enabled members to continue to “talk” to each other
when they were unable to convene in person. I selected the Bulletin for review, because I
wanted to include a periodical that represented a subset of a larger professional
organization. This periodical shed light on how regional and national associations worked
together to keep its members informed and engaged with each other and to the broader
aims of the field.
The journals included in this study, with the exception of Quarterly Journal of Speech (QJS), were designed to serve practitioners and scholars in the field of English studies and were edited by individuals affiliated with English departments. The inclusion of QJS may appear inconsistent with my first criteria for subject selection, since QJS was written for speech and communication educators. However, there is a historical rationale behind this selection. Unlike academic departments, the U.S. military made no clear distinction between oral and written communication. During World War II, military leaders were primarily concerned with equipping soldiers and officers with the linguistic capacities needed to give and receive orders, operate technical machinery, and report essential information. Consequently, when the U.S. Army and Navy designed the curricular aims for the campus military training programs, they included oral communication (traditionally taught by speech instructors) in the basic English course. The disciplinary implications of integrating speech training in the military’s basic English course are well-documented in Berlin’s Rhetoric and Reality and Crowley’s “Freshman English and War.” For the purposes of this study, I studied QJS articles that addressed collaborations between speech and English instructors, and considered how these collaborations contributed to academic debates about the role of English instruction in American higher education.

Three of the journals selected for this study were pedagogically-oriented. These periodicals differ in style, content, and scholarly rigor. With war on the minds of teachers and students alike, these more politically responsive periodicals were filled with opinions and advice about what English teachers could do in response to the war.
The News Letter of the College English Association (News Letter) which featured short, pithy articles using a newspaper layout and double-column format, was issued monthly and was more conversational and informal than College English or The English Journal. Edited by Burges Johnson, who worked as a professional journalist for over a decade before becoming a professor, the format of the News Letter reflects Johnson’s work as a writer and editor for popular magazines. Perhaps more than any other periodical examined in this study, the News Letter illustrates John Kultgen’s argument that “the picture of professions as integrated collegial communities is mythological . . . they in fact are loose congeries of individuals with similar training and culture and varying expertise, dedication and integrity, whose influence on one another is shifting and adventitious” (143). Johnson delighted in framing each issue of the News Letter as a spirited conversation, pairing oppositional voices in order to highlight the foibles and virtues of each, and ultimately to help clarify the broader aims and values of the field of English studies. He also looked for solutions outside the academic community, reaching out to military officers, poets, political and educational activists, and magazine editors to comment on issues facing college English teachers.

The English Journal (EJ) and College English (CE) are scholarly journals of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Both journals “showcased teacher opinions, experiences, and responses to both local and national pedagogical movements in English studies” (Ritter 82). EJ, which first appeared in 1912, is the NCTE’s founding journal and was originally designed by J. F. Hosic to address the teaching of English at all educational levels. As the Council expanded and the American education system evolved, the focus of the journal gradually transitioned between 1928 and 1938 to address
secondary education, with only a small section devoted specifically to “college.” When Hosic passed on both the editorship and copyright for *EJ* to Hatfield in 1938, Hatfield used the content previously published in his college section to found a new journal, *CE*, which was designed to support postsecondary English instruction. Consequently, he discontinued the college section in *EJ*.

If the *EJ* no longer published content related to college instruction in the 1940s, why include it as an object of study in my analysis? As with the *QJS*, my decision to include *EJ* in this study was based on historical considerations. Because high school students, particularly high school seniors, were targeted by a number of military programs and legislation, including the Selective Training and Service Act, colleges and universities during the early 1940s had a strong interest in working closely with high schools to retain and recruit students transitioning from high school to college. College administrators and English teachers were motivated to work with high school teachers to create more uniformity in the aims of secondary and postsecondary English instruction.¹⁸ For the duration of the war, at least, English instruction at the secondary and collegiate levels was a united effort.

¹⁸ As an aside, Kelly Ritter describes *Education for Victory* as “an instructive primer for teachers and administrators on how and where high school students could engage in nationally sponsored war efforts, and as an announcement of advances in education that linked back to patriotic or nationalist wartime ideas for schools” (66). However, like the *English Journal, Education for Victory* was not exclusively targeted to secondary education, but published a section addressing wartime issues in higher education in every issue. This speaks to my claim that the crisis of war narrowed the gap between high schools and colleges, since they were both essentially competing with the military for the same group of students.
Description of Selection and Organization of Scholarly Articles

After selecting the periodicals for this study, I read through every issue in each of the six journals between the years of 1938 to 1949. Articles that directly addressed wartime contingencies or conditions were selected for further textual analysis. I reread the article, recording prominent themes or ideas. I then organized these ideas into general categories, which were used as the basis of an informal coding process which I used to analyze broader patterns.

Table 1-2: Prominent Themes in Articles Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Key Terms/Ideas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Arts Crisis</td>
<td>civic education and citizenship; liberal vs. vocational training; technical vs. nontechnical; practical vs. impractical; aims of college English; threats to liberal arts; total war; material vs. immaterial; immediate vs. timeless; defunding liberal arts programs; value of English studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy and Mental Health</td>
<td>mental hygiene and national defense; leisure; expressive or literary writing; sanity; normalcy; reading for pleasure; teacher civilian guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmatic Restructuring</td>
<td>ASTP and V-12 campus training programs; federalization of higher education; program funding; professional conventions and gatherings; fuel shortages and travel restrictions; civilian defense programs; accelerated schedules; teaching and student shortages; composite speech and writing courses; professional teaching associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post-War Peace
saving American democracy; peace; international goodwill; post-war planning; demilitarization;

Memory of WWI
propaganda; SATC program; violations of academic freedom; disloyalty acts; chauvinism; academic independence from the military; patriotism

International Relations
China; Latin-America; Germany; fascism vs. American democracy; xenophobia; cultural awareness

Editorial Practices
editorial policies; periodical descriptions; editorials; letters to the editor; discussion of the founding and growth of the periodical

A single article could contain multiple themes. For example, in the January 1942 issue of the *CEA News Letter*, in the article “Here is Our Plan,” the majority of the article addresses potential programmatic changes in response to the war “why not have thirty weeks in the classroom followed by sixteen weeks of money-earning employment in defense-industry, and let these alternating periods continue for four years, when the degree shall be awarded” (2). The final sentence of the article references the idea of hysteria, “this seems to us a pretty good plan, but maybe we are just victims of war-time hysteria” (2). The first part of the article was coded under the general category of programmatic restructuring, while the final sentence is coded under the general category of mental health.

Frequently ideas fit into multiple categories. The following sentence, from “What Has ‘English’ to do with the War?” published in the November 1942 issue, is such an example: “We and our men must have a purpose, a purpose nearer than life itself, a
purpose on which those who come after us can build a new world, a world far better than
the world we have built and are now building” (3). Here, the author, Mary Hill, seems to
be both drawing upon a commonplace of America as a “new world” to be civilized and
the idea of post-war peacebuilding. In cases such as this, the sentence(s) was coded into
multiple categories.

After categorizing and sorting the first periodical, I repeated the process for my
six target periodicals. I compared the general categories across the journal to see if there
were notable editorial differences. I did not use any digital sorting tools or coding
programs to sort and categorize materials. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to
address all of the themes I identified through my informal coding process. Specifically,
this study excludes an analysis of international relations and postwar peace, although
wartime college English teachers were concerned about both of these issues. Both of
these topics offer potential areas for future study.

Why Scholarly Periodicals?

The disciplinary function of scholarly journals today has evolved from when
Connors and Goggin published their respective studies in 1984 and 2000. The number of
scholarly journals has increased, as has their role in academic hiring practices and
ranking. There have also been significant changes in the use of technology to compose,
distribute, and engage with academic articles. In “Journals in Composition Studies,
Thirty-Five Years After,” Douglas Hesse argues that digital publications and online
library services have altered practices associated with journal reading and circulation (389). He writes:

. . . the technological changes in means of distribution betoken a profound change in the relationship of journals to the field of composition studies. In an age of physical communications at measured paces and routines, knowledge was dolloped in measured portions. Subscribing to journals was not only a symbolic means of identification, even consubstantiation, with disciplinary conversations, but also a practical means of accessing and displaying authority. (368)

Hesse’s observation on the materiality of journals before the digital age alerted me to an aspect of reader engagement that I had previously missed—precisely because my reading practices as a millennial researcher are shaped, as Hesse argues, by unrestricted access to articles via the web. That is to say, that I have not cultivated the same degree of sensitivity to the rhythms and cycles of academic publication as educators in the 1940s would have in a print era.

I have previously stated that this study is based on an assumption that scholarly periodicals function as significant sites of disciplinary values and authority, and are thereby worthy of scholarly consideration. I maintain that many of Connor’s findings about the disciplinary functions of scholarly journals apply both retrospectively to the scholarly periodicals of the 1940s and to scholarship today.19 However, I had not before

19 Connors argues that there four basic functions of a scholarly journal: to make the most current research available to members of an academic community; to “filter”
considered that apart from these important disciplinary functions, the regularly scheduled release of journal issues must have offered a sense of stability and security during very uncertain and unstable times. Even as nation fought against nation, wartime subscribers could rely on periodicals to help them maintain ties to the larger academic community.

War attunes individuals to their mortality, an awareness that seems to awaken a deep desire for kinship, community, and social connection. A few brief excerpts from the *News Letter* illustrate the value wartime readers placed on receiving and reading their monthly subscription. “Dear Editor,” one anonymous contributor writes in the October 1943 issue,

For a long time I have wanted to drop you a line in appreciation of the ‘News Letter’ that comes to my desk from month to month. The little sheet is invariably full of interesting and significant material and I usually read it from beginning to end, sometimes mark it, and frequently pass it on. In the present campaign over the Humanities you have gathered and presented a surprising amount of wisdom. Please accept my hearty congratulations both on the idea of such a brief, informal interchange and on the delightful temper and atmosphere that appears to surround it. (2)

What strikes me about this letter is that the writer engages with the *News Letter* not only as a source of information, but also as a monthly ritual—a habitual practice that

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scholarly work within a discipline, defining what counts as rigorous or scholarly; to credential or rank contributors, thereby building a scholar’s reputation among other academics or professionals; and to “create status” through the perceived prestige of a journal or the citation score of an article (‘Journals” 351-352)
symbolically reconnects the writer back to the English teaching community and invokes a feeling a community in isolation. Liza Potts’s work on the use of social media in disaster response reveals that most people who have been unsettled by a major external crisis cling to familiar communication systems to send and receive important information, because these systems help create a sense of normalcy in chaos (11).

This yearning for familiarity, community, and stability is evident in several letters to the editor submitted by subscribers to the *News Letter*. For example, Paul Mowbray Wheeler, a professor of English at Winthrop College, writes in August of 1943 “May I add my expression of gratitude for the work that the Association and the ‘News Letter’ are doing? I digest every word in every issue, and I wish that I might find some active way to help you in what you are doing” (“Gleaned” 2). In the same issue A. V. Hall from the University of Washington writes, “as a forum for the expression of individual opinions, the ‘News Letter’ is filling a long-felt need” (“Gleaned” 2). The rhetoric of gratitude and longing expressed in these exchanges suggests that scholarly periodicals not only filled an *academic* need, but more fundamentally a *human* need for connection in a time of crisis. Scholarly periodicals not only “provide a window on disciplinary discursive practices,” as Goggin claims, but also provide a window into the lived experience of instructors working through very challenging educational conditions.

**Limitations of Subject Selection**

One of the virtues of reading across multiple scholarly periodicals from the 1940s is that these periodicals represent a range of academic perspectives. In this study alone,
contributors wrote from forty states across the United States at over one-hundred and fifty different institutions. These contributors also worked for a large range of different institutional types including publicly-funded and privately-funded schools, women’s colleges, liberal arts schools, land-grant universities, teaching colleges (formerly known as normal schools), junior colleges, vocational schools, and high schools. Yet, even this seemingly broad range of voices from the English teaching community represents only a partial view of the field in the early 1940s. There are many voices that go unrecorded or underrepresented in these journals.

No data set can offer a complete rendering of any historical period; rhetorical theorist Kenneth Burke observed that this is because “even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function as a deflection of reality” (45). Sue Mendelsohn’s article “‘Raising Hell’: Literacy Instruction in Jim Crow America,” observes that the innovative literacy training and experimentation at HBCUs during the 1940s has not made it into major composition histories even when other less historically relevant communication programs have. This is, in part, because the primary materials used in these histories deflect attention from racially-motivated editorial practices and disparities. Mendelsohn notes that her narrative “relies on popular press accounts more than do other composition studies histories. This reliance is, in part, a recognition that black faculty members at HBCUs received less attention in NCTE publications during the 1940s than did their counterparts at

20 As a point of reference there were “seven hundred and twenty-seven colleges for undergraduates” in 1946. See Johnson, Burges. *Campus Versus Classroom* (17).
predominantly white institutions” (40). Recognition of these “deflections of reality,”
Mendelson argues, allows a careful reader to recognize that black educators wrote a
counter-narrative that challenged the assumption propagated by white educations that
literacy training could “save” the war-torn nation and “make it a country worth saving”
(36).

Mendelson’s argument about the types of sources used to historicize writing
instruction in the forties highlights a major limitation of this study and its claims: the
majority of the teachers who contributed to the selected periodicals were male, white, and
middle-class. I acknowledge that in selecting this particular set of scholarly periodicals, I
risk omitting information that would offer a more complete rendering of the role of
English studies during World War II. It is beyond the scope of this project to investigate
the material issues size as class size, teaching staff gender, class and race representation,
or teacher qualifications.

Despite its limitations, this data selection also addresses gaps in research that have
not been accounted for and which enrich existing narratives about literacy instruction in
wartime America. For example, the News Letter has gone virtually unrecorded in
composition histories documenting the impact of World War II on college English
instruction, despite the volume of articles published on wartime issues and the
pedagogical orientation of the publication. The editorial practices and format of scholarly
periodicals yields insights into the cooperative and competitive relationship between
higher education and the military—a dialogical relationship that shaped debates about the
“value” and “role” of college English in American higher education during World War II.
Justification for this Study

Building upon the scholarship that has been done on the relationship between war and literacy instruction in higher education during World War II, this dissertation also differs from these studies in important ways. Previous studies on wartime college writing instruction have focused primarily on two ideas: tracing what happened to the FYW course during the war years and contextualizing the post-war conditions that led to the emergence of rhetoric and composition as an academic discipline. While these approaches to historicizing World War II provide a useful overview for understanding curricular and programmatic changes that led to the formation of composition as a discipline, they do not fully capture the dynamic discourse generated by English teachers in response to wartime exigencies.

Between 1941 and 1945, postsecondary English teachers published hundreds of articles about the war and wartime teaching in professional journals, newsletters, and conference proceedings including The News Letter of the College English Association, The English Journal, College English, The Quarterly Journal of Speech, and the South Atlantic Bulletin, which are the primary sources of this study. Although other histories have referenced these articles in isolation, this is the first sustained analysis of these materials. I also conducted archival research at three universities: The Pennsylvania State University, the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and the University of Arizona. My use of archival materials collected from these sites in this project is limited. They were primarily used to corroborate details from my close readings of wartime journal articles.
The content of the wartime scholarly periodicals shifts my analysis away from an exclusive or narrow focus on FYW, although consideration of basic writing and composition classes does factor into my analysis. This is, in some respects, a departure from many historical studies on wartime college English instruction. Sharon Crowley’s chapter on general education, university requirements, and World War II, “Freshman English and the War,” for example, follows an established tradition in composition studies of placing special emphasis on FYW as a way of understanding and defining disciplinary issues and identity. There is an obvious reason that FYW has dominated research in composition studies; namely, the basic writing requirement that has been enforced by virtually every American institution of higher education. Moreover, as Fleming observes, freshman English has always had a uniquely public function, and its institutional role has historically been dictated by the “perceived social and cultural needs” of the United States, specifically the cultural need for a literate, educated citizenry (4). For better or for worse, the universal writing requirement has profoundly shaped the nature of scholarship in composition.

The universal writing requirement was a well-established policy in American higher education by 1940. Considering its institutional (and, during the war, military) use-value, it is little wonder that FYW has received special attention in histories of rhetoric and composition. With the pragmatic aim of preparing as many students for war as quickly as possible, the Army and Navy required a basic writing course in campus military training programs.

Hastily developed and uneven in their implementation, these courses reveal ideological differences between how the military and higher education approached the
challenge of literacy instruction during a period of national crisis. Outside of the basic writing course, military leaders were mostly ambivalent about the long-range vision of English departments to promote distinct American values and a strong national identity through literacy training. The U.S. military didn’t have the time or resources to care very much about the post-war future envisioned by English teachers, but recognized basic writing instruction as a commodity that could be exchanged—at least in theory—for more reliable soldiers, equipped to quickly process verbal and written orders.

On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that the content of FYW remained fairly stable through the war years and may have been less dramatically affected by the war than other courses offered through college English departments. Most of the public criticism toward English studies during the war years was directed toward literature courses, which were viewed as superfluous and even excessive in a time of national crisis. Histories that focus solely on the impact of the war on the FYW course often miss the generative ways that English teachers had to respond to these public challenges.

Extrapolating disciplinary and pedagogical trends based on what was happening in FYW also has the unfortunate effect of suggesting the existence of stronger disciplinary boundaries than is representative of the period. While there is much to be said (and has been said) about the subordination of composition to literature in English departments, it is historically anachronous to overlay current disciplinary divisions of labor onto 1940s instruction. Departmental specializations and disciplinary divisions that characterize the field of English studies today, were not nearly so well-defined in the forties. Teachers taught literature courses and writing courses. If the militarization of higher education had any short-term effect on English departments it was a consolidation
and unification of the broader aims and purposes of English studies. As Hook observes, “there was no escaping the war . . . the national attention [was] so single-focused . . . the nation was more united in purpose during those war years than at any other time in its history” (133). Academic snobbery towards composition persisted through the forties, but it was also during this period that composition secured recognition for its public service to military and civilian defense programs. Though some in the profession continued to snub composition, they also depended on writing instruction to help sustain English studies as part of the core curriculum in American higher education.

To illustrate this point, I offer two perspectives on the general wartime work of college English teachers, one from a writing instructor and one from a literature professor. Both taught as full-time faculty during World War II. Grant Redford, who taught Basic English for the Army Air Force Teaching program observed that during the war, “literature teachers who had written nothing more than some term papers and a thesis and abhorred journalism as plebian now began to teaching writing which had for its purpose simple, direct, and accurate communication” (277). Jo Milton French, wrote that “most of us [literature professors] feel convinced that for time being we must expect to reduce courses in literature in colleges and devote most of our time as teachers of English to the most prosaic and utilitarian task of teaching composition to soldiers, either actual or prospective” (Jones and Rice 316).

Contributors to scholarly periodicals did not usually refer to themselves as specialists—as writing instructors, compositionists, linguists or literature professors—but simply as teachers of English or English teachers. For this reason, I intentionally use the generic moniker “college English teachers” or “English teacher” except where textual
evidence requires specialist distinctions. I likewise use the generic term “college English” to refer to English courses taught at a number of postsecondary institutions, including universities and junior colleges. I am aware that there are important distinctions between these institution types, especially in relation to localized contexts, but I do not generally make these distinctions to allow for more stylistic fluidity. I selected “college” as my preferred term, because the majority of the contributors to the scholarly periodicals I examined were employed at colleges. Whenever possible, I include both the author name and institutional affiliation to clarify and highlight institutional differences. I acknowledge that there may be reasonable objections to my use of these generalized terms, especially because my findings are not representative of all college English teachers, but only of the teachers who contributed to the scholarly journals between 1941-1945. For the purposes of this study, this terminology was a practical solution to the challenge of discussing a large and complex group of individuals.

Relatively little scholarship has been done to account for the ways in which college English teachers collectivized in response to the exigencies of World War II. Few studies consider the impact of war on the field of composition’s historic commitment to civic education; few examine how the context of war created opportunities for invention in disciplinary and institutional identity and purpose; even fewer analyze how a climate of total war and national unrest on college campuses during the war years revitalized ongoing debates about the role and social value of literacy instruction and liberal education in higher education. In addition to contributing to the relatively limited number of disciplinary histories on the 1940s, this dissertation addresses the complicated
relationship teachers of English have had with war and militarism and considers the enduring legacy of the militarization of literacy training during World War II.

**Overview of Chapters**

This dissertation explores the question of how World War II affected wartime college English in three parts. First, I explore the broader changes in American higher education that resulted from the war and reflect on how national and institutional changes influenced the teaching of English on college campuses. Second, I explore how disciplinary aims and objectives were shaped by wartime policies and programs during World War II. Third, I explore the lived experiences of college English instructors teaching in wartime conditions through the lens of time.

*Chapter Two: American Higher Education and the Value of English Studies in Wartime America*

This chapter historicizes how postsecondary educational institutions, spearheaded by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the National Committee on Education and Defense (NCED), organized prewar planning and wartime educational and institutional response during World War II. I argue that the academic response orchestrated by the ACE during the war years is important for two reasons. First, understanding the history of the prewar activities and academic planning that proceeded the placement of civilian defense and military programs on college campuses contextualizes the conditions and pressures that teachers of college English faced during
World War II. Second, this historical context demonstrates how postsecondary English teachers collectivized to ensure the future of English studies during and after the war.

The transition of institutions of higher education to total war through civilian defense programs and militarized training programs oriented American higher education toward national survival and utility to the state. The total effect of wartime adjustments in American higher education, including accelerated schedules, federal incentives toward war-related research, the militarization of campuses, and the emphasis on practical education created a climate of distrust among liberal arts educators about the future of any subject deemed non-essential to the war. Widescale military general intelligence testing revealed national literacy deficiencies; hundreds of thousands of men were turned away from military service because they failed to meet eligibility requirements. World War II not only brought English instruction into the national limelight, it also shaped the wartime purpose and curricular aims of college English teaching. Anxious to fill induction quotas and to reinforce wartime morale, the Army and Navy leadership endorsed the inclusion of English studies in a wartime curriculum, sanctioning the discipline as an important contributor to a national defense program.

Chapter Three: English Teaching and the Aims of Wartime College English

American’s entrance into war changed the public face of higher education from one of liberalism to military pragmatism; academic subjects were valued for what they could contribute to the war effort. In this chapter I explore how reactions to the crisis of war played into the formation of disciplinary aims in 1940s English teaching. I argue that
there were essentially three reactions to the war among college English teachers: conservative, reactionary, and cautious. Conservatives resisted calls to redefine the aims of English instruction according to the values of military utility. They argued that the best educational response to the war was to carry on teaching English as they had before the outbreak of war and to maintain as much of the traditional English teaching curriculum as possible. Reactionaries embraced wartime changes to the curriculum and accepted military definitions of value. They argued that the aims of English instruction required immediate intervention and should be revised to meet immediate wartime needs. The exigencies of war provided an opportune moment for disciplinary redefinition and purpose. Cautionaries also accepted military aims as a temporary wartime concession. They agreed to these terms based on a belief that the field of English studies would return to its original values and purposes at the end of the war. Cautionaries took a practical view of the war and acknowledged that some concessions were required in order to meet public expectations and to fulfill civic obligations to the state, but resisted the idea of a major disciplinary overhaul.

Chapter Four: Literacy and Leisure in Wartime America

In this chapter, I explore the “affective qualities” and “structures of feeling” resulting from the educational goal of national survival and a culture of speed from the perspective of college English teachers. I argue that “war time,” with its accelerations and suspensions, not only profoundly shaped educational policy and curricular development, but also the lived experience of instructors. In keeping with the military values of
efficiency and standardization, the curricular status of literary studies in higher education was challenged not only by public officials and educators, but by college English teachers themselves who were often ridden with civilian guilt and a desperate desire to offer meaningful contributions to the war. While writing instruction had a clear military application that justified its inclusion in a wartime curriculum, literary studies offered no obvious contribution to the short-term needs of a national defense program. Specifically, I examine wartime criticisms of literature as a “leisurely activity” or a curricular “luxury” better suited for a peacetime curriculum. In response to these critiques, literature professors launched a defense of literature as a vital subject in the nation’s war program. Drawing upon an ethic of leisure, college English teachers argued for the value of reading as a leisurely activity that contributed to the mental and emotional health of Americans and the nation. I argue that the rationale for this defense was not politically neutral and that it marked a conscientious reclamation of time. I conclude the chapter with a brief return to the idea of conscious educational action and disciplinary responses to the war.

Chapter 5 Conclusion: Reflections on Educational Responses to National Crises in Uncertain Times

I conclude this dissertation with a reflection on educational response to national crises. I argue that the totalizing experience of the COVID-19 pandemic has striking parallels to the totalizing experience of war during World War II. I reflect on examples of educational response in each of my chapters and suggest that bringing awareness into
educational response is an effective strategy for resisting the overwhelm of a national crisis.
Chapter 2
American Higher Education and the Value of English Studies in Wartime America

“We can do this: we can make English contribute to morale, to patriotic ardor, to love of freedom, and to desire to fight to procure it. We can do this, and we should.”


Although historians often reference World War II as a time of highly productive military-academic relations in the United States—when both the military and higher education worked together as a united front to defend the nation—the militarization of American colleges and universities in the early 1940s was achieved through a process of prewar negotiations and emergency wartime concessions that tested foundational American educational values. In exchange for federal support and government contracts, American higher education aligned itself with a state war program, prioritizing the preparation of male students for active-duty service and civilians for specialized work in defense-based industries.

America’s entrance into war in 1941 oriented American higher education toward martial pragmatism and national survival; accordingly, academic subjects were generally valued for what they could contribute to national defense efforts. The crisis of war fueled a national debate about the purpose of higher education in a democratic nation; the civic function and curricular importance of the liberal arts college and humanist courses became “flashpoints” in these debates. The wartime goal of training civilians and soldiers
to perform specialized, technical work left colleges and universities struggling with how to best integrate non-technical subjects into a practical, defense-oriented curriculum. National leaders disagreed about the practical value of the liberal arts and how much curricular space, if any, should be granted to English studies. However, a wartime national literacy crisis and the military need for communication training helped to secure a place for English instruction in a wartime educational program.

Early in the war effort, widespread military general intelligence testing revealed national literacy deficiencies; hundreds of thousands of men were turned away from military service because they failed to meet eligibility requirements. The literacy challenges during World War II not only brought English instruction into the national limelight, it also shaped the wartime purpose and curricular aims of college English teaching. Anxious to fill induction quotas and to reinforce wartime morale, the Army and Navy leadership endorsed the inclusion of English studies in a wartime curriculum, sanctioning the discipline as an important contributor to a national defense program. Contracted by the U.S. military to teach soldiers how to read, write, and speak to meet shifting military literacy standards, the U.S. Army Specialized Training Program and the Navy Collegiate Training Program programs helped establish the social utility of composition to the state as part of a national defense program. College English teachers used wartime conditions to “promote their field of study and establish newly defined “public” identities (Dorn 114).

This chapter historicizes how postsecondary educational institutions, spearheaded by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the National Committee on Education and Defense (NCED), organized prewar planning and wartime educational and
institutional response during World War II. I argue that the academic response orchestrated by the ACE during the war years is relevant for two reasons. First, understanding the history of the prewar activities and academic planning that proceeded the placement of civilian defense and military programs on college campuses contextualizes the conditions and pressures that teachers of college English faced during World War II. Second, this historical context demonstrates how postsecondary English teachers collectivized to ensure the future of English studies during and after the war.

**World War II and the Practical Turn in American Higher Education**

In an August 1942 report issued by the War Manpower Commission—a federal agency formed in April 1942 to manage the mobilization of labor in industry, agriculture, and the military—Lieutenant General Behon B. Somervell urged university and college administrators to temporarily abandon the teaching of any subject unrelated to the war:

> Every able-bodied boy is destined at the appointed age for the armed services. It is the job of the schools and colleges to provide the opportunity for every youth to equip himself for a place in winning the war. You must do this regardless of cost, time, inconvenience, the temporary side-tracking of non-war objectives, or even the temporary scrapping of peacetime courses . . . every classroom is a citadel.” (“Every Classroom”)

Numerous reports on wartime adjustments at colleges and universities issued by government agencies, professional organizations, and academic institutions from 1942 to 1944 sound a similar refrain. “The President’s Annual Report” in the July 1943 issue of
The Educational Record reports that, “with the rising tempo of the war and its inevitable implications for colleges and universities . . . the first duty of all Americans under present circumstances is to win the war” (Zook 183). The question for American educators remained: what subjects provided the education and training necessary for “winning the war”? What subjects could be abandoned? What subjects had to remain?

Education critic, Porter Sargent, who established a name for himself based on his popular critiques of the American education system, reported in Education in Wartime that:

The universities are hastening to offer practical courses of use in war time. Mathematics is stressed, history, geography, foreign language, science and all types of technical training. The conduct of the war requires particularly knowledges and skills, and the schools and colleges must now supply them. In turning from the humanistic, theoretical and metaphysical to the practical, technical and scientific, the universities are . . . 5 or 10 years late . . . in preparing to make effective use of the nation’s resources, human and material. (46)

Sargent’s criticism—that traditional models of American higher education were outdated and insufficient to shoulder the educational demands required by the war—was echoed in national newspapers and magazines. In a multipage spread detailing the educational curriculum of the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, George Barrett from the New York Times quoted an unnamed naval admiral’s dismissal of the humanities, “When my ship goes into action I don’t care a damn whether my officers can tell a Chopin etude from a Bayeux tapestry, or an iambic pentameter from an aquatint. I want officers who
can navigate ships” (4). Barrett commented that this “famous saying” is “more true today than it ever was,” and approved of the decline in “so-called ‘culture’ subjects” in American schools (4). What had “culture” to do with winning the war?

This was a question that deeply concerned college English teachers who claimed that sensitivity to democratic values was best achieved through prolonged and serious study of great works of literature and language. Whether such sensitivity could be cultivated and realized in a climate of total war was another question. D. R. Angus, the department head of the English department at the University of Tampa, argued that Barrett’s *New York Times* article “presents a point of view too widely held and too reasonable to be dismissed.” (308). His response to Barrett’s article, published in the February 1943 issue of *College English* urged fellow English instructors to respond to the “present nation-wide urge to eliminate all activities not essential to the winning of the war” (308). The first course of action Angus recommends is for college English teachers to “reconsider [. . .] the basic aims and legitimate methods of [college courses in literature]” (308). In a time of war, where academic subjects were measured against a litmus test of national security, what kind of literacy training would best contribute to the nation’s needs?

In his article “Literature and the Practical,” published in *College English* in January of 1942, Gilbert Macbeth argues that college English teachers had not sufficiently answered this question for themselves or for the educational institutions they are employed by and that this indecision would have serious consequences for the future of English education.
Perhaps the most serious form of attack that the literature course in college has had to face in recent years is the one based on the belief that literature is not a practical subject. In view of the tremendous emphasis placed of late upon practical values in life and education, it was inevitable that one college course after another would be put to the test of practicality. Courses in literature have not escaped the general necessity, and it is to be feared that, unless teachers of the subject take pains to elucidate their position more thoroughly than they have done in the past, the future will see a weakening of the function of literature in American education. (406)

Macbeth would go on to argue that the incoherent aims of English education and the lack of agreement on “what may be expected from a study” of literature has made the institutional role of English in college less defensible. He concludes that “if we college teachers feel the pressure in the direction of the practical too keenly for easy resistance, we may in good conscience yield somewhat and begin to give greater prominence to the social implications of our subject” (409). By conceding to the public call for a practical orientation to education, Macbeth suggests that college English teachers are better positioned to defend the value of English studies. In the same breath, however, Macbeth reaffirms the cultural role of college English teachers as “inheritors and guardians of a broad culture,” and suggests that the “primary concern” of college English teachers is to synthesize the liberal arts tradition with the practical demands of the day: “A true humanism . . . will not endure a conflict between two or three approaches to life; it will serve as a peacemaker among them by comprehending them all” (409). Macbeth’s injunction for college English teachers to serve as “peacemakers” reveals the tension
between the social pull for practicality in the face of war and the need for education that would outlast the ongoing national crisis.

Although the idea of a more utilitarian educational model appealed to the American public facing a long-term military campaign, pragmatism, as an educational value, was much older than the war or any singular national crisis. Classical and liberal models of education based on humanist values had been under siege in the United States for over a century by the 1940s, but World War II precipitated a nation-wide educational orientation toward practicality, vocationalism, pragmatism, and specialization. Crowley’s definition of pragmatism as “an action-oriented, forward-looking philosophical orientation that eschews the search for first principles” that emerged in nineteenth-century America, resurfaced in 1940s wartime cries for educational reform (16).

Stanford University’s 1943 report *Education in Wartime and After*, argued that immediate response was necessary to meet the demands of war, but recognized that rapid institutional changes, driven by wartime hysteria rather than long-term academic planning, would have far-reaching and undesirable consequences. The following passage from the report highlights a major tension that educational institutions, and college


21 Nineteenth-century education movements championed pragmatism as a viable competitive educational model to expand educational access to disenfranchised groups and displace classical humanism, which catered to a socially elite, leisured class preparing for the learned professions. An obvious historical example of this is the American land-grant movement. Land-grant schools—established by the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act—were established to promote the agricultural and mechanical sciences and to grant educational opportunity to women and the “industrial classes” (Geiger *American Higher* 586). While not overtly antithetical to the study of classics and liberal education, the Morrill Act emphasized the utilitarian purpose of a college education.
English instructors, faced in this crisis—the immediate need for rapid educational response and academic resistance to becoming a mere cog in the nation’s war machine:

Total war demands the mobilization of the total resources of the country. Just as business cannot continue as usual, education cannot continue as usual. The declaration of war set for the educator the very important and very difficult task of redirecting and reconstructing the educational program. The demands of the war must be given priority over all other educational features, no matter how worthy they are under other conditions . . . The gradualness of change in peacetime must give way to speedy action in war. In this rush, however, when old guide-lines are being forsaken, the educator must be wise in his actions. (v)

With war-conscious rhetoric saturating American educational discourse, the value of higher education in the United States was increasingly defined by its social utility to the state. *Time Magazine* reported Paul V. McNutt of the War Manpower Commission as saying that “[t]here is no excuse for any young man or young woman to be in college preparing for any profession not directly useful to the war effort” (“Every Classroom” 68). The pragmatic orientation brought about by World War II did not pose a serious threat to academic disciplines that had obvious military applications, such as mathematics, engineering, physics and medicine. Instead, the liberal arts, which had once been assumed as a core and defining component of American higher education, was

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22 A note on the use of the term “liberal arts” here is warranted. The terms “liberal education” and “liberal arts” and “liberal arts colleges” are distinct terms which were sometimes used interchangeably in scholarly discourses. The Association of American
placed under institutional and public scrutiny. As one of the keystone academic subjects within the modern humanist tradition, English studies was challenged by the utilitarian values of World War II America.

The Interwar Period: Federalization and Public Definitions of Value

Three decades of social hardships, including an international war, a pandemic, and a severe economic depression resulted in a number of important structural changes to American higher education in the 1920s and 1930s that would later directly impact educational response to the war in the 1940s. U.S. involvement in the war against the Central Powers during World War I may have been relatively short-lived, but nineteen months was more than enough time to demonstrate the devastation war could wreak havoc on the business of higher education. In order to defray the capital and human costs incurred during and after World War I, colleges and universities became increasingly dependent on lines of financial support from the U.S. federal government—a dependence that would only grow stronger during World War II.

Colleges and Universities addresses the usage and connotations of these terms in their introduction to a statement on liberal education issued in April 2020 in response to the COVID-19 outbreak. They note that “liberal arts refers to a specific set of disciplines (the humanities, the arts, and the natural and social sciences).” A liberal arts college is a “type of higher education institution whose curriculum is designed to provide a liberal arts education.” And a liberal education refers to an educational program that “seeks after the truth unencumbered by dogma, ideology, or preconceived notions” and entails a civic component as part of the educational program, and fosters citizenship and social responsibility as a central goal of education. (“Advocacy for Liberal Education,” https://www.aacu.org/advocacy-liberal-education-0)
The federalization of American higher education began in nineteenth-century America, spurred by a number of social and industrial changes, as well as the American Civil War. As predicted by proponents of the 1862 and 1890 Morrill Land-Grant Acts—the first legislative acts to establish a continuous line of federal appropriations for the establishment and maintenance of postsecondary institutions—the federalization of American colleges and universities secured the futurity of publicly funded postsecondary education amid economic and social downturns. It also made institutions of higher education beholden to government interests and public definitions of value, particularly during the early 1940s when the financial solvency of many postsecondary institutions and the academic freedoms they were designed to protect were seriously threatened by war and the militarization of college campuses.

Historian Christopher Loss argues that World War I “precipitated a long period of bureaucratic reinvention—both within the university and between the university and the state” and that the “effects of this new institutional arrangement on the meaning of democratic citizenship surfaced during World War II” (4). Without federal war programs, most colleges and universities may not have survived major losses in human and financial resources that led higher education into what Willis Rudy refers to as a “willing dependency” on contractual agreements with the U.S. military and the federal government (75). But, federalization and the militarization of college campuses in the

23 Rudy reports that by 1945, about 50 percent of the income at men’s colleges came from federal programs and grants (75). Geiger’s more comprehensive analysis of all colleges and universities calculates that federal programs and grants accounted for 36 percent of institutional income in 1943-1944 (American Higher xix).
early 1940s also challenged a model of liberal education in which institutions of higher education were charged with the civic duty of safeguarding intellectual freedom and protecting academic integrity from external social or political pressures.

To carry out this responsibility, institutions of higher education needed to maintain institutional independence and agency and, in the words of education historian Hugh Hawkins, to guard against federal and military “efforts to control educational affairs in the name of national security” (xii). Statements, such as the one offered by W. Howard Pillsbury of the American Association of School Administrators to an audience of thousands of educators, military leaders, and government officials, argued that in a democratic nation, educators should oversee and direct educational affairs, especially during periods of national trouble or crisis. The schools might partner with the military and industry, but should maintain their authority over educational affairs. The primary purpose of education, he observed, was to protect the future of American democracy:

[The schools] accept responsibility for service along with the armed forces and those engaged in the production front behind the line. They do believe, however, that they are founded in order that democracy might survive in this country and that the continued attempt to meet this purpose is essential to the winning of both war and peace. (*Handbook on Education* 264)

Upholding this charge was complicated by higher education’s dependence on federal lines of funding and federal definitions of value. When the crisis of war imposed a single-minded, government interest in national security on the social function of education, U.S.
institutions of higher education had to negotiate the terms of their educational agency while also meeting the civic responsibility of preparing civilians and soldiers for war.

As an extension of this idea, college English departments, and not just the educational institutions that housed them, also had to redefine their relationships to the state through this period of disciplinary reinvention. Skinnell’s research on the relationship between federal funding, regional accreditation, and literacy education shows that as the budgetary proportion of federal funding increased, many postsecondary institutions leveraged or reconfigured writing courses in order to qualify for New Deal federal funding in the 1930s, and later GI Bill funding in the 1940s and research programs in the 1950s. During the war years, adjustments to literature and writing courses were not internally-driven by research-based pedagogy or best practices. Rather, these changes reflected broader institutional compliance with external federal recommendations or with institutional interest in qualifying for funding derived from wartime civilian and military training programs.

Federalization during the interwar period was part of a larger shift in higher education that historian Roger Geiger refers to in *The History of American Higher Education: Learning and Culture from the Founding to World War II* as “mass higher education,” a shift which was marked by a large influx of postsecondary student enrollment rates and new school constructions (428). Between 1915 and 1940, student enrollments in higher education nearly tripled, from 5.5% of all Americans between the ages of 18 and 21 in 1915 to 15.5% in 1940 (Geiger 428). Historians have attributed this growth to a number of factors: a dramatic increase in the number of high school graduates, an influx of student veterans cashing in on military benefits after World War I,
the expansion of junior and urban colleges, a scarcity of employment opportunities after the market crash in 1929, and widespread social purchase in the belief that higher education improved upward social mobility (Adler; Giordano; Geiger; Loss; Ritter).

Despite strong enrollment rates, American colleges and universities were also plagued by dangerously high attrition rates throughout the 1920s and 1930s (Loss 19). Frustrated Americans blamed the number of dropouts on an inefficient curriculum and ill-qualified faculty, demanded institutions of higher education be held to higher standards of public accountability, and urged colleges and universities to cut out any “fads or frills” from the academic curriculum (Congress 3). The Congress for Democracy—a prewar national education conference—was organized specifically to address these “rifts” in public relations and to address the national defense challenges posed by foreign threats to American democracy.

Higher Education Prepares for War: The American Council on Education and the Congress on Democracy

August 1939. Against the backdrop of the Hudson River, Teachers College, Columbia University, hosted what the New York Times described as “probably the most

21 There may have been some merit to public complaints about college hiring and staffing practices. The surge in student enrollments after World War I meant that schools needed more instructors. To meet the demand for more course offerings, universities and colleges internally hired graduate students for part-time teaching positions. The majority of these positions transitioned into full-time positions upon graduation. Ultimately, this practice resulted in academic “inbreeding” with its usual problems of intellectual stagnation and conservatism (Cohen The Shaping 124-133).
significant conference of its kind ever held by an educational institution” (qtd. in Dorn 1). In fact, the Congress for Democracy was one of several notable prewar academic conferences organized by academic associations to align educational and public attitudes about the social utility of higher education and its importance to national defense efforts. Through an appeal to commonplaces about American democracy and civic order, leaders in the higher education community wanted to unify American public opinion “in support of a substantial program of education for democracy” (Congress 7).

Conference organizers recognized that outreach was critical to creating publicly supported prewar educational policies and expanding educational and military programs on college and university campuses. In an effort to reach a disenfranchised public base and to clarify the difficult “conditions confronting educators,” delegates from twenty-eight public organizations “representing all aspects of American life” (Congress 6) were invited to attend the Congress on Democracy and to discuss and define the purpose and value of education in a democratic society.¹⁹ No professional English associations were

invited to represent the position of English educators at the conference. There were, however, a number of prominent attendees selected from the Commission on Liberal Education, the Association of American Colleges, and the ACE who were proponents of the liberal education model. The NCTE would later campaign for better representation of secondary and postsecondary English departments in wartime planning and advisory committees and national academic conferences, such as the Congress on Democracy.

Rumors of war hung heavy in talks at the 1939 Congress for Democracy—like thunderclouds setting down on the horizon. With the memory of World War I still looming in the cultural atmosphere, conference participants discussed defensive preparations and the civic purpose of education not only in terms of machines and men, but also in terms of minds and hearts.22

In his opening statement, William F. Russell, dean of Teachers College and conference chairperson, argued that restoring public trust in American educational institutions, particularly in educators’ abilities to respond to issues of crisis-resolution, was critical to maintaining a strong national defense program and to the future of American democracy. “In modern warfare,” he declared, “the first line of defense lies in our schools and in other means of education. Our teachers, and not the marines, will be the ‘first to fight.’ Just as all countries are now building up their defenses, so we must re-arm in education” (Congress 20). His statement struck a cultural chord; so much so, that

22 Russell writes “We, of the War generation, have seen democracies rise and fall. Where they rose, they were in the hands of brave and hopeful people. Where they fell, they fell through fear and despair . . . when people are left in ignorance, fear conquers hope” (23).
over three-thousand people were reportedly turned away from attending the closing session held at Carnegie Hall (Congress 1).23

According Dorn, the 1939 Congress for Democracy highlights what David Labaree argues is the central tension of the American education system: a tension between “what [Americans] hope society will become and what we think it really is, between political ideals and economic realism . . . between democratic politics (public rights) and capitalist markets (private rights) . . . between political equality and social inequality” (Labaree 41). In his article “Public Goods, Private Goods: The American Struggle Over Educational Goals,” Labaree identifies three competing educational goals that have defined American educational policy and reform: democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility. The goal of democratic equality is for the schools to produce good citizens who are capable of maintaining a democratic system of social and political governance through “citizenship training, equal treatment, and equal access” (44). Labaree writes that “the rationale for the liberal arts is that all members of a free society need familiarity with the full range of that society’s culture” in order to participate as citizens and that the goal of humanist and liberal education is democratic equality (44). Social efficiency, in contrast, positions education as a “public good” that prepares individuals to assume specific social and occupational roles within a capitalist market economy. The goal of social mobility defines education as a private consumer

23 Conference organizers did not, apparently, anticipate the high volume of participants at the Congress. According the conference proceedings, “the attendance at the Congress was gratifyingly large” and required a number of unexpected accommodations, including overflow meetings, loudspeakers, and turning people away.
good that individuals can possess and exchange for “competitive advantage” in pursuing desired social roles (43-50). The educational goals of both social efficiency and social mobility were driven by market inequities and educational movements, such as vocationalism, which are based on a logic of “immense practicality” (48).²⁴

Educational discourse during the interwar period was ambivalent about which of these goals should ultimately guide the academic outcomes and curriculum development of American higher education, resulting in an “incoherent” and “ineffective” vision for educational policy that angered and alienated the American public. This vision was further complicated in the late 1930s by the exigence of an impending international war, a factor that Dorn argues Labaree’s analysis does not sufficiently account for in his threefold model outlining the competing goals that have defined American educational policy.

Dorn argues that national crises—particularly if a crisis involves some kind of a national security threat—shifts the goal of education “away from democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility towards national survival” (7). Unfortunately, Dorn does not define the term “national survival” as an educational goal, beyond his commentary on its relationship to civic education. Because the idea of national survival

²⁴ Laurence Veysey, who has been cited by historians of rhetoric and composition including Maureen Goggin and James A Berlin, describes three “ideals” of American higher education that overlap somewhat with Labaree’s: the research ideal, the liberal culture ideal, and the utility ideal. As Goggin summarizes it, the research ideal is aimed at the “creation of knowledge,” the liberal culture ideal at the “preservation of knowledge” and the utility ideal at the “use of knowledge” (5-6). Veysey argues that American institutions of higher education have held these three ideals in tension, with competing educational policies advancing different ideals since the 1800s.
as an educational goal is pivotal in my analysis of the treatment of postsecondary English education and English departments during World War II, I define national survival as an ideological orientation that employs the military values of practicality, efficiency, and action and the civic values of social responsibility and the sublimation of individual interests to communal or social interests. The educational goal of national survival is for schools to maintain social order and to unify and train citizens to protect and defend the nation against outside threats or attacks until a crisis or the threat of eminent danger has passed.

The declaration of war in 1941 and the ACE’s pledge of the “the total strength of our colleges and universities” (qtd. in Cardozier 6) created a temporary, but powerful rhetorical opportunity that united American schools at all levels in a national defense effort. However, although educators were resolved to support the goal of “national survival,” there was no clear consensus about how this goal could be achieved. The Congress for Democracy is one example of how college administrators and educators responded to the pressures that war imposed on American institutions of higher education by pledging educational support to the cause of national defense, but without a clear directive of how to do so.

Just three weeks after the three-day Congress on Democracy had convened, Germany invaded Poland. President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a state of “limited national emergency” on September 8, sanctioning major military budget increases. The interwar period in the United States was drawing to a close. The U.S. transition into total war was in motion.
The Specter of World War I: Coordinating Defense on American College Campuses

The Congress on Democracy was not an isolated instance of preemptive educational response to the threat of war. Seasoned members of the higher education community, with the benefit of a lengthy institutional memory, regarded the War Department’s ill-timed and overbearing militarization of colleges and universities during World War I as a strategic failure. Christopher Loss observes that “no institution was haunted more by the specter of [World War I] wartime bureaucracy than the modern university . . . Martial imperatives—morning drill, mandatory ‘war issues’ courses, and the presence of army commanders—overwhelmed normal, day-to-day campus operations” (19). Even more troubling than the exchange of classroom exercises for military exercises, was how World War I college administrators and faculty, drunk on the “euphoria of [the First World War],” compromised their ethical and moral commitment to uphold academic standards and protect academic freedom by enforcing a code of strict military support on campus and condoning the dismissal of dissenting faculty voices (Geiger American 424-26).

Timothy Reese Cain’s chapter “For Education and Employment: The American Federation of Teachers and Academic Freedom, 1926-1941,” documents punitive measures taken against faculty members during World War I for “disloyalty” to the United States. Such acts of disloyalty included a failure to buy enough Liberty bonds, leftist political leanings, faculty ties to southeastern and eastern Europe, lackluster responses to public pro-American rallies, failure to implement a “War Issues Course,” and pacifist leanings (70). In 1917, the American Association of University Professors,
an organization established in 1915 to protect professional educators and academic freedom, issued a wartime policy that condoned the dismissal of faculty who were deemed a threat to national security interests. Geiger writes that “the AAUP wartime policy allowed professors less freedom than even the draconian Espionage and Sedition Acts” of the Cold War (History of Higher Education 425).

Nationalism and military support on campus became even more regulated after the draft age was lowered to eighteen on October 18, 1918. Before this point, enlisted male students were furloughed until they completed their coursework and on-campus military training. When the draft was lowered, inducted students became active-duty soldiers and institutions of higher education were put under military control as units of the Student Army Training Corps (SATC). Under the direction of the SATC a number of changes occurred. Academic standards were lowered to accommodate military needs. Campuses moved to a quarter academic calendar, which facilitated the rapid transfer of student soldiers to active military units. Institutions of higher education were told that “during the war you are no longer degree-giving institutions but rather short-course training schools for the specific purpose of preparing officers for the Army and Navy” (qtd. in Navy 20). The changes made to higher education by the SATC were far from

25 On the subject of academic standards, see Willis Rudy’s chapter “The Impact of War on Academic Standards” (pp. 31-33). In Wartime College Training Programs of the Armed Services, a 1948 report sponsored by the ACE, Alonzo G. Grace observes “when there is a war to be won, the end becomes more important than the means to the end. Whatever methods . . . would produce results were the ones used in the college training programs. There were no vested interests to prevent the scrapping of ineffective teaching procedures. There was little opportunity or desire to complain about instruction” (v). This commentary applied to both the teaching practices in effect during World War I and World War II.
sustainable. According to Geiger, were it not for the signing of the Armistice onNovember 11, 1918, the “SATC would have drained the entire male [student] population in 1 year” (The History 426).

The wartime “disloyalty” policies and campus take-over by the SATC in October of 1918 were regarded by some conscientious educators as threats to academic freedom, independent critical thought, and intellectual dissent. In short, as a threat to American democracy itself. The militarization of college campuses was certainly remembered with bitterness and skepticism by certain members of the NCTE, such as E. Estelle Downing. Hook records that Downing developed an early conviction of the immorality of war, especially for its power to harbor prejudice and hatred. This antiwar sentiment carried over in her work as a teacher of English at a normal school in Michigan. Downing argued that intolerance was antithetical to the pluralist values of English teaching, which worked to “lesson combative group loyalties” and “prevent standardization of opinions and beliefs” (qtd. in Hook 63). She believed that literacy instruction could save the United States from future international disharmony, expressing faith in the humanistic tradition as a boon to world peace. In 1925, moved by Downing’s appeals to NCTE to promote a greater degree of international awareness and sensitivity among English teachers, the NCTE established the International Relations Committee, appointing Downing as chairperson. Hook writes that Downing was hopeful that the teaching of English could transcend group loyalties and unite humanity. As chairperson, Downing’s antiwar sentiments influenced the committee’s stance on international relations (Hook 63).

In 1935, the NCTE International Relations Committee drafted a resolution for the Annual Business Meeting of Members on November 29 that specifically addressed the
Council’s position on educational wartime policies. The resolution affirmed the Council’s commitment to peacekeeping policies and its opposition to a national military program:

Those present pledge our support to a thoroughgoing peace policy for the United States and for the world. We are opposed to the war and to the supplying of munitions and all materials that might be used toward the breaking of world peace. We are opposed to the prevailing tendency to militarize the schools and colleges of the nation though the widespread support and expansion of R.O.T.C and other military units and the utilization of high school and college classes for the spreading of war propaganda. (qtd. in Reading the Past 28)

Although the NCTE revoked this position after the Pearl Harbor attacks, those English teachers who had lived through the First World were none too thrilled about a potential renewal of the “disastrous” policies of the SATC.

Still, objectors to the militarization of postsecondary campuses were in the minority. The prevailing opinion among educational leaders in the United States in the late 1930s and early 1940s was that even if the SATC program was flawed and clumsily implemented, the regimented military objectives and the wartime climate instilled students with a sense of civic duty, national unity, and social purpose. As Hawkins observes in his study of American academic associations, “for those envisioning a more centralized, coherent, rationalized society, the war offered an opportunity to line up colleges and universities under the aegis of the War Department’s educational program” (23). No better agent than war for removing academic “excess” from the curriculum.
Faculty generally regarded campus militarization during World War II as an appropriate—even vital—response to the threat of war, but one that required timely and careful academic planning. Even representatives of the ACE, who had “unhappy recollections” of the SATC, reported their belief that “the lessons learned would serve to guide in drafting a different plan” for the future (Wartime College 4).

If anything, the experimental SATC program persuaded college administrators and faculty that early military intervention of academic programs following a national crisis was crucial to a successful collaboration between the U.S. military and institutions of higher education. In Wartime Schools: How World War II Changed American Education, Gerard Giordano argues that “the mistakes that had been made [during World War I] persuaded many individuals that national defense required aggressive preparation” (4). Arguments supporting the full-scale militarization of U.S. education at all levels, including higher education, emerged shortly after Roosevelt’s declaration of a limited national emergency in September of 1939. George F. Zook, president of the ACE wrote in a New York Times’ editorial published on December 31, 1939 that “with a world at war, the end of which no one can confidently predict, education now needs more than ever before to set its house in order” (27).

The American Council on Education and Uncertainty in American Higher Education

Under the leadership of Zook, the ACE campaigned for pre-war adjustments on college and university campuses urging administrators and faculty in higher education to
converse with government and military officials about how U.S. higher education could contribute to national defense efforts.\textsuperscript{25} The Council, which had functioned as “the central agency for coordinating the efforts of higher education with the educational efforts of the federal government” during World War I (\textit{Wartime College} 3), reassumed a leadership role in promoting defense coordination on university and college campuses. In August of 1940, the ACE and the National Education Association, the largest professional organization of U.S. public educators, formed the National Committee on Education and Defense (NCED). This committee would later be adopted as a subcommittee of the Joint Army-Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation, one of the federal bureaucracies which oversaw campus national defense programs.\textsuperscript{26}

On September 16, 1940, Congress passed the Selective Training and Service Act, the first peacetime draft in U.S. history for all men ages twenty-one to thirty-six.

\textsuperscript{25} The ACE has had strong ties to the U.S. military from its founding in 1918. In fact, the Council was originally named the Emergency Council on Education because it was formed to respond to the wartime crises American higher education faced during World War I. According to Linda J. Ebben’s 1982 introduction to the finding aid for the \textit{American Council on Education Archives: 1918-1977}, the ACE focused its research and policy initiatives on issues of national security, international relations, vocational and military training, and civilian impacts of the war during both World War I and World War II (i). During the post-war years, the Council sponsored research on the impact of the war on U.S. higher education. The webpage “Our History” on the current ACE website states that “ACE’s support of the military has been present since the day it was founded during World War II” and details a number of military-related initiatives and veterans causes that the Council has initiated or endorsed. (https://www.acenet.edu/About/Pages/history.aspx)

\textsuperscript{26} Sargent quipped that the large variety of wartime associations, committees, subcommittees, bureaucratic entities, and institutions “with their somewhat confusing similar titles and overlapping purposes afford an opportunity to place men in positions where they feel responsibility” (107). Indeed, the need to collectivize, to meet in groups, to unionize seems to be a byproduct of the mental and emotional effects of war.
Although the draft had a deferment provision for college students who had enrolled in the 1940-1941 academic school year, historian V. R. Cardozier records the sobering effect the passage of this act had on student morale. When college students arrived for the 1940 fall semester, “the campus mood was tense, permeated by a sense of foreboding . . . The war in Europe was becoming increasingly real” (1). Students knew it was only a matter of time before the draft age would be lowered, and they would be called into service. War was even closer to home.

Student reactions to aggressions in Europe and China were mixed—as were student responses to the draft. Although students were encouraged to continue their education before enlisting, this advice was ignored. Patriotic fervor and vocational opportunity were incentives that many students—of all genders—could not easily reject. A shrinking number of students continued to rally for peace and isolationism, denouncing prewar mobilization and defense preparations on campus (Rudy 130).

Whatever their sentiments about the war, fewer students were attending school. Campus enrollments at colleges and universities for the 1941-1942 academic year dropped 9.16% from the previous year (Education in Wartime, Sargent 30). In 1943, the total full-time student enrollment at U.S. colleges and universities dropped from 633,500

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27 W. G. Carr and M. L. Mallam’s article “Effects of the World War on American Education” published in the Feb. 1943 issue of Review of Educational Research found that there was an average 10 percent decrease in college enrollments in the second half of the 1941-1942 school semester. Carr and Mallam findings were based on statistics published by Bureau of Labor Statistics and a study of college enrollments in New York between 1937-1942 conducted by J. Hills Miller and Dorothy V. N. Brooks.
to 373,999 (Rudy 71). Likewise, faculty members were also leaving campus for government posts, industry positions, and military service by the droves. Newsweek described the wartime decrease in faculty and student numbers as the “Exodus from Campus” (qtd. in Sargent 30). A study conducted by Henry G. Badger and Benjamin W. Frazier of the U.S. Office of Education in the fall of 1941, surveyed 1,720 institutions of higher education and collected data from 896. Respondents reported a decrease of 7.5% for male teachers, and a 1.3% increase in female teachers, with even higher increases at liberal arts colleges and state universities. The study notes, though, that these increases are relatively minimal because “number of women involved is not large” (Education for Victory, Jan 1943, pg. 13). By 1944, another study conducted by the U.S. Office of Education reported that a third of teachers in higher education were enlisted in military service or other defense-related industries (Hook 131). Within a year of the authorization of the draft, the number of U.S. troops increased over twelve-fold, growing from 125,000 to 1.6 million strong (Brandt 486).

The editor of the News Letter, Burges Johnson’s reportage of the migration of students and faculty to different areas of the public sector in the May 1942 issue of the

28 The March 1, 1943 issue of Education for Victory also reports a sharp decline, in a report estimating student enrollment numbers at American institutions of higher education between 1939-1943. According to the report, a total of 1,493,203 students were enrolled at postsecondary institutions (including professional, teaching, and vocational schools and junior colleges). This number dropped by an average of 6.6% from the 1939-1940 schoolyear to the 1941-1942 schoolyear, and then by 13.3% in the 1942-1943 schoolyear with an estimated loss of 284,053 students (24). Public schools also reported a decrease of about 6% of student enrollment (24).

29 Sargent writes that “The migration of patriotic professors to Washington in response to the nation’s call, or to be near the spigots, has been a serious drain on college faculties” (41).
News Letter includes a reprint of a 1940 public statement from Roosevelt to McNutt on the importance of maintaining a base population at the colleges and universities:

Reports have reached me that some young people who had planned to enter college this fall, as well as a number of those who attended college last year, are intending to interrupt their education at this time because they feel that it is more patriotic to work in a shipyard, or to enlist in the Army or Navy, than it is to attend college. Such a decision would be unfortunate.

We must have well-educated and intelligent citizens who have sound judgment in dealing with the difficult problems of today . . . Young people should be advised that it is their patriotic duty to continue the normal course of their education, unless and until they are called, so that they will be well prepared for greatest usefulness to their country: they will be promptly notified if they are needed for other patriotic services. (2)

Johnson then observes that college English teachers should convey Roosevelt’s statement to college students and prospective college students who might be considering dropping out of college because of the war. Although he acknowledges that “the number” of students reading The News Letter “is probably zero,” he writes that he felt an obligation to remind students, instructors, and administrators that the continuation of education during the war was essential to the defense of the nation (2). Johnson’s comments throughout the article further suggest that Roosevelt’s statement might be used as justification for “cultural” programs at a time “when young men in our colleges are being
prepared for a mechanized war and when there is an inclination on the part of many over-
impulsive administrators to drop from the program all studies and practices which do not
provide *immediate* training” (2). The primary debate in higher education in the early
1940s was how to appropriately modify the temporal focus of a college education—to
balance educational response to the immediate needs of the country and with educational
foresight toward a postwar future.

**Defense Mobilization on American Campuses**

Between 1940 and 1941, the NCED met regularly with government and military
officials in an effort to wrangle a joint agreement about the wartime aims and objectives
of American higher education. With the passage of the Lend-Lease Act in March of 1941,
public opinion began to shift in support of the U.S. becoming militarily involved in the
war overseas. National educational conferences reflected the changing tide of public
opinion. In February and July of 1941, the ACE organized two additional major prewar
national conferences (comparable in scale to the Congress for Democracy) titled
“Organizing Higher Education for National Defense” and “Higher Education Cooperates
in National Defense.”³⁰ As the conference themes suggest, leaders of higher education

³⁰ Representatives from a number of professional associations attended both
conferences. The associations included the American Association of Teachers Colleges,
American Association of University Professors, Association of American Colleges,
American Association of Junior Colleges, Association of Land-Grant Colleges and
Universities, Association of Urban Universities, National Association of State
Universities, the American Council on Education, the National Catholic Educational
actively considered the role of education to national security, initiated conversations with the military, and looked to the armed services and the federal government for direction in designing programs and educational curricula. Where leaders in the military and higher education had failed to coordinate an effective defense strategy for education in World War I, the ACE was determined to succeed.26

The national conferences focused on the practical challenges of implementing wartime educational policies. Rather than trying to settle ideological and institutional differences between the military and higher education that may have contributed to the breakdown of military-education relations in 1918 and the interwar years, the NCED and the ACE focused on a domestic objective the U.S. military and higher education could both agree on—the defense of American democracy and civic virtue through a practical-
minded approach to education. Zook understood that if the United States declared war, the militarization of postsecondary schools was inevitable. By soliciting U.S. government and military leaders through a process of ongoing and extended discussions, the ACE hoped to renegotiate the terms under which American higher education would be militarized.

One of the ACE’s priorities was wartime faculty retention, which had been a major problem at colleges and universities during World War I. In partnership with the Office of War Information and the Office of Education, the ACE reached faculty through official government publications, such as *Education for Victory*, a biweekly wartime publication distributed by the Office of Education to over 60,000 U.S. schools from March 1942 to June 1945, to convince faculty that staying put was the best way to support the war.31

A statement prepared by the Commission on Teacher Education and the ACE and printed in the June 15 issue of *Education for Victory* in 1942, pleaded with postsecondary teachers not to leave academic work for vocational or military service, but to instead actively engage in defense preparations on campus. “We know what happened to teaching during the last war,” the statement warns, “Then experienced teachers were

31 The U.S. Office of Education’s official monthly journal publication, *School Life*, which was “inaugurated . . . to meet the pressing war and educational needs” of World War I, was reissued as *Education for Victory* during World War II (“Education for Victory” 1). Although U.S. Commissioner of Education, John Studebaker claimed that the journal’s name change was made in order “to meet as adequately as possible the new situation brought by World War II.” (1) the change signals a desire on the part of the Office of Education Wartime Commission to distance itself from any unpleasant associations with the War Department’s handling of campus militarization during World War I.
drawn away by the tens of thousands, many to the armed forces, far more to industry. Then too, college enrollments fell sharply, and with them the supply of well-prepared new teachers” (4). If the prospect of higher education was bleak during the first World War, American education, the article suggested that educators faced an even more imminent crisis. “If we do not act wisely and at once, past errors will be multiplied” (4). However, academic associations hoped that early crisis intervention and participation in academic planning would allow institutions of higher education to avoid the errors of the past: to uphold their civic role as centers of learning while also fulfilling the national need to educate and train citizens and soldiers for total war.

Early efforts to mobilize for war varied by academic institution; support for prewar civilian training programs among administrators and faculty accelerated after the passage of the peacetime draft. An article published by E. D. Whittlesey in July of 1941 reports that in a national study of one hundred representative colleges, “only one out of the 100 has neither a committee nor a special activity devoted to national defense” (qtd. in Sargent 160). Defense mobilization at colleges and universities included organizing internal defense committees, responding to diminishing student enrollment and faculty numbers, expanding campus Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) programs, and teaching government-funded, technical courses through “experimental” civilian defense training programs (Cardozier; Herve; Giordano; Neiberg; Dorn). The first issue of Education for Victory, acknowledged that “long before the declaration of war by the

United States against the Axis powers, the higher education institutions of this country were making adjustments of various kinds to meet such an emergency” (19). Most of these adjustments were related to technical and specialized work, which was a major point of focus in the ACE’s negotiations with the federal government and the military, especially in their advisory capacity to the War Manpower Commission. Although the ACE did have a vested interest in protecting the continuation of the liberal arts and the humanist tradition, Zook recognized that his entry point to the military would be through campus resources and courses that met immediate military needs.

Convinced that the United States would need more technical specialists and engineers to support the war effort than U.S. colleges and universities were capable of producing in a traditional four-year curriculum, John W. Studenbaker, the U.S. Commissioner of Education, was charged with developing on-campus training programs designed to address these technical gaps in U.S. defense industries. Congress quickly approved funding for Studenbaker’s proposed defense programs at approved colleges and universities, subsidizing the cost of teaching and research for academic departments that could support wartime research programs, such as engineering and physics, while other departments, such as English, did not receive any additional government monies and had to rely on traditional revenue sources for funding.

The Pennsylvania State College, for example, began offering Engineering Science and Management Defense Training courses in January 1941; the program was sponsored

by the U.S. Office of Education’s Engineering Defense Training Program. By September 1941, one-hundred and nine ESMWT courses had been offered through the Penn State University Park and extension campuses (Bezilla “From Depression”). The University of Wyoming likewise authorized the formation of a Civil Aeronautics Authority Pilot Training Course in 1939 to train pilots and generate interest in aeronautics for defense purposes. Like the ESMWT program at Penn State, the aeronautics program grew in scale as demand required it and continued through the duration of the war (Clough 10). The effect of these civilian defense programs was to show to the American public that American higher education was not an intellectual hideout from the war, but a facility where civilians could gain valuable training that would allow them to make meaningful and practical contributions to the war.

Localized adjustments set the stage for later large-scale conversion of campuses into defense training programs, but the federal government had yet to define and situate these changes as part of a broader national defense plan for higher education.

27 Both Penn State and the University of Wyoming illustrate how campuses evolved to support a strong military presence between 1942 and 1945. As land-grant institutions, both schools had existing ROTC programs and a commitment to educational outreach to local communities. This historic commitment to service-based educational outreach contributed to the success of civilian training courses. The extension program at Penn State, in particular, was a strategic site for militarization because its extension campuses could reach many rural populations across the state of Pennsylvania. In fact, Penn State was one of only two schools that had military training programs from all branches of the armed forces: Army, Navy, and Army Air Forces. Schools like Penn State and University of Wyoming already had the campus resources and infrastructure to quickly implement additional military programs.
The United States Goes to War

December 7, 1941 changed everything. “When the blow fell on Pearl Harbor,” Emory Holloway, a literary scholar, wrote in CE in April of 1943 that it “rocked the values on every campus” ("The American” 421). Isolationism, which had so profoundly influenced public opposition to the war only a few months prior, almost entirely vanished. College students—who had orchestrated rallies for peace across the nation, opposed the renewal of the Selective Service Act, and had petitioned President Roosevelt to maintain political neutrality just months before—were shocked by the Pearl Harbor attacks (Rudy 42). “The implication for college men was clear,” Cardozier writes, “they would sooner or later likely be called to military service with the specter of combat and possibly death looming in their future. Most were quiet and unsure of what to do or think” (3). Whatever embers of the campus anti-war activism had outlasted the wartime winds of change, cooled almost overnight.28

In response to the Congressional declarations of war on December 8 and 11 of 1941, the NCED and the U.S. Office of Education organized a two-day historic war conference to be held in Baltimore, Maryland on the third and fourth of January. The name of the conference was simply titled “Higher Education and the War.” A flood-tide of over one thousand participants, from university presidents to faculty members, to speakers from the U.S. Armed services, to civic representatives from the Office of

28 Willis Rudy marks 1936 and 1937 as the years that student antiwar activism was at its height, as internal splintering between the groups started to shackle up the anti-war movement, mostly occupied by pacifists and socialist students (127).
Civilian Defense, gathered together to learn what was expected from institutions of higher education now that the United States was officially at war. One result of the conference was a sixteen-part pledge to the President of the United States and the American people to offer the “total strength of our colleges and universities” to “determine how colleges and universities might best serve the war effort” (qtd. in Cardozier 6). Among the issues discussed at the conference were selective service and deferments, training requirements for service personnel, strategies that could be drawn from the militarization of colleges during World War I, and the necessity of higher education to the preservation of democracy.

Confident that American higher education could contribute to the success of the U.S. military campaigns abroad, morale among the Baltimore conference participants was high despite the serious topic of discussion. College administrators and faculty expected after pledging solidarity to the cause of national defense, the armed services and government agencies would quickly roll out defined educational goals, defense contracts, or research programs—in short, that the military would issue its orders for higher education.

Disappointingly, months passed without any military or federal responses to the Baltimore resolutions. Frustrated members of the NCED complained on July 15 at a conference, also held in Baltimore, on higher education and the war of about one hundred university presidents that the “lack of any adequate, coordinated plan for the most effective utilization of higher education toward the winning of the war” was a sign of bad faith on the part of the government (Hawkins 148). Even students were frustrated. The Harvard Crimson reported on July 24, 1942 that:
Only the colleges possess the facilities necessary to train the mass of experts needed on all fronts, but after six months there are still no national directives . . . Individual colleges have spurred on ahead of the rest, but what is needed is not a ‘Yale plan’ or a ‘Harvard plan’ but a national plan with federal directives aimed at the fullest utilization of the human and material resources of the American colleges. (“Give Us”)

Campus agitation for clear educational directives from the federal government did little to speed bureaucratic responses regarding the creation of military training programs at colleges and universities, although the War Manpower Commission did create a special subcommittee in July of 1942 on higher education to review the Baltimore resolutions and recommendations from the Office of Education. Though the WMC was slow in its response, it was also reluctant to relinquish control over the creation of military training programs at institutions of higher education. As Herge observes “The WMC continued to be obdurate in its stand! It would not relinquish its control to any other agency of government. It and it alone would be responsible for developing a unified plan for college programs!” (Navy 18). Eventually, the Army and Navy Personnel Board “invited the ACE to appoint a committee on the Relationship of Higher Education to the Federal Government” comprised of university presidents and chaired by Edmund E. Day, President of Cornell University (Navy 18). The committee proved instrumental in moving plans for campus militarization forward, but it had only a limited advisory role.

In *Wartime College Training Programs of the Armed Services*, a study sponsored by the ACE to better understand the impact of military campus training programs on
American education, Henry C. Herge, the primary author, refers to the period between September of 1939 (when Roosevelt declared a limited national emergency) to the rollout of the ASTP and Navy V-12 programs in the spring semester of 1942 as “the period of uncertainty for higher education” (Wartime College 6).

Sargent argued that the federal government and the U.S. military were not entirely to blame for the “confused situation” that institutions of higher education found themselves in after war broke out. According to a May 1941 article written by Frederick Redefer, Director of the Progressive Education Association, departmental tribalism at colleges and universities and infighting among members of academic associations “bogged down” and contributed to the confused position that higher education found itself in (qtd. in Sargent 95). However, there is little to suggest that academics were not doing all that was in their power to mobilize for war.

One major change, following the Baltimore conference, was that almost all U.S. postsecondary institutions converted to quarter or all-year calendars. The first issue of Education for Victory discussed the accelerated curriculum at universities including Yale, Michigan, Harvard, Indiana, Bowdoin, Chicago, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island State College, as examples of how to “permit students to graduate or finish their courses considerably earlier than usual” (13), noting that “many other universities and colleges are beginning to report adjustments in their programs similar to those above.

34 Herge also referred to the 1940s as the “period of vacillation” (Navy 1).
35 The move to an accelerated calendar system was one of the sixteen resolutions passed at the Baltimore conference.
36 One interesting exception to the push for accelerated education was Simmons College, a women’s college, which reportedly “rejected the ‘speed up’ program” because women’s colleges faced unique challenges in a wartime climate (Education for Victory, vol. 1, no. 1, 3 Mar. 1942, pp. 31).
Additionally, colleges and universities cooperated with the armed forces, allowing enlisted reservists to continue their education until they were called into active duty. More drastic measures would have to be made in the future, but educational administrators resolved to do what they could until they received further directives from the federal government.

**Military Shortages and a Wartime Literacy Crisis**

In the midst of these educational and institutional preparations for war and the militarization of college campuses, the Army made an important discovery that raised the stakes of educational debates about the curricular importance of reading and writing to a national defense program. According to Deborah Brant, the U.S. Army did not pay much attention to literacy rates in 1940 and 1941, when the United States was still a sympathetic, but neutral party to the Nazi aggressions in Europe. Conservatism ran deep through army leadership and policies. Historian Geoffrey Perrett describes the state of the U.S. Army in the early forties as “enough to inspire despair” (35); army equipment was embarrassingly outdated and, according to Perrett, so was the thinking of Army leadership (36). Considering the fact that the Army still had a horse and cavalry unit (and obtained Congressional funding to expand a second unit), it is little wonder that when drafted men arrived at induction stations to be screened for intelligence and literacy in compliance with the peacetime Selective Training and Service Act in 1940, the Army basically “recycled” literacy tests from World War I (Brandt 486). The standard of literacy had been defined by the U.S. Census in 1940 as meeting a fifth-grade level of
reading and writing and the Army used this standard as the basis for their examinations (Clifford 475).

Rapid expansion and mobilization of the armed forces between required widespread general intelligence screening which, in turn, exposed national literacy deficiencies. Within the first few weeks of 1942, it became alarmingly clear that illiteracy would likely prove to be a barrier to fulfilling induction quotas. On May 29, 1942 President Roosevelt announced that 433,000 otherwise fit men, were unable to engage in military service because they were not functionally literate (“From Crisis” 153). In her article “From Crisis to Crisis,” Varnum argues that the idea of functional literacy, which “related literacy to a person’s occupation by requiring that he be able to read and write sufficiently well to perform the job that was expected of him,” was a wartime innovation (153). The Army’s educational directives to produce men and women who could “communicate clearly and accurately in any media” and “understand the orders they give as well as the orders they receive” in “clear, forcible English” set the ideological standard of what it meant to be functionally literate in the military (“Later” Herzberg 9).

Roosevelt’s announcement raised a national fear that illiteracy, particularly among the poor and colored peoples of the United States, could potentially cost the nation the war. In Education in Wartime, faculty from the Stanford School of Education specifically addressed illiteracy as a wartime issue that English teachers should address. “It is a disgrace to our great nation,” they write, that army camps have found it necessary to set up schools to teach the men who are to defend democracy how to read and write. The NEA [National Education Association] Research Division reports in Schools and the 1940 Census that 76
per cent of the Negro selectees and 11 per cent of the white selectees in an army camp near Washington D.C. were found to be functionally illiterate. The director of the Civilian Conservation Corps reported in 1941 that 5 per cent of the young men in the CCC “were totally unable to read and write when they entered the Corps, and a much higher percentage are functionally illiterate.” (186)

The fact that white, middle-class soldiers were drafted into service, while persons of color, immigrants, and poor whites were exempted because of educational disparities bothered some liberal educators; members in the educational community both inside and outside of profession of English teaching argued that English teachers redouble their efforts to eliminate illiteracy with all due speed. Ethel Spilman, President of the Harrisburg chapter of the Virginia State Teachers Association, wrote “the schools must immediately set about to eradicate the illiteracy that has kept more than a million willing young men from serving the armed forces of their country. This personnel, if it were only educated, could constitute an army able to turn the tide in the military side in any way” (Education for Victory, Nov 1, 1943, Vol. 2, No. 9, 29). Of course, an immediate eradication of illiteracy was impossible, because literacy is a socially-defined construct and is, therefore, beholden to complex social and economic forces that cannot be easily reduced to a univariate solution.

A number of articles published in scholarly English teaching periodicals articulated the complexity of the challenge to reduce nation-wide illiteracy. Paul Farmer, an English teacher at Boys’ High School in Atlanta Georgia, argued that the literacy crisis was representative of deeper philosophical and structural problems in American education. War only brought these entrenched inequalities to light. He described the 1942
literacy crisis as a kind of a karmic reaction to educational disparities U.S. taxpayers and legislators had consciously chosen. Americans who had disproportionately invested state-funding to white schools and white education as a matter of course, particularly in states where Jim Crow laws were in force, had lower induction rates, while more liberal states were absorbing the costs of these social and civil injustices. “White boys in Georgia,” he writes, “have paid in blood for the differences that exist in Negro and white salaries in Georgia. Californians and New Yorkers have paid in blood for inequalities in teacher salaries in their states compared to teacher salaries in Mississippi” (“Making Physical” 148). Farmer observes that draft rejections for educational (literacy) deficiencies was 2.3% in the twelve U.S. states with the highest teacher salaries, while rejection rates were 11% in the twelve states with the lowest teacher salaries. He concludes that “national literacy can be attained only by the federal government’s assisting in equalizing educational opportunities for all children in the United States” (150).

Carrie Belle Parks also laid the literacy crisis at the feet at the American education system, although she was primarily concerned with inadequate teacher training and uneven teaching salaries across the United States. In her 1943 article “Quality Verses Quantity Production of English Teachers,” she argues that investing in English education could have prevented the wartime literacy crisis:

38 Parks, Carrie Belle. Quality Verses Quantity Production of English Teachers” (CE, vol. 4, No. 8, May 1943, 499-503)
Can our colleges remain unconcerned when fifteen divisions of drafted men are lost to defense through illiteracy? The problem is not confined to regions or to certain grade levels, for the groups were widely distributed as to geography and school experience. Better teaching would have reduced the number; better prepared English teachers would have provided more efficient classroom instruction; and for the future, a larger endeavor on the part of college English departments will secure a better education for English teachers to come” (499).

These educational challenges required long-term solutions that would not resolve the Army’s immediate need to fill induction quotas. The Army could not do much about teacher training or the equitable distribution of educational funds in American schools, but it could do something about its eligibility requirements. Despite racist and discriminatory military policies that barred African-Americans from entry and rank advancement, particularly in combat positions, in a segregated military, the Army reluctantly began pressing the black community for military service and manpower. And so, as Brandt writes, “a new [literacy] standard emerged” in the form of a Visual Classification Test and a policy change that increased in the percentage of illiterates who could be inducted into the Army from 5 to 10 percent (486). Brandt suggests that this change was designed to specifically target black Americans and other minority populations who were disproportionately affected by intelligence screening standards.

However, this decision introduced a new problem in 1942 and 1943. The critical mass of enlistees was still falling far short of quotas and shortages in enlistment rates were reaching alarming levels; at the same time communication systems, organizational
units, and weaponry were increasingly sophisticated and required technical or specialized training and high literacy skills. The war raised a new and higher standard of literacy. An article about aviation cadet programs in *Education for Victory*, offers one example of the reading skills expected of interested incoming cadets.

The aviation cadet be able to read intelligently from Army manuals, technical manuals, texts, and other sources, and understand what he reads. In addition to a knowledge of individual words, he must understand sentences and paragraphs, be able to pick out the central thought or essential idea in a passage . . . Aviation is a complex subject, and the aviation cadet must be able to educate himself in this field through his own reading and study. (“Qualification” 30)

Messaging that emphasized the importance of well-developed literacy skills was common in recruitment materials and wartime educational discourses targeted toward young adults.

As the war continued, the armed forces faced a real dilemma. Functionally illiterate soldiers required additional training and could potentially slow or jeopardize military operations. Illiteracy was a costly risk-factor. At the same time, raising the literacy standard meant that even fewer men would qualify for service. The military never really resolved this problem. “In the space of five years,” Brandt writes, “what counted for literacy—or enough literacy changed six times” (486). The need for improved literacy education quickly became recognized as an important educational priority in the cause of national defense.
Military Leaders Affirm the Relevance of English Studies to the War Effort

Both Knox and Stimpson issued brief written statements affirming the relevance of college English instruction to the war effort. Extracts of these letters, included below, were addressed to the CEA in May 1942 shortly after Roosevelt’s announcement, and circulated among CEA members in the September 1942 issue of the News Letter. Knox’s letter cordially thanks the CEA for its correspondence and directly addresses the question of what English teachers can do to support the war effort:

As you suggest, the war-time value of scientific or vocational studies in our schools and colleges is obvious. Competent training in such curricula leads to a variety of immediately useful services under the administration of the Navy Department both in shore stations and on ships at sea.

Much less obvious is the present need in the Navy for competence in the use of the English language. And yet I would go so far as to say that the ability to use clear, concise and forceful English in speech and in writing underlies and reinforces efficiency in all any and all branches of the Naval Service . . .

In view of these considerations I shall be obliged if you will convey to the members of your Association my very hearty endorsement of their mission in the National War Effort and my no less genuine appreciation of their spirit in conceiving and carrying out this valued contribution. (2)
Stimson’s succinct statement likewise affirmed the Army’s interest in maintaining foundational courses, such as freshman English, in wartime education. Like Knox, he argues that college English teachers should focus on clarity of expression and style. His letter is as follows:

I can appreciate your concern as to the effect of the War Effort upon the courses of study in colleges. In general, what is required is not necessarily a reduction of effort on basic studies, such as English, but rather a vastly increased emphasis on those studies having a special bearing on our War Effort.

In war, as in peace, the ability to report facts and to express ideas clearly is an important attribute of the leader in every field of action. Teachers of English have a very real contribution to make in developing and encouraging that ability. (2)

It is important to note that these letters of endorsement did not approve of English instruction wholesale, per se, but rather a specific aspect of English instruction that directly served a clear, utilitarian purpose. Unlike statements produced by the NCTE or CEA that articulated the wartime aims of English education, Stimson and Knox were silent about the “cultural” advantages of language instruction and were reasonably concerned with improving the communication skills of the troops.
Campus Military Training Programs

While the literacy crisis created a bedeviling logistical challenge for the armed forces, the lowering of the draft age to eighteen on November 13, 1942 put enormous pressure on U.S. colleges and universities to close in on an agreement with the Army and Navy about how to utilize colleges and universities for national defense—just as it had in October of 1918. With the armed forces and higher education essentially competing for the same student demographic, implementing an actionable plan for campus military programs became imperative. At the behest of the ACE, Roosevelt wrote to Secretary of the Army, Henry L. Stimson, and Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, on October 15, 1942 to assess or tap into the resources offered through colleges and universities. His letter reads:

Please have an immediate study made as to the highest utilization of American colleges . . . in view of the undoubted facts that the drafting of boys . . . will greatly deplete all undergraduate enrollment . . . It may be advisable to call in . . . a number of leading educators from state universities, large private universities, and the smaller colleges. There is an enormous amount of equipment in colleges . . . which the Army and Navy may be able to use without great change” (qtd. in Keefer “The Birth” 2)

An investigation was hastily carried out, propelled by Roosevelt’s presidential nudging and ongoing pressure from the ACE. On December 12, 1942, the U.S. Army and Navy jointly announced their plans for partnering with higher education to implement the Army
Specialized Training Program (ASTP) and the Navy Collegiate Training Program (commonly known as the Navy V-12 program). Additional campus training programs were later developed and implemented by different branches of the armed forces throughout the war, but were even more short-lived than the ASTP and V-12 programs. The stated purpose of these programs was to utilize college and university resources to train inductees for specialist work or to prepare them for officer candidacy.

In return for the services rendered by higher education, the armed services would pay trainee tuition and help rebalance student enrollments which had been depleted by the war. The ACE approved the plan, but expressed some reservations about the practical reduction of liberal and humanist education in these programs.

**Standardized Testing and Military Screening in the ASTP and V-12 Programs**

Acceptance into the ASTP or V-12 programs was contingent upon high performance scores on the Army General Classification Test or the Qualifying Test for Civilians developed by the U.S. Armed Forces and the College Entrance Examination Board. The exams, which were developed by psychologists to objectively evaluate the mental and emotional intelligence levels as well as the leadership potential of enlisted men, were essentially updated versions of variations on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Test (IQ test).\(^{39}\) Standardized testing, both in 1918 and 1942, promised to help the

\(^{39}\) The armed services developed a battery of tests used to screen men and women enlisted into service, including the Minimum Literacy Test, Basic Test Battery, and
military solve the vexing logistical problem of getting the right men into the right classrooms in order to maximize military manpower.

The use of standardized tests for military screening and placement purposes in the SATC during World War I demonstrated the potential value of mass testing programs for nonmilitary applications in higher education. Educators continued ongoing research into objective testing during the interwar period. For example, in 1926 the College Board developed the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which is still used by U.S. colleges and universities today. Although standardized testing showed promise as an educational tool that could be used for mass testing, it was not until the development of the first automatic test scanner in 1936—which could detect pencil marks—that standardized tests became a measurably faster method for assessment (Fletcher). Advancements in mass testing during the 1920s and 1930s, including the development of grading technology increased confidence in the use of standardized tests for military and educational applications during the Second World War.

According to Norbert Elliot’s history of writing assessment in the United States, *On A Scale*, the attack on Pearl Harbor initiated a full-scale national push for colleges and universities to adopt the SAT as the standard college entrance examination. Less that twenty-four hours after news of the Pearl Harbor attack broke, the college presidents of Princeton, Yale, and Harvard announced several wartime modifications to the admissions Officer Qualification and Officer Classification Tests. Brandt’s article “Drafting U.S. Literacy” provides a detailed historical overview of the literacy standards used by the Army to screen men in World War II.
process. First, they announced an adjustment to their examination schedules, allowing students to take the College Entrance Examination Board’s entrance exam in April in order to facilitate early admissions. Students would be notified about their admissions status in May so that they could enroll in the summer courses offered through the new yearlong, accelerated schedule. The new April examination format consisted of the SAT and objective achievement tests; the three-hour comprehensive English essay examination, which had been used since 1900 as basis of the entrance examination, was eliminated (Elliot 99-100). Almost all of the students who had signed up for the College Board’s June examinations opted to take the objective examination in April. Following this major announcement, several other academic institutions also opened up the April exams for their students.

Ostensibly, the change to objective testing was driven by the time-sensitive needs of students, who might only have one or two semesters to attend college before getting drafted into military service. But standardization through objective testing during World War II was also driven by administrative interests in saving resources and money. Assessing essays was time-consuming and required experienced readers and writers. Whereas the cost to grade the June 1941 essay examination was $40,744, the 1942 April objective examination only cost $7,659 to grade (100). Moreover, according to Elliot, research conducted during the 1930s on writing assessment suggested that the College Board’s comprehensive English examination was not a reliable standard for intelligence or academic achievement (111). The combination of a decreased confidence in the essay format of the older versions of the exam and the dramatically decreased costs of the
objective exam justified the new testing format as a welcome solution to the nearly universal financial challenges facing institutions of higher education in 1942.

The discontinuation of the comprehensive English exam in 1942 was far from a direct attack on the field of English studies, especially because the SAT achievement tests still included a writing component, but it was one of a growing number of changes that marked a shift in the outlook of educators during the war years. Unsurprisingly, some college English teachers objected to the College Entrance Examination Board’s abandonment of the comprehensive English examinations; these objections were readily dismissed. After all, “with a war on,” college administrators argued that an expensive alternative “was not worth the effort” required to maintain an academic tradition that had potentially outlived its use-value (qtd. in Elliot 112). The College Board’s endorsement of the SAT as a pragmatic solution to the U.S. military’s demand for speeding up higher education is one example of the practical turn of 1940s American higher education in a climate of total war.

In contrast to the essay test format, the military also favored the “objective,” multiple-choice test format as a more efficient and accurate method for determining

40 The comprehensive English examinations were later reinstated, after the war had revealed national literacy deficiencies. This change was documented in the “News and Notes” of the December 1943 issue of CE. The article reads as follows: “In April 1943, over ten thousand students took the English composition test of the College Entrance Examination Board. This figure is nearly double the number of those who wrote the comprehensive English examination in 1941 . . . Its presence among the achievement tests should serve at once to prevent the decrease of attention paid to writing in schools . . . The new calendar of four tests a year will accommodate freshmen who wish to enrol (sic) for any of the three or four terms of the present all-year college schedule” (160; CE, vol 5, no. 3 Dec 1943, pp 160-163).
military placements on college campuses and in the field. The armed services main concern was to mobilize men quickly, efficiently, and effectively. Standardized tests offered a systematic method for streamlining this process.

The U.S. military offered national testing programs to inductees, enlists, ROTC students, and reservists in their final year of high school or within the first three years of their college education (Fifty 5-6). According to historian Louis Keefer, these tests were advertised nationally through popular media, such as radio, magazines, and newspapers (“Exceptional” 376). Students who were accepted into the ASTP or V-12 programs were expected to perform as well or better on these exams than candidates applying for officer candidate schools. Those who passed their qualifying exams would be earmarked for an interview with a military recruitment officer, which would complete the final screening process.

George S. Wykoff, an associate professor of English at Purdue who served as an ASTP basic writing instructor, critiqued the test design of the Army General Classification Test in his article “Army English,” published in 1945. He argued that the exam design often failed to appropriately determine student placement in its required writing courses. Because there was “no attempt to section Army students according to training and intelligence” (“Army English” 338) beyond the initial screening, Wykoff argued that many advanced students were unnecessarily required to take basic writing courses, while other students were unprepared for the coursework. The range of writing experience among ASTP students made it difficult for instructors to determine appropriate pacing for the required course content. Wykoff concluded that “our normal
way of sectioning students is more satisfactory” (338) and would help the army better meet its program objectives.

However, the army was not particularly interested in modifying qualifying exams or curricula based on disciplinary best practices or recommendations, especially if the existing programs were functional. Higher education and the military were united in the common goal of protecting and defending the nation; this goal, however, did not assuage educators’ concerns about how the military approached educational problems. Nor did it necessarily result in making the military more receptive to educational input into the program design of campus military programs.

The military classification and achievement tests were created with efficiency and rapid screening in mind. From the army’s perspective, although the initial screening process might create additional work for teachers, design failings in the qualifying tests did not compromise the broader objectives of the ASTP. The goal of the program was not to train professional writers or literary critics, but soldiers who could communicate clearly and effectively. And even the objective of teaching clear communication skills was regarded by most military instructors as less important than the technical training offered through the ASTP.

The armed services continued to use classification tests for placement evaluations. Elliot estimates that 600,000 men took qualifying tests for ASTP and V-12 programs
before the test was discontinued in April of 1945 (118). Of those who took the exams roughly 325,000 trainees would be accepted into and complete the programs.41

The ASTP and V-12 Curricula

The first ASTP courses began in March of 1943 with V-12 courses beginning in July of the same year. Due to a critical shortage of infantry in 1944, the U.S. Army discontinued the ASTP program in March of 1944. The Navy V-12 program lasted for the duration of the war with the last trainees graduating in June of 1946. Although the duration of the ASTP and V-12 programs were short-lived, as Sharon Crowley observed, the programs had both immediate and long-term effects on “the way things are done on American campuses” and in college English classrooms (156).

One of the flashpoints in critical discussions about the ASTP and V-12 curricula was how to integrate non-technical subjects into a technically-oriented educational program. Because many of the academic consultants who advised the military were strongly committed to the liberal arts colleges and a liberal arts tradition, they were troubled by the military’s utilitarian view on education that privileged scientific and technical subjects “at the expense” of the humanities (Navy-12 28). Accordingly, they urged the Army and Navy to reconsider the importance of cultural subjects to a military practicum. Unlike physics or engineering, English courses were designed to instill and

41 Keefer estimates that 200,000 trainees completed training through the ASTP at 227 institutions of higher education. The V-12 program had roughly 125,000 sailors and marines at 131 schools (“Exceptional” 375).
reinforce cultural values. It was not enough, liberal arts proponents argued, to teach a soldier to fight; the purpose of education was to first teach him *why* he should fight and *what* he was fighting for.

The rationale for this position is based upon an ideal of liberal education—of producing good citizens. From this perspective, good citizenship included answering the civic duty of military service for the duration of the war, but also preparing for a post-war future. In other words, the educational goal was to produce “enlightened” citizens first, soldiers second. Military officials, on the other hand, were operating from the assumption that higher education, like every other major social institution in the country, should work towards the aim of national survival. They maintained that the goal of the military training programs was first and foremost to prepare men for war, and not to educate men for personal enrichment, civic participation, or democratic engagement in a post-war world. In other words, the educational goal was to produce soldiers first, citizens second.

The ASTP included a number of tracks in engineering, professional fields such as medicine and dentistry, and foreign languages. The engineering and professional programs included three twelve-week terms of instruction (approximately nine months) in basic coursework, including English, history, and geography, and one to four terms (three to twelve months) in advanced coursework in mathematics, physics, and engineering. According Wykoff, there were 84 periods of class instruction in English in the ASTP program, or roughly the equivalent of just under two regular academic semesters (339). The V-12 program was organized into six to eight, sixteen-week terms of instruction, depending on the area of specialization selected by a candidate. During the freshman year, students were required to complete coursework in mathematics, English,
physics, engineering, naval organization, physical training, and a course on the historical background of World War I and World War II. The second and third years were divided into eight tracks of specialization. The fourth year only included five tracks: civil engineering, construction, three types of engineering specialists (*The Navy* 5-13). There were 96 periods of classroom instruction in English (two terms, English 1 and English 2), with each class period lasting for 50 minutes. Since the goal of the program was for participants to eventually complete an academic degree in their selected fields of study and for participants to receive academic credit for their coursework, the organization of the V-12 program did not deviate significantly from a traditional academic bachelor’s degree.

ASTP and V-12 trainees were under military discipline and expected to conform to military standards in and out of the classroom. The program schedule was rigorous and demanding. According to Keefer, the typical workweek for the ASTP and V-12 programs was divided into four areas of focus: classroom instruction (24 hours), required study hall (24 hours), military instruction (5 hours) and physical instruction (6 hours) (*Scholars in Foxholes* 6). Classes were held six days a week, with many institutions offering courses as early as 7:30 in the morning to 11:00 in the evening—a schedule that was mentally and physically demanding for both enlistees and instructors (Keefer “The Birth” 6). In

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43 Candidates studying to become Navy chaplains took advanced courses in English. Specific references to pre-chaplain candidates are not addressed by any of the journal articles in the scholarly periodicals I evaluated, but because the Navy allowed their candidates to participate in civilian classes, instructors may not have felt a need to specifically identify these candidates among students enrolled in advanced coursework.
Wartime College Training Programs of the Armed Services, Herge estimates that students enrolled in military training programs spent around 8.5 hours a day during academic work and 1.5 hours a day participating in military drills and physical training (54). According to Herge, about 25% of academic work was spent on lectures, 25% on recitations and quizzes, 35% on supervised study, 10% on free study, and 5% on laboratory work (Navy 54).

The eccentricities and strict protocols of the military were sometimes disruptive to a productive learning environment. In a descriptive report titled “Military English at Georgia Tech,” published in the April 1944 issue of the SAB, Andrew J. Walker noted with some annoyance that “some of the demands made by the Army were not conducive to good teaching.” His list of grievances against the Army includes: 1) the requirement that students “rise and stand at attention” whenever they speak, 2) the frequent army inspections to ensure that students are following the “rise and stand” protocol, 3) the number of written reports on the progress of each student, even if the class meeting time totaled “22 hours,” 4) the use of course examinations issued by the Army that did not address the course material covered in class (6).

Not all college English teachers were opposed to this strict regime, which imposed a disciplined focus on campus that the schools could not seem to replicate in peacetime. A group-authored editorial (T.M. Pearce, Cornell M. Dowlin, John S. Harrison, and Robert J. Conklin) published in the December 1942 issue of The News Letter expressed admiration for the potential educative power of a military education. This statement is, in many respects, an anticipation of what some college English teachers imagined the upcoming military training programs could offer:
Now comes the war, and it invades the colleges. One armed service after another looks over our young men, selects the ones it desires and prescribes a program of study and a larger program of physical discipline. Or perhaps it snatches from our classrooms an indolent and pasty-faced youngster, who has been practicing all the arts of evading responsibility and control for two or three years on the campus, and puts him into camp where he must get up in the morning and go to bed at night by rule, and eat according to prescribed patterns. He works when he is told and plays when he is told, and does an astonishing number of other things which his college teachers are certain lie entirely beyond his powers. Then he returns to the campus on a week’s furlough, a changed young man—erect, cleareyed, direct-spoken, courteous, humorously recalling the wastrel that once he was, a long six months ago. If the war spares him, it is evident that he may come out of it not a fragment of academic flotsam, but a man.

What is this war going to teach us? Is any greater degree of educational discipline likely without the greater justification of war? (2)

The authors, all college English teachers, speak admirably about the transformative power of a military training regime and approve of the strict disciplinary practices that instill responsibility and order and moral certitude in an otherwise selfish student.

The seriousness of war might have imposed a pall of severity over academic life in general, but military English instructors who were actually contracted by the Army and Navy to teach ASTP and V-12 courses were dismayed to discover that their students were could be just as disengaged in their army English classes as they were in peacetime. In
“Freshman English for War and Peace” published in the February 1944 issue of the SAB, Charles Sanders writes about how student discipline failed to meet instructor expectations:

Some of the instructors who have taught servicemen, however, have experienced at least one disillusionment. These instructors had assumed—had been told—that the students sent to them by the Army or Navy would be better motivated than civilian undergraduates usually are. Now they find that many of these students are not as well motivated as had been expected. (1)

This lack of motivation likely came from students’ eagerness to begin their advanced coursework. Some may even have been resentful of the English requirement, considering it a less important subject than their specialized coursework. In response to a survey of the English courses in military programs published in QJS, U.S. Navy Reserve Lieutenant Argus J. Tresidder reported that “in the case of Engineering students, the rest of their required program is so exclusively technical that it is difficult for them to develop much interest in English or devote much attention to it” (“Speech” 390). Tresidder’s observation is echoed in an account from an anonymous ASTP and V-12 English instructor, which was published in the March, 1944 issue of The News Letter:

Too many of my students resent the English requirement. It isn’t that they dislike the study in normal times, but they think now it interferes with the main business of getting ready for combat duty. When they say they have no time to read, they mean that they have no time for the kind of reading the teacher wants done. But I find that 75% of them get in a good deal of reading at odd moments—‘Esquire’, ‘Reader’s Digest’, ‘Time’, and a
great lot of ‘pulps’ and ‘adventure stories’. So, I have tried taking them just where I find them and going from there. (“Here and There” 2)

Indeed, it wasn’t uncommon for English teachers to complain that their course was treated with less seriousness or as less important than the advanced courses in mathematics, engineering, physics, or other specialized training courses by both students and other instructors. College English teachers who tried to meet their students “where they found them,” rather than where they expected to find them reported higher degrees of satisfaction in the course (Tresidder 388).

English teachers contracted through the Army were expected to teach for eighteen hours of classroom instruction per week in addition to whatever other courses they were already teaching through their home institutions with no vacation and without additional pay (Cardozier 31; Long 47). Hiring was temporary, lasting through duration of the program term on a contract by contract basis. The unstable nature of the hiring process and military demands often required instructors to teach courses well out of their areas of expertise. According to a survey of MLA members after the war, Long reported that MLA members, particularly English instructors, were contracted to teach over fifty-eight wartime subjects including code, naval administration, tank gunnery, and cryptology (48).

Educators were also often given very short notice before a new group of trainees arrived. Walker writes about the lack of curricular preparation afforded to instructors. He recalls:

The Army reached [Georgia Tech] first. We had expected basic courses to begin in July, but on March 18 we learned that six classes would begin on
March 22 . . . Texts had to be chosen, schedules of work organized, tentative divisions of the three courses made, teaching schedules reorganized—all within the space of three days . . . Schedules were made and work was planned in the three days before the trainees arrived. (1)

Baird, an English professor at the University of Amherst who taught the military training program recalls a similar lack of notice for academic or curricular planning. As at Georgia Tech, Amherst instructors often had only a few days to plan for civilian defense or military training programs:

Most of our teaching was the army and the air force and this meant that the dean would call me up at seven-thirty in the evening and say, ‘We’re going to have about three hundred students here on Friday. They were in such-and-such a program that they’re sending us.” And I’d say, “All right, how many sections, how often does English meet?’” And he would give me information and we’d have a meeting with the handful of teachers that were engaged in this. It would be impossible to reconstruct this experience without much pain. We employed teachers on a short-term basis for special programs, and it was very helter skelter. But the interesting thing to me was that those of us . . . who were engaged in it took it very seriously . . . This was our contribution. (25)

Most instructors, like Baird, acknowledged the enormous pedagogical challenges that they faced as instructor during the war years. But, with a mixture of patriotism and civilian guilt, they felt it was their civic duty to support the wartime military programs and shouldered their heavy loads with remarkable forbearance.
Differences between the ASTP and V-12 Programs

Although the Army and Navy training programs shared much in common, there were several key differences that affected the reception of these programs at institutions of higher education and among collegiate teachers of English. First, during the planning phases of the program, the Army and Navy did not exhibit the same degree of openness toward input from the academic community. Whereas the Navy implemented the majority of the recommendations offered by Edward C. Elliott (Purdue), Edmund E. Day (Cornell), Clarence A. Dykstra (Wisconsin), Karl Taylor Compton (MIT), James B. Conant (Harvard)—distinguished university presidents who served as academic liaisons on advisory committees to the armed services as higher education transitioned to wartime conditions—the Army was somewhat indifferent to their suggestions and moved forward with plans for an Army training program that functioned as a self-serving, independent unit. As far as the Army was concerned, higher education should cater to the needs of the armed services and not the other way around. As Col. Herman Beukema, the West Point professor who oversaw the ASTP program asserted, it was “soldiers first, students second!” (qtd. in Keefer “Exceptional” 376). This motto was inscribed in the first two lines of the ASTP handbook issued to trainees in Fort Benning, Georgia. The lines, written in all caps and bolded, “YOU ARE A SOLDIER. YOU ARE NOT A STUDENT,” clarified for trainees in no uncertain terms, the conditions upon which they were engaged in collegiate studies (“Army” 1).

If this attitude was off-putting to educators, especially those humanist scholars, so were the logistical challenges of the program itself. Working within the parameters of a
compressed program term—twelve weeks—was a serious challenge for administrators and faculty, especially because the ASTP start and end dates did not overlap with existing academic term schedules. The program was designed to remain separate from civilian courses—inductees were not allowed to attend class with civilian students—which burdened already overloaded instructors with additional coursework.

The Army was less than forthcoming about the outcome for students after they completed the program than the Navy, which frustrated both instructors and students. Whereas the Navy made good on their promise to recruit and train officer candidates upon completion of the V-12 program, very few ASTP inductees were admitted to officer candidate schools. Walker writes that the first group of inductees in the ASTP program at Georgia Tech were eager to perform well in all of their classes, until they learned that completion of the ASTP program did not guarantee a spot in an OCS. Walker recounts that disappointment upon learning this was severe, “many,” he writes, “felt that they had been tricked” (“Military” 6).

The widespread misconception among civilian educators and students that inductees would either be sent to officer candidate school or assigned to technical or specialist positions for service, was largely due to poor communication and advertising on the part of the Army. Army literature, like the pamphlet entitled Fifty Questions and Answers on the Army Specialized Training Program published by the War Department stated that most soldiers would be “recommended for Officer Candidate School,” but also included ambiguous language about official assignments upon completion of the program (5).
Although the ACE promised the Army that partnering with higher education would support the Army’s goal of training men for specialized work, Army leadership doubted the value of the ASTP. Because ASTP trainees were selected from a pool of active-duty, enlisted men as well as inductees, their primary concern was that the program would disrupt the line of command and deplete the ground troops of desperately needed leadership. Enlisted ASTP trainees were singled out for their intelligence and character—leadership qualities that often placed them in important command positions within a unit. The relocation of these soldiers to colleges for additional training depleted the Army of some of its best qualified soldiers. Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, one of the earliest and most vocal critics of the program, openly challenged the continuance of the ASTP, particularly in light of serious personnel shortages in the Army: “With 300,000 men short,” he observed exasperatingly, “we are asked to send men to college!” (qtd. in Keefer “Exceptional” 376).

In his institutional history of Lehigh University, Willard Ross Yates writes “perhaps ASTP aided the war effort, although the point is debatable. But it was a disaster for the temper of faculty and administrators at Lehigh” (183). For their part, these educators and students were disappointed by a program that did not award academic degrees—ASTP trainees received a certificate designating their training specialization rather than a degree—and felt misled by misinformation about military assignment after program completion.

On the other hand, the V-12 which was always designed with officer candidacy in mind, was “the most compatible with academic culture” (Geiger American Higher xix) and was generally well-received by civilian educators. Not only were the Navy’s
academic terms longer—sixteen-weeks instead of twelve—the program offerings were also more comprehensive. And, unlike ASTP trainees, V-12 trainees were allowed to enroll in civilian courses and to pursue bachelor degrees simultaneous to their completion of the specialized training program. In contrast with the Army’s attitude of “soldiers first, students second,” Rear Admiral Jacobs, Chief of Naval Personnel, described the V-12 program as “a college program” with its “primary purpose [as] giv[ing] prospective naval officers the benefits of a college education in those areas most needed by the Navy.” Jacobs concluded his statement by emphasizing that the intention behind the program was “to preserve the normal pattern of college life” and encouraging institutions of higher education to “enforce all necessary regulations to keep academic standards high” (qtd. in Navy 58).

In terms of compatibility with academic programs, the Navy program was superior. In a footnote to Tresidder’s reportage on the satisfaction levels of Army and Navy English instructors in military training courses, Tresidder comments that “in general it is agreed that the Navy plan was more definite, more generous, more far-sighted, and less confusing than the Army plan (which has now been withdrawn from most of the schools in which it was originally established)” (“Speech” 388). Walker wrote that “From our [the English instructors at Georgia Tech] experience the inescapable conclusion is that the Navy program is in almost every way better suited to the capacities of college and to the situation of the student in the world war” (7). These observations appear to be fairly representative of additional views expressed in other articles by college English teachers contracted as military training program instructors.
There was also a difference in the types of academic institution that the Army and Navy contracted with. Because the Army mobilized ROTC instructors for military instruction in ASTP programs, they selected schools that had the institutional infrastructure needed to support the rapid conversion of Army ROTC and engineering programs and which could support a high volume of student enlistees. These institutions included mostly land-grant schools and large state universities and colleges. ACE President, George Zook, criticized the Army and the War Manpower Commission for their failure to utilize the resources of “large numbers of institutions, including nearly all teachers’ colleges, colleges for women, small liberal arts colleges, colleges for Negroes, and junior colleges,” (13) which were unable to secure military contracts.

The V-12 program and the Army Air Forces College Training Program (AAFTP) had a more diversified institutional placement and generally contracted with smaller institutions, including liberal arts colleges, men’s colleges, and private colleges. In total, the Army and Navy contracted with six-hundred and sixty-three institutions to facilitate military and civilian defense training programs, roughly one third of the total number of postsecondary institutions in the United States (Navy 18). The difference in institutional placement of these programs contributed to a general feeling in the academic community,

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44 In response to Zook’s criticism of program placement, the War Manpower Commission, in response, claimed that it carefully reviewed over a thousand institutional applications, but that a majority of these aforementioned institutions were deemed ineligible based on inadequate campus facilities, housing, and safety accommodations. Only four percent of the total number of junior colleges and twenty percent of HBCUs that applied, were awarded contracts.
and especially among college English teachers, that the Navy was more sympathetic to the aims the liberal arts programs than the Army.

The impact of these programs on campus life was often short and significant, as it was at Lehigh University where “the ASTP virtually transformed life on campus for the year of 1943-1944” (Yates 183). At other institutions the effects were more subtle and far-reaching. The transition to total war on campuses like University of Wyoming, where the military already had an institutional foothold, was not as dramatic. In his history of the University of Wyoming during World War II, Wilson Clough recalls, “It is interesting to observe in retrospect how slowly adjustments came about, how relatively stable the traditional procedure proved to be under the strain, and yet how little by little the picture shifted, until colleges were clearly a part of the national wartime scene” (15).

As an added incentive to ASTP, V-12, and Army Air Forces programs, the federal government offered scholarships and low-interest rate loans to civilian students studying “critical fields” to national defense efforts (Navy 12). Government scholarships were “awarded to students in such fields as chemistry, physics, engineering, fuel technology, glass technology, metallurgy, mining, and radio communications” (Rudy 69). These critical fields, notably, did not include areas of study traditionally housed under the humanistic disciplines. Rudy writes that the result of these government incentives resulted in a sharp decline of student enrollments in liberal arts departments (70).
English Instruction in ASTP and V-12 Programs

The blending of military and civilian life was an adjustment for many college English teachers; some regarded the campus military training programs as an imposition on their work, others looked forward to making a contribution to the cause of national defense, and still others regarded militarization as a necessary evil. The pedagogical demands of the programs tested even the best of teachers. As W. Wilber Hatfield wrote in his article “English for Men in Uniform,” that surveyed the experience of English teachers in campus military programs, “teachers of English in the Army Specialized Training Program and in the Navy V-12 program face many serious problems” (200). The list of challenges that English teachers faced seemed endless: curricular time constraints; ambitious course objectives; helping veteran students adjust to an academic schedule; inadequate faculty and facilities; teaching courses outside of area expertise; little time for preparation; bored or uninterested students; disparities in student preparedness and ability (one account reported educational backgrounds from “grade school training” to a Ph.D. (Hammond “English” 1); incorporating oral communication in the English course.

In his article “With Grammar on My Left: English Teaching and the Second World War,” David England argues that despite broader claims about English instruction in the ASTP and V-12 courses strengthening American democracy and inspiring civic engagement, “there is no evidence . . . to suggest that many methods and activities which had been traditions in English instruction were appreciably altered as a result of changing objectives and justifications” (70). According to England, the practical orientation of
higher education in the United States during World War II reinforced current-traditional rhetoric, with its technical emphasis on traditional grammar, correctness, and “error hunting,” and structural form (70). This generalization mostly accurate. The difficult working conditions of ASTP and V-12 instructors certainly did not seem to inspire or support radical departures from what James Berlin called the “dominant form of college writing instruction in the twentieth-century” (36). For example, in “English for Aviation Students,” Geraldine Hammond of the University of Wichita discussed conducting extensive “drills” in “outlining, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary” (1). John Hicks of Miami University likewise describes using Foerster and Steadman’s rhetoric *Writing and Thinking* to practice “exercises dealing with meaning, analysis, reading speed, vocabulary, etc.” (4). Other examples of a pedagogical emphasis on the formal elements of language in descriptions of English instruction are manifold.

However, to suggest that there was no pedagogical experimentation or innovation in these classrooms is not an entirely fair interpretation of the campus military training programs or the individuals who designed and taught their basic English courses. For example, the military training programs inspired some teachers to explore interdisciplinary or composite courses with a goal of promoting national defense. As England observes, these courses drew from the integrated curriculum that had been explored in the thirties, but “channeled educational concern toward group, rather than individual need” (72). The shift in this pedagogical focus reflects the reorientation of higher education to an educational goal of national survival in which individual needs are sublimated to the needs of a group.
The most obvious example of composite courses was the ASTP basic English course itself, which included course objectives in oral communication that were traditionally taught in speech courses. Crowley’s history of speech in the ASTP and V-12 English courses suggests that the artificially imposed collaborations between speech and English departments in the campus military programs resulted in largely unsatisfactory feelings on both sides. However, the war did inspire other, unlikely interdisciplinary collaborations that resulted in experimental courses. Richard C. Boys describes the success of an English war course, originally developed for the Navy V-12 program, that emphasized “correlations” between “mathematics and physics and English and history” (86). Boys reports that efforts to “integrate” physics and mathematics were less successful than efforts to integrate history, but that students still benefitted from philosophical and technical evaluations of “laboratory papers” and the joint perspectives of their English and physics teachers working collaboratively (86). By integrating the curriculum, Boys argues that “we believe that in the Basic Curriculum we are doing an honest job of preparing a young man for life in a democracy” and that they have simultaneously prepared candidates as “officer material” for the Army or Navy (86).

The war also inspired some teachers to experiment with new media or new technologies, including radio, film, and mimeographs. Robert Stallman, who published an article in *CE* about his use of a slide projector in the ASTP and V-12 English courses, enthusiastically describes how the technology assists him in illustrating “details that could not be readily pointed out by any other technique of class presentation” (39). Faced with the challenge of teaching from difficult technical documents, Stallman found a new method of delivery for teaching. The inclusion of a new technology in the writing
classroom was minor adjustment, but Stallman argues that this small change helped him see his course in an entirely new light (39).

While a lot of instructors may have relied, as England suggests, on traditional methods and activities in their classroom instruction during World War II, college English teachers were building a reserve of experiences and building teaching skills such as adaptability, resourcefulness, and readiness. Walker observed that the daily challenges of teaching ASTP courses “made us attempt the impossible in our English courses and return to our limited objectives with a clearer view of our proper field. Most important, it was steadily improving and challenging us to improve” (7). Walker closes his thought by observing that although the V-12 course more popular among instructors, that “when the veterans return to the college, it will be the ASTP rather than the Navy program which will help us adjust our curricula and our teaching to the new conditions we shall face” (7).

**The Militarization of American Higher Education: In Summary**

In sum, World War II caused broad shifts in higher education, most notably a shift toward the educational goal of national survival and utility to the state. The total effect of wartime adjustments in American higher education, including accelerated schedules, federalization, the militarization of campuses, and the emphasis on practical education, challenged academic subjects deemed non-essential to the war. Public debates about the social function and curricular place of the liberal arts during the war years, reflected a tension in values between different educational goals. Like many humanistic departments
housed under a liberal arts college, English studies was challenged to define its usefulness to a national war program. The need for literacy instruction during the war constituted a national literacy crisis. The demand for clear and accurate communication during the war years meant that English, or more specifically, composition studies would be included as part of the military training programs. Thus, while literature was perceived to be in jeopardy during the war, composition thrived. The inclusion of English in military training programs helped secure English studies institutional place and value to colleges and universities. The war increased the visibility of composition through its role in the ASTP and V-12 training programs.
Chapter 3

English Teaching and the Aims of Wartime College English

In the previous chapter I argued that the onset of war and the militarization of college campuses initiated a number of important changes in American higher education. One of those changes was the federalization of higher education, which I argued made colleges and universities beholden to government interests and public definitions of value. In 1940s America, public definitions of value closely aligned with military values: efficiency, utility, and order. With educational institutions pledging their full support to a national war program, schools were driven by a social goal of national survival. By sponsoring campus military training and civilian defense programs, American higher education increasingly aligned university work with national defense priorities and military definitions of value. Postsecondary English education was influenced by these changes in education. English teachers who had been contracted by the U.S. Armed Forces to teach soldiers to read, write, and speak were supplied with course objectives developed by the Army and Navy. And, even traditional courses were tailored to accommodate wartime conditions. After so much disciplinary anxiety about the institutional role and social value of English studies at the start of the war, the inclusion of English courses in the campus military training programs seemed to provide a clear directive for the pedagogical aims of wartime college English.

However, the process of aligning the aims of English education to a national war program was, as Dorn articulates, “more complicated . . . than “simply placing [English
teaching] in the service of the nation’s war machine” (104)\textsuperscript{45}. As I suggested in my previous chapter, the war raised an ideological clash of values that shaped opinions about the purpose of education in American society. These ideological differences are evident in debates about the wartime function of college English among English teachers. As Crowley argues in her analysis of college English teachers’ reactions to the ASTP course objectives, there was “much in these descriptions to alarm teachers of the traditional Freshman English course: the emphasis on oral communication; the reading of popular media and technical manuals; the absence of attention to self-expression; and perhaps worst of all from a humanist point of view, no literature” (157).

English teachers had not only ideological differences to contend with as they considered how to implement military objectives and war aims into class instruction, but their own disciplinary aims—newly drawn up just prior to the outbreak of war—to contend with as well. Should members of their profession simply adopt the aims of military English for the duration of the war, temporarily accepting the terms and values embedded within them? Should they align existing aims to the new war program? Or, should they claim agency in determining and setting the course of English studies without reference to the armed forces or the war? To what degree should the external demands of war set the terms of how literature and composition courses should be taught in American colleges and universities?

\textsuperscript{45} Dorn uses this expression to refer to the challenge of aligning the institutional mission of Stanford University with a national war program. Stanford was founded on liberal values and has a clear institutional mission to promote undergraduate liberal education.
Wilbur Hatfield, editor of *CE* and *EJ*, and his assistant editors, John J. De Boar (*EJ*) and B.E. Boothe (*CE*) invited responses from the English teaching community to address these issues directly. Although college English teachers were united in their support of a national defense program and benefited from military contract work, opinions varied widely about how the profession should adapt in response to the crisis of war. Subtle differences in official NCTE statements on the aims of college English programs in wartime reflect some of these professional disagreements. One vision of English studies aligned with the military goals of equipping servicemen to engage in more sophisticated levels of decision-making and communication in applied military work. Another vision of English studies aligned with the civic goal of training up “enlightened” citizens who could participate in a democratic society and promoting civilian morale during the war. This broader vision allowed English teachers to continue pursuing a “highly diverse set of goals and objectives” (England 68) in English classes under the auspices of working toward the national goal of winning the war.

In this chapter I examine the NCTE wartime aims of English instruction and the reception of these aims within the English teaching community. First, I examine the “Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools,” an NCTE report produced just before the outbreak of war that outlined the educational aims of collegiate English instruction. Contrary to what some scholars have asserted, I argue that these aims were basically compatible with the ASTP and V-12 course objectives for the basic English course. However, subsequent statements and resolutions published by the NCTE, such as “English Instruction and the War,” and “English in Wartime: A Resolution from the College Station,” emphasized disciplinary aims that resisted the narrow role of English
instruction envisioned by the military. While training soldiers was a critical responsibility, English teachers recognized that it was a temporary one: soldiers who returned from the war would resume their roles as citizens. There were three reactions among the English teaching community to the wartime aims outlined by the NCTE: conservative, reactionary, and cautious. Conservatives resisted calls to redefine the aims of English instruction according to the values of military utility. They argued that the best educational response to the war was for English teachers to carry on teaching English as they had before the outbreak of war and to maintain as much of the traditional English teaching curriculum as possible. Reactionaries embraced wartime changes to the curriculum and accepted military definitions of value. They argued that the aims of English instruction required immediate intervention and should be revised to meet immediate wartime needs. The exigencies of war, they argued, provided an opportune moment for disciplinary redefinition and purpose. “Cautionaries,” accepted military aims and the practical orientation of higher education as a temporary wartime concession. Cautionaries assumed that after the crisis of war had passed, instruction would resume as it had prior to the war. In other words, preparing students to fulfill immediate wartime responsibilities was viewed as a civic duty, but this state-determined program would be phased out as the United States moved into a postwar period.

An analysis of NCTE statements on the aims and objectives of college English and reactions to these statements from members of the English teaching community

reveals how college English teachers in the early 1940s resisted external definitions of value and redefined the terms of their contribution to the war effort.

**A Call to Arms: A Call to Aims**

In terms of the pedagogical aims and disciplinary identity of English studies, the years leading up to World War II were experimental and confused. New areas of research emerged during the 1920s and 1930s, including progressive theories of education, semantics, correlated curricula, and experience-based learning. As the field expanded to include areas of study traditionally housed in the social science, so did the goals of English instruction. An editorial published in the April 1941 issue of the *News Letter* speaks to the eclecticism of English departments and calls for a clarification of goals of the field. The article reads:

What every college teacher of English knows is this: that college English is an agglomeration of at least four or five different fields of study, each as distinct from the others as Philosophy is from Mathematics; yet all may have to be taught by the same man, and often in the same hour. First comes Practical Written Expression, which (the entire faculty insists) shall be a tool in the hands of every student, sharpened and polished and used with skill. Second, there is Literature as a social and historical study. Third, there is the study of English as one of the Fine Arts.—and training in creation as well as appreciation makes two separate fields of this. And, finally, it may be necessary to teach, in the name of English, that abstruse science called Grammar. (Burges “Editorial 2)
While the introduction of new educational theories in the interwar period expanded the purview of English teaching and opened the field to fresh approaches to literacy instruction, it also watered down an already ambiguous set of educational goals. Speaking to this issue, Hook observes that,

The agitation during the 1930s for the core, correlated, or integrated curriculum, coupled with many English teachers’ insistence that every teacher . . . should and could be a teacher of English, had led many administrators to believe that English need not exist as an autonomous subject . . . In addition, English teachers’ inability to agree on their major goals weakened their case. (131)

By 1940, the NCTE perceived a need to clarify the purpose of English studies and appointed a five-person committee, headed by Dora V. Smith, to evaluate and define the aims of English instruction in the United States. The NTCE Committee on Basic Aims compiled their recommendations in a report titled “Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools” (“Basic Aims”), which was scheduled to be published in *EJ* at the start of the new year in 1941. The plans for that publication, however, were abruptly interrupted (though not ultimately delayed) by the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

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47 The other members of the Committee on Basic Aims were Harold A. Anderson, John J. DeBoer, Max J. Herzberg, and Marquis E. Shattuck.
Shocked by the news of the attacks, NCTE Executive Council\textsuperscript{48} held an emergency meeting in Chicago on December 29 in order to strategize an immediate response plan and to clarify the Council’s position on the war. One of the first orders of business at the December meeting was the creation of a wartime Planning Commission, which was designed to identify what English teachers could contribute to the war effort and to coordinate with federal and military officials to determine specific wartime needs related to English instruction (Hook 133). Two of the members selected to serve on the Planning Commission, Eason Monroe and H. A. Domincovich, were already serving on the NCTE Committee on International Relations—the same committee that had drafted an antiwar resolution just a few years prior in 1935 (\textit{Reading the Past} \textit{28}). After the Pearl Harbor attacks, the NCTE retracted its antiwar position, but maintained a professional commitment to peacekeeping policies that shunned xenophobia and bigotry. To this end, although the NCTE fully endorsed the nation’s war program during World War II, the Committee on International Relations promoted “international goodwill as a major tenet of democracy” and worked to curb a “hatred of the common people of other nations, distrust of minority groups in the United States who are descended from peoples of enemy countries, and an attitude of blind patriotism” (“English Instruction” 88).

\textsuperscript{48} Members of the 1941 NCTE Executive Council were very active in promoting the war effort. The Council included NCTE President John DeBoar; three past NCTE presidents, Essie Chamberlain, E. A. Cross, and Robert Pooley; NCTE Vice Presidents Max J. Herzberg and Marion Sheridan; and the NCTE Secretary and editor of \textit{CE} and \textit{EJ}, Wilber Hatfield. It is worth pointing out that two of the members of the Executive Committee, John DeBoar and Max Herzberg, also served on the NCTE Committee on Basic Aims.
When the NTCE Executive Council, Planning Commission, and International Relations Committee convened on December 29, 1941, they recognized the urgent need to clarify and define the educational objectives of English studies as a field. Unsurprisingly, one of the immediate points of business was to discuss the findings and recommendations outlined in “Basic Aims,” and to determine if these recommendations, drafted in a time of peace, were appropriate now that the nation was at war. According to Hook, the Executive Committee deliberated for “about a day and a half” before formally approving a written statement prepared by the Planning Commission titled “The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime.” (“The Role”) (133). This statement endorsed the thirteen educational aims outlined in “Basic Aims” as relevant to the current needs of students; however, in addition to the “Basic Aims,” the NCTE articulated three wartime educational “objectives,” which had “special significance for the current scene” (133).

In the following sections I first discuss some of the broader educational objectives in the “Basic Aims” report. I consider how the objectives of “Basic Aims” aligned with a vision of wartime English instruction that was designed to prepare students to fulfill immediate, but temporary military duties, including soldiering. To that end, I consider the compatibility of “Basic Aims” with the military English course objectives outlined in the ASTP and V-12 programs. Then, I analyze why the NCTE published three unique educational objectives in “The Role,” the NCTE’s first published statement on the organization’s response to and position on the war. I argue that the three wartime objectives presented in “The Role” emphasized the role of English teaching in citizen formation and civilian morale, a subtle shift away from the pragmatic military goal of producing functionally literate soldiers. A resolution produced by the College Section of
the NCTE in Indianapolis after the Pearl Harbor attacks also prioritized the cultural and social aims of English studies as most essential educational contribution English teachers could make during the war and after. In response to the crisis of World War II and the ongoing wartime changes in higher education, college English teachers demanded a clarification of disciplinary values and purpose. I argue that although the educational aims outlined in reports and statements published by the NCTE appear to present a cogent vision of the purpose of English teaching in wartime, they actually reflect disparate goals and ideological divisions among members of the profession about the social value of English studies. Reactions to the war and to the aims outlined by the NCTE capture the variety of perspectives about the nature of educational response to a national crisis. Moreover, they capture how college English teachers struggled to maintain agency in defining and shaping disciplinary values.

“Basic Aims of English Instruction in American Schools” in Peacetime and Wartime

The recommendations covered in “Basic Aims” reflects the eclecticism of the various programs and areas of interest housed under English departments in the early 1940s. It also anticipates wartime pressures that would shape English instruction during World War II. The report outlines thirteen educational aims for college English, which were intended to guide English teachers in curricular and instructional design.49 There are

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49 The thirteen aims are as follows. 1) “Language is a basic instrument in the maintenance of the democratic way of life.” 2) “Increasingly free and effective
many points of interest in this statement, but I will focus my analysis on three objectives that are relevant to my discussion of college English teachers’ reactions to the war and what they felt the profession had to contribute to the war effort: defining the academic subject of English as a communicative art, using English instruction as a tool for civic and social training, and expanding the definition of literacy to include functionality. These areas of educational focus were compatible with the pragmatic and civic orientation of higher education during the war years and were adaptable to the specific educational course objectives of campus military training programs.

A Communications Emphasis

One prominent claim in the “Basic Aims” document is that English instruction should include a study of all of the “language arts,” including oral as well as written communication. The first aim of the document, “Language is a basic instrument in the interchange of ideas vital to life in a democracy.” 3) “Language study in the schools must be based on the language needs of living.” 4) “Language ability expands with the individual’s experience.” 5) “English enriches personal living and deepens understanding of social relationships.” 6) “English uses literature of both past and present to illumine the contemporary scene.” 7) “Among the nations represented in the program in literature, America should receive a major emphasis.” 8) “A study of the motion picture and radio is indispensable in the English program.” 9) “The goals of instruction in English are, in the main, the same for all young people, but the heights to be attained in achieving any one of them and the materials used for the purpose will vary with individual need.” 10) “The development of social understanding through literature requires reading materials within the comprehension, the social intelligence, and the emotional range of the pupils whose lives they are expected to influence.” 11) “English pervades the life and work of the school.” 12) “English enriches personality by providing experience of intrinsic worth for the individual.” 13) “Teachers with specialized training are needed for effective instruction in the language arts.” (“Basic Aims 40-55).
maintenance of the democratic way of life,” argues that “intelligent living in a democracy requires a high degree of proficiency in the four fundamental language arts: reading, writing, speaking, and listening” (40). The inclusion of oral training and listening skills anticipated the consolidation of speech and writing classes in the military English courses. Five of the thirteen aims in “Basic Aims” emphasize English studies as a communicative art. In defining the study of English as the study of human communication, “Basic Aims” recommends that instructors prioritize the formal elements and conventions of written and oral communication because these elements of language instruction were assumed to circumvent or prevent misunderstandings and miscommunication.

The focus on English as a communicative art also emphasized the social utility of language. “Language,” the report reads, “is a living, growing instrument of thought adheres to no rigid logical pattern of expression, but varies from situation and from time to time in response to psychological and social need” (42). The idea that the effective use of language is situational and determined by context meant that when the United States entered World War II, the curricular content of English courses was subject to public definitions of value and social needs driven by external circumstances. It also meant, that on an individual level, students needed to be exposed to examples and models specific to particular contexts. Thus, “practical” documents, such as letters, were assumed to foster awareness of the language arts in “life both in and out of school” (43). It would not require much of an adjustment for teachers to exchange formal business letters for military reports in the composition classroom.
English Instruction as Civic and Social Training

Several of the thirteen aims articulate the civic function of English studies. Language training, as described in “Basic Aims,” is vital to the production and socializations of democratic citizens. For example, one of the aims argues that mastery of the communicative arts of speaking, listening, reading, and writing requires “sincerity, restraint, courtesy, and a sense of responsibility” (41). These behavioral traits are associated with the formation and cultivation of civic identity within a democratic society. Discussions about the presentation of ideas and the formal elements of language use are likewise connected to citizenship training within a democratic society. Aim three, for example, argues that a reading-intensive curriculum might be used by teachers as a kind of social program in schools to reduce racism and bigotry: “Enmities of race, of creed, of social classes, and of nations may be lessened through the enlarged sympathies and broadened understandings developed by a carefully directed program of reading” (45). Remembering the propaganda of World War I classrooms, the third basic aim reflects the NCTE’s peacekeeping agenda even in wartime. Still, although the a few of the aims endorse interracial and international goodwill, they reflect an ethnocentric view of the world and nationalist values. Aim seven, for example, argues that “young people must seek to understand their own country first” (46) and recommends a program of reading in American literature to reinforce the unique heritage and political ideology of the United States.

Hook also argues that disciplinary interest in the social function of English reflected a national pull toward collectivism and the sublimation of individualism in the
United States during the early 1940s. Americans were aware that the war would require many personal sacrifices for the good of the nation. According to Hook, “the coming of war . . . decreased the emphasis on the individual” (132). The emphasis on group cooperation aligned with military values. In fact, the military is essentially organized around the principle of sublimating the individual within the group. As Hook observes, “servicemen are necessarily interdependent rather than independent. Soldiers go to war in squads, platoons, companies, regiments; one man cannot operate an aircraft carrier . . .

So, the forties saw, in the schools and elsewhere, a quick reemphasis on cooperation and group activity” (132). In this respect, the aims outlined by the NCTE in “Basic Aims” were compatible with the campus military training programs.

**Functional Literacy**

A final point of interest in “Basic Aims” is that it describes the construct of literacy as inherently related to socialization. In the previous chapter, I discussed the concept of “functional literacy,” that is, the ability to read or write well enough to be able to function within a community or meet the expectations required by that community. Although the term “functional literacy” is never used in the “Basic Aims” statement, several of the thirteen aims define literacy as more than the ability to read or write, arguing that the acts of reading and writing are tied to one’s ability to contribute to a social group or to meet social demands or expectations. Literacy, by this definition, entails the idea of comprehension, the ability to recall, interpret, and integrate information. Aim ten argues that “the development of social understanding through
literature requires reading materials within the comprehension, the social intelligence, and the emotional range of the pupils whose lives they are expected to influence” (5). English teachers are advised to evaluate a student’s ability to read based on comprehension levels and their ability to translate what they’ve read into a practical application of that information, rather than their ability to recognize and sound out words (51). “Basic Aims” reflects an “enlargement in the concept of literacy” during the early 1940s (Varnum “From Crisis” 154). As I have argued in my previous chapter, expanding definitions of literacy shaped military literacy standards. In order to meet the technological and intelligence demands of modern warfare, the armed forces redefined and raised their definition of literacy.

The Compatibility of “Basic Aims” with ASTP and V-12 Course Objectives

In her chapter “Freshman English and War,” Crowley argues that when the U.S. Army and Navy released the course objectives for the ASTP and V-12 English courses, college English teachers were dismayed because “the aim of basic English looked very different to the military than it did to English teachers” (157). Crowley’s claim suggests that there was a fundamental incompatibility between the military course objectives and the educational outlook of the English teaching community. This claim is worth further examination. In this section, I will examine the course aims for the ASTP “English 111” and Navy V-12 “English I” courses to evaluate the compatibility of these courses against the goals outlined in “Basic Aims.”
ASTP and V-12 English Course Objectives

The purpose of the ASTP and V-12 military training programs was clear: educators were to help train candidates for specialized work or officer candidacy. To that end, the campus training programs and course objectives were designed with practical educational aims in an applied curriculum. Course objectives and examinations for the ASTP and the V-12 courses were set by the Army and Navy, but instructors were given freedom to create their own lesson plans and course materials. The ASTP course objectives for English 111 were outlined as follows:

The end-product of the Army Specialized Training Program is an officer candidate who will, after further specialized training, function effectively in a position of command. He must, therefore:

1. Be a clear thinker.
2. Possess the skill of orderly, concise, and appropriate communication, both oral and written, including the ability to observe and report accurately.
3. Possess the ability to listen and to read understandingly.
4. Know the basic forms of military communication.

50 The ASTP curriculum for English was created by the Army Specialized Training Division, under the direction of Colonel Herman Bukema, a history professor at West Point. According to Cardozier a “committee of college and university presidents” were given an advisory role in the creation of the curriculum (23). The Navy V-12 Program was designed by the Training Division of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, under the direction of Captain Arthur S. Adams, an assistant dean of engineering at Cornell University and a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy (Cardozier 55).
In view of the limited time available for instruction in English, it is particularly important that this instruction be reinforced by requiring trainees in all classes to write and speak with deliberation, clearness, and correct language. (“On ASTP” Wiley 16)

The course objectives work toward an end goal of promoting functional literacy. That is to say, the goal of English 111 was to help candidates develop the verbal skills necessary to carry out their assigned work. Developing functional literacy required, as articulated in the NCTE’s basic aims, “proficiency in four fundamental language areas: reading, writing, speaking, and listening” (“Basic” 40). Earl W. Wiley and Lt. Argus J. Tresidder, who both wrote about the ASTP English course, emphasized that oral communication (i.e. speech and listening) was integral to the course design of “Army English.”

Interestingly, even though the “Basic Aims” document defines English education as covering four areas of language studies (reading, writing, speaking, and listening), the results from an informal survey conducted by Tresidder about the teaching of English in ASTP and V-12 programs found that the majority of English teachers minimized the speech component of the course and overemphasized written instruction (391). This finding supports Crowley’s claim that English teachers were dissatisfied with the inclusion of speech and listening as part of the curriculum in Army and Navy English courses, but her claim does not address the fact that the NCTE had endorsed an educational program in English education that included speech and listening as integral to the curriculum in the “Basic Aims” report.

The fact that instructors were reluctant to teach speech and listening in the campus military training programs, suggests one of a few possibilities. The NCTE “Basic
Aims” were not representative of the views of the broader English teaching community during wartime; the recommendations included in “Basic Aims” had not yet been adopted into practice by English teachers because of wartime exigencies; or, the disciplinary rivalry between speech and English departments was still too bitter to be overcome, even in a climate of total war. My point in raising this issue is that, on the surface, there is nothing to suggest that the inclusion of speech and listening in the Army English course was misaligned with the aims outlined in “Basic Aims,” but many English teachers did not teach listening and speech because these subjects historically fell under the purview of other departments.

The course objectives of English I in the V-12 program were similar in design and purpose to that of English 111 in the ASTP course. The English I course description states that “the aim of this course is to teach the student to say and write what he means concisely and with a purpose, and to read and listen with precise understanding and discrimination” (The Navy College 24). The V-12 English course was divided into four units: writing, speaking, English usage in speech and writing, and reading. The first half of the semester was to emphasize “accuracy and conciseness in the handling of informational materials,” while the second semester was to focus on “judgment and effectiveness in handling materials of considerable complexity and range” (24). Like the Army course, the Navy course was organized around four areas of focus. Descriptions of these focus areas are as follows:

Writing: gathering material; planning and writing various kinds of short papers; reporting of observed events; summaries of short passages; letters
and reports (including Navy letter forms and reports); explanation of problems, situations, and processes of increasing complexity.

Speaking: clear and full recitations, short informal talks, giving directions, explaining situations and processes (especially those involving diagrams, models, or specimens), taking part in group discussions, and summarizing talks and discussions as a test of listening.

English usage, oral and written: concise, direct sentences; consecutive and forceful paragraphs; standard practices in pronunciations, punctuation, spelling, idiom, and grammar.

Reading: varied readings in periodicals and books, to gain information, to extend the students experience, and to show modern practices in common types of technical and popular expression. (25)

The course design reflects a narrowing of English instruction as a practical rather than an expressive art. Although an emphasis on the communicative and formal elements of language use (i.e. grammar, correct usage, spelling, idioms) outlined in “Basic Aims” was a standard practice in the 1940s English instruction, it was compatible with the military goal of producing soldiers capable of communicating within the established standards or conventions of a particular genre. From a military perspective, standardization in writing and speech is highly practical, as miscommunication is costly, and often fatal. Although “Basic Aims” does not explicitly include standardization as an
educational aim of English instruction, the prominence of current-traditional rhetoric in 1940s English classrooms supported the military goal of standardized communication in the military training courses.

**Compatibility of Military English and Basic Aims**

The NCTE “Basic Aims” and the ASTP and V-12 course objectives for the English course reflect a compatible view of the role of English instruction, even if the military programs narrowed the function of English to a very specific range of activities and contexts. Unlike, the “Basic Aims” report, the military course objectives give little attention to the socializing function of English instruction, or even civic training. However, the NCTE’s interest in citizenship training as outlined in the “Basic Aims” could exist as a “separate though not conflicting, emphasis” from the military interest in preparing individuals for war (Applebee 160).

**Reframing “Basic Aims” for a Wartime Context: “English Instruction and the War”**

A month after the publication of “Basic Aims” in *EJ*, the NCTE Executive Council published a special wartime report titled “English Instruction and the War,” (“English Instruction”) which was drawn up at the December emergency meeting in 1941 by the NCTE Planning Commission. The report summarized the NCTE’s position on the purpose and value of English instruction in wartime. An editorial comment, presumably written by Wilbur Hatfield, at the beginning of the document notes that “the report, which
was approved by the Council’s Executive Committee, was the product of genuine group thinking and was unanimously adopted by the conference.” (87).

The opening sentence in “English Instruction” explains why the NCTE Executive Committee felt compelled to release a statement about the war before circulating the “Basic Aims” report: “Although the statement of ‘Basic Aims of Instruction in English” recently produced by the National Council of Teachers of English is obviously as important for times of war as for times of peace, it seems wise, in view of the present emergency, to select for particular emphasis at the moment certain aspects of the program which have special significance for the current scene” (87). “English Instruction” is a fresh reinterpretation of the “Basic Aims” report that emphasizes citizenship and civilian morale as the highest priority for wartime college English teachers.

“The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime”

“English Instruction and the War” includes a discussion of three disciplinary objectives for secondary and postsecondary English for the duration of the war. These three wartime aims are:

I. Through reading and discussion, we can help young people to sense what it is that America is fighting for by developing an understanding of democratic ideas and by stimulating devotion to them . . .

II. In the teaching of English we are in a position to promote national unity (1) through the democratic integration of diverse cultural groups, (2) through recognition of the unique contribution of each to our national
culture, and (3) through emphasis upon the contribution which America has made to each of them . . .

III. The teaching of English in wartime will concern itself also with the needs of the individual for social and personal adjustment (87-89)

It is clear that these three objectives share a common purpose with the educational aims describe in “Basic Aims.” Both emphasize the socializing function of English instruction in a democratic society and articulate a vision of the English classroom as a site of democratic deliberation and development. Both statements promote an attitude of global respect and condemn bigotry and racism inspired by military aggression. However, although the scope and sentiment of the wartime aims in “English Instruction” and “Basic Aims” have much in common, there are several subtle points of distinction that reflect a different view of the social function of English education in the United States.

For example, in “English Instruction,” which outlined the NCTE’s position on the war, there are no references, in either the wartime aims or the discussion sections of the report, to speech training or language arts in “English Instruction.” In a report detailing specific recommendations for accommodations or adaptations that English teachers should make to respond to the war, this is a curious change. Why would the authors remove references to English as a communicative art when there was a pressing military need for men and women trained in all areas of verbal expression, including listening and speaking? To answer this question, we must first consider the broader educational objective or vision espoused by the three wartime aims.
While both “Basic Aims” and “English Instruction” claim that one of the purposes of English instruction is to shape and preserve cultural values, the rhetorical messaging in “English Instruction” has a more pronounced nationalist orientation than the “Basic Aims” report. For example, in a discussion section of the first aim, “through reading and discussion, we can help young people to sense what it is that America is fighting for by developing an understanding of democratic ideas and by stimulating devotion to them,” the NCTE recommends that teachers develop an educational program that honors American democracy as a unique and enlightened political, economic and social system. The second aim supports the first goal in its vision of America as an integrated and unified body of diverse social, ethnic, and racial groups. In the discussion section of this aim, English teachers are charged with instilling a sense of shared national purpose and identity through a reading program that emphasizes American literature as having its own unique tradition and style. Together these aims present a vision of English instruction as upholding the cultural values of American democracy.

The third aim, which focuses on the socializing function of English instruction, emphasizes the importance of individual experience and expression. The authors focus, in particular, on promoting “mental hygiene” through class discussions, reading programs, and creative writing. In other words, the third aim asserts that the role of the English teacher in wartime is to strengthen civilian morale. Taken as a whole, the three wartime aims in “English Instruction” articulate two contributions that English teachers offer to a national defense program: instilling and preserving cultural values and strengthening civilian morale. There is very little mention in “English Instruction” of practical or utilitarian goals that defined the course objectives in the military training programs.
Compatibility of “English Instruction and the War” and Military English

Earlier I argued that the NCTE “Basic Aims” statement reflected a view of the role of English instruction that was compatible with the course objectives of the ASTP and V-12 English writing courses. Interestingly, when the NCTE Executive Committee and Planning Commission released a statement specifically addressing wartime adjustments, the wartime educational objectives outlined in “English Instruction” were actually less compatible with the objectives of the military courses than the original “Basic Aims” statement. This is not to say that the three wartime aims published in “English and Instruction” were antithetical to a national war program. Rather, the wartime aims in “English and Instruction” redefined the war work of English teachers, shifting their focus from the training of soldiers to the training of citizens. This shift reflected an attitude within the profession, expressed by Charles Child Walcutt that “English teachers”—not the government, not the military, not “hysterical or selfish groups”—should “determine what changes are to be made in English teaching” (“A Symposium” 497).

“English in Wartime: A Resolution from the College Station”

At the same time that the NCTE Executive Committee and Planning Commission held an emergency meeting in Chicago in December of 1941 to discuss the Council’s response to the war, the College Section of the NCTE also convened in Indianapolis, Indiana at the MLA convention. The focus of the Indianapolis meeting was “basic wartime policies for the National Council” (“A Symposium” 495). This topic was
discussed at the luncheon meeting, where over one-hundred teachers were in attendance. The College Section drafted a resolution addressing the role of English studies and English instructors in wartime—just as the NCTE Planning Commission had done in Chicago. This Indianapolis resolution, titled “English in Wartime: A Resolution from the College Station,” (1942 Indiana Resolution) was published in the Round Table section of the March issue of CE.

The Indiana Resolution opens with the assertion that a national defense program has two branches: the armed forces and educators. “In time of war,” the resolution declares, “the first duty” of college English teachers is “to defend our country” (578). While protection from outside threat of attack or foreign invasion is left to the military, the resolution asserts that “teachers . . . are obligated to support civilian morale” (578). They are also charged with the responsibility of “the preservation and extension of democracy, its institutions, its hopes, and its ideals” (578). These two roles of upholding civilian morale and the preservation of American democracy and culture are presented as the permanent functions of English studies both in times of war and in times of peace.

The resolution states explicitly that “hastily contrived schemes to adapt our institutions to the immediate ‘aims of the duration,’ may, as they did in the last war, compel [college English teachers] to do what we are ill fitted to do” (578). In other words, the resolution claims that the disciplinary aims and objectives for English instruction should be determined by English instructors, rather than external sources such as the military or the federal government.

Like “English Instruction,” the Indiana Resolution links English studies to a tradition of liberal education and defines it as a humanist discipline. In response to the
“crisis” of war, the resolution declares it is more important than ever to “reaffirm” certain
disciplinary objectives. The resolution reads as follows:

Our duty then, as teachers of English is to help develop citizens who are
honestly and enthusiastically devoted to the society which they create.
This we do in the study of the arts of expression through which the student
learns clarity, accuracy, and responsibility in thought and communication.
In the study of literature we emphasize, in its vivid record of individual
experience, the importance and dignity of the individual personality. We
emphasize equally, in its presentation of universal values, the social nature
of man. At times we have lost sight of these objectives. In this crisis it is
imperative that we reaffirm them. (578)

As with the disciplinary aims presented in “English Instruction,” the Indiana Resolution
emphasized the civic and cultural role of English studies. College English teachers
accepted that literature and writing courses would have to be adjusted in response to the
危机 of war, but affirmed the relevance of their work in developing “devoted” citizens.
Although they knew that the war—with its attendant changes to higher education—would
not last forever, the crisis mentality that developed on college campuses as a result of the
war threatened to displace English as a humanist discipline and assign it temporary
wartime meanings of value. Public debates and internal disciplinary disagreements about
the social function and curricular place of the liberal arts during the war years highlight
some of the ideological differences between the military and higher education.
English Teachers React to War

The editors of *EJ* and *CE* invited Council members who had served on the NCTE Basic Aims Committee, the Planning Commission, and the Executive Committee and members in attendance at the 1941 meetings in Chicago and Indianapolis to submit brief statements that addressed the question, “What is the function of English in wartime?” and “Should the teaching of English remain unchanged after our entrance into World War II?” (“English” 578). These individuals were also asked to comment on the NCTE’s position on the war as outlined in “English Instruction” and the 1942 Indiana Resolution (“English” 578). NCTE member responses were compiled and edited to simulate the form and style of a “symposium” in an article format and published in *CE* and *EJ* as companion pieces to “English Instruction” and the 1942 Indiana Resolution respectively. The first article titled “The Function of English in Wartime: A Symposium,” was published in the *EJ* in February 1942 as a reaction to “English Instruction”; the second symposium, titled “English in Wartime: A Symposium by College Teachers” was a reaction to the Indiana Resolution.

Responses to the questions about the role and function of English studies during wartime were mixed. However, the positions and opinions can be roughly categorized into three groups: conservative, reactionary, and cautious.

Before delving into these responses to the war, let’s review the context and stakes of this debate. In the last chapter, I discussed broad changes in American higher education that aligned higher education with a national war program. I argued that academic disciplines were valued for what they could contribute to national defense
effort. In this chapter, I argued that the disciplinary aims outlined in the NCTE “Basic Aims” statement anticipated the wartime turn in higher education and that these aims were aligned with broader changes in higher education during World War II and supported a narrow interpretation of English within a military context. However, the NCTE’s statements and resolution on war in “English Instruction” and the Indiana Resolution emphasized different educational aims that shifted the social function of English from producing good soldiers to producing good citizens and upholding civilian morale.

World War II presented a rhetorical opportunity for reinvention in English studies. The field could take hold of the wartime context as an opportunity to redefine itself as a communicative art, taking full advantage of the military imperative for proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Or, it could take hold of the wartime context as an opportunity to reinforce itself as an expressive art, taking full advantage of the social imperative for social unification, shared cultural values, and national pride. Reactions to the war and debates about the function, role, and aims of English education were ultimately bound up in contested visions for the future of the discipline.

**Conservative Responses**

The conservative response to the question “should English change in response to the war?” was a steady no. Conservatives resisted calls to redefine the aims of English instruction according to the values of military utility. They argued that the best
educational response to the war was for college English teachers to carry on teaching
English as they had before the outbreak of war and to maintain as much of the traditional
curriculum as possible. For example, responding to the 1942 Indiana Resolution, Ben
Euwema of Michigan State College wrote that:

> There is, then, no reason to suppose that an English classroom in wartime
> will differ materially from an English classroom in time of peace. For the
classroom itself . . . is one of the things for which we are fighting. To
change the classroom now would be to surrender without struggle one of
the very values we are struggling to preserve. If the study of *Hamlet* was
considered valuable in 1932, it is imperative in 1942; for, in a sense,

*Hamlet* itself is now one of the war ‘aims.’” (“A Resolution” 579).

Barreling headlong into the nation’s war program, Euwema argues would be an
abandonment of the timelessness that has made the literary tradition and humanist values
endure for so long. P. G. Perrin writes that “the first thing for us to realize as college
teachers of English is that we are not training soldiers but that now as always our
contribution is to our students as future men and women” (“English in Wartime”496-97).

Conservatives argued that it was folly to rush into wartime curricular changes or
align the discipline with military programs. They remembered with bitter distaste, how
campuses had been overrun by the SATC programs during World War I. Fred W. Lorch
writes,

> The statement in the resolution that appears most vital to me is the one that
urges teachers of literature to emphasize the dignity of the individual
personality . . . In making this emphasis . . . we are not working
ineffectually in an effort to teach what we are badly prepared to teach (I am thinking of the war-aims courses taught by teachers of English during World War I); through teaching, we are making a direct legitimate contribution to the preservation of the democratic freedoms we cherish”

(581)

Though conservatives were the most strident voices against the use of propaganda, recalling the abuse of propaganda in the American education system, they were also among the most vocal advocates for promoting nationalist values in the name of preserving democracy.

**Reactionary Responses**

Unlike conservatives, reactionaries embraced wartime changes to the curriculum and accepted military definitions of value. They argued that the aims of English instruction required immediate intervention and should be revised to meet immediate wartime needs. The exigencies of war provided an opportune moment for disciplinary redefinition and purpose. Lennox Grey argued that the war provided an opportunity for a radical restructuring of the discipline. In “Communication and War: An Urgent Letter to English Teachers,” Grey argues:

Communication is one of the five or six most crucial services of war. It is one with which a half-dozen major agencies in Washington are now urgently concerned, for home front and battle front alike, following the first imperative concern with military mobilization and war production. It
is plainly the one in which our seventy-five thousand teachers of English can make the special war contribution we have been looking, hoping, waiting for—if we can mobilize, if we can take hold of ‘communication’ in its full meaning, if we can take the initiative now. (12)

Grey’s statement represents the opportunist attitude of the reactionaries. And also, their strategic interest in securing a future for English studies. Wartime debates about the value of liberal arts colleges made it clear that even “timeless” disciplines did not have a secure future and that college English teachers would have to be flexible in shaping the field to meet public interests.

**Cautious Responses**

“Cautionaries,” agreed to the curricular terms set by the Army and Navy based on a belief that English education would return to its pre-war values and institutional role when the war drew to a close. I refer to this viewpoint or reaction to war as “cautious” and to those who espoused this position as “cautionaries.” I use this term based on an observation made by Max Herzberg in his article “Later May be Too Late.” Herzberg argues that there are three administrative responses to the “the many changes that are being demanded of our schools” (8). He writes that one may be “lethargic, he may be cautious, he may be drastic . . . The cautious chap examines the situation carefully and reconstructs as necessity demands” (8).

Cautionaries took a practical view of the war and acknowledged that some response was required to meet public expectations and to fulfill their civic obligations to
the state, but did not wish to sacrifice their discipline to it. This was the most common reaction expressed by college English teachers in NCTE journals.

The ideas expressed in “English in Wartime: A Symposium by College Teachers” is a representative example of this viewpoint. Knowing that the 1942 Indiana resolution would not be ready for immediate publication, Hatfield and Boothe set out to collect opinions on the NCTE’s position on the war by conducting a “preliminary survey of opinion on the teaching English in World War II” (495). The results of this survey, including brief individual statements, were published in an article titled “English in Wartime: A Symposium by College Teachers” in the February issue of CE (495). Noting the small sample size in the selection of statements included in the article, Hatfield argues that the “weakness of the small number, however, is overcome by the strength of the unified and obviously representative character of the responses. Teachers of English believe in the permanent value of the work they are doing” (495)

Indeed, both the editorial responses and the individual statements included “English in Wartime” reflect a professional consensus that English teachers were obligated to respond to the crisis of war and that wartime adjustments to classroom instruction were appropriate and necessary. Virtually every individual statement in “English in Wartime” acknowledges that English teachers will have to accept changes to the curriculum, at least on a temporary basis. “No doubt,” writes Louis Pound, “there will have to be a curtailment of classroom courses in English as well as of other courses in the curriculums of our schools and colleges; and no doubt here and there expansions may be needed . . . Careful thought should be given them, and it will be” (“English in Wartime”
Oscar James Campbell, like his colleague Pound, advises a composed response to wartime adjustments. He writes,

> Let us not in a mad rush to be immediately practical forget the place of English in education. Let us not become street-corner orators or advertising agents for this or that aspect of defense. Our main effort must be, as always, to keep alive those generous individual and social impulses which make and preserve civilization. So, let us keep on our academic shirts. Let us not pull them wildly off and toss them into the fire of world-conflagration. ("English in Wartime" 502)

Cautionaries urged teachers to “stay calm and carry on.” They accepted that change was inevitable, but maintained that too much change within institutions and academic disciplines could jeopardize the control English teachers had in shaping the educational aims and future of the discipline.

**The Role of the English Teacher in War: A Summary**

In their book, *Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States*, Richard Hofstadter and C. DeWitt Hardy observe that studying how curricula changes over time or in response to certain pressures is “a barometer by which we may measure the cultural pressures that operate upon [a] school” (11). If we take the educational aims and reactions among college English teachers as a barometer of the cultural pressures that
operated on the discipline of English studies in American higher education, what does it show us?

First, the confused aims of wartime English instruction during World War II reflect a tension between two different visions of the social role and value of English instruction: one that was defined by its utility to meet the immediate demands of the state; the other that was defined by its utility to meet the cultural preservation of the state. College English teachers resisted pressure to narrowly define the aims of all English instruction to conform to military standards or objectives. At the same time, most English teachers recognized that some of their courses would have to give way to institutional needs. They accepted that the militarization of college campuses and subsequent adjustments to disciplinary aims were a temporary concession that had to be made. Through all of the debates and discussions and pressures to adjust to the crisis of war, college English teachers maintained their right to define the educational aims of the discipline, rather than to let those aims be determined for them by external forces. Through conventions, forums, and group deliberation, English teachers redefined their contribution to the war effort in alignment with liberal values.
Chapter 4

Literacy and Leisure in Wartime

Academic life now follows an unfamiliar path, devoid of the usual signposts. It is jarring not just for students, but also for professors, who have grown accustomed to an existence punctuated by predictable ceremony, unfolding in semesters.

—Jack Stripling, “Ritual, Rhythm, Community: Everything Higher Ed Does Best, the Coronavirus Attacks,” The Chronicle of Higher Education

In 1943, Mary Gwen Owen, a faculty member of the speech and drama department at Macalester College published a reflective narrative in QJS titled “The Liberal Arts—Necessary,” which defended the liberal arts as vital to the emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of Americans living in a climate of total war. Known for her flamboyance and congeniality as a teacher and scholar, Owen’s spirits were considerably dampened not only from the emotional stress of sending students off to war, but from feeling that she had to constantly justify her teaching program to students, administrators, the public, and even to herself. With so many public figures criticizing or condemning humanistic subjects as impractical and irrelevant in wartime, Owen describes the emotional guilt and self-doubt that she experienced throughout the war years. She writes:

It is not only that one by one they [students heading to war] stop by to break your heart as they say, fumbling a little, “Well, I guess I’ll be going tomorrow . . . goodbye.” “Goodbye,” you say and smile and your heart bleeds and your anguish is consuming. In a state of unrealness you go on.
Each class seems more unreal than the last. Those left are so beset with accelerated programs in mathematics and physics and navigation and the attending practicalities of total war, that the practicalities of total Living Life inherent in the Liberal Arts are so stifled that for a time you wonder if you will ever wake from this hideous dream—if you’ll ever get a grip on your soul again. There is something about having it constantly reiterated that *this* in the curriculum must be abandoned for war, and *that* in the curriculum must be abandoned for war that seeps the contagion into your mind, until you wonder if it is not true after all that maybe such a thing as Liberal Arts *is* ephemeral and must be put aside for the “more real” things of life. (277)

As the war wore on, the seeds of self-doubt, sown through nationalist rhetoric endorsing an educational goal of survival, blossomed into a source of real emotional pain for Owen. What she describes in this passage is akin to the writing of a person experiencing a religious faith crisis, with the situational context of war inducing cognitive dissonance: she must hold in tension her belief in the virtues of humanistic study as an educational program with the reality that students are going to war, some to die. One effect of this cognitive dissonance is ennui, an aimlessness in a search for something “real,” something tangible to hold on to from the remnants of a belief-system shaken by the war. “Occasionally,” she continues,

... but their voices have a feeble ring over against the insistent voices of the others: “There is no time for Chaucer, every college an army post.”
And you see it happening before your eyes. The required “necessary”
courses are increasing in size—in numbers of sections—and it takes time
for the numbness and the unbelievability of it all to become fixed in your
mind so that you know that this is what they are doing, stating flatly,
emphatically, what is “real” and what is not—as if man can live by
mathematics or navigation or physics alone, necessary as they are to a
total war or a total peace. (278)

In this passage, Owen is “numbed” by the conversion of the familiar liberal arts
college where she has been employed for over a decade into a campus “army post”; she
describes the daily experience of teaching in a climate of total war as surreal, as though
she has wandered into an alternative reality. The war has sped up the academic clock, and
this disruption in her experience of time also disrupts her sense of reality. With a war on,
and teachers and students already working around the clock to meet tight defense
schedules, reading and performing plays feels like a luxury that the nation simply can no
longer afford. She wonders, in a world where what is “real” is dictated by the immediate
needs of the nation’s war machine, by martial imperatives that deprive students of
reading literary giants like Chaucer, and by educational imperatives that must be
efficiently converted into quantifiable gains in machines, intelligence, or manpower, what
is her value as a teacher? How can she restore feeling and vitality to her work as an
educator? What can she say to the men and women in her classrooms as they rapidly
move into a future she feels acutely, but is still grasping to comprehend?

Her response is to take conscious educational action that resists the disorienting
experience of war and restores a sense of time past. Collaborating with other humanist
educators on campus, Owen organized a dramatic series celebrating poetry, music, visual arts, and theater which she called the “Eight O’Clocks.” Her idea was to combine performance-based exams for various classes, such as “Public Reading 303” or the “Choral Reading Program” with an evening of leisure, where students and the public could temporarily forget their war worries through a celebration of the arts. The series, so named for its evening performance time, was scheduled during the Christmas holiday break, free of charge to anyone interested in attending. Owens writes that this new series is a “conscious attempt to help people forget the terror of the world—and to remember the exquisite release there is in the beauty of great poetry and music and painting and to help them know again that these, too, are important and necessary” (279). The humanities have an essential role to play in the war, she argues, if only to help those “who, in the midst of the whirlpool of despair, must carry on the details of mundanity which seem so utterly, completely futile—pitted against flying bombers and the glamor of uniforms” (279). Owen reclaimed an old argument that the nation needs courses in literature and drama not only for their utilitarian value, but for their spiritually restorative value. “Cultural” subjects, once claimed as the intellectual property of a socially elite class, are not luxury commodities or peacetime indulgences, she argues, but are vital tools that can be used to restore mental and emotional imbalances brought about by the frenetic pacing of the war.

Many of the ideas in Owen’s argument were deployed, with some effect, in other scholarly articles that address the topics of time, civilian guilt, leisure, and mental health in college English. I argued in my previous chapter that contributors to these periodicals often argued about the wartime purpose of college English in terms of time and material
considerations. Conservationists who argued that the best educational response to the war was to carry on teaching English as usual were confronted daily by immediate material considerations: the financial hardships that educational institutions faced and the bodies of newly inducted student soldiers who now constituted an important demographic on campuses. Reactionaries who argued that English teachers should sacrifice any content that did not contribute directly to the war effort were challenged by longitudinal educational considerations: the potential loss of traditional educational standards and values, the decline of public morale as war progressed, and the reconstruction of a post-war education when hostilities ceased. Cautionaries, like Owen, emphasized the temporary nature of the war, arguing that if institutions of higher education had to sacrifice educational quality and values, these sacrifices would be short-lived. Educators could regroup and pick up where they left off before the disruption of war. Each of these reactions were shaped by constructions of academic time designed to support the educational goal of national survival and defense.

In her chapter, “Telling Time in War,” Mary Favret claims that the experience of war is “fundamentally dislocating, and that such dislocation expresses itself most frequently and forcefully through our sense of the movement (or stasis) of time, through temporalities” (49). War distorts time, and this distortion was felt keenly on college campuses where the rhythms and cycles of academic life had been relatively stable and predictable. The acceleration and suspension of academic programs in the forties had profound implications not only on educational policy and curricular development, but also on the lived experience of educators. Modern wartime, Favret argues, “houses many temporalities, each one . . . a structure of feeling with its own affective qualities, its own
expressivity, its own silences” (49). Applying Raymond Williams’ concept of “structures of feeling” to modern warfare, Favret’s argument that time and sensibility are intimately linked in the lived experience of war is illustrated in Owen’s narrative, where her feelings of disorientation, overwhelm, despair, and uncertainty are inseparable from her experience of teaching in a time-bound educational environment that has temporarily suspended and displaced the study of “timeless” subjects, such as literature.

In this chapter, I explore the “affective qualities” and “structures of feeling” resulting from the educational goal of national survival and a culture of speed from the perspective of college English teachers. I argue that “war time,” with its accelerations and suspensions, not only profoundly shaped educational policy and curricular development, but also the lived experience of instructors. In keeping with the military values of efficiency and standardization, the curricular status of literary studies in higher education was challenged not only by public officials and educators, but by college English teachers themselves who were often ridden with civilian guilt and a desperate desire to offer meaningful contributions to the war. While writing instruction had a clear military application that justified its inclusion in a wartime curriculum, literary studies offered no obvious contribution to the short-term needs of a national defense program. Specifically, I examine wartime criticisms of literature as a “leisurely activity” or a curricular “luxury” better suited for a peacetime curriculum. In response to these critiques, literature professors launched a defense of literature as a vital subject in the nation’s war program. Drawing upon an ethic of leisure, English teachers argued for the value of reading as a leisurely activity that contributed to the mental and emotional health of Americans and the nation. I argue that the rationale for this defense was not politically neutral and that it
marked a conscientious reclamation of time. I conclude the chapter with a brief return to the idea of conscious educational action and disciplinary responses to the war.

**The Tempo of War**

On February 9, 1942 at 2:00 standard time, clocks across the United States were reset in compliance with a federal law that established daylight saving time as the new time standard of wartime America. Daylight saving time had been federally mandated once before, during World War I, when the government attempted to standardize four U.S. time zones as part of a national energy conservation effort. After the First World War, Congress repealed daylight saving time and it was adopted unevenly by states and local municipalities across the nation. In her book *War Time: An Idea, Its History, Its Consequences*, Mary L. Dudziak documents the reemergence and adoption of daylight-saving time during World War II, observing that daylight saving was reintroduced and presented before Congress as part of a solution to maximize commercial power usage and minimize civilian power consumption. Although the actual energy savings from this change were only “between 1 and 5 percent per year” nationwide, Dudziak argues that instituting daylight saving achieved the more important national goal of “calibrat[ing] daily life to . . . War Time” and “coordinat[ing] . . . all activity according to a single public time” (13, 21). The turning of the clock during the spring and summer months served as a “tangible way for ordinary Americans to serve their nation” and a “constant reminder that the nation was at war” (13).
As the federal government worked to get civilians to “step in time” with the new, energy-efficient standard, postsecondary educators and administrators were also “calibrating” academic time in compliance with military and civilian defense needs.

America’s entrance into World War II reset the temporal orders at institutions of higher education: accelerated schedules, extended teaching hours, year-round course offerings, civilian and military training programs, and a general energy of urgency set a new rhythm and pace to academic timetables. Everywhere on campuses across the nation there was a sense that whatever stores of time had been available to faculty and students in the pursuit of knowledge, these stores were running dry. In a speech delivered to college officials and instructors, Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell admonished educators to “be realistic” about what could be achieved. “The tempo of war is such,” he argued “that a complex college education is impossible” (qtd. in “Later” 8). Wykoff, observed that even after the ASTP and V-12 curricula were trimmed down to the basic “essentials,” there was “too little” time “for the work to be covered” (“Army English” 339).

Many college English teachers observed these changes, and the administrative possibilities they introduced, with growing alarm. “Let’s not kid ourselves,” Alexander Cowie of Wesleyan College wrote in 1944, “There is a lot of talk about the potential benefits of accelerated schedules. People are enormously stimulated by the curricular alterations made necessary by the presence of service men” (“Acceleration” 1). Cowie acknowledges that campus training programs have revealed that certain aspects of educational development, such as rote memorization, mastery of factual information, and “mechanical” training, can be “immensely speeded up,” and he admires the “tough
discipline” that the militarization of campuses has enforced (1). “But,” he argues, “when it is assumed that education can be speeded up in the same ratio, some of us refuse to string along. Some of us refuse to admit that, as is so often charged, colleges have failed all along the line” (1). Cowie defines “education” as the development of “judgment,” a term that he does not define, but which seems to indicate aesthetic or intellectual taste cultivated through a broad exposure to good and bad ideas. In other words, Cowie’s idea of education refers to liberal education. And this, he continues, is “where the time-fallacy comes in,” because, like a young plant in nature, liberal education requires patient cultivation over an extended period of time before it will reach maturation. It cannot be hurried. It cannot be accelerated. It cannot be forced into realization by external pressures or exigencies (1).

The militarization of American campuses raised an important question for the future direction of college English studies. How could teachers of English uphold humanist ideals and maintain their self-appointed social and civic role of instilling “timeless” national values and protecting academic freedom and still remain relevant in wartime? How could they support higher education’s commitment to a national defense program and not get swallowed up by it? In his 1942 roundtable response to the NCTE Indianapolis resolution pledging the NCTE’s commitment to the war, Gerald Sanders encourages members not to get swept up by wartime “hysteria” or give in to wartime pressures driven by emotional rather than rational reactions to the war:

As the tempo of war quickens, we shall be subjected more and more to the pressure of hysterical individuals and groups, who will demand that all ultimate values be subordinated to immediate requirements . . . However
dire the next months or years may be, we here in America have faith that we shall achieve ultimate victory. . . To help prepare students to meet their responsibilities soberly and thoughtfully and willingly is our highest task.”

William R. Parker writes that no one in the profession disputes the “ideals” put forward by Sanders as desirable educational aims. “The problem,” he writes, is “how best to realize them” (236). The war has raised a dilemma for English teachers, which Parker neatly captures in his article “English in Wartime: A Suggestion and an Illustration,” published in CE in January 1943. He writes:

We want to stick to our essential business without, at the same time, appearing anachronistic. We want to prove ourselves equal to the crisis of the hour without becoming servants of the hour. We feel ourselves, and at our best we are, custodians of the wisdom of the ages. At some cost too, we have trained ourselves to be skeptical and tolerant and objective. Shall we now abandon our heritage, and, because our nation is again at war, encourage chauvinism and uncritical thinking? What can the teacher of English do? (236)

The question, then, was how to respond to the real educational needs imposed by the militarization of campuses, without allowing the field of English studies to succumb to jingoism, as it had during World War I when English teachers had limited their concerns to “topical” problems and turned a blind eye to attacks on academic freedom and academic standards.
For Parker, and many other college English teachers, the liberal arts and the humanist tradition represented a stronghold of American democracy that should not be put aside casually, even for a national crisis as serious as World War II. Moreover, English teachers needed to think strategically about the future of the profession. If College English teachers allow their work to be “distorted” by “an overemphasis of the ephemeral and the purely topical,” Arthur H. Nethercot asks in his 1942 response to the NCTE Indianapolis Resolution, where would that leave the profession when hostilities ceased? Giving way to external pressures to redefine the aims of English instruction as part of a national defense program, he continues, must be staunchly “refused”: English teachers should stand their ground by maintaining existing objectives and curricula (“Round Table: English” 580).

But others in the profession argued that refusal to address the war directly reflected a willful evasion of civic responsibility and an unpatriotic disregard for the enormous personal and national costs of war. College English teachers could not afford to cling to political neutrality. They had to take action. They had to get political. Teachers like Neal Cross, who served on the NCTE Planning Commission and published a wartime pamphlet for high school English teachers titled “Teaching English in Wartime,” found the prospects of the wartime academic schedule exhilarating, if exhausting, and argued vociferously that the profession could no longer hide its head in the sand and carry on teaching English as though the war did not exist. “The teaching of English cannot continue in its usual complacent way during the present crisis”; teachers must “make an active and vigorous attempt to cultivate . . . a realization that, though war is necessary now, it is a horrible business” (“The Function” 99). Monroe, who served with Cross on
the NCTE Planning Committee and would later serve in the Bureau of Naval Personnel as a lieutenant commander in Washington D. C. from 1943-1946, likewise argued that, war and its complex effects upon all the people raise for us a new pattern of teaching responsibilities. A policy of “English as usual” will not serve. The challenge which every American must accept in meeting this crisis is also a challenge to the English teachers of America.” (“The Function” 105).

NCTE leadership was swift to reiterate its position on wartime defense and the need for English teachers to take decisive and organized action. In response to Somervell and other public criticisms of the academic unpreparedness of students entering the armed services, Herzberg, who served as president of the NCTE from 1943-1944, wrote in his January 1943 article “Later May Be Too Late,” that English teachers had long demonstrated their ability to adapt instruction with the “needs of the time,” and urged secondary and postsecondary English teachers to make whatever professional or personal adjustments were necessary to meet the demands of this new schedule.

We must change our outlook—this is war. We probably must move faster in some parts of our work to make room for new activities and new content. We must add new material in many directions. We may have to drop entirely some of the traditional material in our courses. In the case of some of the material we retain, we shall need to change our procedures and the attitude we take toward it . . . English teachers can help more than any others to build a brave new world. (12)
In petitioning fellow Council members to pick up the pace by lightening the curricular load and focusing on course materials relevant to the war, Herzberg acknowledges that “we cannot escape some damage to our work and our courses,” but “unless we do it now, later may be too late” (9). Implicit in Herzberg’s plea is an assumption that the study of literature will be the sacrificial lamb that college English teachers must put on the altar of national defense.

Herzberg’s stylistic expression throughout the article has a kind of fatalistic determinism: suffer or perish—later may be too late. In fact, despite his sometimes ominous manner of expression, his argumentative position is strategic rather than dire. If college English teachers are cautious and not lethargic or drastic in their approach to wartime educational reforms, Herzberg argues, they may lose some valuable elements of the curriculum in the short-term—namely, the displacement of literary courses to war courses—but these sacrifices may actually lead to valuable gains for English studies in the long run. He continues:

It is, moreover, true that by a wise boldness now we may not only meet the iron necessities of war but also rebuild English teaching in ways that will ultimately be to its greatest advantage. The danger is not that we must make adjustments; adjustment is life. The danger is supineness. (9)

Herzberg correctly anticipated that the war offered a unique opportunity for the postsecondary English teaching community to redefine and clarify the aims of English studies and that this redefinition would attract public attention. Although the wartime orientation of higher education during the war years challenged the practical value of English studies, Herzberg recognized that if college English teachers took decisive action
by repositioning the teaching of reading and writing as vital to American democracy and national security, the crisis of war could actually be leveraged for disciplinary advantage.

Dudziak argues that a sacrificial and survivalist mentality is a product of “war time,” in which war is recognized as a temporary anomaly (in contrast with the constant normal of “peace time”) that requires immediate and sometimes undesirable changes. She writes:

Once war has begun, time is thought to proceed on a different plane. There are two important consequences of this shift: first, we have entered a time that calls for extraordinary action, and second, we share a belief that this moment will end decisively, so that this shift is temporary. Because of this, built into the idea of wartime is a conception of the future. To imagine the future requires an understanding of the past. In wartime thinking, the future is a place beyond war, a time when exceptional measures can be put to rest, and regular life resumed. The future is, in essence, a return to a time that war had suspended . . . In American wartime thinking, there is also a powerful sense of determinism. Actions that would normally transgress a rule of law are seen as compelled by the era, as if commanded by time . . . individuals defend themselves by arguing that their actions were compelled or justified by the times” (22-23).

College English teachers expressed both the need for extraordinary action to meet the immediate needs of the war and yearning for an imagined post-war future when collegiate instruction would resume its prewar tempo outside the constraints of military
Some of these statements are optimistic, such as this anonymous response to Warner Rice and Howard M. Jones’s disciplinary survey published in their article “The Humanities and the War: A Survey of Opinion on a Proposal to Act to Preserve the Study of the Humanities.” The responder anticipates a speedy and decisive American victory which will usher in a postwar reinstatement of humanist studies that have been temporarily displaced: “after we’ve licked Hitler and the Japs, we can go back to the luxuries of debating what T. S. Eliot meant, or why Gertrude Stein is a great writer” (317). Yes, the writer concedes, college English teachers may have to put aside their Shakespeare and Shelley and Chaucer and Milton, exchanging them for technical manuals, military reports, and handbooks, but postponement is not indefinite: war will come to an end at which time English teachers can resume their “normal” duties. Presumably, “normality” in this example is a return to a prewar curriculum in which a military victory in Germany and Japan promises a future that will not be disrupted by the threat of foreign or colored bodies.

Some college English teachers were not so optimistic about their hopes for the profession; their postwar imaginings of the future were far more anxious and self-deprecating. For example, in his 1944 analysis of the effects of the war on English

51 In “One People, One Language” Robert C. Pooley writes that “in a nation preoccupied with armaments, the production of materials of war, and the accumulation of physical resources, the present is all important and the future is neglected. But wars end—this war will end. When it ends, how will it find us as a nation” (119). I find this quote particularly curious in light of Dudziak’s argument about the future as constructed beyond war. Far from “neglecting” the future, college English teachers spent a great deal of time, and ink, thinking about what the future might hold. A reversal of Pooley’s statement “the future is all important and the present is neglected” more accurately represents the attitudes of college English teachers during the war years.
graduate studies, Tom Burns Haber longs for a future that is no longer defined by war and campus militarization, but worries that a future constructed from nostalgic visions of the past will only set college English teachers up for disappointment. The future of graduate studies in English in postwar America, he warns, is far from determined.

We look for a return to normalcy after the war. We think that there will be a resurgence of interest in the humanities and that our English departments will again be blessed with their due share of candidates for advanced degrees. But this turn of affairs is by no means inevitable. It will not come by wishing. Who knows what the temper and spirit of the American people will be like after the war? . . . There is no reason to expect that the materialism which bred the war and is fighting it will in the postwar world easily come to terms with those who profess to represent the ideals of liberal education . . . If the mood of America after the war is one of embitterment and disillusion, the immediate prospect for higher education will not be bright; for to us the wisdom of great books has been rather an adornment of leisure than a present help in time of trouble. When we are ill, we look for our souls’ remedy not to the sage but to the politician.

(“Graduate Study” 41-42)

Haber’s criticism of the use-value of literature as an “adornment of leisure” rather than a “present help” is a common critique in some of the more pessimistic and personal admissions made by college English teachers during the war. Robert C. Pooley\textsuperscript{52}, who

\textsuperscript{52} Pooley served as the NCTE President from 1942-1942.
himself took a much more idealistic view of the institutional and public value of literature in wartime, records the sense of hopelessness and helplessness expressed by a colleague about his professional contributions to the war in his president’s address delivered to the members of the NTCE at the Atlanta conference in 1941:

I was too young to serve my country more than a few months in the last war; now I am too old to serve as a soldier in this one. Besides, I am not specifically trained to be of use in a time of national emergency. Jones of chemistry has been taken for government research of a highly secret and important type; Smith of geology now controls the nation’s metals: Brown of law is a specialist in the Attorney-General’s office. But here I remain, teaching freshman English and Shakespeare. I have never felt so useless.

(“One” 117)

Pooley concludes this narrative with his private observation that there is a growing malaise spreading among college English teachers who feel that they have been “deferred” because of their professional commitments from the more important work of national defense. This discontent, Pooley argues, undercuts conscious educational action and diminishes the contribution of English teachers who are working to preserve American democracy. He continues:

I venture to present this homely instance because I am sure the feeling expressed is more or less common among the members of our profession today. When we see one after another of our fellow-teachers drawn to the colors or enlisted in the civilian army of specialists while we remain at
home unsought and unwanted, the dignity and importance of the work we
are doing give way to a sense of futility. (117)

Pooley’s anecdote and observation are illustrative of the civilian guilt that many
English teachers experienced during World War II. Though scholarly periodicals flooded
teachers with arguments justifying and articulating the role of college English in wartime,
with its values and virtues, the anxiety expressed in these same periodicals suggests that,
for many teachers, these disciplinary justifications did not outweigh the overwhelming
sense of guilt they felt teaching “impractical” topics such as seventeenth-century British
poetry\(^{53}\) to students who were going to war. Although the story of his colleague is a
minor point in Pooley’s argument, he doesn’t deny that many college English teachers
worried that the war would pass them by before they had a chance to contribute anything
of substantive “value” to the nation. In fact, he spends the majority of his argument trying
to convince English teachers that they are in a unique position to contribute to the
national defense program by upholding democratic values and strengthening civilian
morale through language instruction. His nationalist ideals lead to some rather
astonishing claims at the conclusion of his speech. For example, he writes:

I venture to reply to my colleague . . . to teachers of English over the
nation that what we are doing or can do in our obscure, insignificant jobs
is of such vast importance now and for the future that our democracy with
its rights and privileges is inevitably doomed if we cease our efforts . . .

\(^{53}\) I use this example consciously since more than one contributor to the English
teaching journals alluded to this particular topic as being on the curricular chopping block
during the war.
We need now as never before to realize the extent to which language is the pulse of national health . . . I assert with all the force of which I am capable that this task is more important to the health, spirit, and continuity of our democracy than airplanes, guns, tanks, or even food itself. Who will shoulder this responsibility if we do not? What can save America if we fail? Here is responsibility, here is personal worth, here is value second to none! (118-19)

Pooley’s hyperbolic rhetoric in this passage, which claims that English instruction is the most vital war work in the nation, has two distinct rhetorical motives. First, Pooley justifies English instruction by connecting it to a broader nationalist project to preserve American democracy. He equates the preservation of English as the national language of the United States with the preservation of the United States as a political state. If Americans are deprived of English instruction, they will be starved of the cultural identity that defines America. And, if English instruction suffers, the health of the nation will also suffer. Second, Pooley justifies English instruction to a group of teachers who are clearly feeling anxious and discouraged about the social value of their work. The language in this passage is reminiscent of a pep rally designed to stir up and reinvigorate the beleaguered and disillusioned. The statement “here is personal worth, here is value second to none” is a haunting tribute to a disciplinary insecurity that ran deep. The federal government, the military, educational institutions, and local communities weren’t the only ones who needed convincing that English education mattered. English teachers also had to convince themselves.
Teaching English and Civilian Guilt

In his article “The College English Teacher and the War,” W. R. Richardson, a professor of English at the liberal arts College of William and Mary, writes about how the unsettling, high-stress environment on campus triggered lapses of focus and bouts of melancholic reverie among students and faculty. In addition to meeting the demands of achieving the curricular aims of military campus training programs, Richardson writes that teachers also have to respond to the complexity of how individuals are “affected in various ways by the prospect of war” (4). Some students are less motivated to study and some teachers are less motivated to teach, because the war has destabilized their future. Others, like him, want to put more energy into their work, but lack the time or emotional resources to do so. “Almost all” of the individuals who have stayed behind, Richardson observes, “give way at times to moods of reverie, as they wonder whether they and those dear to them may be at the siege of Berlin or Tokio (sic), and if so, whether they are likely or not to come back at all” (4). These “moods of reverie” are symptomatic of the malaise of civilian guilt. By civilian guilt I refer to a number of highly conflicting emotions bound up in civilian attitudes toward military service: gratitude, envy, insecurity, shame, and longing.54

W. H. Blair at Kent State writes about civilian guilt in the December 1943 News Letter, imaginatively representing the aimlessness and uncertainty of English studies through the fictional character of Professor Sallow, a middle-aged professor of English

54 For another powerful example of civilian guilt, see “Cultivate the Seed” by Dorothy Dakin of Washington State College, published in the News Letter in April 1943.
who, like Pooley’s colleague, is too young to have served in World War I and too old to enlist in the current conflict. Sallow contemplates his purposelessness as he wanders across campus on a Saturday morning, bumping first into a former student who has just been inducted and later into an unnamed colleague who he meets outside the city bank. The narrative describes Sallow as stuck in time: caught in the minutiae of daily living in a climate of total war. He drifts toward his destination, mulling over “petty thoughts”: gas shortages that force him to walk to class, the ration book that his wife asked him to pick up, meals without butter. All of these home-front sacrifices are “supposed to make him feel virtuous,” but instead he feels adrift (3). Lost in his own thoughts, Sallow loses his sense of time as he contemplates his own middling insufficiency:

He was in a rut, he supposed. There was a big war going on, and he had no part of it—except a lot of students who soon would be in it: he wasn’t “on the beam” or “in the groove;” he was in a rut . . . Every time he walked across the campus and down Center Street and saw young men in uniform, he became aware of a spiritual unrest which he found hard to put into words. Now, he said to himself, was the winter of his discontent. Being middle-aged wouldn’t ordinarily get him down, but it was painful to realize what it signified to belong to the neither-old-or-young middle forties, the generation that had flourished between years . . . it was the men of his age who should have been thrown in the struggle first . . . Here was the root of the sickness of his spirit: What could he do, what could anyone of his age do, that was comparable to what the younger men had to do? . . .
There were details that the historians of the future, painting the picture on the big canvas, would not include—in their desire to give the proper shade and color to the Major issues of World War II. Right now, those details were all that he could see in the troubled eye of his mind . . . the homesick draftee, the kid in the upper berth bound for God knew where (with no return-trip ticket in his pocket) . . . figures in the mist, creeping through the green New Guinea forests with Japs like murderous monkeys in the trees, fixing their gun sights . . . bodies on the rubber raft, floating silent on the oily surface of the grey ocean . . . . (3)

Caught in the middle. Stuck in a rut. Suspended between past and present. The war has, in a manner of speaking, passed over Sallow, and yet he is consumed by its presence. His “spiritual unrest” has arrested him, mind and spirit, in the sublime expanse and tempo of war. The younger generations will be remembered as part of a grand narrative that historians will paint “on the big canvas,” while Sallow’s experience is swallowed up and sublimated into the sweeping brushstrokes of the “Major issues” of the war. Sallow’s discontent stems not only from his frustration that he has outgrown the age for heroics and remembrance, but also that he is too overwhelmed by the “details” of his own experience as a civilian instructor to mentally or emotionally process his feelings of envy, guilt, and helplessness. He cannot physically join with the ranks of enlisted students, so he imaginatively stations himself at scenes of military action, first as an onlooker, and then as a participant standing in for the “homesick draftee” he both pities and envies.

Sallow’s reverie is a civilian fantasy of war: the racist othering of Japanese soldiers, the lifeless bodies strewn across the landscape, the high-octane suspense, and
hyper-realistic details create a picture of white American heroism in the face of mortal
danger. Sinking deeper into this fantasy distances him from the banality of civilian life
and compounds the guilt he feels as a “stay-at-home” professor, securely settled on a
college campus with books for his company and consolation. Like the academic field of
English studies during the forties, Sallow’s position at his educational institution is
relatively secure, but his sense of purpose has been unmoored by the crisis of war. And
like Sallow, many college English teachers expressed an insecurity in this security and a
longing to be “part of the action” during the war years.

This imaginative longing for action from a place of relative security is what
Hargis Westerfield, a former member of the English Department at Indiana University,
argues is the difference between civilian and military experience in his poem “For a Stay-
at-Home,” published in the October 1945 issue of CE while Westerfield was stationed in
the South Pacific. The second stanza of the poem reads:

If I could put into words
The difference between us (no blame
To you), it would be that deck
In the moonlight, men singing
Not coming back, the life-belt
Slung on the shoulder, the canteen
Full for a day in the boats;
The dark waters whelming us down
West over the world’s edge, and men
Singing on deck daring them. (19)
On the one hand, Westerfield’s poem attempts to narrow the gap between “stay-at-homes” and combatants by drawing readers (presumably the stay-at-homes the poem is addressed to) into a fairly tranquil scene at sea. But even in this scene, where there is no active military action taking place, every detail emphasizes danger and peril: the seamen are outfitted with accoutrements for survival and face the open sea fully awake to their own mortality. Thus, even as the poem seems to close the gap between the stay-at-home and the man-at-war, it actually deepens the civilian/military divide by emphasizing the “difference” between them.

Although Westerfield’s poem suggests that civilian experience is fundamentally different from military life, he does not “blame” his colleagues. Some contributors to English teaching periodicals were not so restrained. In a scathing critique of Rice and Jones’s proposal to create a national committee dedicated to the preservation of the humanities and liberal education, titled “The Humanities in Wartime,” which was published in the May 1943 issue of *College English*, an “anonymous westerner” openly accuses Rice and Jones (and by extension, any other “stay-at-homes” in the profession who approve of their proposal) of intellectual elitism and ingratitude.

This is no time to stickle for vested interests, to insist on our right to sit in our ivory tower, to indulge in what to a great many people—including myself—looks like intellectual snobbery, implied if not explicit. Making such a proposal [to preserve the humanities] would seem to me to be saying, “We who teach the humanities are not as other men; we are a superior breed. You of lesser worth go and fight the battle, suffer, and die. When you have won the battle for us, we superior intellects will decide what is to be done with the world.”
Assuming that the rest of the citizens of the world would sit by while the professors decided the peace, are the professors under any illusions that the men who come back from those battle fronts are going to let the stay-at-homes, the noncombatants, decide what should be done with the world they have fought to save? (“The Humanities in Wartime” 315)

The reviewer argues that those who have not risked their lives in combat have no right to unilaterally decide what the fate of the humanities will be after the war. All of the “talk” in college English departments about the preservation of democracy, the reviewer continues, has not amounted to a clear, coherent educational response to the crisis of war; rather, the disciplinary chatter exemplifies how detached academics are from the “real” issues that face Americans. She seems to take particular offense to Rice and Jones’ suggestion that their proposed committee explore the option of creating a civilian peace program “comparable to the various military and naval training programs” affording participants “similar privileges with reference to deferment” (“The Humanities: An Appeal” 166), which the reviewer interprets as a cowardly evasion of civic responsibility.

Too many English teachers, she seethes, have either taken up teaching subjects outside of their expertise to “avoid the draft” or “scuttled off the academic raft to work in some industry which will assure them the same deferment” (“The Humanities in Wartime” 504). To ask for “favors and exemptions” in a time of war, when many in the profession already had secured “safe” noncombatant positions, the reviewer argues, is the height of

55 The gender of the reviewer is not disclosed in the article, so I have taken the liberty of assuming “she” as the “neutral” pronoun here.
academic “snobbishness” and the surest way for college English departments to “commit suicide” (“The Humanities in Wartime” 504).

This critique would not be the first or last statement to question the motives of college English departments or to accuse literature professors of indulgence, escapism, and evasion. But, as Herzberg anticipated, these accusations served as kairotic opportunities to reposition English studies as vital to the health and defense of the nation.

Wartime Work and Leisure

As American colleges and universities transitioned into a wartime rhythm that demanded long hours, flexibility, and efficiency—what Levette J. Davison referred to as the “all-absorbing daily grind” (“Teachers of English” 204)—civilian leisure time was also increasingly defined by the war. Richardson encourages college English teachers to reconsider how and where they are spending their time. If a college English teacher is not “fit” for service in the armed forces, then he must “decide how to live like a sensible human being”; that is, the college English teacher must consider how to fill the time he

56 Incidentally, the anonymous western reviewer was not the only person to express discomfort with the idea of English departments receiving any special treatment, especially in the form of draft exemptions or deferments for students or instructors in the humanities. Rice and Jones report that Floyd Stovall, George F. Reynolds, J. Milton French, James H. Hanford, J. H. McKee, Robert C. Pooley objected to the terms of their proposal. Pooley’s rejection surprised me, given his enthusiastic statements defending wartime English instruction. According to Rice and Jones, Pooley circulated the proposal to a group of high school students, who all agreed that although they thought that the humanities should still be taught in schools, humanists should not receive any special rewards for noncombatant service. It appears that his students’ skepticism was the basis for Pooley’s rejection of the proposal.
does not spend teaching English (“an essential war work”) with serviceable, civic activities. Time spent on scholarly rather than pedagogical pursuits “must be cut down greatly, or the work must be stopped, until the war is over” (4). For example, the time spent researching and writing a book should be reinvested into local community defense programs. After all, Richardson writes,

    Many students, faculty, and townspeople are cheerfully losing sleep, renouncing cards and gossip sessions, in order to do various kinds of work. He should have begun training months ago, immediately after the talks by the leaders of the local civilian defense, who were certainly not overstating when they said that every man, woman, and child should prepare intelligently . . . He may decide to begin with a first aid course . . . He must be on his toes if he hopes to be as useful as the manager of the town power plant who has already helped save two lives by artificial respiration . . . Afterwards, the English teacher may decide to take up advanced first aid. Or he may decide to drive an ambulance. Or he may decide to try plane spotting from the tower of the nearby church: he has learned to respect everyone connected with this work, which is far more wearing than a cross-country or a six day bicycle race. He is certain to discover that it is possible now for him to occupy himself a small part of the time at a task that he once was convinced would prove to be too distracting and exhausting for him to carry with other work. (4)

Richardson’s description suggests that the duty of college English teachers—indeed of every person living within the boundaries of the United States—is to use their time
productively. Productive activity, he implies, entails any activity that contributes to national defense and promotes communal welfare above personal interests. The time typically spent on “self-serving” activities like gossip, sleep, or card games should be reallocated to learning emergency preparedness skills that can be used in service of the state. His phrase “a small part of the time” suggests that even incremental moments should be capitalized for civic readiness. In a similar article titled “A Challenge” by Eric V. Sandin at State Teachers College in Duluth, Minnesota, Sandin reminds fellow teachers that

We who teach from nine to fifteen hours of college English should remember that we are citizens as well as cloistered scholars. We have definite obligations to our community other than to teach, to attend conventions of learned societies, and to enter research papers in obscure journals . . . To be specific, how many of us go before service clubs . . . chambers of commerce, and even P.T.A. groups . . . how many of us take active parts in school board elections or serve on our local school boards? Frankly, the college instructor of English should have a keener sense of his obligations than college teachers in other subjects.” (38)

Civilians, Sandin argues, demonstrate their patriotism by participating in state-sponsored defense programs and local civic centers at home. Preparedness, industry, thrift and engagement bring the community together in a cooperative effort to support the war: in this endeavor, English teachers cannot be found wanting. While the war was pulling English teachers into spaces of public engagement and public work, a laudable change,
the push to prove their worth through professional and private wartime commitments exhausted teachers.

With time spent at work and at home increasingly determined by a national defense program, “war work” took a toll on both individual teachers of English and the profession as a whole. In his 1944 article, “Tired Teachers,” Thomas H. English of Emory University, an associate editor of the SAB, argues that institutional time pressures on instructors during the war were unsustainable and threatened to deplete college English teachers of the creative energy necessary to produce good teaching and good research. English argues that the wartime emphasis on pedagogy at the neglect of scholarly research in college English would stymie academic progress, even if these measures were socially justified. As such, English contends, educational planning should include very serious consideration toward the need for paid leave and vacation time which, he argues, will assist instructors in recouping creative energies spent in service to the state during the course of the war. He writes:

When the training programs and the colleges return to their normal terms and curricula, there will be a tired teacher in every classroom. Some of them will be almost fainting under the burden of fatigue accumulated during the accelerated training programs; others will be jaded from long service with the fighting forces or in war agencies. If there is not to be a serious drop in campus morale at the top, ways must be found to ensure vacations for our teachers without endangering their financial security . . . Whether our patrons realize it or not, whether our teachers realize it or not, we shall have been drawing at the faucet for a long time without filling the
tank. The quality of postwar teaching will seriously deteriorate if extraordinary encouragement is not given to study and research . . . unless administrative officers and department chairmen take fully into account the crying need of rest and reinvigoration, both physical and mental, for their teachers, college and university education after the war will stagnate. Otherwise the speedup will be followed by the inevitable slowdown; the intellectual pace of higher education will lag . . . (2) English’s commentary on the “plight of our teachers” in this passage illustrates the enormous difficulty of negotiating working conditions during a major crisis or war. Returning to Dudziak’s claim that war time depends upon a sacrificial attitude that demands more from individuals than would be expected of them during more tranquil times, this passage articulates the emotional and mental cost of this temporal philosophy on teaching bodies. English’s demand that institutions of higher education reinstate paid vacation and sabbaticals after the war is a call for academics to reclaim their right to private, unstructured time. In an academic environment where virtually everyone on campus was being asked to make personal sacrifices, requesting “time off” was a politically-charged move.

The war raised a number of questions about time management and productivity. When every “man, woman, and child” had been publicly charged with preparing the United States for war, was it unpatriotic to take a vacation, to relax, to recreate? Was there even such a thing as “free time” or “leisure time” in war time? And what bearing did these questions have on the lived experience of college English teachers or the institutional place of English studies during and after World War II?
Leisure and its place in the educative process has a long and vexed history in the United States, and particularly in higher education where academics have defended unstructured time, self-reflection, relaxation, and isolation as critical to the production of creative and productive scholarly work. At various historical turns, when a practical orientation and an efficiency mindset in education prevails, these claims have been challenged. In the edited collection *Idleness, Indolence, and Leisure in English Literature*, editors Monika Fludernik and Miriam Nandi argue that Western constructions of idleness have been strongly influenced by the Latin concept of *otium*, a term that is so “contested” and “equivocal” that a list of its various translations into English resembles a thesaurus entry: “idleness,” “indolence,” “leisure,” “relaxation,” “recreation,” “repose,” “rest,” “retirement,” “diversion,” and “disinterestedness” (3). These words are themselves polarized terms, with strong negative and positive connotations that reveal underlying social attitudes toward time management, economics, and social and personal (in)activity. For example, the term “idle” might be positively associated with fallowness, a period of creative inactivity that facilitates restorative growth; conversely, the same term might be negatively associated with sloth, a vice that breeds immorality and discontent. Likewise, the term “recreation” might be positively associated with creative play or negatively associated with frivolous diversion. Fludernik and Nandi write:

> the terms and the activities associated with idleness find themselves in a contested space between positive and negative evaluations. When used pejoratively, idleness is accused of representing a state of inactivity, passivity, and interrupted productivity. Throughout the history of idleness, the leisure activities have tended to draw on them the anger and moral
indignation of various apostles of thrift, industry and the work ethic . . .

The history of idleness is therefore . . . a history of its foils and counterimages. [The history of idleness is] a history of the preoccupations, anxieties and fantasies about the use and abuse of time. (6)

The treatment of time on college campuses represents a curious microcosm of national constructions of temporality and attitudes toward time management. During World War II, social attitudes towards the “use and abuse of time” in American higher education were shaped not only by the military values of efficiency and standardization, which temporarily rose to dominance in American life in the early forties, but also as a reaction to an ethic of leisure which had, through extensive reform efforts from 1840 to 1940, gained considerable cultural traction before the war broke out.

William A. Gleason observes in *The Leisure Ethic* that an American leisure ethic began to emerge in the 1840s as a reaction to urbanization and industrialization and a search for alternative values in the character formation of American citizens. Nineteenth-century reformers, roused by the working conditions of the laboring classes, began to reclaim “free time” for laboring bodies as essential to the health of the nation. Between the end of the nineteenth century and into the mid-twentieth century, a number of American theorists and reformers began formulating an ethic of play as an alternative to a work ethic that had been driven to an extreme by a capitalist economic system. Progressive-era reformers in the United States were particularly interested in the social and cultural benefits of recreation as a political restorative that could combat individual and national maladjustments (Gleason 1). As J. L. Hemingway observes in his article “Leisure, Social Capital, and Democratic Citizenship,” the treatment of leisure within a
society “has political implications, first because political activity of all kinds has a
temporal dimension that includes leisure; second because configurations of leisure reveal
much about the distribution of resources and of power in a given society and how these
are mutually reinforcing; and third because leisure can become an arena for challenging
any existing distribution of resources and of power” (154). The lure of the leisure ethic in
modern America was the promise of political reform, through a redistribution or
reclamation of time. Considering the intense economic and social stresses, both
domestically and internationally, that the United States passed through between the turn
of the century and 1940, it is little wonder that these theories began to take hold in
American cultural consciousness.

By 1940, according to Gleason, a leisure ethic exerted as much force as a work
ethic in shaping American values and identity. He writes:

Born from the deathbed of the work ethic, spurred by laborer’s demands
for more free time and the Progressive Era’s belief that the right recreation
held the key to national regeneration, the American “gospel of play”
quickly became a matter of cultural necessity as well as public policy . . .
the notion that one might shape a satisfying sense of self primarily through
one’s leisure activities instead of one’s job . . . was fast becoming an
article of American common sense. (1)

Gleason is quick to acknowledge that the shift from “work to play” as a culturally
defining construct in the twentieth century was not “straightforward” or “inevitable”:
debates contesting the virtues and vices of leisure and work in education continue to the
present day. Moreover, as Gleason points out, the American leisure ethic has a fraught
history of exclusion. Despite activism that claimed to democratize leisure, women, immigrants, and people of color were denied access to recreational opportunities and spaces afforded to white men. Contemporary scholarship on leisure rightly asks the question “leisure for who, and under what circumstances?” Still, Gleason argues, by 1940 leisure represented an alternative standard by which “matters of selfhood, citizenship, and freedom” and the general health of the nation were being socially and culturally defined and measured (11). If a leisure ethic had gained a status of “general acceptance” among Americans by 1940 as Gleason claims, then what Brandt refers to as the “production imperative” (485) of the war years revived the American work ethic with a vengeance.57

On the one hand, the exigencies of war called for mass productivity and acceleration at all levels of American society as vital measures to secure the economic and military safety of the nation. On the other hand, the intensity of the production imperative simultaneously created a psychological need for release from these conditions to keep Americans emotionally healthy and sane. Wartime morale was also an important matter of national defense. The curricular status of literature in American higher education was caught in between these competing ethics of work and leisure during World War II.

57 Brandt uses the term “production imperative” in reference to her claim that during World War II literacy was reconstructed as an economic good rather than a moral good. By production imperative, Brandt refers to filling quotas and meeting shortages driven by war-based needs.
Leisure and Literature

There are many unexplored dimensions of leisure in wartime that merit further exploration, but for the purposes of this argument, I will focus on how leisure was taken up in debates about the curricular place of literary studies and the social function of literature during World War II. Unlike writing instruction and linguistics, which had military applications that justified their inclusion in a wartime curriculum, literary studies offered no obvious contribution to national defense and was internally criticized as a luxury academic subject, easily suspended and better suited for a slower-paced, peacetime curriculum. In response to these critiques, many members of the profession launched a defense of literature as a vital subject to the nation’s war program in its contribution to citizen formation and national morale. I argue that the rationale for this defense was not politically neutral and that it drew upon an ethics of leisure that resisted a wartime culture of speed. I conclude the chapter with a discussion about how temporal responses to the war helped reinforce disciplinary divisions between composition and literary studies in the forties and fifties.

To understand debates about the use of time and the teaching of English, it is important to first understand the cultural connection between leisure (otium) and literature in the Western tradition and then to understand how leisure was reinterpreted during World War II in the United States within a cultural framework of national survival. This is a complex history and I offer only a very basic overview of the cultural import of constructions of literature as a leisurely activity before moving into specific wartime examples from scholarly periodicals.
The association of literature and leisure is deeply rooted in Western constructions of time, labor, race, social class, and education. Fludernik and Nandi write that *oitium* was originally defined in opposition to *negotium*, a Latin term for labor and its attenuating time-bound stresses. Otium signified the privileged ease, enjoyed by the elite classes, that created the temporal, mental, and emotional conditions necessary for recreation. Otiose activities were “both relaxing and intellectually challenging, meditative, reflective, and philosophical” (4). In his chapter, “Leisure and Democracy,” Hemingway argues that the claim that leisure is a form of escapism is a reductive misinterpretation of classical definitions of leisure. Rather than being a self-indulgent practice, Hemingway argues that a classical “ideal of leisure” was conceived as “an arena for the development of the individual as a member of the community” (61). In other words, leisure was classically defined as a fundamentally social issue in which the “cultivation of personal excellence . . . was to be achieved through participation” within a civic body (61).

Reading and writing were considered “among the key activities of *otium*” that were essential to the development of a cultured mind and society (Fludernik and Nandi 4). The treatment of literature as both a source of enjoyment and a powerful instrument of identity formation and assimilation was common in leisure theories adopted by American reformers. Gleason writes that theories of play and leisure between 1840 and 1940 America were fascinated with the power of literature as a source of individual and social rejuvenation. Progressive-era reform handbooks on leisure “placed considerable importance on the role of art, and specifically literature, in shaping the ludic self . . . reformers not only praised literature in their texts, but repeatedly invoked it” (21).}

Gleason argues that the reading culture in the United States served as the basis of a
“common culture” through which Progressive-era leisure theorists could explore questions of national identity and purpose. Like the playground, which progressive reformers lobbied for, literary texts functioned as a common site for community play and socialization.

Evidence of the cultural import of a leisure ethic on English education in the late thirties and early forties in the United States is the inclusion of leisure in the NCTE’s 1942 report “Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools,” which was discussed in the previous chapter. The twelfth aim discussed in this report, “English enriches personality by providing experience of intrinsic worth for the individual,” defines reading and literary study as leisure activities designed to promote relaxation, creativity, imagination, and a temporary escape from stress. The rationale for this aim describes leisure reading as both an individual and a social good that will cultivate habits of lifelong learning and citizenship. The statement reads:

Above all, the program in English offers wholesome enjoyment for hours of leisure and re-creation in the truest sense of the word. Indirectly, through the sharing of ideas and experiences in writing and discussion, it taps innumerable sources of interest and opens up new areas of constructive activity for young people . . . in fostering habits of personal enjoyment of literature, the teacher of English makes a unique contribution to the lives of young people . . . To open up to young people new reaches of thought and feeling through association with the best works of today and yesterday, to make possible for them a range of human experience without limitation of time or space, of social status or of race,
and to lead the way to unexplored realm of humor and imagination as a
means of temporary escape from a troubled world—these are
opportunities open to every teacher of English. (“Basic Aims” 53)

Leisure, according to this statement, was not only a desirable habit of the mind, but was
an educational objective that English instructors were encouraged to pursue. This
particular objective was reaffirmed by the NCTE as one of the basic aims of English
instruction during the war.

But, literature’s long-standing and close association with a leisure ethic also left it
open to the same line of moral attacks levied against leisurely activities by adherents of a
work ethic. In a wartime climate where shortages and rationing required economizing in
virtually every aspect of American life, accusations of excess and impracticality had to be
addressed directly.

“In Time of War, The Gentle Muses Must Give Way to the Sterner Gods of
Battle”: The Case Against Literature and Leisure

Throughout this chapter, I have alluded to a strain of self-criticism and guilt that
ran through wartime scholarly periodicals. This extended to both external and internal
critiques of college English teachers, the institutional function of literary studies, and the
need for extensive revision in the curricular design and delivery of these courses in higher
education. Ultimately, these arguments operated from a logic of temporal and material
scarcity eschewing indolence, waste, and excess.
For example, in “English and the Liberal Arts” the social activist and educational reformer Dorothy Canfield Fisher agrees with the public injunction that college English teachers must economize in the classroom. She writes:

To be sure the great majority at present seems to be swinging toward a rather meager practical view. That is natural enough. A world war, a free-spending paper-profit inflation, a black depression and then another greater war, all in thirty years, has left us somewhat in the situation of shipwrecked sailors. We do well to take stock of our desert island, carefully budget our resources, intangible as well as material. We can’t afford the luxury of purely decorative or ornate education. To such a proposition we can all say ‘amen’ (1).

Time is, of course, one of the “intangible materials” that Fisher refers to, and it is a resource that needs to be carefully considered and budgeted within academic departments. She argues that she is not inherently “hostile” to culture subjects, such as literary studies, slyly noting that “even the most hair-splitting research has its place,” but that teaching language for the purpose of “convey[ing] information” is the first and primary task of college English teachers in a curriculum that can spare no time for useless erudition (1).

H. F. Watson writes in his article “Herr Hitler and Soph Lit” that English instruction and his work as a literature professor are treated as something of a joke on campus. After attending a speech delivered by an Army representative confirming the inclusion of composition in the Army training course at Simpson College (with no mention of literary studies), Watson’s colleagues jibe him about the curricular changes
that are coming to the English Department and tease him about the likelihood that literature will be cut from future course schedules. The jests, while expressed in good humor, undercut a moment of public recognition for the civic service of writing instructors across the nation and challenged the value of literary studies in a wartime curriculum. He writes:

As the representative of the Army concluded his excellent short speech amid a burst of applause, my friend the Coach whispered, “Aw, as usual, the English department got all the breaks.” To the perennial slander imbedded [sic] in this generalization I retorted nastily, “Board, room, and laundry!” but at that I was inclined to think the Colonel had treated us pretty well. He had said something about the composition courses required as part of the armed forces’ training programs, had suggested that the blunder sacrificing the Light Brigade at Balaklava was a pronoun with indefinite reference, and had commented feelingly on six million dollars’ worth of misplaced comma in a government revenue act. In short, he had done us proud.

But mention of the spiritual qualities in the Faerie Queen and exposition of the beautiful imagery of Kubla Khan were as notably if understandably lacking as praise of the poetic subtlety of Cynewulf. And the teachers of bellicosely essential subjects thereafter consoled with me somewhat eagerly on the inevitable elimination of such impractical courses as literature, along with, presumably, me. The atmosphere suggested that, although war was, of course, a terrible calamity, a little
good might possibly result if certain too-long-delayed curricular and personnel adjustments should at last be made. I returned to my desk with something of the feeling a turkey must have on Armistice Day: not yet actually worried but a bit depressed. (338)

Although Watson’s style is tongue-in-cheek, his anecdote illustrates a general sentiment that the war was bringing about curricular changes in English departments that needed to be reevaluated or discarded anyway. Writing instruction, with its military endorsement, had secured its place in the curriculum as a wise investment of the nation’s time and resources. But, in the words of Edith R. Mirrieles of Stanford University, “literature [was] less lucky” (3). For, heaven forbid, that the fortunes of war hang upon the misuse of a comma!

John L. Clive of the University of North Carolina recounts a similar experience to Watson’s. Upon hearing that Clive was preparing a paper on Shelley for publication, one of his colleagues derisively remarked “Writing a paper on Shelley, eh? That’s going to be a lot of use to the army, I’m sure!” Clive observes that this comment “stuck” so forcefully in his mind that he spends the rest of the article trying to answer for himself if his study of the English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind” is really a “waste of time” (“Shelley’s” 3). With his induction date near at hand, Clive wonders “Shouldn’t I be learning about the mechanism of a machine gun instead of interpreting ‘Ode to the West Wind’?” (3). Both Clive and Watson affirm their conviction that literary studies will outlast the crisis of war, but their defensive reactions to their colleagues’ criticisms suggest that these taunts had hit a sensitive nerve.
Allusions to or direct attacks against the teaching of literature as a “waste of time” or a “luxury” were commonplace in English teaching periodicals during World War II. The following is a sampling of the charges laid against literature and literary study:

- Anne B. G. Hart of Smith College commented that the teaching of cultural subjects “might be a luxury we shall have to give up” because “sugar from a flour sack will not make a nourishing bread” (“The Time” 3).

- Robert T. Fitzhugh of the University of Maryland asks fellow teachers “how often do we deserve the sneer that English is only for dilettantes? We cannot teach literature to illiterates. And we cannot continue the ceremonial of facing students with largely meaningless jobs and still retain their or our own respect” (3). He concludes his point by stating that he welcomes wartime changes that will make literature “something more than a playground for scholarship” (“The Humanities—Yes!” 3).

- William S. Lynch scoffs at attempts at literature professors’ attempts to entice engineering students to read literature for pleasure with “five-pound bookshelves and tea and ladyfingers with every discussion of the book of the month” (“Freshman English Responsibilities” 429).

- Donald C. Dorian of the New Jersey College for Women writes that there is not sufficient time to “trust to the slow process of discovering literature” (“While We Wait” 1) even if it is a superior alternative to the wartime emphasis on communication.

- Professor of English at Queen’s College Emory Holloway acerbically remarks that future generations who will have to pay the “staggering cost”
of wartime education are likely to find “the slow examination of ideas, the use of discussion instead of the ‘efficient’ army-like indoctrination, the extension of educational opportunities to all in the hope thereby to educate some” to be “wasteful” (420). If English teachers have any hope of securing public support (and funding) in the future, he argues, then they must willingly participate in a wartime “elimination of waste” in higher education, even if this means cutting out advanced literature courses (“The American Tradition” 420).

- An anonymous reviewer asks “Will teaching Beowulf make the world better, or the Gull’s Horn Book? No.” and then comments that “I think the liberal arts college has to sail in the same boat with coffee, automobiles, silk stockings, and summer trips to the British Museum” (“Humanities and the War: A Survey” 317).

- Norman Nelson of the University of Michigan critiques the teaching or study of expressivist writing, arguing that it brings out “all that is egocentric, malcontent, and irresponsible in our young people” and warning that “a tired, hard-working nation may decide that it can spare such luxuries both during and after the war” (583). Referring to fellow literature professors as “literary detectives,” Nelson further accuses members of the profession of “amusing themselves and obfuscating young people with learned trivia” rather than teaching students “why they [should] choose our culture rather than Hitler at the peril of their lives” (“English in Wartime: A Resolution” 584).
George T. Guernsey, editor of *American Teacher*, argues that publishers should stop backing “escapist” novels, arguing that “It will become increasingly necessary for the American people at home to face reality and the problems of a real world, because escape now will not be an escape from fear and confusion but from democracy’s greatest opportunity” (“Facets of War” 402).

Without belaboring the point much further, I’ll conclude this section by stating that college English teachers wrote feelingly about these negative evaluations of literature and literary studies. And, at institutions like the University of Michigan, where “Chaucer, the Jacobean drama, and the metrics of Chiddick Tickbourne” were removed from the course schedules (Boys 85), fear about the future of literary studies did not seem entirely misplaced. Would a witty retort to a colleague or a panegyrical on the virtues of reading Shelley be the end of what English teachers had to say to colleagues and critics of the literary tradition?

### “With a Book of Shakespeare’s Plays in One Hand and a Tommy Gun in the Other”: A Defense of Literature and Literary Studies

As discussed in the previous chapter, the NTCE’s statement on wartime aims in “The Role of the English Teacher in Wartime” included three general objectives “for particular emphasis” in the “present war emergency” (87). The third aim, which affirmed the Council’s commitment to reading and writing as leisurely activities, stated that “the teaching of English in wartime will concern itself also with the needs of the individual for
social and personal adjustment” (90). Anticipating that the war would be a “shock” to the nation, the Council argued that,

a major purpose of . . . reading and discussion will be to develop a long view of the problems confronting the present in an effort to preserve sanity and perspective and to provide the relief which comes from seeing the present conflict in relation to past events . . . creative expression will also be fostered as an outlet for the emotions and as a means of reflection upon and synthesis of the experiences young people are facing. (90)

The document concludes that English teachers should do their best to maintain as many of the “normal experiences in language and in reading” as possible, and urges members that “especial caution is needed to conserve those aesthetic and recreational values in English which are necessary to continuing culture, to personal growth and satisfaction, and to the maintenance of sanity and perspective during wartime” (90).

The NCTE’s position on leisure and literature was reiterated in thirteen of the twenty individual support statements written by Council members who had met with the Executive and Planning Committees in an advisory capacity at the emergency meeting. Marquis E. Shattuck explicitly stated that promoting “literature as a means of relaxation” (“The Function” 92) and “morale building” (93) were the joint goals of wartime English instruction. These two aims, he argues “can produce great loyalty in this hour of national peril. They are intrinsic to the fundamental aims of our regular English programs” (93).

Other statements from council members sound a similar refrain. Ward H. Green writes that “in wartime as contrasted to peacetime, mental and emotional strains are greater” and, therefore, activities that are relaxing in peacetime, such as “read[ing] a good
book,” should be “greatly intensified” in a wartime curriculum (“The Function” 98). His reading suggestions are telling: the “world’s best literature, all the way from the Bible to Little Jackie Horner” and the “Bill of Rights” (98). For what could be a more relaxing pastime than reading a foundational political document? Dora V. Smith writes that “in the present emergency nothing counts for more than a sense of inner security” and argues that “literature of a deeply personal quality is especially adapted for that purpose” (“The Function” 102). She concludes that English teachers can “open up resources for hours of leisure, for necessary escape on occasion,” which will ultimately facilitate better learning in all subjects (103). Nellie Appy pledges not to “abandon all that is imaginative or fanciful” in her curriculum “for fear of being called ‘escapist,’” noting in an aside that “in wartime, especially, we need release from pressures” (“The Function” 109). And, Marion C. Sheridan wrote that “literature is a mass experience as well as an individual one. In trying times, it offers a safety valve for recreation and diversion” (“The Function” 99). In summary, these position statements emphasized the restorative quality of reading and argued that the national need for a psychological break from the strictures of daily living was acute.

Herzberg’s statement most clearly articulates the need for leisure as a counterbalance to the dynamism and volatility of war time. He writes:

A nation intensely and emotionally concentrated on the moment-by-moment clashes and crashes, excitements and fears and hopes, sorrows and triumphs of the battlefield, is likely to become overwrought—perhaps hysterical—and is then the less likely to wage war efficiently. It may even prove to be of greatest patriotic service that we turn aside salutarily to
scenes of quiet and peacefulness, of hope and faith as expressed in the world’s great books. (“The Function” 104)

Rather than endorsing leisure for its own sake, Herzberg appeals to the American work ethic by arguing that leisure time and reading will actually improve soldier performance and civilian productivity. His claim is based on an assumption that the act of reading for pleasure or diversion resets the mind and helps regulate imbalanced emotions. He presents literature as a solution that will help the nation maximize the labor capacity of the American workforce and military forces. By this logic, engaging in leisurely activities for the purpose of individual refreshment was constructed as a patriotic act.

Members of the CEA also launched a defense of literature and leisure that focused on the military and national importance of recreation. W. E. McPheeters of Lake Forest College argued that to assert the relevance of literature in combat scenarios was laughable, but that it was to the military advantage of the armed forces to encourage leisure reading among servicemen and women. He writes:

We can hardly expect a soldier, marine, or sailor to charge the Japs or Germans with a book of Shakespeare’s plays in one hand and a tommy gun in the other. But military men, as a rule, do not fight all day and every day. Consequently, we are not surprised to find that even in strenuous campaigns soldiers, great and small, have packed a book or two in their meager luggage to refresh their minds and to stimulate their spiritual faculties amidst scenes that seem far removed from the civilized thought of life which these soldiers have known in peace. (6)

In a curious reversal of Westerfield’s poem “For the Stay-at-Home,” which invited civilians to imaginatively gaze upon a scene of military life, McPheeters argues that
pocket books, distributed to military servicemen and women during the war, invite soldiers to reimagine and ruminate on the tranquility of civilian life. Once again, we see racial undertones emerge in this civilian description of military life, which presents war as totally removed from “civilized life.” However, unlike the bellicose fantasy of the fictional Professor Sallow, McPheeters emphasizes the vast amounts of time soldiers spend on activities other than active combat. While a book might not help a soldier dodge a bullet, it could help soldiers mentally process distressing field experiences. McPheeters argues that reading actually combats idleness by offering soldiers a pleasurable activity that reconnects them to the “good” in humanity and to their lives before the war. “English won’t win the war,” he quips, “but it has a vital part in training the fighting men—for the war today, for the peace that will follow” (6). Soldiers and civilians alike had a right to enjoy the pastime of reading, to equip themselves for a future free from the sounding drum of war time.

“How did America Become a Nation of Book Readers? Is This a Temporary Wartime Phenomenon?”

Whether books offered soldiers the spiritual refreshment and reconnection to civilian life that McPheeters promised, only they can say. What is clear is that as the war progressed, the demand for books in the United States boomed as other sources of diversion were curbed by wartime cuts and shortages.

In a CE article examining wartime trends in the U.S. publishing industry, A. C. Spectorisky, editor for the Chicago Sunday Sun book review, reported that 1943 was a
“banner” year, with the number of books sold in the U.S. reaching over two hundred and fifty million. 1944 was an even better year, with a 25% increase in book sales from the previous year (“The Future” 304). Spectorsky reports that 3.5 million additional books were shipped monthly to military men and women serving overseas through a special literacy initiative organized by the Council on Books in Wartime. Historian Paul Fussell writes in his chapter on reading in Wartime that the Council on Books in Wartime, which was founded by publishers, booksellers, librarians, and authors, produced and distributed 22 million copies of Armed Services Editions of over 1300 book titles in 1943 alone (239). Stapled, paperback copies of books were cut to fit in the upper pocket of the army shirt for convenience. Inexpensive to produce, the publishing industry was making new waves with readers and was only held back from even greater expansion by wartime paper rationing (Spectorsky 305). Historian Geoffrey Perrett observes in his history Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph that “the war years saw the development of a mass market for books for the first time in American history. Before 1939 . . . there was neither a mass market nor a prospect of one. But in less than six years there came a virtual revolution in popular culture” (382).58

58 There is not exact agreement among the sources I consulted on the total number of books and book sales. For example, Perrett reports that “book sales rose more than 20 percent each year after Pearl Harbor. Pocket Books had gone from a sale of several hundred thousand to more than 10,000,000 copies in 1941, 20,000,000 in 1942 and nearly 40,000,000 in 1943” (382). Fussell’s history offers a more conservative estimate of 22,000,000 pocket books in 1943 (239). I have opted to use err on the conservative end of the estimates. Regardless, the point still stands that the publishing industry saw a major spike in public interest and sales.
America’s rise as a “nation of book readers” was, according to Spectorsky, attributable to five important social changes. First, the “extension and development of education for leisure-time cultural pursuits” (304). In other words, the development and adoption of a leisure ethic in American culture. Spectorsky suggests that this trend was indirectly related to a gradual acceptance of American literature as an academic subject in the schools. Second, Spectorsky speculates that wartime travel restrictions and gas-rationing have led to a renewed interest in leisure activities. Third, he claims that the rise in reading has made books and book-reading a desirable status symbol. Fourth, the increase in advertising and book sales has led to the production of more books. And finally, the consolidation and nationalization of major forms of entertainment and communication, such as radio, television, film, and journalism encouraged national reading practices (304).

To Spectorsky’s point that the war had changed the type of leisure activities available to Americans (decreases in “travel” and “leisure-time gadgets” such as “radios, cars, steel fishing rods,” which subsequently led to “increased money to spend on nonessentials”), Perrett writes that the Office of Production Management had also stopped the production of “tennis balls, golf balls, hand balls and so on. Hunting and fishing were also forbidden” (238). Perrett writes that “with money to spend, but few goods to spend it on and fewer places to travel to, some outlet had to be found. People went without vacation. They spent more time entertaining at home.” (238). Little of this “home entertaining” was erudite in nature. The push to find indoor sources of entertainment led to a rise in attendance at nightclubs and restaurants and alcohol consumption, at least until in 1943, when, “as if frowning on so much frivolity in
wartime,” Perrett observes, “federal officials put a 30 percent tax on live entertainment . . . and sharply raised the tax on liquor” (379).

W. L. Werner, a professor of literature at Penn State, wrote about these social changes in his February 1943 article published in the News Letter defending literature as an “escape” from the daily stresses of wartime living.

Our normal refuges (travel, movies, liquor) have been greatly reduced.

Middletown’s pet possession, the automobile, has turned into a white elephant. But there’s still no frigate like a book to take us into lands away.

The countries of the mind are not ringed with forts and mines, nor dimmed by black-outs (“English” 4).

He argues that the conditions of war have made the inducements of literature even more appealing, literally describing books as the new drug for American minds.

On our shelves are stimulants and drugs for men who enter battle or who lie in hospitals, for lonely sentries and crowded city workers, for people isolated on farms and people deafened by the roar of factories, for soldiers to whom nobody writes and for relatives who brood over the government notice, ‘Missing’. If we can find the right stimulants or the right anodynes, we’ll be as essential to the war effort as the mathematicians and the doctors. (4)

Books had the advantage of being a relatively inexpensive source of entertainment that could be read anywhere at almost any time and also had the advantage of being socially perceived as a source of personal enrichment and development. Moreover, as Werner later argued in a letter to the editor of the New York Times in response to an editorial
statement that had accused liberal arts educators as “dallying with Elizabethan poetry or the Homeric epics while civilization is at stake,” Werner demurred “that study is not ‘dallying’ and that even some soldiers find relief between battles in Shakespeare and Homer” (“The Liberal” 1). Besides, he argued, “if literature is of little or no value, why bother with [book drives] and librarians’ salaries and ‘subscriptions to 50,000 magazines’ for the army camps? One of the hardships of a soldier’s life is waiting, and then literature is the cheapest, most available diversion. The better the book, the better the soldier” (4).

Werner’s claim that books were in high-demand among members of the armed forces was not an exaggeration. Fussell’s history illustrates, through his extensive research on the lived experiences of servicemen and women in World War II, that much of a soldier’s life was indeed, as Werner suggested, spent in “waiting.” Fussell offers a counter-narrative to the idea of military service as a life filled with constant action, excitement, and danger, presenting instead the “grinding boredom” of daily living as a soldier (238). And, to counter that boredom, many members of the armed forces turned to books. Nathan Comfort Starr of Rollins College cites an excerpt from the New York Times written by an officer on a U. S. destroyer that “poetry is extremely popular with all hands. It seems to afford the meaty relaxation that men demand under these circumstances and even the toughest old seaman can be seen surreptitiously peeping at their ‘Pocket Book of Verse’” as evidence of a literary military culture (“Sea-Change” 3). The Director of Public Relations for the U.S. Navy, Captain Leland P. Lovette, forwarded

59 An edited version of this letter was republished in the April 1943 News Letter, which is the source referenced here.
a report on reading practices among sailors in the December 1942 *News Letter* detailing the “reading tastes of Navy men” and the “books which most frequently find their way into the travelling kit of a sailor” (5). The reading materials included a wide range of titles from technical materials to the Bible, to biographies, to literary “classics,” such as Dumas, Melville, Conrad, and Tolstoy (5).

According to Fussell the “hunger of the troops for something to read was even greater than for civilians, ample supply being less likely. And for those accustomed to artistic or intellectual life, isolation in remote spots without a letterpress could be hell” (231). To illustrate the high demand for books among servicemen and women stationed overseas, he shares the following anecdotes.

At the front, a carton of these paperbooks [Pocket Books shipped by the Council on Books in Wartime] would arrive with the ammunition and the rations, and men would devise some system of presumably fair access. Of course, officers were likely to pick over the titles first. Trading after reading was the most common practice, and in times of shortage expedients were devised, like soldiers’ “tearing out portions of the books . . . in order to pass them on quickly.” One typical platoon of combat engineers possessed a cache of eight or ten beat-up Armed Services Editions, guarded by their lieutenant, “who refused to let any man have a book unless he would agree to read it aloud to the fellows in his shack or tent.” One Armed Services Edition was issued to each soldier boarding a ship for the Normandy invasion, and while waiting for the awful moment the troops read and swapped. (240)
The interest in books among members of the military was not only a boon to U.S. publishing houses, who unexpectedly found themselves producing for a mass market, but for college English teachers defending literature and literary studies. Stories of men on the front line with a “book of Shakespeare’s plays in one hand and a tommy gun in the other” added credence to the weight of college English teachers’ claims that literature was a vital wartime subject, not for its contribution to the technical training of soldiers, but for its contribution to their health and mental wellbeing.

**Conscious Educational Action**

The fact that more Americans were buying more books during the war than ever before didn’t lessen the pedagogical load that college English instructors carried, even if the high demand for books, particularly among members of the armed forces, did help to justify their programs. Nor did it necessarily ease the emotional burden of meeting institutional and student needs in a demanding educational environment. Even with national interest in reading and book-buying at an encouragingly high peak, college English teachers still faced enormous challenges in the day-to-day workings of the classroom. These challenges persisted for the duration of World War II, and sometimes beyond.

William R. Parker, like Mary Gwen Owen, argued that it was possible to resist the powerful, sweeping current of war time through conscious educational action. The solution was simple: teach with a conscious awareness of the present needs of students. Be present as a teacher, not with nostalgic pining for the past, not with longing toward the
future, but with a mind focused on the present. He encourages all fellow teachers to “thoughtfully reconsider the literature of the past with a view of the needs to the present. . . The time to do this is now, not tomorrow” (236). Parker acknowledges that teaching to the current needs of students requires adaptability, creativity, and attentiveness, but taking the time to pause and reflect on the implications of the war is a way to bring new life and purpose into teaching.

Addressing fellow “war-torn teachers” in April of 1944, Burges Johnson offered the following encouraging words of advice:

When overburdened, harassed, perplexed,
When Deans and Prexies have left you vexed.
If acceleration has got you hexed.
Dearly Beloved, this is my text:

*Quietly do the next thing next.* (“To War-Worn” 2)

The stresses of the war were perplexing, overwhelming, burdensome. Wartime college English teachers brought conscious awareness to these stresses and to the impact that wartime pressures exerted over classroom instruction as a coping strategy to reclaim a sense of agency within the totalizing experience of war. For some educators, like Parker and Owen, selecting materials or assignments that encouraged students to slow down and to engage with each other was a conscious response to a national crisis. But, as Johnson argued in an April 1 1941 editorial in the *News Letter*, conscious educational action didn’t require “slanting” a curriculum “in defense of democracy”; instead, he advocated that educators, living in a “topsy-turvy world,” take action by engaging in “thoughtful
and good-tempered discussion,” or slowing down the mental buzz by “plot[ting] his own course of teaching” minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day (“Editorial” 2).

At least one instructor benefited from Johnson’s message, writing to Johnson in December of 1944 that the advice to “quietly do the next thing next” was the “most helpful piece of verse that has come out of the war!” (“Dear Editor” News Letter 2).

**Wartime: A Summary**

In the *Age of Doubt*, Historian William Graebner argues that World War II was characterized by a culture of doubt. This statement is certainly true of wartime American colleges and universities. During the war, English teachers questioned the central assumptions and social values of their discipline, testing existing course offerings and pedagogical practices against an economy of productivity and thrift. I have argued that war disrupted the temporal experience of college English teachers and that academic and leisure time were increasingly defined by a climate of total war. I have argued that two contrasting philosophies of time and time-management shaped debates within the profession of English teaching about the wartime value and function of literature. I have also argued that an ethic of productivity challenged the utility of literature courses during the war years.

In response to aspersions of literature as wasteful or indulgent, college English teachers reclaimed leisure practices, such as reading and writing, as restorative coping mechanisms to the psychological and emotional stresses of war. Reaffirming leisure as an educational aim of English studies, English teachers argued that literature and reading
played a key role in supporting national morale: imaginative, escapist, and leisure reading not only offered a healthy, temporary release from the stress of wartime living, it also reinforced the nationalist idea of a consolidated and unified “American identity.” Both of these outcomes contributed to a national defense program. Far from being a waste of time, college English teachers argued that literature provided a practical solution to a social need. In short, English teachers emphasized the civic and social value of a leisure ethic. The relentless pace of war threatened to drive Americans mad. Like Mary Gwen Owen, members of the profession resisted the temporally dislocating experience of war through conscious educational action. They could take back time, not only for themselves, but for the nation they had pledged themselves to defend and serve.
Chapter 5

Conclusion: Reflections on Educational Responses in Uncertain Times

“Perhaps we cannot expect the lay public to understand the plight of our teachers; almost certainly it will not understand. But we should see it clearly, and without crying over what cannot now be avoided, we should make plans for its cure as soon as the time of crisis is past. When that time shall come, no one can say, but it is not likely to be very soon.”

—Thomas H. English, “Tired Teachers” SAB April 1944, p. 2

“At first, the virus came for spring break. What, it forced students to consider, is a break without end? Sadly, the virus teaches, it is no break at all. It is, instead, a disturbingly indefinite line—a horizon none can see.”

—Jack Stripling, “Ritual, Rhythm, Community: Everything Higher Ed Does Best, the Coronavirus Attacks” The Chronicle of Higher Education

In the introduction to this dissertation, I paraphrased Hook’s observation that those who have not “lived through” the experience of war may find the totalizing effect of war on civilian life “barely conceivable” (132). I could not have imagined that I would be writing this conclusion in the midst of the totalizing experience of a global pandemic, which has encompassed virtually every aspect of American daily life, and threatens to shape the future for unknown years to come. When “the time of crisis is past,” as Thomas H. English wrote in 1944 about World War II, “no one can say, but it is not likely to be very soon” (2).

In searching for an apt description of a totalizing national experience I am reminded of Holland Roberts’s statement published shortly after the outbreak of World War II:
Blackout as I write. Overhead the planes from Moffat Field wheel and turn, day and night. Westward in the expanses of the Pacific our men grapple with the poised forces of the invader. What can we do to help them? How can we strengthen them and ourselves? How can we guard our nation and our people against treason, treachery, destruction, and extinction? (“The Function” 100)

War was everywhere before Roberts. It was in the power outages that darkened his vision. It was in the sounds that filled the air around him. It was in his imagination, as he worried about the men at war risking their lives. It was in the endless questions that demanded immediate action and timely response. It was lodged in the fear that the nation was no longer safe and secure. That he was no longer safe and secure.

COVID 19 has demonstrated how disorienting and destabilizing a totalizing national (or global) crisis can be. It has awakened an old and deep fear: The nation is at risk. We are not safe. How can we guard our nation? What can we do to strengthen our communities as well as ourselves?

Like many educators, I have looked to responses within my disciplinary community and the broader educational community to glean how “colleges are contributing to the ‘war effort’ to contain and fight the coronavirus,” as a special report recently released by The Chronicle of Higher Education puts it, and to formulate my

own reasoned response and action plan to the crisis. I commented in an aside in my introduction that a yearning for familiarity, community, and stability was evident not only in the scholarly articles published by various wartime journals, but in letters to the journal editors that affirmed the importance of each issue during a period of national emergency and crisis. As I read across academic responses to the COVID 19 pandemic, especially those published by more vulnerable members of our educational community, I see echoes of a similar yearning for familiarity, community, and stability. I remember that in a not too distant past, educators “convened” through printed scholarly forums when wartime gas rationing and travel restrictions put a temporary halt to in-person gatherings and conferences. And I appreciate, even more deeply, the value of shared discourse across geographic and temporal divides in times of social uncertainty.

Like World War II educators, members of the higher education community now face grave financial and logistical challenges that are not (and may never be) completely understood, but which require immediate responses. Once again, higher education potentially faces major losses of students, faculty, staff, and administrators whose lives have been irrevocably disrupted by an external crisis. Once again, the American higher education system faces the challenge of where to cut costs, how to maintain academic standards, how to manage the problem of time, how to support the mental and emotional well-being of students, faculty, and staff. Once again, American higher education is being oriented toward an educational goal of national survival. It is not even possible to imagine, as some 1940s college English instructors did, that we can conduct “business as usual.” Academics who are now preparing for a post-pandemic world know that the forced mass-exodus to distance learning has political and economic implications that will
change the way educators conduct the business of teaching now and in the future. As Brian Rosenberg, president of Macalester College, has recently written,

> For decades traditional higher education has not deviated from its fidelity to the aphorism attributed to the future U.S. president James Garfield, that the ideal college was embodied by Mark Hopkins . . . on one end of a log and a student on the other. Now, for the first time, we must add a qualifier: The log must be more than six feet long or, better still, a virtual background on Zoom. Things have changed. (“How Should”)

Yes. Things have changed. But it does not follow that all of these changes must be undesirable. And it does not follow that we are powerless to the totalizing experience of this ongoing crisis.

Although I did not initially conceive of my project in these terms, each of my chapters touches upon a different aspect of educational response to a national crisis. I do not posit these responses as answers to the ongoing pandemic or mean to suggest that World War II and COVID 19 are comparable issues (although that comparison has been made in the popular press by William A. Galston of the Brookings Institute and others). I agree with William H. Janeway’s assertion bluntly encapsulated in his article titled “COVID 19 is Not World War II.” But I do believe that the educational responses discussed in my chapters speak to contemporary concerns and challenges.

When the First World War came to college campuses it overwhelmed the educational system and many of the programs and policies implemented were unsustainable and unethical. When war returned to the campuses in 1941, educators were among the first-responders. Educational leaders collectivized and mobilized, determined
that even if they could not foresee the future, they would not accept the same solutions or outcomes that had failed in the previous war. I argued in my first body chapter that through a combination of prewar negotiations and emergency wartime concessions--many of which were seen as a threat to humanist academic subjects and a liberal tradition--educators, spearheaded by the ACE, were able to negotiate the terms of their educational agency while also meeting the civic responsibility of preparing civilians for war. The war programs that emerged on campus were the result of extended negotiations that redefined the educational aims and purpose of higher education.

With respect to the ongoing public-health and financial crisis facing postsecondary institutions of education, we can expect that there will be compromises and concessions at least on scale with campus mobilization for war during World War II as administrators work with government and public health care officials to develop contingency response plans. And we can expect that adjustments will have to be made in the upcoming months and years after strategic action is taken.

In my second chapter, I explored disciplinary reactions to the outbreak of war and analyzed the group and individual statements prepared by members of the profession of English teachers. I argued that college English teachers’ reactions to the war could be basically divided into three groups: conservative, reactionary, and cautionary. In the recent flood tide of responses to the coronavirus crisis, we can see instances of each of these reactions, or at least the ideological values that inform these reactions. I argued that educational reactions to the war (and to issues of national crisis), reflect underlying attitudes about time and materiality that are not politically neutral. Today, as in the past, we need to carefully consider the implications and limitations of these positions.
In my final chapter, I argued that war was a temporally disrupting experience and that the acceleration and suspension of academic programs deeply affected the lived experience of teachers, students, and administrators. The exigencies of wartime America called for mass productivity and efficiency at all levels of American society in order to meet labor and military needs. However, the intensity of the production culture simultaneously created a psychological need for release from these conditions to keep Americans healthy and sane. Currently, a halt on production and operations across the United States jeopardizes the mental and emotional health of millions. Its impact, immeasurable. As educators, living, as Mary Favret argues, “in (not through)” the experience of a sustained crisis is overwhelming. Bringing awareness into educational responses to the pandemic, as some college English teachers brought to the war, may function as a limited coping strategy to resist the overwhelm of crisis. Awareness, by which I refer to a process of attention, self-reflection, and compassion, may not resolve the macro scale of the problems facing educators, but its potential as a pedagogical strategy is promising.

I began this dissertation with a claim that Americans are increasingly separated from war even as war continues to saturate American consciousness. I argued that there is empirical evidence that Americans’ relationship with the military is changing. The pandemic is not a modern simulation of war, but it has, at least for me, rendered the anxiety that educators must have experienced during the war more tangible, less abstract. It has certainly made their stories more compelling and their characters more sympathetic.
Like World War II educators, we currently face a very public opportunity for self-reflection and evaluation and for a reconsideration of institutional and disciplinary questions of value. Drawing upon the definition of crisis defined by James E. Cote and Anton L. Allahar in *Lowering Higher Education* as a “turning point . . . rather than a situation of impending doom,” the direction of higher education is at a crossroad. And, like educators in the early forties, we cannot know where that road will lead us, only that decisions must be made. As Max Herzberg observed for teachers “surveying both the present crisis and the possibilities of the future, we know that we are being catapulted into a vastly different world” (“Later” 12).
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