



Fall 2016

Education for Victory: An Analysis of Social Studies Education in American Secondary Schools during World War II

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Abstract

Secondary schools during World War II were viewed as a vital component of the war effort on the home front. The nation's youth were seen as important potential contributors to the war effort, and were educated as such. The atmosphere of total war especially affected social studies classes at this level. An analysis of contemporary educational journals and supplementary teaching materials reveals that secondary school students were virtually indoctrinated with democratic and patriotic values in their social studies classes in wartime schools. Social studies classes thus functioned as a route through which students could be encouraged to participate in the war effort. They were also a far-reaching system that attempted to unify the nation's youth in support of the war.

Keywords

World War II, social studies, high school, education, history

Disciplines

Education | Military History | Social History | United States History

Comments

Written for HIST 421: Seminar: The U.S. and World War II.

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during World War II

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History 421

Fall 2016

Dr. Birkner

December 12, 2016

Abstract

Secondary schools during World War II were viewed as a vital component of the war effort on the home front. The nation's youth were seen as important potential contributors to the war effort, and were educated as such. The atmosphere of total war especially affected social studies classes at this level. An analysis of contemporary educational journals and supplementary teaching materials reveals that secondary school students were virtually indoctrinated with democratic and patriotic values in their social studies classes in wartime schools. Social studies classes thus functioned as a route through which students could be encouraged to participate in the war effort. They were also a far-reaching system that attempted to unify the nation's youth in support of the war.

I affirm that I have upheld the highest principles of honesty and integrity in my academic work
and have not witnessed a violation of the Honor Code.

The home front was a significant contributor to the campaign for Allied victory in the Second World War. Citizens were encouraged to participate in war efforts in their communities, ranging from conserving essential materials and products to buying war bonds.¹ One significant, but relatively understudied, aspect of the home front effort occurred within American public schools, especially in relation to the social studies and civics curriculum that was introduced during the war. Historian Charles Beard wrote in 1932 that generally, “instruction in social studies in the schools is conditioned by the spirit and letter of scholarship, [and] by the realities and ideas of the society in which it is carried on.”² This statement holds true for the concept of junior high and high school social studies education during the Second World War, in which students received an education that was heavily influenced by the atmosphere of total war.

Indeed, the social studies curriculum was oftentimes immersed in issues concerning the war, ranging from current events to the promotion of American democratic values. High school students, in turn, responded in various ways to the topics that were discussed in schools, many of which involved participating in activities that benefitted the war effort on the home front. This paper will discuss the often propaganda-like changes to the nation’s wartime high school social studies curricula, especially in terms of how educators and bureaucrats associated with the war effort employed propaganda to bolster patriotism in schools.

The topic of wartime education in schools has been discussed in some historical literature. However, this mainly occurs in the context of broader changes in educational thought and practice that resulted from the war, rather than in analyses of propaganda that was

¹ Allan M. Winkler, *Home Front USA: America During World War II* (Wheeling, IL: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 38-45. For more information on home front propaganda, see James J. Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front: War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2006), 3-13.

² Charles A. Beard, *Charter for the Social Studies* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1932), 2, accessed November 8, 2016, <https://archive.org/details/charterforsocial00amerrich>.

disseminated through American high school social studies classes. Education professor Gerard Giordano's *Wartime Schools: How World War II Changed American Education* considers the ways in which wartime curriculum and general education changes influenced education as a whole during the twentieth century. He claimed that the school system, overall, promoted both sentiments of conservatism and the belief that education should promote patriotism and national security. Giordano also emphasizes the degree to which American schools promoted democratic, patriotic, and nationalistic education, arguing that the tension-filled climate of the warring world pushed the American government to encourage the advancement of democratic and patriotic values in schools in order to sustain the "American way of life." In addition, he discusses the wartime fear of seditious textbooks that supposedly produced un-American values in schools, which relates more specifically to social studies education.³ He also discusses various wartime resources that encouraged teachers to instill patriotic values in students that were distributed to schools by the Office of Education, including newsletters and pamphlets.⁴

Caroline J. Conner and Chara H. Bohan of the University of Georgia similarly discuss the increased centralization of the education system for the purpose of supporting the war effort. The ways in which social studies education became an avenue through which to convey patriotic propaganda to young people are also discussed, especially in relation to the shift from the Great Depression Era, during which students were encouraged to think critically about American institutions.⁵ These sources provide an educational outlook on the more general changes to the overall American education system during the war, with some emphasis on social studies and

³ Gerard Giordano, *Wartime Schools: How World War II Changed American Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 120-125.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 31-32.

⁵ Caroline J. Conner and Chara H. Bohan, "The Second World War's Impact on the Progressive Educational Movement: Assessing its Role," *Journal of Social Studies Research* 38 (April 2014): 92, <http://dx.doi.10.1016/j.jssr.2013.10.003>.

civics education. Other studies of wartime schools focus not on social studies education, but on more general changes to public school education during the war.⁶ These and other secondary works provide context to the use of propaganda in education, with most authors emphasizing changes to the educational system during the war years. Overall, though, scholars promote the idea of the educational system being an avenue through which citizens on the home front were educated in patriotism and encouraged to participate in the war effort.

Despite the relative lack of studies that focus upon social studies education in the war, this subject matter was of critical importance in the boosting of morale among young people on the home front, as well as engendering support for the war among adolescents. American high school social studies and civics education during the Second World War was, overall, utilized primarily as a facet of the war effort to instill democratic values and beliefs of American exceptionalism in students so as to encourage support for the war effort.

Government Endorsed Vision of Wartime Education

At the commencement of the war, the United States government realized the significant task that lay ahead in terms of the overall scope of the war effort. The resulting push towards large-scale mobilization included changes in the function of many public institutions. The U.S. government increased its regulation over various industries and shifted their production from consumer products to war materiel. The government also used various strategies to encourage the

⁶ Giordano's *Wartime Schools* discusses more general changes to American schools during the war, such as an increased emphasis on vocational education during the war, as well as changes to the math, science, and physical education curricula. For more information on these topics, see Giordano, *Wartime Schools*, 143-160. For an in-depth study of government-promoted programs such as the High School Victory Corps, which functioned as patriotic and vocational wartime education, see Richard M. Uglan, "Education for Victory: The High School Victory Corps and Curricular Adaptation during World War II," *History of Education Quarterly* 19, no. 4 (1979): 435-51, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/368053>.

population to function in ways conducive to winning the war. This included encouraging adult men to enlist in the military, and encouraging adult women to work outside of the home in war-related industries.⁷ The government's mobilization efforts thus heavily influenced the actions of U.S. citizens through its increased involvement in industry, as well as its propaganda efforts to encourage citizen action in the war effort. Children and adolescents, too, were encouraged to participate in efforts on the home front, such as through scrap drives and the selling or buying of war bonds.⁸ While this was achieved through more overt methods of propaganda such as films and advertisements in various media, the education system played a large collateral role in the diffusing of such propaganda.

Indeed, the U.S. government saw immense value in the education system for its ability to promote specific values and encourage participation in war-related activities. As a whole, schools were viewed as “an essential component of the home front campaign,” and “educators were asked to assume extraordinary responsibilities.”⁹ President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a statement to a conference at the National Institute on Education and the War, highlighted his expectations for wartime schools by claiming that American schools

have always been molds in which we cast the kind of life we wanted. Today, all we want is victory, and beyond victory a world in which free men may fulfill their aspirations. So we turn again to our educators and ask them to help us mold men and women who can fight through to victory.¹⁰

By conflating the drive towards victory with educators' efforts to promote the war effort and American values in schools, President Roosevelt suggests the importance with which schools

⁷ John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 171.

⁸ Giordano, *Wartime Schools*, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰ President Roosevelt is quoted in “Schools in the War Effort,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 25, no. 1 (September 1942): 22, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20331128>.

were regarded in the overall war effort. His statement, then, assigns to schools the hefty responsibility of training young men and women who would embody American values and contribute to the war effort once they grew into adults.

John Studebaker, the U.S. Commissioner of Education during the war, similarly wrote in the widely distributed pamphlet “What the War Means to Us” of the importance of educating young people about the war effort and about American exceptionalism. He stated that because of the “all-out war,” schools “must use every device known to the profession to develop mental and spiritual preparedness—in a word, morale based on understanding.”¹¹ This emphasis on “mental and spiritual preparedness” was critical to the promotion of American values and exceptionalism in schools. The fact that government higher-ups encouraged educators to teach these topics is significant, and speaks to the role of the government in influencing promotion of the war effort in schools. Important U.S. government administrators thus endorsed a movement in schools that would both educate students in American values and encourage students to participate in the war effort.

The role of schools was also assigned particular importance in the war effort through privately produced teaching materials specifically supplied to educators. Various publications also promoted the sentiment endorsed by government administrators. Education journals such as *The Clearing House*, popular with contemporary junior and high school educators, advanced views similar to those of President Roosevelt in its articles throughout the war years. In a late 1941 article, editor Forrest E. Long advanced the notion that “the school must be willing to sacrifice many of its customary modes of procedure for the common good,” and that “the

¹¹ What the War Means to Us: A Teaching Guide (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Office of Education, 1942), 5-6, <http://utdr.utoledo.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1950&context=ur-87-68>.

immediate concern of America's schools is to work for victory."¹² Indeed, schools' role in the war effort was often viewed as essential due to the perceived stakes of the war. After asserting that the war was "a struggle for survival to determine whether we are to become slaves or remain free men," one author wrote, "every teacher should recognize that his leadership [in schools] is not only imperative but a sacred obligation."¹³ Journals that heavily influenced educators thus promoted changes to the curriculum during the war, and equated the role of teachers to promote these curricular changes as a virtually sacred duty.

Other education journals emphasized the importance of schools in the drive for victory. The *Phi Delta Kappan*, for example, stated that because the "present world conflict has reached such proportion and such a stage that every force at the command of the people of the United States must be thrown into the war," schools must make their "special and particular contribution to the struggle." Indeed, "fighting with learning is the slogan of victory."¹⁴ Education was therefore viewed as an essential component in the war effort on the home front, and helpful to the goal of victory. A multitude of publications aimed at educators encouraged support of the war effort in schools and challenged educators to take action to promote the war effort in their curricula.

While the importance of teaching for victory was encouraged in all schools, high schools were especially viewed as critical spaces for promoting war aims. Educational journals reminded educators that "the home front consists, in addition to adults, of approximately seven million adolescents enrolled in secondary schools. And these youngsters are all either potential members

¹² Forrest E. Long, "High Schools in War," *The Clearing House* 16, no. 4 (December 1941): 242, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30177632>.

¹³ H.H. Mills, "High School Teacher on the Home Front: Handling a Key Job in the War Effort," *The Clearing House* 17, no. 4 (December 1942): 226, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30176764>.

¹⁴ "Schools in the War Effort," 21.

of the armed forces or workers in war industries.”¹⁵ Due to their age, then, it was regarded as essential to convince high school students of the importance of participation in the war effort as a whole. Indeed, the same article goes on to state, “unless the war ends before all present conditions indicate, the majority of the boys now enrolled in high school will see service in the armed forces, and the girls will take their places in various activities directly connected to the war effort.”¹⁶ High school aged students were also viewed as potential carriers of “important responsibilities in a war economy,” thus further affecting their usefulness to the home front.¹⁷ Secondary schools were additionally promoted as “community-centered institution[s], working with youth and adults in the accomplishment of common social purposes” during the war.¹⁸ This further situated these public institutions in a space that was critical to both the community and the war effort.

Furthermore, supporting the shift of the high school curriculum and mode of functioning within the community was promoted as indicative of loyalty to the United States. Various articles referred to the patriotism of those who supported this change, such as one that stated, “now that we are at war, high schools everywhere are swinging their emphasis to victory. Every loyal American will applaud this effort.”¹⁹ Rhetoric involving the sentiment of patriotic duty was therefore employed to convince Americans of the necessity of shifting the role of the high school. In addition, the curriculum was frequently adjusted during the war years, with schools embracing “to a large extent, if not wholly...programs of ‘Education for Victory’

¹⁵ Mills, “High School Teacher on the Home Front,” 226.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Long, “High Schools in War,” 242.

¹⁸ L.W. Kindred, “9 Social Activities for Meeting the Impact of the War,” *The Clearing House* 17, no. 3 (November 1942): 161, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30176719>.

¹⁹ Long, “High Schools in War,” 242.

and...vocational preparation.”²⁰ High schools were thus accorded a special place in the war effort, and secondary school curricula were changed because of this goal.

Although high school curricula in general experienced some degree of change during the war years, social studies was a critical field of study in high schools that was specifically targeted by the concept of education for victory. Educators promoted the ideals of advancing American values in schools through educational journals. One 1943 article claimed that “the social-studies field is one of the most significant of all learning fields, one which aims directly at training for participation in democratic life.”²¹ Social studies and civics education were therefore advanced as a route to educate young citizens in the ways in which they could participate in democracy.

Pamphlets such as “What the War Means to Us” also advanced this notion. In a section entitled “Schools’ Responsibility for National Unity,” educators were encouraged to “promote shared understandings” of democracy in their schools, largely because schools were viewed as “one of the agencies responsible for organizing young people and adults to think through and talk over the fundamentals of democracy and the war effort.”²² The promotion of American values, then, was viewed as essential to boosting home front morale and encouraging support for the war effort. In some cases, such as in “areas where there are many aliens,” this was viewed as essential to “Americanization work.”²³ The promotion of these shared values, then, was critical in promoting an idealized vision of the American way of life, especially for those who were

²⁰ I.L. Kandel, *The Impact of the War on American Education* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1948), 4, accessed November 2, 2016, https://archive.org/stream/impactofthewarup008915mbp/impactofthewarup008915mbp_djvu.txt.

²¹ Joseph Burton Vasché, “10 Ideas for Timely Teaching of 1943 Social Studies: Stanislaus County Schools’ Plan of Action,” *The Clearing House* 17, no. 8 (April 1943): 471, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30176934>.

²² What the War Means to Us, 7.

²³ Ibid., 6.

viewed as not completely trustworthy in the eyes of “true” American citizens. Social studies and civics education was therefore advanced as the most conducive route to promoting shared values, as well as the view of American exceptionalism.

Social studies and civics education was therefore a critical aspect of education in wartime schools. The development of patriotism in young people as a whole was viewed as a crucial aim in wartime, as well as one that would benefit the war effort.²⁴ This portrayal of American exceptionalism and promotion of American values was attempted in various ways in schools.

Social Studies Education in High Schools: Promotion of the “American Way of Life”

Throughout the war years, many forms of propaganda surrounded citizens, including posters and advertisements in various media they encountered such as songs, magazines, and newspapers.²⁵ Students, too, were exposed to this propaganda in wider society, but were also inundated with education that both promoted “American” values and asserted American exceptionalism. This was achieved primarily through changes to the government endorsed social studies curriculum, as well as through various activities that supplemented students’ regular curricula.

As previously discussed, the war heavily influenced all aspects of schools during the war years. However, due to the importance with which social studies was regarded in terms of building student morale, this subject experienced significant change in wartime high schools. Various educational journals and government issued pamphlets encouraged the discussion of war topics in the classroom. A 1942 article in the education journal *The Phi Delta Kappan*

²⁴ Giordano, *Wartime Schools*, 7.

²⁵ William L. O’Neill, *A Democracy at War: America’s Fight at Home and Abroad in World War II* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 141; Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 177.

recommended that schools revise their social studies courses “to give a knowledge of war aims and issues as well as actual experience in community undertakings.”²⁶ Other journals similarly advocated that schools “devote at least one social-studies period each week exclusively to current-events study.”²⁷ Different resources used in schools also focused on the war. Periodicals such as the *Weekly News Review* were commonly read in schools, and included various articles that gave information about war events. In a January 1943 edition of the resource, a semester test provided on the last page included a quiz that incorporated various multiple-choice questions about the war, as well as maps of the theaters of the war.²⁸ Educators were therefore encouraged to discuss current events during the war years, and oftentimes put this into practice in their classrooms.

The U.S. government also encouraged high schools to engage their students in discussions about the impact of the war on their lives. Teachers were encouraged to have students talk about the war, as well as the many ways in which their lives had changed as a result of the war. This included male family members joining the military, mothers working outside of the home, and ways in which students could be expected to help their families at home due to these changes.²⁹ The issues caused by the war, as well as war events themselves, were not ignored in the classroom. This, however, can be expected in wartime. More significant to the character of wartime schools was the shift to the promotion of American exceptionalism.

Although the wartime educational system emphasized the value of the American way of life, this was not necessarily the norm in Depression-era American schools. Prior to the outbreak

²⁶ “Schools in the War Effort,” 21.

²⁷ Vasché, “10 Ideas for Timely Teaching of 1943 Social Studies,” 471.

²⁸ “Weekly News Review Semester Test,” *Weekly News Review*, January 18, 1943, p. 8, Print, Donald C. Haynes Collection, Box VFM-352, Musselman Library Special Collections, Gettysburg College, PA.

²⁹ What the War Means to Us, 10.

of the war, progressive education was gaining support in the United States' education system. It essentially emphasized issues-based learning and the development of critical thinking in students. Various progressive thinkers, such as Harold Rugg, encouraged teachers to discuss social problems with students and to have students "critically examine their own society and social institutions." This trend inspired the introduction of various social studies courses in schools, such as Rugg's recommendation, "Problems of Democracy."³⁰ Before the war, then, institutions of democratic government were called into question and even regularly criticized in American high schools.

Indeed, a 1933 editorial in the educational journal *Junior-Senior High School Clearing House* detailed a need for social studies classes to promote a more progressive education. The article claimed that the social studies teacher should not teach in order to produce the "average man" in a democratic society, who would blindly follow sets of fixed ideas. Instead, educators were encouraged to teach students to be "questioning and acting and purposive" so as to allow them to criticize and improve social institutions. Social studies was regarded as an avenue by which society could be "fixed," then, and would "function as [a lever] for lifting society by its own bootstraps."³¹ In the midst of the Great Depression and before the war began in Europe, social studies was viewed as a way to teach youth to question social institutions and hopefully change them for the better.

However, this shifted once the war began. Instead of promoting critical thinking and the questioning of American institutions in schools, the government encouraged "banning textbooks

³⁰ Conner and Bohan, "The Second World War's Impact on the Progressive Educational Movement," 91-92. Conner and Bohan claim that the Progressive Education movement was able to gain traction especially due to the 1929 stock market crash and general sense of public disillusionment that resulted from the Great Depression.

³¹ P.W.L.C., "Whither the Social Studies?" *Junior-Senior High School Clearing House* 8, no. 2 (October 1933): 70, accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30174095>.

which questioned American ideals.”³² In order to preserve national unity in wartime, the U.S. educational system promoted a shift in education, where students in high schools would learn about the benefits of the American way of life. Harold Anderson of the National Council for Social Studies, for example, outlined a social studies curriculum that emphasized the three main points of selecting problems that “relate directly to our national welfare.” These included America’s defense needs and relations with “American neighbors”; “placing special emphasis on the methods of studying social problems”; and “developing warm loyalties to the democratic way of life.”³³ While Anderson and others encouraged discussion of social problems, this supposedly objective analysis was fraught with assumptions about the superiority of democracy. Elsewhere in his speech, for instance, Anderson asserted that “teachers know that no other country and no other form of government offer the opportunities for ‘life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness’ found in the United States.” He also discounted claims that the benefits of socialism were discussed in American schools.³⁴ This aspect of his speech reveals both the concern that the superiority of the American way of life was not being emphasized in schools, and that this topic was viewed as a necessary one during the war. Overall, the educational climate shifted from “questioning American institutions to celebrating them” in order to promote national unity during the war.³⁵

³² Conner and Bohan, “The Second World War’s Impact on the Progressive Educational Movement,” 96.

³³ Howard R. Anderson, “The Social Studies, Patriotism, and Teaching Democracy,” in *The NCSS Presidential Addresses, 1936-1969: Perspectives on the Social Studies*, ed. Mark A. Previte and James J. Sheehan (Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education, 2001), 67-8, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED460065.pdf>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁵ Conner and Bohan, “The Second World War’s Impact on the Progressive Educational Movement,” 93.

This occurred even before the United States formally entered the war. Articles in educational journals suggested that students discuss not issues present in America, but the successes of the country. A 1940 article entitled “What’s Right with America” contained a lamentation of the thought processes of high school students in a public speaking class after they pessimistically discussed world issues. Teacher Margaret Walthew wrote,

they were becoming too critical, their thinking was being done from a purely negative viewpoint, they had become aware of flaws without training themselves to be conscious of achievements...they were giving too much thought to what was wrong, and not enough to what was right with our country.

Walthew went on to develop a unit in which students would “find out what was right” with America.³⁶ High school students were therefore discouraged to engage in critical thinking about the issues present in their country, and instead were taught to search for the positive traits of America. Though teaching optimistic thinking certainly has its place in schools, this should not necessarily occur in a vacuum. The lesson outlined by Walthew functioned as a subtle form of propaganda that promoted American exceptionalism in schools.

The benefits of a democratic government were one such topic of discussion that was widely encouraged in secondary schools throughout the war years. In an article published by *The Clearing House*, recommendations were made to raise morale among high school students. This involved two things: “First, youth must possess a clear understanding and an abiding faith in the democratic way of life. Second, there must be abundant opportunities for youth to contribute to a realization and continuance of that way of life.”³⁷ High school students during the war were thus

³⁶ Margaret Walthew, “What’s Right with America,” *The Clearing House* 15, no. 4 (1940): 205, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30177531>. The early date of this article also reveals that this rhetoric of American exceptionalism began to be promoted in schools even before the United States entered the war, but after the war began in Europe.

³⁷ Mills, “High School Teacher on the Home Front,” 226.

expected to not only be educated on the tenets of American democracy, but also possess faith in the superiority of democracy. The article went on to outline various ways of “revealing to youth the true meaning of democracy,” which included

a democratic social environment in the classroom and throughout the school in which children can discover for themselves the satisfactions of democratic living, [and] careful study of the great documents of democracy, such as the writings of Jefferson, the American Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution of the United States, with special emphasis on the Bill of Rights.³⁸

These suggestions reveal a great deal about the promotion of democracy in wartime high schools. Not only was this system of government promoted in schools, but also functioned to bolster the American national myth in the eyes of young people.

Other widely distributed materials encouraged a similar approach to democratic education. In the pamphlet “What the War Means to Us,” for example, educators were told, “the school is one of the agencies responsible for organizing young people and adults to think through and talk over the fundamentals of democracy and America’s war effort.” The pamphlet further outlined various units that could be taught in social studies classes or, alternatively, in “Freedom Forums” that would take place throughout the school week.³⁹ A secondary school education that included the instilling of democratic values, then, was seen as an essential component of the war effort.

Various methods were suggested to promote democratic values in the social studies curriculum, both in government-organized materials and privately produced educational resources. Teachers wrote in to educational journals to describe the ways in which they were promoting democratic values in their social studies lessons. One article included a comprehensive unit of the study of democracy that was taught in a junior high school in the later

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ What the War Means to Us, 7.

years of the war. The impetus behind this unit of study was a desire to defy “the challenge so blatantly shouted in our ears: ‘Democracy has failed. The American way of life cannot endure.’ We would prove that America still holds high the torch to ‘enlighten the world.’”⁴⁰ Elements of reinforcing the idea of American exceptionalism, as well as the general benefits of democracy, can be seen in this motive, as well as in the unit itself. Indeed, the study encompassed five units in which the term democracy was studied, as well as the development of a democratic form of government in America.⁴¹

Different activities that simulated a democratic society were also encouraged in schools, with the aim that once students experienced a democratic system, they would be convinced of its supposed inherent superiority. Schools were pushed to establish or continue student councils, in which students would democratically vote for candidates, thereby giving “training to students in the American way of life through active participation.”⁴² Overall, schools were told that students must “learn the way of democracy by experiencing democracy in action.”⁴³ Ideally, this would allow students to see the virtues of democratic values, and experience increased morale in the war to protect these values.

In addition to an emphasis on the value of democracy in the curriculum and regular school activities, schools engaged in special activities that promoted American values and the war effort as a whole. These included events such as the celebration of “Bill of Rights Day,” declared by President Roosevelt on December 15th, 1941, shortly after the United States entered the war. A pamphlet issued by the Bill of Rights Sesqui-Centennial Committee of the Council

⁴⁰ Clara M. Thurber, “4-Subject Study of Democracy Based on Social Studies,” *The Clearing House* 19, no. 1 (September 1944): 14, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30177828>.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁴² “Schools in the War Effort,” 22.

⁴³ Long, “High Schools in War,” 243.

Against Intolerance in America suggested various activities for observing the day of celebration in schools. It was deemed an important celebration in which students should partake because, according to the Committee, “a clear understanding of the content of the Bill of Rights, its historical accomplishments, and, most important of all, its meaning today is essential if we Americans are to keep our democracy strong and free.”⁴⁴ The impact and value of American national documents was therefore emphasized through activities such as the Bill of Rights Day.

The program, furthermore, contained various activities relating to the Bill of Rights and its importance in American society. It outlined the function of the Bill of Rights, and included a quiz for students entitled “Why It’s Fun to Be Free.” The quiz posed questions and gave answers such as, “To what church must you belong, according to the Bill of Rights? (Any church or no church. It even protects non-believers)” and “The years 1863 and 1919 admitted two classes of people to the full benefits of the Bill of Rights. Who were they? (Negroes and women).”⁴⁵ The day’s suggested activities thus emphasized a specific, if not completely accurate, portrayal of the benefits of democratic documents that ensured the rights of citizens. No mention, after all, was made to the discriminatory treatment of African Americans in American society at the time, and was likely not covered in schools. A play included in the program also extolled the virtues of the Bill of Rights: it followed a boy who was tasked with talking about the document in a school assembly, and who interviewed different community members about how the Bill of Rights benefitted them. One farmer in the play said that his father immigrated to the U.S. because “he wanted to live in a country that had a Bill of Rights,” and that “we will fight to the last ditch to

⁴⁴ Our Bill of Rights! Suggested Program for School Observance of the 150th Anniversary of its Adoption (Washington, D.C.: Bill of Rights Sesqui-Centennial Committee of the Council Against Intolerance in America, 1941), 1, Donald C. Haynes Collection, Box VFM-352, Musselman Library Special Collections, Gettysburg College, PA.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

defend” the “privilege” of free speech.⁴⁶ Elements of American exceptionalism as well as the general benefits of democratic founding documents were thus detailed in the activities of the day. Activities such as this that took place in high schools across America functioned to promote an idealized vision of the country and its system of government.

In addition to promoting the value of democracy in contemporary times, high school social studies classes focused a great deal on bolstering America’s national myth. Teachers were encouraged to trace “the evolution of our civil liberties” throughout history in an effort to emphasize the superiority of the American way of life as compared to other nations.⁴⁷ As previously discussed, high school teachers were pushed to have students study “the great documents of democracy” in their social studies classes, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.⁴⁸ In addition, other studies of democracy naturally included the study of how the United States came to be. Clara Thurber, the teacher who organized a study of democracy in order to prove that it still had the potential to “enlighten the world,” reported that her classes studied “the exploration and settlement of America,” as well as “the social problems of early colonial life, the democratic principles exemplified in life on the frontier, and the struggle for existence as a nation.” Her class also learned about the “growing pains of democracy,” including the nation’s “great struggle to free itself from the curse of slavery and disunion,” with the eventual conclusion of the nation’s people “winning the cause of freedom.”⁴⁹ Though topics of study such as these could be viewed as normal studies of the United States’ history, the situation of this unit in a wider study of the value of democracy and

⁴⁶ *All Out for the Bill of Rights! A Play*, in Our Bill of Rights, 6, Musselman Library Special Collections.

⁴⁷ Kindred, “9 Social Activities,” 164.

⁴⁸ Mills, “High School Teacher on the Home Front,” 226.

⁴⁹ Thurber, “4-Subject Study of Democracy,” 15.

the American way of life served to convince students of the superiority of American values over other nations. Overall, this focus on a triumphal version of U.S. history served to increase home front morale among young people, as well as to promote a vision of American exceptionalism.

The promotion of a democratic way of life and the general concept of American exceptionalism was oftentimes defined in stark opposition to characteristics of the Axis powers. The traits of the U.S. government and the general traits of the Axis countries were obviously very different; however, social studies curricula portrayed an idealized version of the American way of life that was directly contrasted to Axis powers. This was accomplished in more abstract terms, as well as through examples of direct comparison. The war itself was characterized in classrooms as a struggle against an oppressive power. Students were taught that the United States took up arms “not to dominate the world,” as the Axis powers were attempting, “but to liberate humanity.” Teachers were also encouraged to discuss with students questions such as, “Is war to be avoided at all costs as futile [sic]? Is the chance of being enslaved worth taking in the name of peace?”⁵⁰ Democracy was thus portrayed as a humane system of government, especially due to its comparison with the aims of Axis powers.

Other suggested units also had a nationalist agenda and subtly pushed students to favor their own government over the government systems of other nations. Teacher Clara Thurber’s unit on democracy contained lessons on comparing democracy with “other terms so glibly tossed as panaceas for the ills of the world. Socialism, communism, Nazism, and totalitarianism—each took its turn under the scrutiny of cooperative pupils.”⁵¹ The benefits of democracy were thus contrasted with various other forms of government, including those of the Axis powers as well as those that were simply different than democracy. The language used even in describing the other

⁵⁰ What the War Means to Us, 9.

⁵¹ Thurber, “4-Subject Study of Democracy,” 14.

forms of government, and the possibility that they proposed any sort of solution for the “ills of the world,” seemed to reinforce the superiority of American democracy.

A comparison and contrast between values held by America and the Axis powers was also encouraged by more direct means. Indeed, throughout the war years, teachers were encouraged to have students compare and contrast democracy and totalitarian societies. An entire suggested unit in the pamphlet “What the War Means to Us,” for example, called educators to teach about “what ‘we’ and ‘they’ stand for.” Even the title of the lesson, then, set up the two sides as completely opposed. The introduction of the lesson went on to state,

Hitler long since stated that there is not room enough in the world for both democracy and Nazism. It is either ‘we’ or ‘they,’ democracy or despotism. The purpose of this unit is to examine the irreconcilable nature of the principles of the American and Axis ways of life and to discover why victory of the freedom principles is basic.⁵²

The differences between the two systems of government and ways of life were therefore not only portrayed in stark contrast to one another, but the inherent value and appeal of democracy and was assumed to be true and was assumed to eventually prevail. The suggested unit outline went on to recommend that students discuss the “blessings of liberty” that they “enjoy in this country that would be denied [them] in Germany,” Japan, Italy, and “enslaved France.” A suggested activity, furthermore, asked teachers to post on their billboards “clippings from United States newspapers and magazines whose publication would be prohibited in Axis-dominated countries.”⁵³ A clear division between two “types” of societies was therefore emphasized within the classroom, through instruction and classroom activities.

A similar concept appeared in the play “All Out for the Bill of Rights,” in which a fictional newspaper editor spoke of newspaper censorship under the Nazi regime by saying, “not

⁵² What the War Means to Us, 14.

⁵³ Ibid., 14-15.

a word appears in any newspaper in the country without [Goebbels'] o.k. He sees to it that people see the government in the best possible light." The editor further contrasted this with the United States during election season, in which "newspapers all over the country took sides in [the] campaign and said what they pleased about both candidates."⁵⁴ The superiority of American freedom and its societal institutions as compared to those of Germany and the other Axis powers was therefore portrayed throughout classroom activities in social studies classrooms and in government endorsed civics education activities.

The promotion of American values was a critical aspect of wartime social studies education. In addition, the promotion of Pan-Americanism was also viewed as essential in the wartime social studies classroom. Various educational journal articles throughout the war years discussed the importance of learning about America's allies in the war, as well as other countries on the American continents.⁵⁵ Some of these articles recommended celebrations of "Pan-American Day" as well as developing classroom scrapbooks entitled "Our American Neighbors" and "Our World Friends."⁵⁶ Indeed, educators were told through various educational resources that "the other American nations are more real to us today than ever before in our history."⁵⁷ Journals advocated for a more globalized curriculum based on current events and an understanding of other nations, but acceptance only if a nation happened to be an ally of the U.S.

⁵⁴ *All Out for the Bill of Rights*, in *Our Bill of Rights*, 6, Musselman Library Special Collections.

⁵⁵ "Schools for Victory: A New Monthly Department of News and Ideas on the High Schools' Part in the War Effort," *The Clearing House* 16, no. 5 (January 1942): 270, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30181344>; "Schools for Victory," *The Clearing House* 17, no. 2 (October 1942): 91, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30176665>; "Schools for Victory," *The Clearing House* 17, no. 7 (March 1943): 412, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30176896>; "Schools for Victory," *The Clearing House* 17, no. 9 (May 1943): 535, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30176976>.

⁵⁶ Vasché, "10 Ideas for Timely Teaching of 1943 Social Studies," 472; Thurber, "4-Subject Study of Democracy," 15.

⁵⁷ Long, "High Schools in War," 243.

This was advanced in the hopes that, in the words of one educator, “as we are able to win their friendship, we shall thus strengthen hemisphere solidarity.”⁵⁸

American values, especially those relating to democracy, and an idealized vision of America’s shared past and present, were therefore emphasized in social studies and civics education during the war. This remained consistent throughout the war years: indeed, democratic education was encouraged even before the United States entered the war. These values continued to be taught in social studies classes throughout the war years, with a multitude of articles encouraging this education being published in the years 1942-1943. Furthermore, these values were oftentimes defined in direct contrast to the values held by Axis nations, which functioned to build national unity in opposition to a common enemy. In contrast, though, Allied and neighbor nations were presented as friendly, with commonalities emphasized and differences celebrated. While social studies functioned in a propaganda-like fashion primarily through these avenues, a smaller but still significant aspect of civics education lay in encouraging students to participate in wartime activities by equating these with patriotism in social studies classes.

Promoting An Ideal Vision of America in Junior High School Social Studies Classrooms

American forms of government were portrayed as superior to those of other nations, and America’s national myth was reinforced in relation to democracy through social studies and civics education. However, this was not the only way in which American exceptionalism was promoted in junior high and high schools. An idealized vision of America and its past was also portrayed in various suggested social studies lessons. Propaganda in this form built a sense of national unity during the war.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Coca Cola's *Our America* poster series, distributed to junior high schools in 1943 and containing lessons on different natural resources exploited by Americans, is an interesting case of this form of patriotic education. At the time, many educators felt that younger students should not be exposed to discussion about the war. One wartime study reported that "while it is not possible to determine a precise age level at which the child is ready for abstract social concepts, the study of contemporary wars does not become an appropriate and educative topic for children who are less than thirteen years old."⁵⁹ Students in wartime junior high schools, however, received an education that was strikingly similar to that of their high school counterparts in terms of the implicit promotion of American exceptionalism. The poster series, indeed, portrays America's past and present in an extremely positive light.

The series strongly emphasized America's shared past throughout its posters and the accompanying pamphlets. In some instances, overt references to America's shared history were promoted to reinforce the country's national myth. In a poster that taught students about the use of wood in the U.S., two events that were deemed significant to elaborate upon were the planting of the Stuyvesant Tree and the making of Penn's Treaty. Other topics on the poster included making furniture, operating a lathe, and making paper.⁶⁰ Though the two more specific events did take place in the United States, their inclusion among the more general concepts on the rest of the poster speaks to their likely intended function as events that perpetuated America's national myth.

⁵⁹ William G. Carr and Mary Louise Mallam, "Effects of the World War on American Education," *Review of Educational Research* 13, no. 1 (February 1943): 14, accessed November 2, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1168806>. This quote references a study by Ralph C. Preston, "Children's Reactions to a Contemporary War Situation," *Child Development Monographs* 28 (1942): n.p.

⁶⁰ Coca Cola Company, "Week 3: Using Wood," *Our America: An Education Series*, 1943, Musselman Library Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA. See Figure 1 for an image.

Other examples of this can be found in the workbooks that went along with the posters. The workbook on American transportation includes mini-lessons on the Erie Canal and the use of wagons in America's westward expansion. The paragraph on westward expansion states, "the pioneers who moved westward in covered wagons did not know that the slow movement of the clumsy vehicles meant the building of a new and greater America, but they built into our Country their strength, their courage, and their hope."⁶¹ This celebratory tone promoted a triumphal version of the United States' history, and asserted an understanding of America as exceptional and its people as embodying attributes such as strength and courage. Similar to the facts on the wood poster, then, this lesson functioned as a reminder of the positive deeds of past Americans, and reminded American students of their shared history.



Figure 1: The Stuyvesant Tree and Penn's Tree

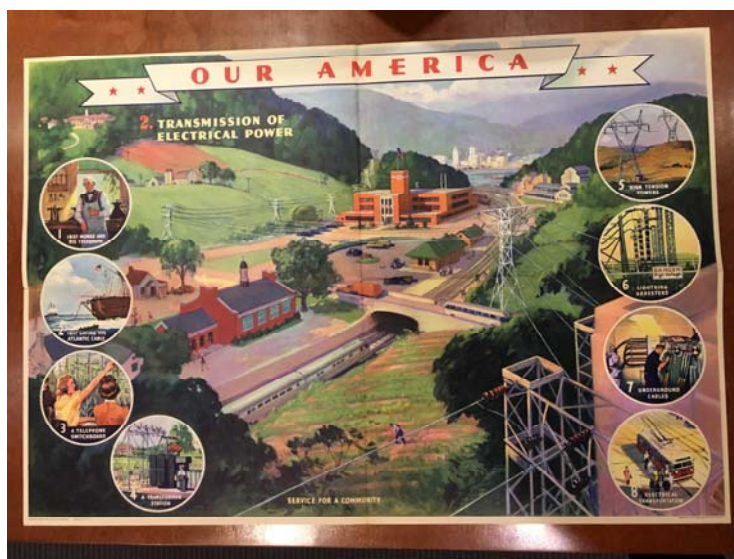


Figure 2: Electricity Poster

⁶¹ Coca-Cola Company, "Transportation Builds a Nation," *Our America: An Education Series*, 1943: p.8, Musselman Library Special Collections, Gettysburg College, PA.

In addition to promoting a very positive view of America's history, the poster series also portrayed an idealized country in contemporary times. A poster on electricity and the transmission of electrical power, for example, portrays in its background a sprawling, green landscape. It is complete with farms, shining power lines, and a sleek, modern-looking train. In the distance, a sparkling coastal city is depicted. The remainder of the poster details different contemporary technological advances such as telephone switchboards, underground cables, and electrical transportation.⁶² A modern, idealized vision of America was thus promoted through the poster, thus functioning to subtly instill patriotic values in students.

Case Studies: Two Schools' Social Studies Curricula in Wartime

The promotion of democracy and an idealized vision of the "American way of life" can be seen in various secondary schools and in school districts during the war years. Although this occurred through various activities and programs within each school, high schools often used their social studies classrooms to accomplish these goals.

Stanislaus County in Modesto, California was one school district that reworked its social studies program upon the commencement of the war. In an article published by educational journal *The Clearing House*, representatives from the district emphasized the importance of teaching history and geography together due to the worldwide conflict.⁶³ A different understanding of social studies education resulted from the war, then, and was advanced in educational journals. The article went on to state ten steps that schools in the district took to restructure their social studies program overall. Most suggestions involved involving current

⁶² Coca-Cola Company, "Week 2: Transmission of Electrical Power," *Our America: An Education Series*, 1943, Musselman Library Special Collections, Gettysburg College, PA. See Figure 2 for an image.

⁶³ Vasché, "10 Ideas for Timely Teaching of Social Studies," 471.

events in the curriculum. For example, the article stated that schools in Stanislaus County aimed to devote “at least one social studies period each week exclusively to current-events study.”⁶⁴ Teachers in the district also made use of newspaper and magazine articles in their classrooms, with social studies educators compiling clippings of articles to use in classroom study when applicable. Educators were also encouraged to blend units on history and geography, and to apply their lessons in the framework of the war. The district offered to its teachers a “war geography booklet” for use in conjunction with social studies lessons, and teachers used maps found in contemporary newspapers and magazines to supplement their history lessons.⁶⁵ The war therefore heavily influenced the social studies program of this school district, and caused a shift in the understanding of how social studies should be taught in Stanislaus County’s schools. Teachers used more current materials in their classrooms in order to discuss the war, and taught history and geography in a new way: as blended topics rather than separate ones.

The University of Chicago High School’s social studies program presented a similar shift in pedagogy during the war. After undergoing a critical examination of the program, administrators at the private school developed a four-year social studies course that would allow seventh through tenth grade students to discuss the history of the United States and the world, as well as contemporary social issues. As a whole, the course sequence would allow students to develop “an understanding of the modern world,” “an understanding of the meaning and significance of democracy,” and “attitudes which are socially acceptable in a democratic society.”⁶⁶ This course sequence therefore promoted the value of the institution of democracy. In

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 472.

⁶⁶ Kenneth J. Rehage and Robert B. Weaver, “The Social Studies Program in the University of Chicago High School,” *The School Review* 51, no. 1 (January 1943): 26-27, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1081274>.

addition, it incorporated democratic processes into the curriculum by allowing for student choice in what would be included in the curriculum. Indeed, students would learn a basic outline of the overall unit, and would then engage in “co-operative planning” with their peers and their teacher to decide what topics would be studied in greater detail for the rest of the year.⁶⁷ Previously discussed suggestions found in various educational journals to have students engage in democratic processes through school-wide activities were therefore implemented in this program. Students of the high school, administrators may have hoped, would come to see the so-called “way of democracy,” and would subsequently be convinced of its inherent value.⁶⁸

Students in the seventh and eighth grades at the University of Chicago High School would study the United States and its people in Social Studies I and Social Studies II, respectively. Students in Social Studies I would focus on a brief narrative of United States history, study a unit entitled “Houses and Home Life,” and would then engage in discussion to determine which aspects of US history would be studied further.⁶⁹ United States history was thus promoted as a foundation upon which students must build in their further study of history and social issues. Furthermore, the promotion of democratic decision-making processes within the unit allowed students to have autonomy in their learning that was ultimately but subtly restricted by the constraints of studying solely U.S. history in their class.

Students in Social Studies II focused on a study of the “Population of the United States,” and engaged in a further unit of study considering the term “community.” Eighth grade students were encouraged in their study of communities to point out problems that they saw in their school community, and then to work with their peers and their teachers to solve them. Examples

⁶⁷ Ibid., 27-28.

⁶⁸ Long, “High Schools in War,” 243.

⁶⁹ Rehage and Weaver, “The Social Studies Program in the University of Chicago High School,” 29-30.

of these issues that students studied and attempted to remedy were the “conduct of pupils in the library-study hall” and “the problem of making necessary repairs on drinking fountains in the school corridors.”⁷⁰ Through these activities, students were able to practice living in a democratic society and could “develop an awareness of the fundamental principles of community living.” Furthermore, administrators hoped that students would understand “the great interdependence which they have found to exist within the communities they have studied and the interdependence of nations in the larger world community.”⁷¹ A more globalized understanding of history and communities was therefore emphasized in the social studies classroom in this secondary school, a concept likely driven by the advent of war.

Ninth and tenth grade students in Social Studies III and IV would study world history, and would specifically engage with the topic of democracy in their studies. Students in Social Studies III would engage in a study of world history, the format of which was similar to that in Social Studies I. They would learn a narrative of world history from prehistoric times to contemporary events, and would engage in discussion to determine topics that would be involved in later study.⁷² During their fourth year of the social studies course sequence, students would undergo a study of “Democracy and its Competitors.” The focus of this year, as explained by administrators, was a study of various competing systems of government in contemporary times, as well as the historical antecedents of the systems. Overall, though, the unit was concerned “primarily with an intensive study of democracy and such alternatives as communism and fascism.”⁷³ Students would therefore engage in a study of world history and world governments in their last two years in the proposed social studies course, with the likely conclusion of the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 30.

⁷¹ Ibid., 31.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 31-32.

sequence being a study of the values of democratic systems of government. Also present is a division of governments into categories of “them” versus “us,” as can be seen in the alternative systems that were studied.

Students in both Stanislaus County schools and the University of Chicago High School were exposed to current events involving the war and units praising democracy in their social studies classes. The presence of such topics in these schools demonstrates the extent to which schools across the U.S. followed suggestions from educational journals that emphasized the need for education for victory during the war. Moreover, these specific districts made significant changes in their social studies curriculum in order to account for societal changes resulting from the war. Stanislaus County schools encouraged involvement with war-related topics on the classroom level, while the University of Chicago High School restructured their overall social studies course sequence to accommodate wartime changes. Wartime social studies programs and classes were therefore fundamentally altered during the conflict due to the increased tendency of schools to teach unifying topics and to teach about current war-related events. However, curricular changes were not the only educational forces that impacted secondary school students in the United States. Students were also encouraged to participate in wartime activities through the material studied in their classes.

The Encouragement of Wartime Activities in Schools

Though students were pushed to participate in the war effort in various ways outside of the classroom, a significant portion of wartime propaganda relating to this issue was present in the high school social studies classroom. Although this occurred across the school curriculum,

social studies teachers held particular sway over students due to the subject matter that was taught in their classrooms.

Indeed, the community-based education that was increasingly adopted during wartime likely influenced students' decisions to participate in activities that benefitted the war effort. Social studies educators were encouraged to discuss changes that would occur in students' daily lives as a result of the war. These included "changes in the use of leisure time," such as "demands for local civilian defense, Red Cross activities, selling Defense Bonds," and collecting scrap materials. These were also related as useful towards building morale in various articles.⁷⁴ Teachers were also oftentimes pushed to arrange "opportunities for pupils to participate in activities directly related to the war effort, such as salvage campaigns and the construction of games to be sent to army and navy camps."⁷⁵ In these ways, educators were tasked with the responsibility of inspiring students to participate in wartime activities. Social studies teachers, in particular, were situated in a position that allowed them to engage students in discussion about the current events of the war. Furthermore, this allowed them to convince students that wartime activities were their patriotic duty, and to encourage them to actually participate in such activities.

The classroom materials that social studies teachers used also encouraged participation in wartime activities. A 1943 issue of the *Weekly News Review*, for instance, contained an article on students in Naperville, Illinois who organized a Christmas concert to sell defense stamps.

Writing of the event, the author characterized the attendees as patriotic, and praised the students

⁷⁴ What the War Means to Us, 10; Long, "High Schools in War," 243.

⁷⁵ Mills, "High School Teacher on the Home Front," 226.

for their “novel way to aid the war effort.”⁷⁶ The article, likely read by students in their social studies classes, therefore promoted activities that supported the war effort, and assigned to them positive attributes such as patriotism. This type of encouragement, along with pressures outside of the social studies classroom, likely inspired students to engage in similar activities.

Students across the country took these lessons to heart in their free time and throughout their extracurricular activities. Students in Prescott High School in Prescott, Arizona, referenced in their 1944 yearbook the many activities that students organized and in which they participated. As the Foreword stated, “the war was always in the background” of each student’s daily life, and many students acknowledged the important role they had to play in the war effort. Students in each homeroom of the school “religiously bought war stamps,” and furthermore participated in various clubs that engaged in wartime activities.⁷⁷ Indeed, different school clubs were started specifically to allow students to participate more fully in the war effort in Prescott High School. The “Minute Maid Club,” for example, consisted of girls who met weekly with community-based organizations such as the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs in Prescott and “would sell war stamps to the members of these clubs.”⁷⁸

High school yearbooks elsewhere similarly contained coverage of students’ wartime activities. Beverly Hills High School in California contained references to students’ participation in “bond rallies, scrap drives, [and] defense courses,” throughout the 1942-1943 school year. These activities were even said to be “as much a part of...school life as the sports and clubs” in

⁷⁶ “Schools at War,” *Weekly News Review* (Washington, D.C.), January 18, 1943, p. 7, Print, Donald C. Haynes Collection, Box VFM-352, Musselman Library Special Collections, Gettysburg, PA.

⁷⁷ Prescott High School, *The Hassayamper 1944 Yearbook* (Prescott, AZ: Graduating Class of 1944, 1944), Foreword page, *National World War II Museum*, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://www.ww2yearbooks.org/yearbooks/arizona-prescott.php>.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Service Clubs page.

which students participated.⁷⁹ Such activities occurred even earlier in the war. The 1941-1942 yearbook of Raleigh, North Carolina's Needham Broughton High School contains a page detailing the sale of US Defense Stamps that occurred two days a week during lunch. The caption of the full-page photograph reads: "the members of the Student Body were awake to the fact that there was a war. Many did their bit by buying Stamps at regular intervals."⁸⁰ High schools were thus very much a part of the "total war" atmosphere during the war years, as evidenced by the central focus the war is granted in many yearbooks from this era.⁸¹ Students were encouraged to participate in the war effort in their classrooms, and many acted upon these suggestions by becoming heavily involved in the war effort on the home front.

Though students were inundated with propaganda throughout their daily lives and not just in the social studies classroom, the role of the classroom should not be dismissed. Teachers utilized various methods to encourage students to participate in the war effort. This occurred through the idealization of the "American way of life" and through sharing class materials from newspapers and other media that suggested different methods of participation. Even student-led publications such as yearbooks contained rhetoric praising activities that benefitted the war effort. High school students were therefore heavily influenced by the atmosphere of total war, and followed suggestions from their classes and wider society to take part in wartime activities.

⁷⁹ Beverly Hills High School, The Watchtower 1943 Yearbook (Beverly Hills, CA: Graduating Class of 1943, 1943), 1, *National World War II Museum*, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://www.ww2yearbooks.org/yearbooks/california-beverly-hills.php>.

⁸⁰ Needham Broughton High School, The Latipac 1942 Yearbook (Raleigh, NC: Graduating Class of 1942, 1942), Activities page, *National World War II Museum*, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://www.ww2yearbooks.org/yearbooks/north-carolina-needham-broughton.php>.

⁸¹ For more examples of World War II era high school yearbooks, see "See You Next Year! High School Yearbooks from WWII," *National World War II Museum*, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://www.ww2yearbooks.org/home/>.

Conclusion

Overall, junior high and high school social studies education during the Second World War was viewed as an important part of the home front effort by government administrators, and was generally characterized by at least some change in the curriculum. Much of this change consisted of a shift from more a more critical-thinking based curriculum that questioned American institutions to one that celebrated the positive aspects of America and its values. Students were exposed to overt and subtle propaganda in their social studies classrooms and in civics-based special events hosted by the school. These included activities and rhetoric that taught and reinforced democratic values, asserted American exceptionalism, bolstered America's national myth, and encouraged participation in age-appropriate war-related activities.

Although education that emphasizes the positive aspects of one's home country is important to an extent, especially in wartime, the American education system as a whole encouraged the promotion of American exceptionalism in a virtual vacuum. For this reason, the wartime social studies classroom can be said to have promoted a propaganda-like curriculum, with the education system as a whole operating as a system of indoctrination for traditional American values. Schools, then, were not insulated from the propaganda that dominated a large portion of American society during the war, and were even employed as an important part of the war effort.

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