

The Influenza Pandemic of
1918
and
Its Effects on the United
States Military

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There was a great enemy during the spring and fall of 1918, and it was greater than any chemical weapon, bullet or blast. The enemy was Spanish influenza. According to Gina Kolata, the Spanish flu “. . . would kill more people in a single year than heart disease, cancers, strokes, chronic pulmonary disease, AIDS and Alzheimer’s disease combined.”¹ It killed between 20-50 million, worldwide. There are many different ways to examine the influenza pandemic. This paper will address the effects of the influenza pandemic on the U.S. military. This is an important issue to address because of the magnitude of the spread of the disease in the camps at the time. It offers suggestions about how to prevent deadly diseases from spreading, especially during a time of war. One way of exploring how the disease affected the military is by examining what historians have learned in hindsight and another is how the media portrayed the effects at the time. This paper will analyze the approach that two newspapers reported the influenza pandemic, these two newspapers are *The New York Times*, which is a civilian newspaper, and the *Stars and Stripes*, a military newspaper. These sources either provide a focused discussion on a camp or branch of the military, or a general discussion of the pandemic with some reference or chapter of a book dedicated to the military. When the author or paper discussed the influenza pandemic they either discussed the military policy or the human experience of it. It is important to examine these aspects of the readings and newspapers because they are biased in their analysis of the pandemic and they do not present every aspect of the pandemic in the military. As this paper will show, the pandemic was particularly devastating because the camps and ships were overcrowded.

¹ Gina Kolata, *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic and the Search for the virus that Caused it* (New York: Farrar, Stratus and Giroux, 1999) ix.

In addition there were not enough nurses or doctors to cope with the rise in patients.

Therefore many soldiers were staying in their bunks when they got sick, which helped further the spread of the disease.

There are different types of flu, such as the bird flu and the Spanish Flu, which is the flu that took place in the spring and fall of 1918. It is important to understand the difference between an epidemic and a pandemic. An epidemic is an outbreak of disease that is based in one country or on one continent. A pandemic is worldwide; if there are countries that are not affected, they are the small island countries that do not see a lot of travelers.² There were two major waves of the Spanish influenza, one taking place in the spring of 1918 and the other in the fall of 1918. The disease began in the spring of 1918. However, this was not the deadliest wave of the pandemic. Influenza mutated in the summer of 1918 into the deadlier disease which took place in the fall of 1918, beginning in late August. Many who died from influenza died of secondary diseases rather than influenza itself. The flu was the primary or first disease soldiers contracted and they would often contract a secondary disease, often times this was pneumonia, which was responsible for killing the soldiers.

The military was struck particularly hard because the United States was in World War I and President Wilson had instituted the draft. This led to overcrowded military installations. When one soldier contracted the disease it spread quickly through the military installations because the soldiers were close together. October 1918 was especially difficult for the military because many men were getting sick and dying. For

² The reason that I got interested in the influenza pandemic was because my great grandfather was in the military during World War One. He contracted influenza and was sent to an infirmary. While he was sick with the flu his whole battalion was sent to the front and they were all killed in action. None came back alive. This is a case in which the influenza pandemic saved lives.

instance, the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) had 37,935 men admitted for influenza and 3,560 admitted for pneumonia in September 1918. In September there were 2,500 deaths due to these two diseases. In October there were 5,092 men who died from influenza. There were 38,655 men admitted to various hospitals for influenza and 7,008 men admitted for pneumonia. In November there were 22,066 admitted for influenza and 2,621 admitted for pneumonia. In November there were 1,552 deaths due to these diseases.³ October was the month in which there were more deaths caused by the influenza pandemic. This demonstrates that the influenza pandemic was rampant through the A.E.F.

The interesting factor in this discussion is that the medical department of the United States Army came up with very different numbers for soldiers who had influenza during those same months. The medical department published a book in 1925 that specified, among other diseases, the number of men afflicted with influenza and the men who perished due to influenza. Another interesting factor is that the medical department divided these men into white men, colored men and the people who did not specify the color of the skin, therefore the same will be done here. There was also the division of the white men and colored men, into whether or not they were in the United States or Europe, however for the purpose of this paper these will be added together and the total number of white men and colored men will be shown. The numbers for the afflicted and deaths among the non-specific skin color was only done for those in Europe. They do NOT include those from the United States, if there were any. The number of white men afflicted with influenza in September 1918 was 123,114, the number of colored men

³ Alfred Crosby, *Epidemic and Peace, 1918* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976) 159.

afflicted was 12,337 and the number of non- specified skin color afflicted were 1,728. In October the number was 247,108 white men afflicted, 24,229 colored men afflicted and 4,723 afflicted of non-specific skin color. In November 1918 there were 41,925 white men afflicted with influenza, 3,413 colored men afflicted and 2,023 non-specified skin color afflicted.⁴ These numbers greatly differ from the analysis of Alfred Crosby of the severity that the disease had on the troops not only at home but in France as well. An explanation of this is that Crosby's analysis was just of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) whereas *The Medical Department of the United States Army in the World War* was a more complete analysis of the army. The A.E.F. pertained to the military units on the Western Front. It does not apply to the troops who were located at various other installations, like the camps in the United States and troops who were sent to Russia as an intervention force in July of 1918.⁵

The number of deaths from *The Medical Department of the United States Army in the World War* due to influenza in September was 6,119 white men, 660 colored men and 130 among those who did not specify their skin color. In October there were 10,664 deaths among the white men, 1,251 deaths among colored men and 403 nonspecific skin color due to influenza. In November there were 77 deaths among the colored troops due to influenza, 1,165 deaths among those who were white and 105 deaths among nonspecific skin color due to influenza.⁶ These are quite different from the ones that Crosby presented as well, for the same reason mentioned above. Another interesting

⁴ Maj. Albert G. Love, M.C., U.S. Army, *The Medical Department of the United States Army in the World War* Vol. XV (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1925) 264, 296, 439, 440, 471 and 560.

⁵ Jennifer Keene, *The United States and the First World War* (San Francisco: Longman Press, 2000) 66 and 118.

⁶ Love, 327, 328, 351, 352, 495, 496, 510, 511 and 568.

analysis is that the disease affected the white soldiers more than it did the colored soldiers. The colored soldiers were more immune to diseases because many of them came from poor neighborhoods and perhaps had more exposure to the virus.

The historiography of influenza is particularly important because the historians can provide information in hindsight of the event that may not have been known at the time the incident took place. Often times the influenza pandemic is written about in short essays and articles, however there are many good books about the pandemic but not as many as other topics. One group analyzes military camps. These are organized from human experience to the military policy. In 2002, William Still wrote, "Everybody Sick With the Flu" in *Naval History*. The main issue Still addressed is the impact of influenza on the sailors in the U.S. Navy.⁷ Still based his analysis on primary sources that include the Surgeon General's annual report from 1919, letters from Admiral William Sims to President Wilson, letters from soldiers to their relatives and the Secretary of the Navy's annual report. Still presents the evidence to show the effects of the influenza pandemic on the sailors. He presents the human aspect of the disease. One case study that Still presents is that of the Atlantic Fleet. By late September 1918, 10,000 sailors were stricken with influenza at the Great Lakes Training Center around Chicago. Still mentions an unnamed sailor, who said many of the barracks had been transformed into mini-hospitals.⁸ The source that Still uses for this particular case study was Alfred Crosby's *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*.⁹

⁷ William Still, "Everybody Sick With the Flu" *Naval History* 16:2 (April 2002) <http://web23.epnet.com/citation.asp> (Accessed 2/16/05)

⁸ Still.

⁹ Still.

A second case study focused on the sailors who were on ships around the southwestern parts of Ireland and how they were stricken most severely with influenza. Two of the ships, the *Utah* and *Oklahoma*, each had one third of their crew stricken with influenza by mid October 1918. On the *Nevada* the line to the hospital was 50-60 feet long.¹⁰ The evidence Still uses to support these statements are letters and books written by sailors who were on the ships as well as an oral history.¹¹

One of the final case studies that Still presents is the experience of Rear Admiral Kent Melhorn from the Navy Medical Corps. Admiral Melhorn was stationed in Norfolk, Virginia during the influenza pandemic. He was in charge of the infectious disease camp. It was the middle of a bad winter and this camp full of the sick was made of tents. The commandant of the Navy yard contacted the commanding officer Captain Leckinski Spratling and asked Spratling how to best prepare for the pandemic. Captain Spratling responded by telling him: to “Build coffins.”¹² Admiral Melhorn said the hospital where he was located had bodies packed in the morgue because so many were dying. The primary source that Still used for this case study is Admiral Melhorn’s oral history.¹³

In 1983, Marybelle Burch wrote “‘I Don’t Know Only What We Hear,’ The Soldier’s View of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic” in the *Indiana Medical History Quarterly*. The primary evidence she uses comes from letters from soldiers to family and friends. These were written in September and October of 1918, in the midst of the second wave of the Spanish flu pandemic. Burch presents the evidence to show how the military tried to contain the disease. One example is the vaccinations the soldiers received. Many

¹⁰ Still.

¹¹ Still.

¹² Still.

¹³ Still.

soldiers had side effects from the vaccinations, such as swollen arms and soreness where they received the vaccination. Many of the soldiers also got sick from the vaccination as well.¹⁴ The evidence Burch used regarding this information includes a letter written by Norris McHenry, who according to Burch, is in favor of her supposition that there were many soldiers who were getting ill from the vaccinations. She also discusses nose sprays the soldiers were given. A soldier by the name of Charles Streitmeier said, “It tastes bad and smells worse.”¹⁵ The sources that Burch uses in this case are a letter by Harney Stover and a letter by Charles Streitmeier. At the Great Lakes Naval Station doctors ordered the barracks to be heated with steam. The purpose of this was to keep the men from contracting pneumonia. When this was done, the number of soldiers who were sick decreased.¹⁶ Burch limited her study of the camps to four states: Illinois, Michigan, South Carolina and Indiana. Most of the letters Burch examines were written by soldiers stationed in various camps in Illinois and provide the human side of the military policy. The soldiers hated the thought of being sick because they knew that there was not much the doctors could do for them.¹⁷ The soldiers clearly thought that the measures that were being taken by the military were ridiculous. This was due to in many cases the preventative measures making some of the soldiers just as sick as the disease would have.

John C. Edwards wrote “Doughboys and Spartans: The Story of Camp Wadsworth,” in 1970. This article provides a brief history of Camp Wadsworth, with minor details of the influenza pandemic. Edwards used health records from Spartanburg

¹⁴ Marybelle, Burch, “‘I Don’t Know Only What We Hear,’ The Soldiers View of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic” *Indiana Medical History Quarterly* 9 (1983) 24.

¹⁵ Burch, 24.

¹⁶ Burch, 24- 25.

¹⁷ Burch, 23-27.

County. The records Edwards used were incomplete records because at the time the record keeping was not very complete. Edwards attributed this to the high volume of sick soldiers, thus it made it difficult for the nurses and doctors to keep up with the record keeping. The influenza pandemic did not occur in Spartanburg until September 1918, but doctors and nurses were busy with, “spinal meningitis, diphtheria and typhoid fever” before that time.¹⁸ Camp statistics show that by November there were 2,000 sick with the flu and five deaths had occurred.¹⁹ Aside from the statistics and health records Edwards does not cite any other evidence to substantiate his arguments.

Edwards discussed the military policy of the camp. He explains how the leaders of the camp and the city of Spartanburg reacted to the pandemic. For instance, he describes how Spartanburg was quarantined as well as how the commander of the army at Camp Wadsworth would not allow his men to go into the city of Spartanburg unless it was for important military purposes. Other preventative measures include the use of gauze masks, the policy that soldiers were not allowed to be in large groups at night and there was to be no less than four feet between the soldiers when eating.²⁰ Edwards also discusses conditions in the hospital at the camp, which was horrible. For instance, there were not enough toilets installed, therefore, the sick were using holes in the ground for toilets.²¹ Edwards asks two important questions about this particular pandemic. How did the camp respond to the disease? What were the conditions of the camp hospital at the time the pandemic hit? These questions are important because they are specific to a

¹⁸ John C. Edwards, “Doughboys and Spartans: The Story of Camp Wadsworth,” *South Carolina History Illustrated* 1 (1970) 66.

¹⁹ Edwards, 67.

²⁰ Edwards, 66 and 67.

²¹ Edwards, 67.

camp. They lead the author, Edwards, to describe conditions at a camp during the pandemic.

Wayne Sanford wrote an article titled “The Influenza Pandemic and its Effects on the Military,” in *Indiana Medical History Quarterly* in 1983. He uses a *New York Times* article from 1918 and the Surgeon General’s medical records from the war.²² The aforementioned sources were written in 1918 and within a few years of the pandemic. Sanford presents the evidence in such a way so that the reader can understand what the soldiers went through during the influenza pandemic. Sanford presents the military policy and military camp perspective of the Spanish influenza pandemic. For instance, Sanford discussed the effects the quarantine had on the camps and whether or not this helped. Sanford argues that even when the camps were quarantined it made no difference. The disease spread the same throughout the camps.²³ The soldiers were required to wear masks, while others were required to gargle with a chemical. The chemicals were presumed to help hinder the spread of the disease.²⁴ Another important aspect Sanford discusses is the fact there was a shortage of nurses and doctors in the military camps. According to Sanford, there were only 40,000 doctors who were enlisted in the military and almost all were sent overseas. Another issue with the doctors was that they did not have the training or understanding of the Spanish flu to properly handle the situation.²⁵

Three historians of the influenza pandemic wrote general histories of the influenza pandemic. One author wrote an article for the *Smithsonian* while the other two

²² Wayne L. Sanford, “The Influenza Pandemic and its Effects on the Military,” *Indiana Medical History Quarterly* 9 (1983) 22.

²³ Sanford, 19.

²⁴ Sanford, 20.

²⁵ Sanford, 19.

authors wrote books on the influenza pandemic. They each have either a chapter or a segment within in a chapter in their book that deals with the influenza pandemic in relation to the military. In 1989 Jack Fincher wrote “America’s Deadly Rendezvous with the Spanish Lady,” which was published in the *Smithsonian*. Fincher discussed the pandemic in general terms; he did not focus on a specific area. He explains what happened in the military camps through the human experience. The spring 1918 outbreak affected many of the military bases. The first case of the pandemic is thought to have taken place in Fort Riley, Kansas. A soldier by the name of Private Albert Gitchell went to the hospital on the base and complained of a headache, the chills and a sore throat. There were 522 cases by the end of the week. About a dozen of the military bases had similar cases. The interesting point here is that the government did not seem to pay much attention to this first outbreak because they were still trying to get many of the “fresh” troops to the western front.²⁶

Fincher argues that one of the main reasons that the military camps were so susceptible was because they were extremely overcrowded. However, Fincher does not give any statistics about the extent of the overcrowding. Fincher explains that people were used to death in 1918, especially in the overcrowded military camps. Fincher also argues that many of the soldiers who died in the first wave of influenza died because of complications from pneumonia.²⁷ There were symptoms that were added to the list of original symptoms during this period. On top of acquiring a sore throat, headache, chills and a fever, many also were dizzy, vomiting, had labored breathing and sweated

²⁶ Jack Fincher, “America’s Deadly Rendezvous With the ‘Spanish Lady,’” *Smithsonian*, 1910 (1989): 132.

²⁷ Fincher, 134.

profusely. Sometimes people got purple blisters on their skin because of oxygen depletion, many spit up yellow-green pus and often times their lungs looked like “melted red currant jelly.”²⁸ At Fort Devens, Massachusetts, up to 90 recruits were dying daily.²⁹ The army was the second worst armed force that was affected by influenza. Military camps were devastated by the outbreak of influenza.³⁰

In 1976 Alfred Crosby wrote, *Epidemic and Peace, 1918*. Within this monograph, Crosby considers issues relating to influenza and the military camps and influenza on the voyage to France and in the American Expeditionary Force in Europe.³¹ Crosby used primary sources such as reports from the Navy Department, reports from ships such as the U.S.S. *Yacona*, diaries of the war from the U.S.S. *Leviathan*, reports from the War Department and newspapers articles from the *Washington Post* and *Stars and Stripes*, the newspaper of the A.E.F.³² In the chapter about the American Expeditionary Force, Crosby draws on evidence from the annual report of the American Red Cross, the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, newspaper articles, the annual report of the War Department for primary source materials.³³ Crosby presents the human experience of the evidence that he uses.

Crosby cites statistics from the Reports from the Navy, which were done annually. Such statistics include death rates for sailors in the last months of 1918. Crosby states there were 4,136 sailors who perished during this time.³⁴ In this chapter, Crosby discusses the flu on the voyage to France and how the flu affected the soldiers being

²⁸ Fincher, 134.

²⁹ Fincher, 135.

³⁰ Fincher, 135.

³¹ Crosby, 70, 91, 121, 145.

³² Crosby, 140-144.

³³ Crosby, 166-170.

³⁴ Crosby, 122.

transported to France. In this case Crosby is examining the influenza pandemic from the perspective of people. Crosby discussed a soldier by the name of Robert James Wallace, who traveled on the ship *Briton* in the month of October 1918. The evidence Crosby used to portray Wallace's experience was a letter to the author from Wallace in 1970. He argues that the experience Wallace had was similar to the experience of other soldiers and sailors. Wallace got a fever of 103 and when he went to the doctor, the doctor told him to take his belongings and lay out on the deck of the ship. That night, there was a storm while Wallace and several other sick soldiers were laying out on the open deck. They all got soaked because there was no place else for them to go. The next day, Wallace was able to go into the ship where the hospital was set up and lay on the floor of the room. The room was overcrowded and that, that was the only place where he could sleep. This, according to Crosby, was a common scenario. The U.S.S. *Leviathan* was four days behind the *Briton*. So the *Leviathan* went through the same storm the *Briton* did.³⁵

Crosby examines the 88th Division, which was stationed in France. They traveled to France in July and by August the whole division was there. They landed in St. Aignan sur Cher, France, however, they were transferred to Hericourt France September 17, 1918. The 88th Division only lost 90 men due to battle. The division lost 444 men to pneumonia contracted after they had the flu.³⁶ With that said, Crosby also points out that the records are unreliable because there were many other things to do than worry about keeping exact records.³⁷

³⁵ Crosby, 129- 131.

³⁶ Crosby, 154-155.

³⁷ Crosby, 157.

Another case he gives is that of Frank A. Holden, who was a second lieutenant of the 328th Infantry in the 82nd Division. On October 9, 1918, Holden was to go to the rear for supplies when he contracted influenza. In his situation, he had to go to a tent hospital to see a doctor. While on his way to the rear, Holden ran into a French unit headed in the opposite direction that delayed him. Holden was traveling on horseback, but on his way to the supply tent he had trouble staying awake. It is possible that this was due to the beginning of the flu. He finally arrived to the supply company tent, where he was able to get some sleep on the ground but when morning came he could not get up. He had the flu. He then had two days of traveling to get to the nearest hospital, all the while suffering the fevers and the chest pains from influenza. Holden had also contracted bronchitis, which was common on the front lines, and many soldiers on the front died from its complications.³⁸ This is important because this shows that the army was unorganized when it came to getting not only the sick but also the wounded to the hospitals. This is an important factor for military personnel to examine at all times because there were many unnecessary deaths due to the length of time it took for the sick and the wounded to be transported to hospitals.

There were not enough nurses or doctors to handle the influenza pandemic among the soldiers in France. A case in point is the Meuse-Argonne offensive which began in late September 1918. During this offensive there were many soldiers who perished because they could not get the proper care that they needed. The influenza pandemic did not affect the troops at the beginning of the offensive. There were only a few thousand soldiers affected with influenza in the weeks just before the offensive;

³⁸ Crosby, 164-165.

however, there were 16,000 soldiers infected with influenza during the week of October 5 alone.³⁹ Crosby also mentions that there were not enough ambulances operating at the time; for example, the First Army was 750 ambulances short. There was also a shortage of hospitals, for instance Base Hospital 6 was operating 1,283 patients over the maximum.⁴⁰ These issues were not what the military needed to worry about in a time of war and yet they were presented with them. A large issue here is that the military was not able to get their resources together to combat these problems. The largest factor here is that the disease spread far too rapidly for the military to cope with these issues.

In 1999, Gina Kolata wrote a monograph titled, *Flu: The Story of the Great Influenza Pandemic of 1918 and the Search for the Virus that Caused it*, explores the questions of where the pandemic originated and what virus caused the deadly influenza pandemic.⁴¹ Kolata draws on Victor Vaughan's book *A Doctors Memories* published in 1926, T. Yamanouchi, K. Skakami and S. Iwashima's "The Infecting Agent in influenza" which was published in *Lancet* in 1919 and an article from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* which was written in September of 1918. Kolata discusses the military policy in reaction to the influenza pandemic.

At Fort Devens, the military camp in Massachusetts, a top medical doctor of the time, William Henry Welch,⁴² investigated complaints from the commanding officers regarding the growing problem with the Spanish flu and their need for some aid. Welch was a doctor who the government sent to the camp to report how bad the situation with the flu really was. When Welch went to the camp, he was sickened by what he saw.

³⁹ Crosby, 156.

⁴⁰ Crosby, 162-163.

⁴¹ Kolata, Prologue.

⁴² Kolata, 13.

There were 45,000 men in a camp meant for 35,000 and many were stricken with the Spanish flu.⁴³ There were also 8,000 men in a hospital for 2,000. Kolata shows that the situation in the camp was strained with the overflow of men which contributed to the influenza pandemic.⁴⁴

At Camp Sherman, Ohio, where 40 percent of the population got sick with the flu, 1,101 men died between September 27th and October 13th.⁴⁵ Kolata explains that the army tried to take measures to control the pandemic in the camps. These efforts includes vaccinating the troops, and spraying and gargling with antiseptics or alcohol.⁴⁶ Kolata clearly shows that the military medical officers were trying to prevent the pandemic from happening in the camps: however, there was nothing that could be done to prevent the disease from attacking the troops or anyone else.

After Welch and Vaughan visited Camp Devens, the Provost Marshal General of the U.S. army did not allow a draft call for 142,000 men to take place.⁴⁷ Kolata demonstrates here that the pandemic was starting to affect the war effort because the army was less willing to draft thousands of men to go train at the camps. There were many who were sick in the camps and there was no use in either having the draftees get sick and be useless or make the situation worse by spreading the illness to healthy soldiers. The camps were already overcrowded, more recruits would strain the doctors and nurses more then they already were.

⁴³ Kolata, 14-15.

⁴⁴ Kolata, 16.

⁴⁵ Kolata, 22.

⁴⁶ Kolata, 22.

⁴⁷ Kolata, 18.

Kolata in her chapter titled “From Sailors to Swine”⁴⁸ Kolata explains how the sailors who were in the Navy’s jail were offered amnesty from their prison sentences if they agreed to partake in an experiment to see how the disease spread. One such case took place on a Naval Training Station on Deer Island in Boston Harbor.⁴⁹ There were sixty-two men imprisoned and thirty-nine did not have a history of being infected with influenza, which made them great experimental subjects. The doctors took mucus from the sick and infected some of the participants. They sent ten healthy sailors to be exposed to the sick men, none of whom became infected with the disease. The same type of experiment was conducted in a San Francisco naval base and the same results were proven as in Boston. These unlawful experiments were useless because they did not explain how influenza was spread.⁵⁰ As Kolata shows, there was no contemporary way to figure out how to solve the influenza problem. This was due to the mysteriousness of the disease because when in “normal” settings, such as the military camps, it was deadly; however when it was in controlled settings it did not infect as many people.

As environmental and social history of medicine began to emerge as common areas of study in the 1970's, historians re-discovered the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic.⁵¹ Alfred Crosby, who wrote *Epidemic and Peace, 1918* in 1976 is a good example. Howard Phillips wrote on the issue in 2004. Phillips also praises Crosby because of how detailed his work was and how Crosby raised the expectations of the

⁴⁸ Kolata, 55.

⁴⁹ Kolata, 55.

⁵⁰ Kolata, 57-60.

⁵¹ Howard Phillips, “The Re-Appearing Shadow of 1918: Trends in the Historiography of the 1918-19 Influenza Pandemic,” *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 21 (2004) 127.

approach to the influenza pandemic.⁵² Phillips also explores regional case studies completed by local historians who used local newspapers as sources and “reports by local authorities or doctors.”⁵³ Historical geographers have contributed to the discussion of the influenza pandemic. Phillips argues that the historical geographers are the ones who discovered how the virus traveled.⁵⁴ Few historians have tried to make a connection between World War I and the influenza pandemic. However, Phillips says that could change as “the social history of warfare” rises.⁵⁵ As Phillips has shown, there has been a great change in the way that scholars have analyzed the military aspect of the influenza pandemic.

There are many ways that historians have approached the effects of the influenza pandemic on the military. The most common approaches examined here are the local case studies of the influenza pandemic and studies that take a broader analysis. Within these approaches the authors also discussed either the military policy or the human experience of the influenza pandemic. Each of these approaches has a quality that the other does not for determining the effects the influenza pandemic had on the military. Case studies such as Marybelle Burch’s that also examine the human experience are important because they explain what the soldiers experienced during their residence in the military camps and ships and what they thought was happening. The authors explaining the military policy and general analysis of the pandemic generally do not address those issues. However, with the exception of Crosby, these authors do not explain how the experience of the military camps or branch of the military was different from or similar to other military

⁵² Phillips, 128.

⁵³ Phillips, 129.

⁵⁴ Phillips, 131.

⁵⁵ Phillips, 131.

camps or other branches of the military. They generally focus on just one camp or branch of the military. The authors who wrote about the military policies tie the effects of the influenza pandemic on the military. They cross boundaries, such as exploring several different camps, whereas the other authors generally do not. Yet the authors who explained the military policy often lack the human side of the pandemic.

For this paper, the authors who examined military policy within a case study offer the best approach to the effects of the influenza pandemic on the military. They describe factors of the pandemic that those who discuss the human experience do not have access to through the personal stories. For instance, Burch does not have access to the fact that many soldiers died because of the influenza pandemic. Burch only relates the experience of a few soldiers, whose letters and personal stories she examined. Her evidence does not show the story of very many camps.

The media and its portrayal of the influenza pandemic affected citizens' understanding of what actually occurred. The *Stars and Stripes* newspaper reported to military personnel and was responsible for passing information about the influenza pandemic to the soldiers. *The New York Times* was a newspaper that reported to civilians daily. *The New York Times* stories also discussed the effects of the influenza pandemic on the military. The government, however, may have censored what the criterion was that the media reported. The comparison between the *Stars and Stripes* and *The New York Times* may shed light on the degree of censorship between the civilian media and the government media. The articles in each source discuss either the human experience or the military policy within the discussions of camp experiences or within the general events of the influenza pandemic, which included the military. The newspapers discussed possible

theories for curing influenza, however they had no scientific knowledge to prove any of these theories.

The role of the media during the First World War was precarious. They could not print anything that was confidential. This would include the placement of military units and “news of troop sailings.”⁵⁶ An analysis of the *Stars and Stripes* and *The New York Times* suggests that the newspapers could not print when and where the troops ships were headed, but after they arrived in France the newspapers could publish an article regarding it. There were not any other types of censorship during this time on the newspapers; however, they were strongly urged by the Committee on Public Information (CPI) to print propaganda for the war effort.⁵⁷ As Jennifer Keene in, *The United States and the First World War* argued, “. . . the agency [CPI] added a distinct emotional edge to much of the material it provided for mass consumption.”⁵⁸ This demonstrates that some of the information provided to the newspapers was exaggerated. This affected the information about the influenza pandemic that the newspapers printed during the time.

The articles used from the *Stars and Stripes* for this analysis were published from November 1, 1918 to January 31, 1919. The articles of the *Stars and Stripes* discuss the experience of the soldiers while the influenza pandemic ravaged through the military. It appears that the publishers of *Stars and Stripes* did not want to worry the men in France and create desertion problems while they were trying to win a war. One article was clearly a propaganda piece by the military; “Hot Coffee Checks Flu at St. Nazaire,” was published December 13, 1918 in *Stars and Stripes*. This article described a scenario in

⁵⁶ Keene, 34.

⁵⁷ Keene, 34-35.

⁵⁸ Keene, 35.

which a camp served hot coffee to all the soldiers and the warm substance prevented them from contracting the deadly virus of influenza. According to the article, influenza appeared in September and there were many soldiers that were going in and out of the camp. A colonel, whose name was not mentioned, realized that with the aid of the weather influenza was going to be a problem. The colonel made the kitchen operate at full capacity, 24- hours- a -day for two weeks. The staff of the kitchen was 75 cooks and assistants and for the first two days as they operated the kitchen for 24 hours there was a continual line of soldiers to get hot food and coffee. After the first two days the service was reduced to hot coffee only but even after the first two days the kitchen was still going through 75 cans of coffee a night. Then the paper states, “The hot hearty drink proved the necessary stimulus. It supplied the heat required to offset the flu germs.”⁵⁹ This article discussed a supposed “experiment” that took place at a camp. The point of this article was to portray that the military had the influenza pandemic under control. This article was published in the winter months to advise the camps how to prevent the spread of influenza, especially when the spread of disease was high due to the weather.

An article about influenza titled “Medical Authorities Say Wave Has Nearly Run Its Troublesome Course Through A.E.F.” appeared in the *Stars and Stripes* issue published on November 1, 1918. This article described how 5,000 soldiers wore white masks, which were drenched with chemicals on a transport ship to France the week before. There were no pneumonia or influenza related deaths and there were 34 cases of the two diseases combined.⁶⁰ The article described the men as “looking like Ku Klux

⁵⁹ “Hot Coffee Checks Flu at St. Nazaire,” *Stars and Stripes* (13 December 1918) 7.

⁶⁰ “Medical Authorities Say Wave has Nearly Run its Troublesome Course through the A.E.F.” *Stars and Stripes* (1 November 1918) 1.

Klansmen.”⁶¹ The article compared this with a case of 17 ships that had landed in France with 28,898 men on board. This article states that two soldiers in the convoy died from influenza while 139 soldiers contracted influenza and pneumonia.⁶² The difference that was portrayed is that there was a large difference in the number of cases who got sick with influenza and pneumonia. The unbelievable part to this article is that they compared the soldiers to the hate group Ku Klux Klan.

“Epidemic on Wane,” was an article written in the *Stars and Stripes* on November 1, 1918. This article appeared immediately after the previous article on page 1 of the paper. This article stressed that the number of soldiers infected with influenza and pneumonia had decreased and that the severity of the infection was down as well. It also states that medical authorities from the Army said that influenza epidemics only run a course of two months and at the point the article was written the fall wave of influenza was about over. The medical authorities also stated that the influenza epidemics correlated with indoor living and sleeping conditions. The exception was the front lines because the men were outdoors.⁶³ This article demonstrated a theory as to why the soldiers got so sick while in the camps and on the ships, which was due to the enclosed living and sleeping conditions. This article was placed after the previous article because it helped stress the fact the situation was in fact getting better. However, this should have been placed before the previous article because the previous article has the numbers to prove that the problem was decreasing. This article was partially true however; it

⁶¹ “Medical Authorities Say Wave has Nearly Run its Troublesome Course through the A.E.F.”

⁶² “Medical Authorities Say Wave has Nearly Run its troublesome Course through the A.E.F.”

⁶³ “Epidemic on Wane,” *Stars and Stripes* 1 November 1918, Vol. 1.

prematurely reported the decrease of numbers when in fact the week of October 27, 1918 was the worst week of influenza deaths.

“Rapid and Steady Decline,” was published in the *Stars and Stripes* on December 20, 1918. This article discussed the decline of influenza and pneumonia after October 27 1918. The article points out that of 1,000 men, 610 had contracted influenza. 100 of them had contracted pneumonia. As of December 8, 1918 of 1,000 men 124 contracted influenza and 13.4 had contracted pneumonia. It also argued that the reason that the camps in the states had a large problem with the disease was because the men were just coming from the civilian life and their body had not yet been strengthened.⁶⁴ The interesting aspect to this article is that it insinuates that the disease began in the civilian life. But as historians such as Fincher have noted the pandemic began in the military installations. The article did not want the soldiers to feel guilty for the spread of this horrible disease; it wanted the men to focus on winning the war. The article also states, “The week of October 11 brought the peak of the disease to the Camps from the States, 90,393 cases of influenza, 17, 882 of pneumonia and a death total of 6,266.”⁶⁵ The article also pointed out the week of October 27, 1918. During that week 75 percent of the pneumonia cases died.⁶⁶ This portion of the article demonstrated that pneumonia was extremely deadly during the influenza pandemic. This was printed several weeks after the end of the pandemic. The decision was wise because printing this information may have caused a large influx of soldiers to panic and run.

⁶⁴ “Rapid and Steady Decline,” *Stars and Stripes* (20 December 1918) 1.

⁶⁵ “Rapid and Steady Decline.”

⁶⁶ “Rapid and Steady Decline.”

“A.E.F. Twice as Healthy,” was an article written December 20, 1918 in the *Stars and Stripes*. It presents statistics of how many soldiers were inflicted with influenza and pneumonia in 1917 and then compares them with 1918. This article stated that between November 1917 and December 1917 of 100,000 men, 2,230 men had influenza and that between the same months of 1918 86 men had influenza. For pneumonia, 268 had pneumonia in 1917 and in 1918, 140 had influenza per 100,000 men. Then the article discussed the deadly influenza in September and October of 1918.⁶⁷ Even though the article discussed the months of September and October, it does not make the connection that the reason the influenza and pneumonia numbers were so low compared to 1917 is because the world had just gotten through the pandemic. This article also implies that the troops were healthy, as if nothing had happened.

The next articles of the *Stars and Stripes* discuss the military policies that were used at the time of the pandemic. “Hospital Attendants Given Honor Medals,” was published January 31, 1919 in the *Stars and Stripes*. The article includes not only enlisted men or officers but 26 nurses as well. There were “...nine officers, 26 nurses and 57 enlisted men of the A.E.F...,”⁶⁸ who were presented with honor medals for their “extraordinary devotion to duty”⁶⁹ during the influenza pandemic at base hospital 57 in France. The interesting factor in this article is that it points out that these men and women who were from the United States were presented these medals from the French Government. They were not honored by the United States at this time for their work.⁷⁰ This is disappointing because these people went above and beyond the line of duty to

⁶⁷ “A.E.F. Twice as Healthy,” *Stars and Stripes* (20 December 1918) 1.

⁶⁸ “Hospital Attendants Given Honor Medals,” *Stars and Stripes* (31 January 1919) 3.

⁶⁹ “Hospital Attendants Given Honor Medals.”

⁷⁰ “Hospital Attendants Given Honor Medals.”

help cope with a problem that the United States government would not handle properly. This also leads to the question of how many others went above the call of duty to help cope with the influenza outbreak? *The Stars and Stripes* supported the United States military and this is why it was important for them to discuss this honor because the men and women were helping everyone, not just the soldiers from the U.S.

“Dreaded Diseases Start Like Colds,” published in the *Stars and Stripes* on November 8, 1918, discussed the fact that winter was almost upon them, which helped increase the respiratory diseases. It also mentioned that the cold weather led to overcrowded living conditions. It received “Bulletin No. 81”⁷¹, which outlined the diseases that were likely to take place in the military camps. The bulletin also made clear that the overcrowded living arrangements meant that disease could spread easily, so the men needed to be sure they took extra care of themselves.⁷² The military sent out a bulletin which tried to explain the importance of the men taking care of themselves while in the over-crowded camps. The military authorities drew attention to different issues than the influenza pandemic because they had grossly mis-handled the influenza pandemic. This article helped verify the article “Epidemic on Wane” from the November 1 issue, when it said that over-crowded living conditions lead to the spread of infectious diseases. By publishing this article the paper implied that the problems with influenza were not related to the over-crowded military camps, at home or in France.

“Like Common Colds at First,” was published in the *Stars and Stripes* directly after the previous article on November 8, 1918. This article was a subsection of the previous article, under a separate subheading. This article points out the early stages of

⁷¹ “Dreaded Diseases Start Like Common Colds,” *Stars and Stripes* (8 November 1918) 7.

⁷² “Dreaded Diseases Start Like Common Colds.”

the various respiratory diseases. It stated that the infection of influenza occurred before it could be determined what the disease was and often times it seemed as though it was a head cold. It then described how influenza was spread, one way is through the spit that comes out when the infected person sneezes. It also described an “anti-sneeze, cough and spit campaign,”⁷³ which was put on by the military authorities. The *Stars and Stripes* then summed up the basics of the campaign in their own words. Here are some suggestions that the paper made, “Sleep as far away from your immediate neighbor as possible. Do not cough or sneeze directly in the face of a comrade.”⁷⁴ This policy was not reported until after the worst of the pandemic had taken place. The article did not mention whether this policy was made during the influenza pandemic or if it was always there and the paper did not report on it until November, the start of the regular flu season. The policy itself was a bit hard to follow because in the case of the sleeping conditions of the men, they could not move very far away from their neighbor because the camps were so overcrowded.

There were newspapers other than the *Stars and Stripes*, that also discussed the influenza pandemic during 1918. *The New York Times* published articles that pertained to the military and the influenza pandemic as well. However, as opposed to presenting the human experience of the pandemic, many of the articles present military policy on the influenza pandemic. This differs from the *Stars and Stripes* because the *Stars and Stripes* discussed the human experience. However, not all the articles of *The New York Times* discussed the military policy undertaken. The next two articles both discuss the human experience. *The New York Times* published “Sixteen Deaths in Boston: Ten of the

⁷³ “Like Common Colds at First,” *Stars and Stripes* (8 November 1918) 7.

⁷⁴ “Like Common Colds at First.”

Victims were Naval Men- Hundreds of New Cases,” on September 17, 1918. This article reports influenza outbreaks in Boston, in the “First Naval District.”⁷⁵ This article focuses on the deaths that have occurred and does not mention any news that is related to the military policy that was taken. This article reported that until September 16, 1918 there were 2,331 sailors had contracted influenza and there were 47 deaths, which was out of 20,500 sailors.⁷⁶ This article sought to share with civilians how the military was affected by the influenza pandemic. But when the article put the total number of men in the unit next to how many were afflicted with influenza, it made the pandemic seem as though it was not that bad. This was done because the newspaper did not want to panic the civilian population especially because there were many camps around the United States and it was a time of war, which meant that soldiers were traveling around the country in higher numbers. This may have caused concern among civilians because they may have seen the soldiers as germ carriers.

There was an article that discussed the Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Illinois in *The New York Times* on September 20, 1918. This article discussed the men who were afflicted with the disease and how they were quarantined from the rest of the camp. The article also stated that there were about 1,000 cases at the station and yet it also argues that “. . . the medical authorities said today that the disease was under control.”⁷⁷ *The New York Times* did not want to cause panic in the civilian realm of the world and say that there were problems handling the problem of the pandemic.

⁷⁵ “Sixteen Deaths in Boston: Ten of the Victims Were naval Men Hundreds of New Cases,” *The New York Times* (17 September 1918) 10.

⁷⁶ “Sixteen Deaths in Boston: Ten of the Victims Were naval Men Hundreds of New Cases.”

⁷⁷ *The New York Times* (20 September 1918) 14.

“Army Camps Report 2,225 Influenza cases,” was published in *The New York Times* in 1918. The article reported that up to noon on September 23, 1918 there had been a total of 20,211 cases of influenza reported by the numerous military posts.⁹⁰ This article states “The epidemic continues most severe at Camp Devens, Mass. The total number of cases reported from this camp was 10,700. Camp Dix N.J., with 1,897 cases to date is second in point of seriousness.”⁹¹ This article discussed the human side of the pandemic because it presented the effects that the disease was having on the soldiers. It showed that the soldiers were not immune to the disease, even though many of the soldiers were young and healthy.

These next articles of *The New York Times* discuss the military policies that were in place at the time of the pandemic. An article published in *The New York Times* on September 21, 1918 reported that Camp Devens officially said that there were 15 deaths from pneumonia, which had been contracted after a bout with influenza. This was reported as happening on September 20th, 1918.⁷⁸ This policy was that the camp suspended the soldiers’ passes so that the soldiers could not leave the camp. The soldiers were allowed to go home only if their home was within “walking distance of the camp.”⁷⁹ This policy was also in place because the army wanted the men to be cared for at the camp hospital if they did get sick with the flu.⁸⁰ This was a policy of containment and it prevented possible treatment at local hospitals. This may have been publicized to keep civilians away because they helped carry the disease to the camps.

⁹⁰ “Army Camps Report 2,225 Influenza Cases.”

⁹¹ “Army Camps Report 2,225 Influenza Cases.”

⁷⁸ *The New York Times*, (21 September 1918) 7.

⁷⁹ *The New York Times*, (21 September 1918) 7.

⁸⁰ *The New York Times*, (21 September 1918) 7.

“65 Deaths at Camp Devens,” was an article written in *The New York Times* on September 24, 1918. This article discusses that influenza had caused 65 deaths at Camp Devens in the twenty-four hours preceding the time that the article had been printed. However, the article also downplays the affect the influenza pandemic was having in the camps. This is due to the article also discussing the doctors that believed that the situation was under control and that the climax of the influenza pandemic had occurred. This was stated in the paper as “. . . officials expressed confidence today that the height of the epidemic had passed.”⁸¹ This article also discusses the arrival of Victor Vaughn.⁸² Victor Vaughn was the doctor who went to Camp Devens with William Welch to help the hospital with the influenza pandemic. Gina Kolata also discussed Vaughn and it helps to legitimize her claims about the story of Victor Vaughn. This article was a contradiction with the article “Army Camps Report 2,225 Influenza Cases.” The two articles were printed on the same day, yet the article “Army Camps Report 2,225 Influenza Cases,” insinuates that the pandemic had a negative affect on the military and that many soldiers were sick. This was argued by the article stating “...influenza had been reported by telegraph by camp surgeons in the various camps.”⁸³ This article insinuates that the Army had everything under control and that the climax of the pandemic was over. This article was printed just before the article “Army Camps Report 2,225 Influenza Cases.” This was to lessen the shock of how many soldiers were sick with the pandemic. This article portrays the negative effects positively; it is an attempt to show that the disease was not as bad as it really was.

⁸¹ “65 Deaths at Camp Devens,” *The New York Times* (24 September 1918) 10.

⁸² “65 Deaths at Camp Devens,” *The New York Times*.

⁸³ “Army Camps Report 2,225 Influenza Cases,” *The New York Times* (24 September 1918) 10.

The New York Times published “Vaccine a Success at Camp Dix” on October 23, 1918. Camp Dix was located in New Jersey. This article reported that 10,000 soldiers who were treated with the vaccine to fight pneumonia and not one got pneumonia.⁸⁴ This article was a propaganda piece to praise the military policy of vaccinations for the disease. The article wanted to portray the vaccine as working. This was due to the newspaper portraying the idea that the military had the influenza situation handled.

September 19, 1918 an article was published in *The New York Times* about Camp Dix, New Jersey. This article portrays the negative effects of the influenza pandemic in a positive light. The article insinuated that there was nothing to worry about and that diseases of this magnitude happened all the time in the camps. It also insinuated that the regimental infirmaries had everything under control and that the 200 reported ill on the 17th of September and the 150 reported ill on the 18th were absorbed with no major problems.⁸⁵

In the September 19, 1918 edition of *The New York Times*, there was an article published about the effects that the influenza pandemic at Camp Upton, New York. This article states, “...influenza caused the camp to close the Liberty and Buffalo Theaters and forbid entertainment in the Y.M.C.A...”⁸⁶ The camp closed social gathering places to help prevent the spread of disease. This article portrays a negative affect on the camp, the men could no longer go to places they used to hang out at and unwind.

“Close Camp Upton to Check Influenza,” was an article published in *The New York Times* on September 17, 1918. This article reported on the closure of Camp Upton

⁸⁴ “Vaccine a success at Camp Dix,” *New York Times* (23 October 1918) 7.

⁸⁵ *The New York Times*, (19 September 1918) 11.

⁸⁶ *The New York Times*, (19 September 1918) 11.

due to the many cases of influenza. No one was allowed to visit the camp and no one was allowed to leave unless it was an emergency⁸⁷ This is an example of the military policy, it was thought that the best way to reduce the spread of influenza was to quarantine the camps. However, as shown in the next article, the quarantines of the camps were not useful because the camp had to then use gauze masks to help prevent the spread of the disease. This leads to another question, which is, what constituted an emergency? The article goes on to report that the camp had plenty of doctors and nurses to handle the situation. The article also reported that “there had been no deaths and no serious cases of influenza.”⁸⁸ This article demonstrates that the newspaper was trying to portray that the problem was not as big of a problem as it actually was.

“Put Masks on at Camp Upton,” is an article that was published in *The New York Times*, on October 2, 1918. This article reported the number influenza cases, which was 3,050 and the number of pneumonia cases at the camp. The number of pneumonia cases had totaled 401 and the deaths totaled 87. The article then goes onto say that “All soldiers and civilians began wearing masks today.”⁸⁹ This article portrays a military policy undertaken by the military camp. The gauze masks were used to prevent the spread of the disease. This article was written after the two previous articles so, it demonstrates that there was not much that could be done to prevent the spread of the disease and that it was everywhere.

“Moving Men to Camps Delayed by Influenza,” was an article published in *The New York Times* on October 18, 1918. This article focuses on the military policy of the

⁸⁷ “Close Camp Upton to Check Influenza,” *The New York Times* (17 September 1918) 10.

⁸⁸ “Close Camp Upton to Check Influenza,” *The New York Times* (17 September 1918) 10.

⁸⁹ “Put on Masks at Camp Upton.” *New York Times* (2 October 1918) 24.

camps. The article discusses the reports from the camps which noted a decline in the number of new cases of influenza and pneumonia in a twenty-four hour period. A second important factor is that it discusses Secretary of War Baker and how he made no promises of when the induction of the new military registrants would take place because the military wanted to wait until the pandemic had subsided.⁹² The military policy is the lack of inducting new registrants into the army. The paper implies that this policy was useful because it helped to subside the flow of men into already overcrowded military installations.

The New York Times published an article October 18, 1918 titled, “Influenza Stops the Flow to the Camps of Drafted Men.” This article reported “...Provost Marshall General Crowder tonight cancelled calls for the entrainment between Oct. 7 and 11 of 142,000 draft registrants.”⁹³ The date of this article is September 26, 1918, which was the first month in which the pandemic struck the camps hard. This article also reports that there were two new camps reporting that they had been struck by the influenza pandemic, which were Kearny, California and Eustis, Virginia. At this point it was reported that there were 35,146 cases of influenza in all the camps, there were also 3,036 cases of pneumonia.⁹⁴ The article also reports “...one out every four men at Camp Devens, Massachusetts, has contracted influenza...”⁹⁵ *The New York Times* changed the way it handled the influenza pandemic in this article because it shows the seriousness of the disease. This was achieved by showing the number of men inflicted with the disease. A reason for this change may be that the civilians began to experience the pandemic as well

⁹² “Moving Men to Camps Delayed by Influenza,” *The New York Times* (18 October 1918) 24.

⁹³ “Influenza Stops the Flow to the Camps of Drafted Men,” *The New York Times* (27 September 1918) 1.

⁹⁴ “Influenza Stops the Flow to the Camps of Drafted Men.”

⁹⁵ “Influenza Stops the Flow to the Camps of Drafted Men.”

and so the paper thought it would be wise to present some actual facts about the real effects on the military.

“Army has Serum to Check Influenza,” is an article in *The New York Times* published on September 29, 1918. This article discusses how there was a serum that was created to help prevent pneumonia because it was largely responsible for the deaths that were being attributed to influenza. This article acknowledges that many soldiers were dying of pneumonia which had been contracted as a result of influenza. This article also states that the Army Medical School had developed the serum. This article also discusses how there was a resolution that was passed by congress in order to help combat the influenza pandemic. Representative Longworth of Ohio was quoted in this article as saying that the war efforts were affected greatly because of the influenza pandemic and there needed to be money appropriated to combat the disease.⁹⁶ This article demonstrates a military policy within the military. The military helped to discover ways to undermine the disease. This was due to the fact that the influenza pandemic, by this time, was having a detrimental affect on the military and its war effort. It was also useful to publish this because it offered hope to the civilians that the disease was finally ending.

“Vaccine Cuts Army Influenza Deaths,” was an article written in *The New York Times* October 18, 1918. This article discussed a vaccine that had been experimented on at an army base hospital. The article discussed Major Dudley Roberts presentation to the New York Academy of Medicine and how he showed that the experiment showed that out of 136 cases, the mortality of those injected with the vaccine was at eight percent

⁹⁶ “Army has Serum to Check Influenza,” *The New York Times* (29 September 1918) 15.

while those without the vaccine had a 35 percent mortality rate.⁹⁷ This is an example of the military policy that was in place at the time of the pandemic. The military thought it was helping keep the spread of the disease down, however they were contributing to the problem because they kept bringing men home from France and sending sick men to France.

“Draft Calls Resumed: Surgeon General Decides Some Districts are Safe,” is another article from the *New York Times*. This one was published October 23, 1918, in the midst of the pandemic. However, this is odd because this was in the middle of the pandemic and it is discussing how the draft was resumed.¹⁰⁰ This article presents a military policy because it demonstrates that the war came first. The month of October was the worst month of the pandemic and the military was continuing to induct men into the military and then send the trained ones to France. The draft policy increased the spread of the disease in military installations and transport ships going to France. This article implied that this policy was not an effective policy to take because as this point it was still the middle of the pandemic.

The article “Epidemic Not Expected Here,” in *The New York Times* on December 13, 1918, reports that soldiers were held at several military installations for nine days. This was due to the concern that the soldiers coming home from France would act as “germ carriers.”¹⁰¹ This is an example of a military policy used by the war department to deter the spread of influenza. This article portrayed the military as having the influenza situation under control. This was due to the newspaper not wanting to scare civilians into

⁹⁷ “Vaccine Cuts Army Influenza Deaths,” *The New York Times* (18 October 1918) 24.

¹⁰⁰ “Army Draft-Surgeon General Decides to Resume Calls, Suspended because of Epidemic,” *New York Times* (23 October 1918) 5.

¹⁰¹ “Influenza Epidemic not Expected Here” *The New York Times* (13 December 1918) 9.

believing that the influenza pandemic was going to get worse. They wanted the civilian population to believe that the military was not going to allow influenza to be spread into the states and this was the best option to protect everyone.

“1,800,000 Americans in service abroad: War Department Announces that Influenza Epidemic Will Retard Shipments Somewhat,” was published in the *New York Times* Saturday October 5th 1918. This article reported that there was not to be any more men sent to France who “have been exposed or show symptoms of the disease.”¹⁰² This article reported a military policy of the war department. This article is somewhat different from the previous articles because it portrays the seriousness of the pandemic. The seriousness of the problem was portrayed through the military picking and choosing who went to France. This plan was also faulty because of the incubation time of the flu. The soldiers may have appeared fine when they left port, but in a days time shown signs of the flu.

The *Stars and Stripes* and *The New York Times* are two newspapers that describe the influenza pandemic in the military. A comparison that can be made between the two papers is these articles are obviously propaganda efforts, usually prompted by the CPI. However, not every article examined in this paper was a propaganda effort. An example of the propaganda effort from the *Stars and Stripes* is through the article “Hot Coffee Checks Flu at St. Nazaire.” This article is the one that presented the idea that coffee was responsible for warding off the flu.¹⁰³ This article described a scenario where the U.S. military camp in France served everyone hot coffee for two weeks and the coffee was

¹⁰² “1,800,000 Americans in service abroad: War Department Announces that Influenza Epidemic will Retard Shipments Somewhat,” *New York Times* (5 October 1918) 8.

¹⁰³ “Hot Coffee Checks Flu at St. Nazaire.”

attributed with the fact that the disease had not been spread through it as severely as other camps.¹⁰⁴ This was clearly an effort by the paper to insinuate that this was the best way to rid the influenza germs from the camps.

An article from *The New York Times* that clearly insinuates it was a propaganda effort was “Influenza Epidemic Not Expected Here.” This article clearly reinforced a fear that civilians had at the time, which was when the men returned from France it would increase the spread of this deadly disease. Therefore, *The New York Times* insinuated that the military had the problem resolved because the military detained the soldiers for nine days before they let them out into the general public.¹⁰⁵ This can be considered a propaganda effort to keep the civilians from panicking.

A contrast that can be made between these two newspapers is that they do not always present the same information. They also contradict each other. This is a key factor to examine because, first it presents a problem of whose story is more accurate and second, did the CPI urge the paper to print the story as a propaganda effort. In many cases that the article is contradictory is when the implications are mixed, in that they can be seen as either the military had the situation under control or the pandemic was having serious affects on the military. One case that this happens in the *Stars and Stripes* is in the article, “Epidemic On Wane.” The paper insinuated that the pandemic was at an end due to scientific evidence, which suggested that influenza epidemics only last for two months. Yet the article attributed the spread of the disease to enclosed sleeping and living quarters, which suggests that the pandemic was not near an end at all.¹⁰⁶ This is

¹⁰⁴ “Hot Coffee Checks Flu at St. Nazaire.”

¹⁰⁵ “Influenza Epidemic Not Expected Here.”

¹⁰⁶ “Epidemic on Wane.”

contradictory because the paper insinuates that the disease is near an end and also that it might continue due to the sleeping and living arrangements of the military.

An article in *The New York Times*, which is contradictory, is “65 Deaths at Camp Devens.” This is due to the article portraying the negative affects the disease had on the military. The article did this through the discussion of the fact that there had been 65 deaths in twenty-four hours and also through the discussion that there were more nurses and doctors being sent to the camp. However, this is contradictory with the fact that it also argues that medical authorities thought that the height of the disease had passed.¹⁰⁷ This article is a disaster because it tried to convince the audience, not very convincingly, that the military had handled the problem since they sent more doctors and nurses to the camp. All the while there is an underlying theme that the pandemic could not be handled because of the rapid strike that it had and the lack of information on how to deal with it.

A contrast between the two newspapers is that the *Stars and Stripes* did not publish as many articles as *The New York Times*. The *Stars and Stripes* only had eight solid articles on the pandemic and they did not start publishing them until November 1, 1918. *The New York Times* published eighteen articles and began publishing September 17, 1918. The difference in the audience played a large part as to why the military newspaper did not print as many articles about the pandemic because they did not want the men to panic and desert in effort to hide from the pandemic. *The New York Times* audience was quite different, however the motives for what they printed were in large part to not panic the civilians. This may have created hysteria and a negative reaction

¹⁰⁷ “65 Deaths at Camp Devens.”

towards the military because they may have gotten the impression that it was the soldiers' fault for the disease spreading.

The influenza pandemic was a tragedy in every aspect of life. No matter where the people were, there was no hiding from this deadly disease. It could not have struck at a worse time because the world was in the midst of a war, which ensnared many of the most "civilized" countries. The historiographic discussion and the discussion of the two newspapers both offer explanations as to how the influenza pandemic affected the military.

The significance of the comparison between the *Stars and Stripes* and *The New York Times* is that it shows that the pandemic was having negative affects on the military. This is even after the newspapers showed that they were contradicting themselves and each other because the one theme that remains constant is the fact that the virus was having a negative affect on the military and its ability to fight the war. Another main significance of this comparison is that it lays the groundwork of the historiography in the sense that it validates the work done by the historians. The reason that it validates them is that these two newspapers were writing at the time that the pandemic was taking place.

It is important to discuss the matter of some of the articles being propaganda efforts as obviously some of them were. There were some articles, especially in the *Stars and Stripes* that were propaganda stunts. The prime example is the article "Hot Coffee Checks Flu at St. Nazaire." But there are other articles in which present a propaganda effort by the media however they are in article which also present the severity of the pandemic and it's negative affects on the military. The only aspect to these articles a that were a propaganda effort was that they attempted to ensure the audience that the military

had the situation handled. This scenario shows up in articles from the *Stars and Stripes* such as “Like Common Colds at First” and an article from *The New York Times* that insinuated this was, “65 Deaths at Camp Devens.”

The relationship between the two newspapers and the historiography is important because the newspapers validate the historians’ work. For instance, “Medical Authorities Say Wave has Nearly Run its Course,” from the *Stars and Stripes* and “Put Masks on at Camp Upton,” in *The New York Times*, both stated that certain camps or military branches required the soldiers to wear gauze masks. There are many historians whose work benefited from this, such as Wayne Sanford and John Edwards. A second example of *The New York Times* benefiting a historian is in the article “Influenza Stops the Flow to the Camps of Drafted Men,” this article discussed how the draft calls were cancelled, which can be correlated with Gina Kolata and her discussion of the draft being cancelled. These are just a few of the examples in which the newspapers validated the historians’ work. This also assures the reader of the articles that not all of the articles were propaganda efforts because the historians used other sources that corroborated these facts. The corroborating sources may have been such things like, health records from the camps or the Surgeon General’s medical records from the war.

The examination of the affects on the military that this deadly disease had is important because it allows the military to examine its procedures for when an outbreak of a deadly virus happens and then rectify them if need be. The newspaper analysis contributes to this because they reported the policies that were taken at the time of the pandemic. The comparison between the two newspapers is useful because in some instances, there were conflicting military policies being used and the comparison can help

determine which policy most likely happened. The examination of the effects of the influenza pandemic had on the military is also important because there were many soldiers who died of the “Spanish” flu, however, their death was not a complete waste. Specimen from their lungs were sent to an archive for later generations to determine what had happened during that fateful year when 20-50 million people died. In the year 1997 that time came, when it was found that the deadly string of influenza was due to a swine flu. This is an important discovery because it is one step closer for scientists to find a vaccine for this deadly version of the flu virus so that it will not kill again.

Afterword

The influence that the 1918 influenza pandemic has had on modern scientific research is extensive. The scientific world has looked upon the “Spanish” influenza in times when an influenza string appears to be headed down the same deadly path. One of the more recent cases in which the influenza pandemic of 1918 is compared, is the case in Hong Kong, which was attributed to a chicken flu virus. In 1997, S. Sternberg, wrote, “A Doughboy’s Lungs Yield 1918 Flu Virus.” The evidence Sternberg uses is interviews of personnel who worked for Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) in 1997. This applies to what happened in 1918 and the Spanish flu because the doctors in 1918 kept samples from the soldiers lungs, so future generations could figure out what caused the pandemic of 1918. The samples were kept in a warehouse that was run by the AFIP.¹⁰⁸ Jeffery K. Taubenberger works at the AFIP and he felt that it is important to examine the samples taken from the soldiers because something like this could easily happen again. There were 28 of 70 samples used for the research, seven of which died within a couple of days of getting the deadly influenza. This heightened the chances that the lung tissue had intact pieces of RNA from the eight-strand genome. Many scientists agree that the work could help with the making of a vaccine, if the virus shows its deadly face again.¹⁰⁹ This article stresses the importance the influenza pandemic of 1918 has today and one researcher is convinced that the influenza pandemic could happen again. The soldiers contributed to the research of the deadly virus and without them there may have not been a way to figure what caused the pandemic. With them there is also the possibility of creating a vaccine that could help stop the spread of the disease.

¹⁰⁸ S. Sternberg, “A Doughboy’s lungs Yield 1918 Flu Virus.” *Science News* 151 (1997) <http://web23.epnet.com/citation.asp> (Accessed 2/16/05)

¹⁰⁹ Sternberg.

In 1998, Erik Larson wrote, “The Flu Hunters.” The context in which this author writes this article was what occurred after the influenza outbreak in Hong Kong in 1997.¹¹⁰ This article discussed Jeffery Taubenberger’s work as well. One aspect that Larson focuses on that relates to the influenza pandemic of 1918 and the military is the story of Private Roscoe Vaughn. Private Vaughn was stationed at Camp Jackson in South Carolina when he contracted the influenza in 1918. Apparently on September 19, 1918 he reported to sick call. He died on September 26 1918 at 6:30 a.m. and at 2:00 p.m. his body was autopsied. Specimens from his body were taken and mailed to Washington. These specimens would prove to be useful to Taubenberger because from these Taubenberger found “flu like RNA.”¹¹¹ The analysis of the specimen “showed that the virus of 1918 was an H1N1 influenza virus unlike any flu virus identified during the past 80 years.”¹¹² This is a huge breakthrough because of the implications of the findings. The implications are that humans contracted the flu from pigs. However, there is the possibility that the pig flu and human flu share a “common avian ancestor.”¹¹³ This paper was mainly about the Hong Kong incident in which several people got sick with a form of the flu and six people died. It was found that this “outbreak” was related to chickens, so it is considered an avian flu.¹¹⁴ The relationship that was inferred from the article between the Hong Kong virus and the 1918 virus was that they were both related to birds

¹¹⁰ Erik Larson, “The Flu Hunter.” *Time* 151 (1998) <http://web23.epnet.com/citation.asp> (accessed 2/16/05)

¹¹¹ Larson.

¹¹² Larson.

¹¹³ Larson.

¹¹⁴ Larson.

and these are potentially more deadly. The specimen from Private Vaughn helped in discovering the form of the influenza strand in the pandemic of 1918.

These two articles play an important role as to the importance the 1918 influenza pandemic. One interesting factor about the 1918 influenza pandemic is that its interests scientists and historians. This is an important feature because they both offer facts about the pandemic that the other would not have known otherwise. An example is historians do not have the ability to check the specimen from the soldiers' lungs to determine what strand the strand of influenza took place in 1918. Sternberg and Larson have both demonstrated the important role of the soldiers who died due to the influenza pandemic because without the soldiers, there is no chance that the scientists would have been able to figure out what they have about the strand of influenza that killed between 20-50 million people.

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