

Contested Rosies:
Portrayals of Women Workers in WWII Magazine Advertisements

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Introduction

“Before the war my life was bridge and golf and clubs and children. When the war broke out, my husband’s rubber matting business in Ohio had to close. I wanted to do something that I thought was really vital. Building bombers was, so I answered an ad for Boeing. My mother was horrified. My father was horrified too. He said, ‘You’ll never get along with the people you’ll meet there.’ My husband thought it was utterly ridiculous. I had never worked. I didn’t know how to handle money, as he put it. They started me off in this huge tool room. Eventually I became chief clerk of the tool room. I think I was the first woman chief clerk they had... Boeing was a real education for me. It taught me a different way of life. My mother warned me when I took the job. She said, ‘you will never want to go back to being a housewife.’ At that time I didn’t think it would change a thing. But she was right, it definitely did. At Boeing I found a freedom and independence I had never known. After the war I could never go back to playing bridge, being a clubwoman and listening to a lot of inanities when I knew there were things you could use your mind [for]. The war changed my life completely.”¹

Inez Saur’s above account of working at a Boeing bomber factory during WWII is an example of one woman’s contribution to the United States war effort against the Axis Powers. By the end of 1945, six million American women had joined the workforce for the first time, serving in factories, transportation, hotels, and many other industries.² Because of the need for soldiers overseas and the draft of men over the age of 18, jobs needed to be filled for the U.S to maintain its production quotas on weapons, planes, armor, and other wartime goods. By the middle of 1942 it was clear the labor supply could not sustain a continuous enlistment of male soldiers as well as male workers in vital wartime industries. This led government officials, specifically ones in the Office of War information and War Manpower Commission, to enlist women to fill jobs in military, industrial, and civilian fields. In order to motivate the American public to do everything in its power to help win the war, the government took on massive information campaigns, dispersing educational propaganda urging women to take war jobs.

¹ Kaufman, Pat, quoted in “Rosie the Riveter Remembers.” *OAH Magazine of History* 16.3 (Spring, 2002): 25-29.

² *Ibid.*

Female participation in the labor force during WWII is particularly interesting to historians because it is noticeably higher than decades before and the specific composition of these new workers included a greater percentage of married women. This time period also presents a marked change from previous years because women worked in traditionally male jobs such as construction, welding, shipbuilding, and higher-paying management jobs. While the first part of the twentieth century saw the female labor force “comprised mostly of single, widowed, and divorced women,”³ wartime job vacancies catalyzed expansion in numbers and categories. After the war ended some of these women, both single and married, did quit or get laid off. However, the overall number of females in the workforce and the ratio of working to nonworking women continued to rise steadily throughout the postwar years.⁴ Historical narratives that discount or downplay women’s continually growing presence in the labor force after WWII perpetuate an image of the American women worker that is oversimplified at best and untrue at worst. This is not to say women enjoyed the same employment opportunities once the war ended; indeed, many women were demoted to lower-paying jobs such as assistants, secretaries, and other clerical positions. But by portraying women’s contributions during WWII as entirely new, historians can fall into the very trap wartime propaganda attempted to create: considering working women, especially working wives and mothers, as a temporary anomaly.⁵

For these reasons, the subject of the portrayal of the woman worker during WWII is a complicated one. Rosie the Riveter and other examples of women workers in private

³ Lynn Y. Weiner, *From Working Girl to Working Mother: The Female Labor Force in the United States, 1820-1980*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 84.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵ Professor Nan Enstad, UW-Madison History Department.

advertisements are laden with social, political, and economic messages. Historians cannot know what motivated each individual woman to take a war job during WWII. Indeed, it was probably a combination of many motivations including patriotism, personal connection, the desire for individual success, and economic necessity. However, by looking at the origin of visual representations of the woman worker and undertaking a close visual culture analysis of the images themselves, we can gain a better understanding of the authors' intended purposes for the depiction of woman workers.

This thesis explores portrayals of the woman workers in American magazine advertisements from 1942 to 1945. Specifically, it undertakes a case study analysis of ads in two national magazines intended for men and women, *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, and two magazines intended for only women, *Ladies Home Journal* and *Better Homes and Gardens*. What can the depictions of women workers tell us about the intersection of media, business, and government interests, and how does this connect with historical expectations of gender roles? Advertisers included the government's womanpower campaign in their ads in order to attract women to war jobs, but also had to balance these appeals with urging consumers to purchase products. Despite receiving the same guides from the War Advertising Council, U.S. advertisers in general audience magazines portrayed women workers with generic conceptions of female identity that reinforced established gender roles, while advertisers in women's magazines employed images that emphasized complex characteristics and actively challenged traditional conceptions of femininity.

Much research has been completed about women workers, World War II, and the "Rosie the Riveter" propaganda representation. However, the majority asks just one question about the rich cache of visual sources from the era: how did propaganda motivate women into the

workforce and later justify their expulsion from it?⁶ Most investigations focus exclusively on government propaganda; those that also focus on private advertisements do so without fully exploring the origins or subtleties of these representations.⁷ While many other scholars have studied War Advertising Council (WAC) booklets that encouraged government propaganda, no one has ever directly linked these textual documents with a historical visual culture case study of magazine advertisements.

Previous scholarship about the image of the woman worker uses over-simplified and one-dimensional analyses, claiming portrayals were created “from the top down”⁸ by the WAC, government, and private advertisers. Since these representations originated within these agencies, it is argued, portrayals of Rosie were highly malleable and “vulnerable to swift annihilation”⁹, functioning both as a motivating force for women to take war jobs and later, when the war was ending, urging them to leave the workforce. However, differences between images of the woman worker in general audience magazines compared to those aimed solely at women indicate a significantly more spontaneous and contested development. While the WAC was able to put forward their own ideas for how best to recruit potential women workers, ultimately each private business and ad agency decided on the image that best suited the product they were selling.

⁶ Rupp, Leila J. *Mobilizing Women for War, German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, 53.

⁷ Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond – American Women in the 1940's*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982., also Bilge Yesil, "'Who Said This Is A Man's War?' Propaganda, Advertising Discourse and the Representation of Woman Workers In the Second World War." *Media History* 10 (2004): 103-17.

⁸ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1984), 17.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Executives of ad agencies who feared becoming obsolete during wartime cutbacks created the War Advertising Council. A quasi-governmental agency, it worked with the War Manpower Commission (WMC) and Office of War Information (OWI) to create public service announcements and disperse information to individual ad companies. At the onset of World War II, advertisers feared for their very existence. Pearl Harbor had thrust the United States into an overseas war that required the mobilization of every sector of society. With wartime cutbacks and rations, advertising could have easily been cast off as a luxury that was not absolutely necessary to the functioning of American society. However, leaders of powerful New York City ad agencies created the War Advertising Council (WAC) in order to assure themselves influence within elite circles of business and government. The WAC fashioned themselves as a nonprofit group that would donate advertising expertise to aid the development and distribution of government messages. Hoping to shape public advertising discourse and build stronger connections between corporate and national interests, the council publicized information campaigns that directly affected the daily lives of American men and women. Bringing together powerful leaders from newspapers, magazines, radio, advertising federations, and graphic arts, the WAC forged strong relations among the various groups of industry represented.

Several important studies have examined general aspects of the portrayal of women workers, but no one has explored variations between images in magazines taking into account differences in intended audiences. In addition, when examining images of women workers, previous research has not taken advantage of visual culture studies and thus falls short of a truly layered analysis. Maureen Honey investigates depictions of women in advertisements during WWII, noting that the WAC worked closely with the government to “sell the war to the

American people.”¹⁰ Although she mentions a multitude of companies and their representations of the woman worker, she does not probe into the relation of these private advertisements to the WAC, WMC, or OWI. One film, “The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter,” explores government propaganda and presents the other side of the creation of these images.¹¹ While providing important discussions of government film shorts and posters, it omits any study of their relationship to non-government advertisements.

In her 2004 article “Who Said This Was a Man’s War?” Bilge Yesil analyzes propaganda, advertisements, and the depiction of women workers. She notes women’s “role in the war effort [was] depicted as secondary to that of men” and “their motivation to work characterized as a way to win the approval of men.”¹² Creators of government posters and films along with private advertisers played to “their supposed concern with beauty and womanliness.” Yesil explains women’s choice to work was portrayed as a temporary sacrifice motivated by patriotism. While she does investigate some characteristics shared by advertisements and government propaganda, she does not delve into the sources of these representations. What made multiple ad agencies picture women as patriotic, beautiful, and yearning for male approval?

Leila Rupp’s research on American propaganda in her book, *Mobilizing Women for War* makes many important contributions that begin to specifically explain the source of images of women workers. Tracing the history of the War Manpower Commission and the Office of War Information, she notes that latter was essentially a “government propaganda agency” that

¹⁰ Honey, 23.

¹¹ The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter. Dir. Connie Field. Direct Cinema Ltd., 1987.

¹² Yesil, 112.

[explained] government policy” to the public.¹³ Rupp observes that the War Advertising Council worked closely with the two government agencies to promote wartime jobs for women. The WAC spread its messages to individual ad agencies through professional advocacy, assuring them that “war-related advertising was the best way to sell products or win good will during the war.”¹⁴ While Rupp details specific campaigns created by the WMC and OWI and promoted by the WAC, she does not fully explain the complex dynamics among these agencies. Was there a conscious decision in the WAC to portray women workers, as Yesil notes, as “feminine,” awaiting male approval, and making temporary sacrifices? Are these characteristics prevalent in all images or do some reveal more complex representations? If there are representations different from the majority, was this intentional or unintentional? To what extent did the WAC directly influence advertising companies in their portrayals of women workers and how did the viewpoints of the governmental OWI and WMC relate to these representations?

While many have researched propaganda during World War II, few have investigated representations within the context of the images’ production. Maureen Honey, in her book *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, is one of the few scholars who discusses at the creation of these images in light of government requests. She analyzes the magazine industry as a whole, arguing, “the war’s failure to alter traditional ideas about female capacities was in part due to propaganda strategies for unifying the home front.”¹⁵ These strategies, Honey notes, pushed specific depictions of women workers. However, images of Rosies in wartime magazine advertisements present layered identities whose characteristics and implied reasons for creation are not

¹³ Rupp, Leila J. *Mobilizing Women for War, German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978, 53.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁵ Honey, 17.

monolithic. In what ways was the production of these portrayals contested, and whose interests were served by the depictions of women workers that did appear?

Honey also notes that the image of the woman worker was quick to disappear from the mind of the American public once the war ended. But recent scholarship about the 1950's and the prevalence of the stereotypical American housewife in popular magazines give reason to be somewhat skeptical of this conclusion. Joanne Meyerowitz argues that magazines and other "mass culture [are] rife with contradictions, ambivalence, and competing voices."¹⁶ Analyzing nonfiction articles in popular magazines during the postwar period, Meyerowitz concludes this discourse "did not simply exhort women to stay at home" but instead reveal "a celebration of nondomestic as well as domestic pursuits and a tension between individual achievement and domestic ideals." What does Meyerowitz's analysis of mass culture before, during, and after WWII mean for the image of the woman worker?

Both private advertisers and the United States government had a vested interest in the portrayal of the woman worker during WWII because traditional gender roles played a key part in American conceptions of identity. Engaged in a total war against the Axis powers that was rooted in ideological difference, the U.S. home front became a battlefield and thus a reflection of the success of American democracy. While American soldiers fought overseas to defend ideals of freedom, women began working outside the home in traditionally male industries and challenged definitions of femininity that had previously been linked to domesticity and motherhood. For the U.S. government, this was potentially problematic. To encourage women, especially married women and mothers to work outside the home, to become the main source of

¹⁶ Meyerowitz, Joanne, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture 1946-1958" in *Not June Cleaver*, edited by the author, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 231.

income for their families could threaten the very thing U.S. soldiers were fighting for: the established “American” way of life. Advertisers had an interest in developing portrayals of women workers because they utilized a powerful visual repertoire that had been selling goods successfully for years. Most large businesses employed ad agencies, including those producing lipstick, hairpins, nail polish, and even rationed goods like metal and food. Like the government, these advertisers had to walk a fine line in appealing to women experiencing wartime changes without sacrificing time-honored selling strategies.

Even with their influential media connections, the WAC’s task was not an easy one. Their complicated job demanded they produce government propaganda for agencies such as the Office of War Information and the War Manpower Commission, while at the same time serving as professional advocates for private advertisers. One of the WAC’s main tasks was producing bulletins, pamphlets, columns, and other literature for all types of media outlining the progress on the OWI information campaigns. These included campaigns to save scrap metal, refrain from traveling, and recruit women workers. In order to spread these government propaganda messages, the WAC had to motivate private advertisers already struggling in a wartime economy to sponsor the campaigns along with selling their own goods and services. They asked businesses “to take on voluntarily one of the most urgent jobs on the home front – the job of informing the American people as to what they must do and not do to speed victory.”¹⁷ Underscoring the “great need to reach the American public with war messages,” the ad council required “everyone’s cooperation in achieving such nonpolitical goals”¹⁸ By framing the womanpower campaign as part of a larger effort undertaken by the entire country, the WAC gave importance to small acts

¹⁷ War Advertising Council, *War Advertising Bulletin*, August 1, 1943, Historical File, 1942-1977, series no. 13/2/207, box 2, Advertising Council Archives, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, IL (hereafter cited as Council Archives).

¹⁸ Ibid.

such as donating ad space and reminded businesses and advertisers of their influence. Framing propaganda dispersion as a nonpartisan goal allowed the council to recruit leaders who may have vehemently disagreed with each other, giving them a wider range of potential supporters.

The WAC achieved cooperation from advertisers by developing their agency's expertise in public relations and re-framing already-occurring magazine advertisements as a place to earn consumer goodwill. Pushing the slogan "the best public relations is public service", the council directly linked donation of ad space with profitability.¹⁹ For the WAC, the ideal business would want to devote their entire advertisement to the womanpower campaign. However, knowing this was not realistic, the council also encouraged companies to feature women workers in advertisements to reinforce government propaganda. Approaching the recruitment of women workers as simply another campaign to sell to the public, the council was able to present featuring them as an intelligent business decision that would produce gainful postwar results. One pamphlet proclaims that advertisers would "be building up a reservoir of good will that [would] mean sales after the war."²⁰ The council also reinforced the underlying link to business, noting, "the hundreds of thousands who must be 'sold' the idea of taking war jobs or joining one of the women's services [had] so far resisted every sales appeal."²¹ By communicating with private businesses in language they understood and specifically mentioning women who were

¹⁹ Memorandum, "The Establishment of an Advertising Council", Ad Council Administrative Subject File, series no.13/2/205, box 1, Council Archives.

²⁰ Booklet from the Advertising Federation of America, "Guide for Wartime Advertising Policies", ND, RG 208 entry 3C box 2, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter this record cited as "Guide for Wartime Advertising," National Archives and this location cited as National Archives), 5.

²¹ War Advertising Council w/ Office of War Information, War Manpower Commission, Joint Army-Navy board, "Put Your Advertising to Work for More Women at War", ND, RG 208 entry 90 box 588, National Archives, College Park, MD (hereafter cited as "Put Your Advertising to Work," National Archives), 9.

“hardest to ‘sell’,”²² advertisers were more likely to see their own interests linked to those of the War Advertising Council and, indirectly, the U.S. government.

Another important motivation for featuring the woman worker was to direct “the buying of consumers with newly increased purchasing power.”²³ Specifically, this meant female consumers. With hundreds of thousands of newly employed women, companies who still had products to sell understood many females had newly disposable income. In the eyes of advertisers these women still wanted stylish clothing, good cosmetics, and nice products, and they still enjoyed shopping. This specific piece of advice from the WAC is extremely interesting because the government was running simultaneous campaigns urging Americans to avoid buying unnecessary items. In the midst of wartime rations and continual propaganda appeals asking people to buy war bonds, this statement indicates some of the WAC’s own doubts that consumers would actually stop spending money on “extras.” It also shows that one of the specific motivations for using images of woman workers in advertisements was to attempt to control the buying habits of female viewers.

Although they created many pamphlets and booklets for business, media, and industry representatives, the WAC and government were not entirely confident they were undertaking the womanpower campaign correctly. Men in these agencies had doubts about their ability to effectively communicate with female viewers and what to tell private advertisers. One internal document urges “serious consideration to getting some women on our staff who can prepare material suitable for ... women’s radio programs, in women’s columns in the newspapers, and in women’s magazines.” The government memo concludes with the realization that “the feminine

²² “Put Your Advertising to Work,” National Archives, 9.

²³ “Guide for Wartime Advertising,” National Archives, 7.

angle on the war” was “something that probably [they had] missed to a great extent.”²⁴ Creators of these pamphlets admit they had little understanding of how to best approach the recruitment of women workers and effectively communicate their message.

After these discussions the council decided to work with the Women’s Bureau and also hired a female program manager for the womanpower campaign, Mary Keeler, in April of 1944²⁵. In August of 1942 the War Manpower Commission created a Women’s Advisory Committee,²⁶ These professional groups urged the council to appeal to realistic and complex feminine identities and refuted the idea that a vague sense of duty would be enough to motivate women to sign up for war work. In one letter to male co-workers, Mary Brewster White, an OWI official, warned of a “definite tendency to reduce all women’s recruiting programs... to the ‘buy bonds-save fats’ level.”²⁷ She goes on to explain how women were becoming “hardened to government appeals,” and asserts the WAC’s strategy should change from the “humdrum, and almost phoney, patriotic appeal” and given “vitality” and “realism.”²⁸ In this letter, White explained that the WAC should not treat the recruitment of women workers in the same way as other government campaigns that require much smaller sacrifices. Asking a woman to work six days a week in a factory is not the same as asking her to save the extra fat from her meat. A realistic appeal to a potential woman worker would address concerns of family, time, personal interest, and an overall complex identity, and would not use weighty obligation as the main tool. While these female government officials, the Woman’s Advisory Committee, and the Women’s

²⁴ Memorandum from Office for Emergency Management, May 18, 1942, RG 208 entry 90 box 588, National Archives.

²⁵ Clifford Sutter to Evelyn Blewitt, letter, April 10, 1944, RG 208 entry 90 box 587, National Archives.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Mary Brewster White to Robert Ferry, letter, August 13, 1943, RG 208 entry 43 box 1, National Archives, 1.

²⁸ Ibid.

Bureau attempted to alter the tone of WAC literature, in the end they had limited influence over the specific messages.

In her critique of the WAC's use of nationalism, White implies women would respond to layered conceptions of their identities when being asked to take war jobs. She also points out an important theme that carries over to visual representations of women workers: presenting patriotic duty as a motivation for taking a wartime job. Her opinion displays the contested nature not only of the WWII campaigns, but specifically the concept of patriotism. The government needed to mobilize large numbers of Americans in order to win the war and often used nationalism as a tool to achieve these aims. The council was able to manipulate patriotism so that the concept of postwar America became a motivating force, either as a warning or as a reward. On the one hand, patriotism served as a warning of the evil of fascism and the atrocities occurring overseas, threatening the Allies would lose WWII if citizens did not sacrifice everything for their country. As a reward, nationalism functioned by asking people to believe in and defend an inspirational ideal of freedom and democracy. The presentation of the ideal postwar American life was strongly linked with commodities, wealth, and consumerism. In this way, the WAC strategically asked viewers of these booklets to invest in a particular idea of "America" as it was presented in advertisements. Urging people to believe in and defend a concept of the United States that the government and advertisers helped to define and specifically benefitted from, the WAC often overlooked the fact that it was appealing to people they would have otherwise ignored. Specifically, this meant women and people of color, who they approached only after many white male soldiers, were overseas.

The government needed to regulate nearly all aspects of American media in order to mobilize the nation for war and instruct the public about how to best serve their country. By

specifically taking action to incorporate war-themed messages into the types of media Americans encountered every day, the government assured the story would be told the way they wanted citizens to hear it. One related analysis of the links between government propaganda and corporate media leaders during World War II is Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black's *Hollywood Goes to War*. Discussing government regulation on Hollywood productions, the authors explain how leaders from the OWI and WAC "carried out an intensive, unprecedented effort to mold the content" of feature films.²⁹ They argue that while these films did reflect the values of American society, portrayals were complicated because of governmental regulation and censorship. In addition, Hollywood's representations of the United States were "distorted and refracted by myriad forces, not least of them the profit motive."³⁰ Similar to the motion picture industry, the government wanted to mobilize public opinion through newspapers, radio, magazines, and advertisements. Like the creators of feature films, businesses using women workers in their advertisements needed to consider that selling products was the ultimate purpose. By exploring how government propaganda was able to mobilize the public for war in Hollywood films, Koppes and Black reveal a deep connection between WWII corporate and government interests that pervaded other mediums of mass culture including magazine advertisements.

One of the main methods of communication between the government and corporations was through booklets and pamphlets created by the WAC and dispersed to media leaders. Often confidential and specifically warning "Not for the General Public," this literature was distributed by the council to advertising agencies, newspapers, magazines, and radio stations. These

²⁹ Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), vii.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2-3

pamphlets mention specific steps to take in order to assist in the government information campaigns. Overall, literature from the WAC asking advertisers to recruit women workers does not push for an expansion of gender roles and relies heavily on stereotypical conceptions of feminine identity. Specifically, pamphlets link factory work with household chores, reinforcing domestic responsibility. The WAC also reinforces generalizations about women's abilities or inabilities, presenting them as natural or biological. In addition, these booklets urge potential workers to compare themselves to other women who are giving their time and energy in jobs outside the home. Finally, council literature reiterates women's assumed laziness and apathy toward the war.

When presenting possible barriers to women taking war jobs, booklets frequently rely on comparisons of industrial work with familiar domestic duties. One woman's concern that the jobs would be "monotonous" and "boring" is met with the response, "so are many household jobs."³¹ In reply to the worry "I've never worked in a factory. I know nothing about machines," the same booklet explains that "many war factory jobs are very similar to running a sewing machine or vacuum cleaner, assembling a meat grinder, sewing by hand, and other familiar household tasks."³² By linking factory operations to household duties, the WAC subtly changed a traditionally male sphere to one where women's presence was justified by their supposed innate domestic abilities.

WAC literature for advertisers also presents abilities of women and men as natural, absolute and justified by gender. One booklet notes, "High-pressure production for two years has proven that women excel in the tasks that require sharp eyes, suppleness of wrist, delicate touch,

³¹ "Put Your Advertising to Work," National Archives, 6.

³² Ibid.

repetitive motion, exactness.”³³ By linking success in specific tasks with gender, the council built upon established social roles for women and did not allow for complex feminine identities. Similarly, the council linked masculinity with physical prowess and natural ability in factories and other industries. A government pamphlet discussing war jobs for women explains the “employment of large numbers of women” was “made possible by breaking down tasks which [had] heretofore required years of training, or a man’s strength, into their component parts and assigning to women the operations they can do.”³⁴ While men could simply accomplish these tasks with physical force, women need them to be broken down. Relying on generalizations of ability based strictly on gender in hopes of recruiting women workers, these arguments created binaries that divided “female” and “male” work.

Another strategy for recruitment was to encourage women to compare themselves to other women who were working full-time outside the home, noting everyone should do her part in the war. An industry-developed pamphlet specifically for women asserts females need to work outside the home if they “want to do something in this war” and “feel that [they are] making [their] contribution.”³⁵ This implies that a motivating factor behind the decision to take a war job was the sense of keeping up with one’s neighbor, a familiar strategy for private advertisers who already attempted to shape consumer desire by merely presenting a newer or better product. By crafting their appeals in this manner, the WAC built upon already-established trends in advertising, now asking for women’s time instead of their money.

³³ Booklet by the Office of War Information w/ Mademoiselle Magazine, “War Jobs for Women,” July 1942, RG 208 entry 90 box 587, National Archives (hereafter cited as “War Jobs for Women,” National Archives), 21.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ “Put Your Advertising to Work”, National Archives, 6.

In addition to urging comparisons with other women, literature from the WAC asks private advertisers to appeal to “lazy” female viewers to take war work. The fear of the uncaring or apathetic women was a big concern for the advertising council and an often-discussed barrier to recruiting potential workers. By 1944 the OWI had concluded, “The basic restraining factor on recruitment” was “not that the woman [did] not know what to do, but that she [was] not interested in doing anything.”³⁶ In a specific pamphlet the council mentions that “hundreds of thousands more” women were “needed for the push to victory,” but that the only women left were those who had “turned deaf ears to former appeals.”³⁷ Because of “the constantly increasing difficulty of getting these women to consider any war job,” the WAC presented advertisers with “an expanded national womanpower campaign,” explaining their support was “vital.”³⁸ By generalizing that women who did not “act immediately”³⁹ were indifferent to the war effort, the council overlooked complexities that may have legitimately stopped women from taking work. Emphasizing women’s supposed laziness and apathy urged advertisers to present obligation and duty as necessary motivations, since women supposedly did not want to voluntarily contribute and had to be convinced.

While the majority of WAC advice for private advertisers presented generic feminine identities, some pamphlets actively challenged established gender roles by asserting that women were not working only for the duration of the war. In promoting the idea that genuine interest in developing a career was a potential motivating factor for women, government agencies pushed beyond stereotypical campaigns that merely pushed patriotism. One OWI booklet notes how

³⁶ Booklet from Office of War Information to media leaders, “Women in the War”, p. 2, RG 208 entry 90 box 588. January 1944, National Archives (hereafter cited as “Women in the War,” National Archives).

³⁷ “Put Your Advertising to Work,” National Archives, 5.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ “Women in the War,” National Archives, 2.

training in a specific “industry will be invaluable for any kind of future business experience.”⁴⁰ Embracing complex representations of wartime womanhood, one WAC booklet notes that “the information program for the recruitment of women ... [underscoring] the fact that there [was] no one feminine formula for patriotism, no one road to wartime service.”⁴¹ Additionally, women were not confined to easy, household-like tasks, shown by another pamphlet explaining that “the place of women in the war industry picture [changed] so fast that there [was] no keeping absolutely up to date.”⁴² By specifically pointing out different avenues of service, this booklet actively refuted a generic conception of women’s social roles and implied motivations.

WAC literature had to present government information campaigns to private businesses, industry leaders, and advertisers in a way that would motivate them to use ad space to promote government messages. Linking postwar profitability with donation of ad space, either by promoting the womanpower campaign or by featuring a woman worker, was a key part of these appeals because public service would win consumer goodwill. In order to gain a better understanding of the complexities of these images, the following two chapters undertake a visual culture analysis of four magazines. The first chapter examines advertisements featuring the woman worker from *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, both national magazines whose intended audience included men and women (sometimes referred to as general audience magazines). Chapter two investigates advertisements utilizing the image of the woman worker in *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Ladies Home Journal*, highly-circulating national magazines whose intended audience included only women.

⁴⁰ Confidential pamphlet from Office of War Information to media personnel, “Women in the War ... For the Final Push to Victory”, ND, RG 208 entry 90 box 587, National Archives, 6.

⁴¹ “Women in the War,” National Archives, 4.

⁴² “War Jobs for Women,” National Archives, 3.

Chapter One

Magazines aimed at both men and women, such as *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, posed a difficult problem for private advertisers because they had to consider both male and female audiences when portraying the woman worker, along with their own marketing objectives. Wanting to attract both genders as post-war consumers meant these businesses had to work largely within the framework of established gender roles. Pushing the boundaries in representations of women workers could alienate men, but refusing to acknowledge their importance to the war effort could fail to engage women. Compared to advertisements in national magazines aimed exclusively at women, depictions in *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post* were concerned mainly with displaying women's war work as an acceptable, temporary solution to the problem of manpower and one that would have little effect on women's roles. In these magazines, private advertisers interpreted the War Advertising Council campaign by reaffirming established gender roles and using generic portrayals of feminine identity to "sell" the war to women and frame women's desire to work in language men could understand.

In order to evaluate how private advertisers interpreted WAC campaigns, I will look at three factors related to the depiction of women workers in these ads: the implied motivation for working, the endorsed female social roles, and the represented relationships with men. Using established visual culture studies, my analysis will take into account both composition and content. After evaluating sample groups of advertisements from *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, several themes emerged about the portrayal of women workers. First, advertisers imply the female workers they portray were driven by sacrifice, duty, and patriotism, and treat this concept with much seriousness. Second, these ads present images of workers that easily fit within overly stereotypical social roles such as "sex kitten" and "girl next door." Finally, relationships with

men reinforce established gender roles and show men as superiors, bosses, and supervisors to women's work.

Advertisers in *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post* implied women were motivated by somber patriotic duty and presented working as an idea disconnected from any concrete contribution to the war effort. By using obligation and sacrifice as driving factors, these images simultaneously attempted to convince women they should enter the workforce and reassure all readers that women were not actually interested in historically male jobs.

The first example of this patriotic sacrifice is a black and white General Electric ad depicting a woman walking up a staircase toward her temporary new home, a brownstone apartment building (Figure 1). Sponsored by General Electric, this advertisement pays homage to men and women altering their lives for the war. It also keeps the GE brand in the minds of consumers by paying tribute to its own high wartime production, going so far as to say their company's industry development would "make one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of human progress." Both the composition and content of this image imply women were apprehensive about taking war jobs but did so because of external obligation. A young woman wears a hat and overcoat and holds "a suitcase a little too heavy for her," as shadows fall across her face.⁴³ She looks up wearily at her new place of residence, forming a diagonal line from her gaze to the top right corner of the ad, one that is echoed in the diagonal line of the stairwell. Compositionally, this indicates she is overwhelmed and tired. Visual cues such as her apprehensive facial expression and fatigued body language reinforce the weighty tone of this image. Echoing sentiments of sacrifice, the text explains how Americans are "finding themselves

⁴³ General Electric Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, February 20 1943, 61.

Third floor back...

● It's 4 p.m. on a quiet street in a big city.

A slip of a girl, with a suitcase a little too heavy for her, climbs the brownstone steps and rings the bell.

Her heart is beating a little fast, but it's not from the weight of the suitcase.

She's wondering what it will be like, living in a furnished room, so far from home.

She's hoping she'll make good at her new job.

She's thinking that maybe now she understands a little bit of what Tom must have felt when he said goodbye and left for camp.

But she's not going back till it's over.

Millions of men and women today are finding themselves in strange surroundings—in situations they couldn't have imagined a few years ago. They are giving up their pleasures and comforts—and often much more—to bring future good to the whole world. And they don't mind—too much—because it will be worth it.

Industry, too, has put aside for the duration its never-ending job of supplying those pleasures and comforts which have helped to make life fuller and better in America than anywhere else in the world.

Industry is working today with strange new materials, toward grimmer goals—but working with the same *ingenuity and skill, organization and experience, initiative and resourcefulness*. For these things are as much a part of American industry as they are of Americans.

And because they are, we have not found today's production task, big as it is, too big. Because they are, we shall not find tomorrow's challenge, great as it will be, too great. With new materials like plastics, new sciences like electronics, offering hope and fuller opportunity; but with the old American ingenuity and courage and enterprise—we shall face the task of building a better world. General Electric Company, Schenectady, N. Y.

★ ★ ★

The volume of General Electric war production is so high and the degree of secrecy required is so great that we can tell you little about it now. When it can be told completely we believe that the story of industry's developments during the war years will make one of the most fascinating chapters in the history of human progress.

GENERAL  ELECTRIC



Figure 1⁴⁴

⁴⁴ General Electric Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, February 20 1943, 61.

in strange surroundings” and “giving up their pleasures and comforts”.⁴⁵ Viewers may not understand this woman is a war worker since she is not shown in the act of working, and the only indication of her profession is through the text. This reinforces an emphasis on the concept of the woman worker rather than the actuality of a woman working. In terms of content, this image asks viewers to understand this woman as merely an idea. By presenting a timid young woman and utilizing heavy shadows, a somber composition, private advertisers reassured male readers women did not want to be working and were only doing so out of patriotic sacrifice.

Creators of a Eureka ad similarly imply patriotic duty as the motivating factor behind woman’s decision to work (Figure 2). Compositionally, this woman is located on the right side of the page while the machine she works with is on the left side. A diagonal line connects her gaze to the machine via a metal rod she holds as she solders, indicating an intense focus on her work that is mirrored in her facial expression. The ad’s lighting reaffirms her concentration by connecting the glowing torch tip, her white gloves, and the highlights on the side of her face. In terms of content, the image asks viewers to understand this woman only as a worker. Her face, shoulders, and hands are the only visible parts of her body, and even these are presented from a side perspective. This image is different from the GE ad because the woman is shown in the act of working. However, she is not located in a defined physical location such as a factory or war plant, but merely exists in a vague black space. By deciding not to add other visual content to indicate a specific factory or plant, creators of the ad give no indication of this woman’s life outside her job. In addition, she works entirely alone, without co-workers, a boss,

⁴⁵ General Electric Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, February 20 1943, 61.

YOU'RE A GOOD SOLDIER— MRS. AMERICA

• You're fighting in the uniform of the WAACS and the WAVES and the AWAS and the NURSES' AIDES.

And you're fighting in slacks and a kitchen apron and a street dress.

You've learned to weld and to run a lathe and to hammer rivets into the gaunt flanks of a bomber.

You've sacrificed and gone vacationless—and put every last penny you could spare into War Bonds and Stamps.

Eureka recognizes America's dependence upon you—for more than seventy per cent of those employed on our assembly lines today are women who have enlisted for the duration.

Eureka, too, is in this war to the finish.

Today down our assembly lines there are moving... electric motors to retract the landing gear of the Flying Fortress

...amazingly ingenious signal pistols that fire lights instead of bullets... and gas masks and precisely machined parts for airplanes.

Products on which the lives of men depend—each manufactured to Eureka's exacting *precision* standards.

But a day is coming when this war will be won.

And on that day, Eureka will put aside its uniform and return to the ways of peace.

And, like you, we will have learned immeasurably valuable lessons.

Already we are visualizing a vacuum cleaner better than any you have ever dreamed about in the past.

But until that day arrives, we—and you—share a single task... to help win the war.

EUREKA VACUUM CLEANER CO., DETROIT, MICH.



Figure 2⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Eureka Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb 27, 1943, 77.

or a break room, making even her workplace incomplete. Her intense focus on her industrial activity is rendered much less threatening because it becomes simply another example of the patriotic heroine, a mythical cultural icon. A final image in the bottom right corner of the advertisement shows a vacuum cleaner, reinforcing Eureka's products in the minds of consumers who view this ad. Presenting a domestic product implies this "Mrs. America" will only be soldering for the duration, and can afterwards return to vacuuming. When the war is won, the ad promises, Eureka will "return to the ways of peace," and create "a vacuum cleaner better than any you have ever dreamed about in the past."⁴⁷ On the surface, this ad pays homage to the more than 70% of woman workers at Eureka; however, its cultural work is more complex. By portraying woman workers as iconic heroines sacrificing out of patriotic duty, Eureka simultaneously honors this idea while promoting their own business interests.

In addition to implying patriotism as the main source of motivation for taking jobs, private advertisers used other generic conceptions of feminine identity to frame women's desire to work in language men could understand. The women who embody these cultural myths, such as the "sex kitten" and "girl next door" also display elements of performance, as if they are merely pretending to work because they know someone is watching. By using stereotypes of women that were readily accessible in viewers' minds, advertisers attempted to ease male fears that working in war industry would drastically change definitions of femininity and thus also masculinity.

⁴⁷ Eureka Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb 27, 1943, 77.

Your good health *** take care of it!



To stay on the job—to keep working—to do your share for victory, you *just have* to stay healthy. It's your American duty.

A good toothbrush is as necessary to health as good tools are to your work. And taking care of your teeth, having a smile that's bright and sparkling, is one beauty treatment that pays off in health.

So get rid of your soggy, worn toothbrush without a moment's delay and get a truly quality brush—a Dr. West's Miracle-Tuft.

Miracle-Tuft's "EXTON" brand bristling and scientifically shaped brush head assure more efficient cleansing—outside, inside and between the teeth.

Its unique sterilized glass packaging means germ-free delivery into your hands. And the full year of effective service that it alone offers makes Miracle-Tuft the best buy for anyone's money. Get a Dr. West's Miracle-Tuft today.

ONLY DR. WEST'S Miracle-Tuft OFFERS THESE exclusive advantages

1. "EXTON" brand bristling. Now water-proofed for even longer life, more efficient tooth-cleansing.
2. Surgically sterile glass packaging—for germ-free delivery to you.
3. A full year of effective service for you. Guaranteed by Dr. West's.



And at 25¢, the super value brush of the day...

DR. WEST'S "25"—an outstanding low value made possible by production methods. As fine a brush as it is possible to make at anywhere near this price.

Figure 3⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Dr. West Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, February 20, 1943, 83.

One example of generic feminine identity used by general audience magazine advertisers is the image of the “sex kitten,” shown in this Dr. West’s toothbrush advertisement (Figure 3). Both compositionally and through content, this advertisement seeks to assure men and women that industry workers can still be sexy and to suggest to men that women are merely pretending to work. The color photograph on the left shows a woman holding a toothbrush and looking over her bare shoulder. The direction of her body and the angle of her still-unused toothbrush link her to a black and white image on the right of a woman worker at a drill press, implying these women are connected. In terms of content, the woman on the left shows the work of femininity through styled hair, lipstick, and nail polish. Her gaze is friendly and nonthreatening. Her implied nudity, the angle of her head and upward focus of her eyes, and her position looking over her shoulder imply a sexually submissive attitude. The black and white photograph of the woman working exemplifies elements of performance. This woman’s body is at an awkwardly open angle that would be difficult to maintain while using a drill press safely, reinforcing the idea she is simply performing to the viewer. Her grip holding the item on the drill bed appears dainty and posed. This is not a picture of a woman working; it is a picture of a woman posing as a worker. By using highlights on her entire body and placing the drill in the shadows, the creators of this ad imply the work she is doing is less important than how she looks. The textual information around these images tells female viewers of this ad to take care of their health, however, the photos are performing the more complicated task of appealing to potential consumers. The photograph on the right assures viewers that wives, girlfriends, and other women will not lose their beauty and sexual allure by taking a war job. The second photograph indicates that men should not fear women taking their jobs because women are merely pretending to work. By including the large image of the toothbrush at the bottom of the page, Dr.

West's link healthy teeth with beauty. This is reinforced by the whiteness of the smile of the woman on the right. Since toothbrushes were not regulated during wartime, Dr. West did not need to worry about postwar goodwill but was simply trying to sell products now. In this case relying on the stereotype of the patriotic heroine would have made little sense, as it was much easier to use sex appeal and beauty to attract potential consumers. However, by also including an image of a war worker Dr. West framed themselves as a company that appreciated women workers and thus used nationalism as a tool reach consumers.

Camel's ad exemplifies another established cultural myth of feminine identity used by private advertisers: the "girl next door". (Figure 4) This ad contains three photos of the same woman throughout her day and uses composition and content to reaffirm her social role. Shown in the top central image at her war job, directing planes, this worker wears an expression of calm pride while directly above her head is an American flag (backward because the negative was flipped for the ad). The small inset image of the same woman shows her directly facing the camera, smiling for the viewer and holding a book. Compositionally, her identity as the "girl next door" is reinforced by the square cropping of the small image that places her head exactly in the middle of the frame and by her position directly facing the camera with square shoulders. We also have textual indication of her stereotypical role in the heading "Co-ed leaves campus," linking this woman with her previous occupation as a student. In terms of content, she is well groomed, wears light lipstick and blush, and is dressed conservatively. In the bottom image when meeting a potential romantic interest, her body is only angled slightly towards him and she still looks at the viewer. Although she is wearing a red dress and meeting a man, she is minimally sexualized. Patriotism is reinforced in the advertisement through the color scheme of navy and



*Co-ed
leaves Campus
to fill a Man's job*

She's "in the service"—even
to her choice of cigarettes
...Camels, of course!



● Off duty—and "on the beam"...
for an afternoon's fun. On the "smoking
beam," too! Pat may not know a thing
about the rare care with which Camel's
costlier tobaccos are chosen and blended,
or any of the behind-the-scenes reasons
for the flavor, mildness, and "mmmh-
that-smells-good" fragrance. But she
does know that it adds up to what she
describes as "the most delightful ciga-
rette I ever smoked." And does her escort
agree? You bet! Camels are the favorite
with men in the Navy and in the Army,
Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, too!*



● Very appropriately, Pat and her
Camel cigarette are snap-shotted in front of the
globe. Because nowadays "the sun never sets on
Camels"... they're first in the service* all the
way from Libya to Barnegat Bay, from England to
"Way Down Under." As Pat says: "Camels have
something that's all their own. A flavor like no
other cigarette. And they're so mild that my
throat stays happy, too."

Here the real story of cigarettes is told..

THE "T-ZONE"

The "T-ZONE"—Taste and Throat—is the proving ground for cigarettes. Only your taste and throat can decide which cigarette tastes best to you... and how it affects your throat.

For your taste and throat are individual to you. What will your throat say about the mildness, mellowness, flavor, fragrance of Camel's costlier tobaccos? Try Camels—and see. They may—as they apparently have with tens of millions of smokers—suit your "T-ZONE" to a "T."



FIRST IN THE SERVICE—

*The favorite cigarette with men in the Army, Navy, Marines, and the Coast Guard is Camel. (Based on actual sales records in Post Exchanges, Sales Commissaries, Ship's Service Stores, Ship's Stores, and Canteens.)

Camel

COSTLIER TOBACCOS

Figure 4⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Camel Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, February 6, 1943, 392.

red. By showing this war worker smoking and placing a box of cigarettes in the middle of the page, Camel specifically links their cigarette brand with patriotism and the war effort. Other Camel ads featured male soldiers and air force members smoking on their breaks. This advertisement celebrates the woman war worker by linking her work with military worker, saying “she’s in the service, even down to her choice of cigarettes, Camels of course.”⁵⁰ Through the presentation of a “girl next door” stereotype, Camel associates its brand with hardworking, patriotic workers, sponsoring government messages down to the “Women in the War” logo. Similar to Dr. West’s toothbrushes, cigarette production did not stop during the war, and Camel smartly decided to use patriotism as a marketing strategy, selling both the war effort and their own product.

Equally important as women’s implied motivation for working and the social roles they embodied was their relationship to men. Anxiety about gender roles, specifically fears that men would become less masculine with women working in industry and factories, were significant barriers for the WAC. Creators of wartime advertisements had to balance these challenges in order to successfully recruit female workers. Advertisers whose intended audience included both women and men needed to push their product without alienating consumers of either gender. Advertisements in the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Life* portray men in two main roles: as supervisors or experts on the job, and as objects of romantic interest. By portraying men as superiors in areas of industry and business, private advertisers attempted to ease fears by reassuring men that women would still be secondary as workers. Through representing men as boyfriends or romantic interests, advertisers reinforced the idea that women were only motivated to work because they cared about a man. Both these scenarios support established gender roles

⁵⁰ Camel Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, February 6, 1943, 392.

No war job for Nora



NORA NEEDS A LAXATIVE. But she's due to take a test for a job as a welder at 10. "Beef a little to eat," Nora decides. She doesn't know about quick-acting Sal Hepatica.



FEELING BLOATED due to symptoms of constipation, Nora feels her workday test. "In times like these, folks ought to keep fit," Nora hears somebody whisper as she starts to leave.

Mildred makes the grade



MILDRED NEEDS A LAXATIVE. She's taking a test for a welding job, too. "Never put off till tonight the laxative you need this morning," says Mildred. So she takes Sal Hepatica, knowing that it usually acts within an hour.



"GOOD WORK," approves the employment manager as Mildred signs through her trial job like an old hand. "Report for work tomorrow morning." "It's lucky I took that Sal Hepatica," thinks Mildred, smiling.

**Whenever you need a laxative
—take gentle, *speedy* Sal Hepatica**

IT'S YOUR BEST to keep fit in those trying times. Never put off till tonight the laxative you need this morning.

Take *speedy, gentle* Sal Hepatica. It cost



of 8 doctors, recently interviewed, recommended it. No discomfort. No griping. Sal Hepatica acts by attracting needed liquid back

to the intestinal tract. Helps counteract excess gastric acidity, too, and so helps form a new stomach, secret again.

Try Sal Hepatica, the next time you need a laxative.

Here are the active ingredients of Sal Hepatica: sodium sulphate, sodium chloride, sodium phosphate, lithium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate, tartaric acid. For further facts here. Ask him about the offering of this prescription.

SAL HEPATICA

Product of Watson & Sons

PHONE IN | "TIME TO SMILE" starring Eddie Cantor—Wednesdays 9:00 P.M., EWT
"DILLY D" with Ed Gardner—Fridays 8:30 P.M., EWT

Figure 5⁵¹

⁵¹ Sal Hepatica Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, January 30, 1943, 69.

by implying women still depended on men to either instruct or motivate them, even when working on their own.

One role for men was in positions of power over women, such as the two bosses seen in this Sal Hepatica laxative advertisement, seen in Figure 5. This image presents two pairs of black and white drawings, first showing a woman alone in the morning before a welding test and second depicting her while taking the test. Compositionally, the men are taller and have body language and facial expressions that imply they are in charge. Even in the top right picture, where the man is farther back in space, he still somehow towers over the woman in the foreground. In both pictures with the men, a diagonal line connects the face of the man down toward the face of the woman. The content of this advertisement echoes similar sentiments. While the top woman feels ill but does not take a laxative and does not get the job, the bottom woman took the laxative, did a good job welding and receives employment. In both cases, women are responding to the critiques and opinions of men in order to know if they are successful. Similar to other products such as the toothbrush and cigarettes, Sal Hepatica laxatives link their product with the war effort. However, this ad takes it one step further by presenting laxatives as a necessary part of a successfully being hired, linking their product with job performance. Altering natural ingestion, laxatives directly affected consumers' bodies and seem to be a strange juxtaposition with war work: what if the laxative had worked *too* well while on the job? While this ad is fairly simple in its portrayal of men in positions of power, it is interesting to note the cultural work of the top woman on the bed. Both her body position and her lack of clothing unnecessarily sexualize her for the benefit of male viewers, calling to mind the attractive damsel in distress and the pulp novel. These images are presenting cultural values



"WE'RE ON A MIGHTY MISSION"

Along the high road of Destiny, all America marches in step toward the accomplishment of a mighty mission... freedom for mankind, once and for all time. Surely the goal is worth the temporary sacrifices we must make.

UNTIL the day of Victory you will find it difficult to get home furnishings, trimmings, apparel, tires and other products made of Bibb yarns and fabrics. Cotton is one of the great strategic materials of modern warfare and our mills are running day and night as ten thousand Bibb workers spin and weave materials which have been especially developed to meet the exacting demands of war performance.

The business of Victory comes ahead of everything else. The requirements of the

armed forces must be met though it means that we are unable to supply many of our loyal customers of long years' standing.

To our customers and their customers, we say this:

Once the job at hand is finished, we'll be back... more mindful of your business than ever and with greater values to offer... for we are constantly finding better ways; we have developed new methods and new processes that will enable us to serve you better in the days of peace... when America's mighty mission has been fulfilled.

BIBB MANUFACTURING CO., Macon, Georgia
New York Chicago Philadelphia Alton

BIBB MANUFACTURING COMPANY

USES LESS RUBBER —MAKES TOUGHER TIRES

The Bibb has been making car tires since the first tire was first introduced. The newest development: High Density Tire Cord—thinner and tougher—which have been made 40% stronger in fact by the Bibb HR Process of compressing and bonding cotton fibers. These are characteristics especially needed for heavy duty synthetic rubber tires. The saving of rubber in tires built with Super HR Cord is incalculable. The tires are lighter but stronger.

BIBB PRODUCTS GO TO WAR IN:

PARACHUTE HARNESSES	SHOES	CAMOUFLAGE NETS
PANIC HANDS	UNIFORMS	AMMUNITION BELTS
ASSAULT BOATS	LEGGINGS	WIRE INSULATION
LIFE RAFTS	BELTS	GAS MASKS
POSTHOLES	SHOES	SHIRT SLEEVES
TARPULINS	HANDSOCKS	TANK STRAPS



BUY WAR BONDS—EVERYBODY 10% EVERY PAYDAY

Figure 6⁵²

⁵² Bibb Manufacturing Company Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, March 27, 1943, 95.

systems that reinforce men as the ones who evaluate women's performance and are in charge in the workplace.

Another relation between women and men used to reinforce established gender roles was the depiction of men as stronger and more important to the cause, as shown by a Bibb advertisement (Figure 6). This color image shows a crowd of workers holding farm tools and weapons marching in two lines against an undefined enemy. Compositionally, the man in the foreground is the most important part of this ad. Overtly masculine and drawing on 1930's iconography, he displays his physical strength by the position of his arms and implies bravery through his determined facial expression. He exemplifies the American ideal of the strong man, ready to save his country. A woman stands behind him marching in the same position, wearing the Rosie the Riveter kerchief, but the front man physically blocks most of her body. Placing a man at the center of the composition, advertisers assert his importance in the fight for the "freedom for mankind."⁵³ Wearing Bibb overalls, the image also links the Bibb manufacturing company with wartime service and sacrifice, including a list of the items their company is producing. With fewer items to sell during the war, this company needed to remind their "loyal customers of long years standing" that "the business of victory [came] ahead of everything else."⁵⁴ This advertisement is another example whose creators wanted to build up consumer goodwill for after the war, and using nationalism to honor both themselves and their customers. In portraying men and women armed with farm tools Bibb promotes the idea that their own company and their customers, specifically farmers, are as important as the soldiers overseas. Saturated with patriotic appeal that asks viewers to invest in a specific idea of America, this image shows male and female workers from the military, civil service, and industry marching

⁵³ Bibb Manufacturing Company Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, March 27, 1943, 95.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

alongside one another. With the man wearing Bibb overalls as the central focus, this image works culturally to show the woman worker as less important to the war effort than men. While she is included in the march, her location behind the man and her lack of weapons or farm tools reinforce her role as physically weaker. Although women workers are part of the fight, the Bibb Manufacturing Company wanted to affirm men were still superior and still needed to protect women.

A final role men played in general audience magazines was as the boyfriend or husband of the woman worker, shown in a Eureka ad (Figure 7). This image depicts a black and white drawing of a woman hammering, focused on the work she is doing. Compositionally, she is in the middle of the frame while a combat duty soldier looks out above her left shoulder, holding a gun. A flat black background makes the figures resonate as the most important part of the composition, similar to the previous Eureka ad not in a workplace. Horizontal lines from her arm and the hammer she holds are echoed in the horizontal line of the soldier's gun. By locating this man in the upper corner of the image, the ad's creators imply the woman is thinking of him while she works. Although she had to give up her "hope chest for the duration," this woman is "fighting for a little house of [her] own," and still waiting for "a husband to meet every night at the door."⁵⁵ By explicitly rationalizing her desire to work in the hope for a quiet domestic life after the war, Eureka plants a seed for a future consumer and simultaneously connects postwar peace with an ideal rooted in American consumerism. Culturally, the image of this woman echoes earlier appeals to duty and patriotism. She is strong and focused, and shows no indications of the rituals of femininity such as wearing make-up or styled hair. However, the presence of the male soldier complicates the image, making her motivation for working more

⁵⁵ Eureka Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, June 21, 1943, 81.



*MY HEART'S OVERSEAS
BUT MY HANDS ARE ON THE JOB!*

• Just look at my hands . . . grimy, polish all chipped off. And I used to be so proud! Not that it matters with Tom overseas.

Tap "V" . . . that means O. K. by me, Virginia! Tap, tap "V" . . . funny looking little thing . . . they tell me this is the motor that helps my Tom shoot so straight and true. Look sharp, Virginia . . . someday the tap of this die, stamping my O. K., may mean life or death to Tom!

Tap, tap "V" . . . that means O. K. by us, too, Virginia, because what you're doing spells Victory! It wasn't easy, we know, to close the lid on that hope chest for the duration and pack away those pretty housecoats for a production soldier's overalls. But you've got the right idea.

And you know what you're fighting for. You're fighting for freedom and all that it means to women everywhere. You're fighting for a little house of your own, and a husband to meet every night at the door. You're fighting for the right to bring up your children without the shadow of fear.

And you're doing a superhuman job . . . quietly, gallantly, fiercely, in the ordnance plants, the munitions factories, in transportation services, humdrum civilian jobs, and on Eureka's own assembly lines. We know your hands will never falter till every Tom and Dick and Harry, too, comes marching home . . . victorious!

Today, more than 70% of Eureka's employees are women, making precision parts for machines of war . . .

gas masks, signalling devices, the marvelous little electric motors that raise and lower the huge landing gear of our Flying Fortresses. But already we are looking forward to the day when, out of new skills, new materials and new facilities developed in war, Eureka will put into your hands new work-saving household tools such as you've never imagined in your wildest dreams.

EUREKA VACUUM CLEANER CO., DETROIT



For factory-authorized service and genuine Eureka repair parts, call your local Eureka dealer or contact the nearest Eureka factory branch. See list of cities below.
 ALBANY • BOSTON • BUFFALO • CHICAGO • CINCINNATI • CLEVELAND • DETROIT • GRAND RAPIDS • INDIANAPOLIS • MILWAUKEE • MINNEAPOLIS • NEW YORK • PHOENIX • PHILADELPHIA • ST. LOUIS • ST. PAUL • WASHINGTON

Figure 7⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Eureka Advertisement, *Saturday Evening Post*, June 21, 1943, 81.

than vague patriotism and instead linking it to a specific man. Visual cues such as her shoulder and right arm covering his body imply she is protecting him. By portraying men as boyfriends or husbands, advertisers in magazines whose audience included men framed women's reason for working as male-dependent, maintaining established gender roles.

Demonstrating an instance of private motivation (the man above her shoulder) that resulted in public action, the Eureka ad connects women's patriotism on the home front with heterosexual romance. It also presents an interesting inverse to the images of pinup girls that inspired male soldiers when they were overseas. Robert Westbrook argues that women such as Betty Grable reminded soldiers of girlfriends, sisters, and other actual women they knew back home.⁵⁷ Rather than responding to political motivation urging men to defend their country, Westbrook explicitly connects these posters with a sense of private obligation that could effectively mobilize male soldiers, especially toward the end of the war. Arguing that American men were fighting "on behalf of" American women, he notes soldiers were motivated by "moral obligations of 'the protector' and 'the protected.'" Traditional assumptions about historical gender roles would place the male soldier as "the protector" and the woman back home as "the protected." However, the Eureka ad inverts these positions by making the female war worker block the male soldier, effectively protecting him and linking nationalism with private obligation.

During WWII soldiers were overseas fighting for an often-idealized version of the American home, whose bedrock was a wholly devoted and entirely dependent wife and mother. This is not to say women actually filled these roles, but their myth was both alluring and

⁵⁷ Robert B. Westbrook, "I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James: American Women and the Problem of Political Motivation in World War II," *American Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Dec., 1990), 588.

powerful. For advertisers to ignore or openly challenge these cultural conventions would make men less likely to purchase their products. To admit women not only wanted to, but also were fully capable of, taking on war jobs could disrupt ideas about gender roles that assumed breadwinner husbands and submissive wives. Women taking jobs challenged both of those key factors because it would lead to more economic freedom and a more complex and independent identity.

While advertisers in these magazines certainly had to consider women in their intended audience when portraying female war workers, the above visual culture analyses indicate a strong need to reassure a mixed gender readership that gender roles would remain unchanged. One way private businesses accomplished this task was by using ad space to create tributes to a mythical patriotic heroine. By framing women's desire to work as a nationalistic duty, advertisers could easily link wartime sacrifice with a yearning for postwar prosperity that would lead to sales. This built upon WAC literature that promoted the inclusion of government messages as a way to earn consumer goodwill. Private advertisers also used images of woman workers to demonstrate that wives, girlfriends, and other women could maintain conventional feminine attractiveness while working in industry and civil service, and to reassure men of their importance to their jobs and country. To admit women enjoyed working outside the home in higher paying, physically demanding jobs normally held by men could disrupt gender identity in the postwar world.

Chapter 2

Advertisements in women's magazines had to fulfill the complicated task of promoting war work while simultaneously urging women to remain loyal consumers of their goods and services. These businesses were familiar with readers of women's magazines; in decades of pre-war advertising they established methods of visual communication to frame products in a specific way. While the war changed their message, since some businesses cut back on production and others switched entirely to weapons and machinery, companies still used advertising to maintain consumer goodwill. It was advantageous for businesses to keep their name in view and to be seen as active participants in American life during the war, so that after the war they could use their patriotic actions as a reminder to potential customers. To this end, advertisers built upon recognizable modes of presentation based on their conception of what would motivate female readers to take a war job. Private advertisers interpreted the War Advertising Council campaign in women's magazines by portraying complex feminine identities and challenging traditional gender roles in order to encourage women to join the workforce and buy their products.

In order to evaluate how private advertisers interpreted WAC literature, I discuss the same three factors analyzed in general audience magazines: implied motivation for working, emphasized social identities, and portrayed relationships with men. Using visual culture studies, my examination takes into account both composition and content. After assessing sample groups of advertisements from *Ladies Home Journal* and *Better Homes and Gardens*, several themes emerged regarding the portrayal of female workers. First, advertisers imply women took jobs because it was an exciting opportunity to directly contribute to the war. Secondly, creators of ads

HOW *Women* HELP TO KEEP THEM ROLLING ON THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD



A WAR ROLE FOR WOMEN as a trainman on the Pennsylvania Railroad. Women serve on short runs, as a rule.

RAILROADING has always been regarded as a man's calling.

But when war reached deeply into railroad ranks — taking from the Pennsylvania Railroad alone more than 41,000 skilled and experienced workers for the Armed Forces — women were employed to help keep trains rolling.

Today, on the Pennsylvania Railroad, approximately 22,000 women are serving in a wide variety of occupations — four of which you see illustrated here.

Positions such as trainmen, ticket sellers, train passenger representatives, ushers, information and reservation personnel call for intelligence, courtesy and a high degree of efficiency. Young women fresh from college and high school — after intensive training — have proved they can fill these roles most capably.

So, we're glad to have their help in the greatest job railroads have ever been called upon to do, *moving men and materials to Victory!*



AS A BRAKEMAN in freight yard operations, a woman fills a job that requires strength and coolness—in all weathers.



AS AN USHER, a woman posts signs, announces departures and arrivals — answers the questions asked by travelers.



INFORMATION COUNTERS are besieged these days — so a woman's knowledge of travel must be extensive.

BUY UNITED STATES WAR BONDS AND STAMPS



★ \$1,000 for the Armed Forces ★ 50¢ how gives their time for their country.

Figure 8⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Pennsylvania Railroad Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1944, 102.

depict complex feminine identities in images of women workers instead of relying on generic cultural myths. Finally, advertisers promote equality with men, showing them as peers or co-workers and portraying husbands sharing household responsibilities.

Advertisers portrayed working as a chance to have a new experience, to learn about industry, and as a way to tangibly contribute to the production of goods and services, implying women were motivated to join the workforce by opportunity and excitement instead of shallow patriotic obligation. Compositionally, designers link images of women workers to concrete involvement in the war by portraying them in actual physical locations from zoomed-out viewpoints rather than in vague blank spaces. The content of these ads feature women actively engaged in specific tasks where they are enjoying themselves and directly interacting with customers and workers. Compared to previous images from magazines for both men and women where women were alone and heavy with implications of sacrificial duty, these portrayals of women present a marked contrast.

A Pennsylvania Railroad advertisement exemplifies women motivated by excitement at the opportunity to directly contribute to the war effort (Figure 8). Compositionally, the woman in the top picture is in the center of the advertisement, leaning toward customers and actively working. The bright blue of her uniform draws our eye to her and the symmetrical windows on either side reinforce framing her as the main focus. The compositions of the bottom three images similarly emphasize her active participation in the functioning of the railroad by placing her in the middle of the picture and on equal ground with other male workers. In all four drawings the woman is in a defined physical location, reminding the viewer of her tangible contribution to the war instead of focusing on a removed idea of her as a worker. In terms of content, the body attitude and facial expressions of these women are markedly different from

ones in magazines with male readers. Instead of wearily accepting a vague sense of duty or sacrifice, the female in this ad decided to participate in war work and is happy about her choice. She is smiling and excited, and the ad's bright colors make the message lighthearted instead of serious. By creating female characters whose implied motivation for working was a chance for new experiences and a way to directly affect the outcome of the war, Pennsylvania Railroad presents the viewer with a woman worker whose identity and motivation for working was complex. Still displaying warmth and compassion, this war worker is professional. She shows the work of femininity through makeup and styled hair, but is still able to do her work "quite capably."⁵⁹ The cultural work of these images presents working as an exciting opportunity. Creating a tribute to the woman worker, this ad celebrates women without the heaviness and somberness of other ads, and demonstrates women workers who appear to have chosen their job based on actual interest rather than obligation. By showing the woman worker actively engaged in war work and interacting with both customers and co-workers, this ad is portraying more than a woman pretending to work or an embodiment of the mythical patriotic heroine.

Another example of the chance for excitement and opportunity as motivating forces is shown a Tangee advertisement (Figure 9). The composition of this ad, specifically the placement of the woman climbing into the plane higher than the observer, reinforces a sense of adventure and new experience. Since this woman is located above the camera and waves down, the viewer would see nearly the same thing as the woman who is on the ground, making it natural to feel a connection to the situation. In this way the creators of the advertisement appeal to women's

⁵⁹ Pennsylvania Railroad Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1944, 102.

War, Women and Lipstick—



by CONSTANCE LUFT HUHN
Head of the House of Tangee

A recent portrait of Constance Luft Huhn
by Mano de Kammerer

For the first time in history woman-power is a factor in war. Millions of you are fighting and working side by side with your men.

In fact, you are doing double duty—for you are still carrying on your traditional "woman's" work of cooking, and cleaning, and home-making. Yet, somehow, American women are still the loveliest and most spirited in the world. The best dressed, the best informed, the best looking.

It's a reflection of the free democratic way of life that you have succeeded in keeping your femininity—even though you are doing man's work!

If a symbol were needed of this fine, independent spirit—of this courage and strength—I would choose a lipstick. It is one of those mysterious little essentials that have an importance far beyond their size or cost.

A woman's lipstick is an instrument of personal morale that helps her to conceal heartbreak or sorrow; gives her self-confidence when it's badly needed; heightens her loveliness when she wants to look her loveliest.

No lipstick—ours or anyone else's—will win the war. But it symbolizes one of the reasons why we are fighting...the precious right of women to be feminine and lovely—under any circumstances.

The Tangee Satin-Finish Lipstick of your choice will keep your lips smoother...longer! It will bring an exclusive grooming and a deep glowing "life" to your lips that defy both time and weather.

BEAUTY—glory of woman...
LIBERTY—glory of nations...
Protect them both...



BUY WAR BONDS
AND STAMPS

TANGEE WITH THE NEW SATIN-FINISH
Lipsticks



Figure 9⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Tangee Lipstick Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, August 1943, 102.

“fine, independent spirit”⁶¹ and use encountering new events as a way to attract potential war workers. Reinforcing excitement as a motivating force is the content of the ad, which shows both women happy and actively engaged in wartime service with the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPS. The creators of this ad also use teamwork to encourage reinforce relationships with others instead of displaying the woman standing alone. By using lighthearted appeals to friendship and adventure when portraying these women, Tangee lipstick questions traditional gender roles, presenting military service as an obvious choice for American women. Linking femininity with their product, Tangee explains how lipstick “symbolizes one of the reasons we are fighting ... the precious right of women to be feminine and lovely – under any circumstance.”⁶² Reinforcing connections to feminine beauty even as these women were volunteering for non-combatant military service challenged traditional assumptions linking virility and masculinity with national service. By presenting two active females along with their product, Tangee actively supports consumers who work in the WASPS while also linking their product with adventure.

Lipstick was an important product because even though food, metal, and other products were being rationed, this cosmetic was still produced. In her article exploring American WWII culture through the lens of makeup, Page Dougherty Delano argues “makeup could be a sign of female agency that included sexual power and citizenship and as such was disruptive of wartime’s masculine codes of power.”⁶³ Questioning the historical linkages with makeup to women in public and assumptions of sexual promiscuity, Delano demonstrates women used lipstick during WWII to assert agency or resistance, in her opinion making them “good citizens.”

⁶¹ Tangee Lipstick Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal* Mar. 1944, 102.

⁶² Tangee Lipstick Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1944, 102.

⁶³ Page Dougherty Delano, “Making up for War: Sexuality and Citizenship in Wartime Culture,” *Feminist Studies* 26 (2000), 33.

Linking nationalism with participatory resistance instead of obedience, she presents an American woman for whom “deed and action are joined” to subvert “numbing conformity,” arguing that makeup and lipstick were indications of sexual agency. For women workers during WWII, active participation in public life did not mean downplaying femininity or conforming to a flattened definition of patriotism. Instead, wearing lipstick served as an indication of complex identity and a specific type of nationalism that embraced the discussion, disagreements, and contradictions inherent in public life. In this definition of patriotism, subverting governmental and corporate appeals to traditional gender roles is a key element of being a “good America citizen.”

Another way to emphasize direct contribution to the war effort was through the depiction of women workers in actual physical locations such as factories or plants, shown in the following advertisement for the Chrysler Corporation (Figure 10). Similarly emphasizing teamwork and friendship, the content and composition of this ad reinforce this idea. This image depicts groups of women at a tables working on the “quantity production of essential equipment”⁶⁴. Women on the left side drill metal in upright booths. The tables recede to the back wall, and windows line the right side of the image. By displaying the entire factory, including the ceiling, lighting, floor, and specific machinery, the creators of this advertisement ground these women in a defined place and connect them to tangible contributions to the war. Content-wise, the ad reinforces the idea that women were motivated because of opportunity by linking work with education and presenting the job as a place to learn. By placing the illustrated chalkboard next to the factory and calling the training program a school, the creators of this advertisement imply women will acquire new skills and be challenged in a different way. This ad is much less glamorized than the first two and presents a realistic portrayal of daily factory life, including honest representations

⁶⁴ Chrysler Advertisement, *Better Homes and Gardens*, August 1943, 5.



Alice has gone
to school
again —

YES, Alice and thousands of other girls and women have been prepared by Chrysler Corporation training schools to perform valuable war-production tasks.

In the 26 plants of Chrysler Corporation, located in 13 cities and towns of the U. S. A., more than 25,000 women are engaged in war production. Many are carrying on the work formerly done by men who have left to join the Armed Forces.

mothers. Many have sons, husbands and brothers in the armed services. Some even are grandmothers. Many of them have never worked before. Pay began for all of them the day they entered school.

More women and girls are entering war production work with Chrysler Corporation every day. Many of them, like Alice, will start their work by going to school again so that they may add their skill and

effort to the "on time" quantity production of essential equipment—for the men who are fighting the war.



WAR PRODUCTS OF CHRYSLER CORPORATION

- Tanks • Tank Engines • Anti-Aircraft Guns • Bomber Fuelage Sections • Bomber Wings • Aircraft Engines • Wide Variety of Automobiles • Anti-Tank Vehicles • Coastal Reconnaissance Cars • Cannon Funnels • Deep Water Transporters • Ambulances • Marine Tractors • Weapons Carriers • Marine and Industrial Engines • GyroCompass • All-Steel Ships and Fire Fighting Equipment • Precision Metal Parts • Barber Taps • Field Kitchens • Bomb Shackles • Joint Washers • Refrigeration Compressors • Aircraft Landing Gear • and Other Important War Equipment.

In the production of this war equipment Chrysler Corporation is assisted by 8,077 subcontractors in 838 towns in 29 states

Tone in Major Towns, Everywhere, Chrysler, C.R. 520 P.M., C.W.S.

CHRYSLER CORPORATION
PLYMOUTH * DODGE * DE SOTO * CHRYSLER
 [BACK THE ATTACK—WITH WAR BONDS]

Figure 10⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Chrysler Advertisement, *Better Homes and Gardens*, October 1943, 5.

of women workers who are different ages and are not idealized. However, even with this stripped-down, factual presentation, creators still link women to other workers and show them actively engaged in their work. By displaying the entire factory and using real women with varying identities, the Chrysler Corporation directly connected the contributions of female personnel to the war and attempted to encourage viewers to take war jobs by using opportunity as a motivating force. Through this ad, Chrysler presents itself as a patriotic American corporation, giving women the chance to learn new skills and also producing important war products for soldiers. Reminding viewers Chrysler was active in the war, it established consumer goodwill and linked its brand with providing opportunities for women.

Private advertisers used complex conceptions of feminine identity while still addressing real concerns of potential workers instead of relying on formula fiction to create stereotypical situations. I do not wish to argue that generic conceptions of the woman worker *never* appeared in women's magazines. Certainly they did. However, the greater range of characteristics represented in women's magazines compared to magazines whose readers included women and men shows that advertisers felt complex identities would give them a broader range of appeal to viewers and potential workers. While it is difficult to know how many of these companies employed women in positions where they had an influence over the creation of these advertisements, it is clear from the varied and complex characteristics presented that advertisers knew all-female audiences would best respond to portrayals of women workers that were in line with their own concerns and identities.

By using women with obvious physical strength in portrayals of women workers, private advertisers embrace multi-faceted definitions of femininity and attempt to appeal to a wide variety of possible employees. The woman in this Norge advertisement (Figure 11) exemplifies

complex characteristics of womanhood that did not appear in magazines for male viewers.

Compositionally the ad uses the strong diagonal line of the woman's right arm to link her body to the machine on which she works in a direct manner. Her left arm is similarly connected to the machine, forming a diagonal of a smaller degree. These intersecting diagonal lines give the ad movement, implying this woman is a hard worker, and also showcase her strength. The content of the ad reinforces this message of complex identity by depicting physical traits that are not stereotypically feminine, such as large arms and hands, wide shoulders, a strong jaw line. Her focused facial expression is not necessarily masculine but is markedly different from previous ads because she is in a specific location, we are shown the entire machine, and she is not depicted as motivated by the idea of a boyfriend or husband. By presenting a woman worker who does not fit generic ideas of feminine beauty and whose reasons for working are not instantly classified as dutiful sacrifice, advertisers use complex femininities to motivate a wide range of potential women workers. This image is especially interesting because it is an ad for household appliances. Smaller pictures of a kitchen, a store, and the Army-Navy "E" flag present their brand as reliable and committed to the war effort. However, the box around these smaller images and the woman workers' direct interaction with her factory environment seems to completely separate her from this smaller kitchen. While Norge is selling their name and brand, they do not present a woman imagining a new kitchen or even standing in a kitchen after work. Instead, the only woman is actually in the act of working, and on top of that is portrayed with complex femininity.

Through depicting representations of women actively engaged in war service who do not show the work of femininity, General Electric used supposedly realistic identities to connect with female viewers, shown in an ad from 1943 (Figure 12). While these images are presented to the

NIGHT SHIFT

There's a "night shift" in your kitchen, too—if yours is one of the later model Norge refrigerators. The famous NIGHT WATCH, exclusive to Norge, automatically defrosts during the night. After the war, look again to Norge for advanced features in refrigeration.

Norge distributors and dealers carry on. If you need Norge service, see your nearest Norge dealer. He can help you get best-class service from your Norge for the duration.

"For outstanding production of war materials" reads the citation accompanying the award of the colored Army and Navy "E" flag and individual "E" pins to the men and women of Norge.

NORGE—only pre-war producer of a complete line of
 COLLATOR REFRIGERATORS . . . ELECTRIC RANGES
 WASHERS . . . GAS RANGES . . . HOME HEATERS
 COMMERCIAL REFRIGERATION

WHEN IT'S OVER—SEE NORGE BEFORE YOU BUY
 IN THE MEANTIME BUY MORE WAR BONDS

Wherever American women are working at mechanical jobs in the nation's war plants, they are doing their work well and proving that women are serving America. Many of them have never done this sort of work before, yet they now are competently performing tasks formerly done by men. In many plants one out of every five women employees is on the night shift! But wherever they are, and whatever these women are doing, they are releasing thousands of men for the armed services, and helping to make the very weapons our men are using. Only in a land where women are equal in freedom and opportunity would millions of women volunteer freely for work so difficult and unfamiliar, only in such a land would they have the incentive to carry on. . . . We at Norge, completely in war work, pay tribute to the factory-working women of America and to all other women who valiantly serve both home and country.

NORGE DIVISION, BORG-WARNER CORPORATION, DIVISION OF THE BORG-WARNER GROUP

NORGE HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES
 A BORG-WARNER INDUSTRY

Figure 11⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Norge advertisement, *Better Homes and Gardens*, October 1943, 64.

viewer as honest and natural, appearing to strike a balance between overly sexualized and overly patriotic, they also operate culturally by linking youthfulness, whiteness, and attractiveness with war work. This ad exemplifies supposedly realistic female identities through both composition and content, and is especially interesting compared to an ad by the same company in the *Saturday Evening Post* that uses patriotism and duty as formula fiction. The tone of this ad presents itself as straightforward and rational, approaching potential viewers in a direct manner. Working alone but not laden with heavy patriotism, this woman is matter-of-fact and professional. Compositionally, the worker's shoulders are directly square to the camera, showing confidence and standing in a position that would be appropriate when using an industrial machine. The angle of this woman's head is also important; she looks down instead of merely posing at the machine for the camera. In terms of content, clear markers of the work of femininity are absent from this advertisement as she wears no lipstick or nail polish. Her hair messily tied up in a handkerchief, GE links her to other easily recognized pictures of Rosie the Riveter. Through the use of straightforward depictions of women workers rather than overemphasizing beauty and sexuality, advertisers appeal to female viewers who may have easily overlooked idealized visual stereotypes.

Central to the success of the womanpower campaign was getting men onboard to support their wives, sisters, mothers, and girlfriends taking war work. For this reason, the relationship between men and women in wartime advertisements was of central importance. While magazines with male viewers had to strike a delicate balance between recruiting women and easing male fears about gender roles, women's magazines provided a space to directly appeal to women. Private advertisers recruited potential workers by presenting men as equals with similar

This was her Washday

You couldn't ask for a better washday—a blue Monday spangled with sunlight and fanned by a breeze fresh from the west. A year ago and you'd be already half through that laundry hamper at home.

But nowadays war comes first and washing afterward—just as with us at G-E, war comes first and washers afterward.

For instead of the General Electric appliances you liked so well, G-E people are now making dozens of different tools for war. Things like heat controls for stratosphere fighting and mechanisms for torpedoes and dynamotors and searchlights.

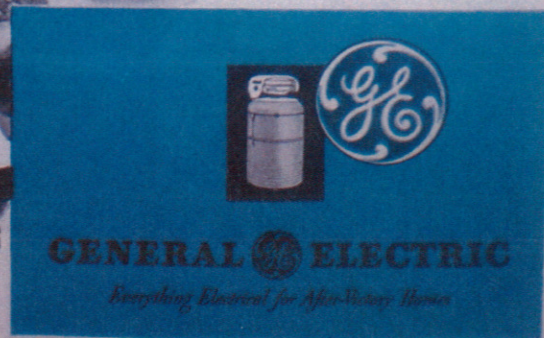
And we're making these tools better—and faster—because of our experience on peacetime appliances for your home. In fact, there's not an American warship, nor a merchantman, nor a plane which isn't using important G-E equipment today.

And since even warclouds have their silver lining we'll tell you this: war itself is a great teacher of skills. From what we've learned about new metals and precision manufacture we're going to make even better General Electric appliances—better ranges and refrigerators and toasters and washers.

So when peace is here again and things like washday and baking day and bridge day assume their old place in your life, General Electric, too, will be ready—ready to equip that wonderful new home your War Bonds will buy.



America still needs women war workers to release manpower, to speed Victory!



Hear the General Electric radio programs: *The "Hour of Charm"* Sunday 10 P. M.—E.F.T. NBC. *"The World Today"* news every weekday 6:45 P. M.—E.F.T. CBS.

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Figure 12⁶⁷

⁶⁷ General Electric Advertisement, *Better Homes and Gardens*, October 1943, 5.

concerns of success, as husbands who were supportive of women workers, or as husbands who could potentially object to wives working. Through these relationships with men, private advertisers indicated women were capable of thriving in an industrial work environment outside the home, but also admitted complicated marital situations and gave women tools to deal with them.

By presenting men as co-workers who were equally concerned with success on the job, private advertisers showed women viewers they would be welcome in areas of industry or civil service that had traditionally been considered male domains. One example of gender equality is shown in an A&P advertisement that depicts all four workers standing in a line squarely facing the viewer, arms linked and feet in step (Figure 13). By placing the women on the same level and showing them in the same stance as the men, the creators of this ad show that relationships with men will be as equals and co-workers. The content of the ad supports this reading by portraying all four workers wearing uniforms, and one man and woman wearing a worker's pin. Additionally, all four hold lunch pails and walk away from a distant factory. A&P used their ad space to emphasize nutrition when working, offering their product as a way to boost "your health on the job."⁶⁸ All four workers are healthy and active; they have worked a long day but miraculously do not seem a bit tired. While this advertisement admittedly displays both war work and relationships with men in a way that is overly idealistic, it is important to note its cultural work as a visual image. By presenting potential workers with a situation of gender equality, A&P assured female viewers they would not be unwelcome or intimidated in work environments; subverting established gender roles that assumed male dominance in public spheres.

⁶⁸ A&P Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, February 1944, 117.



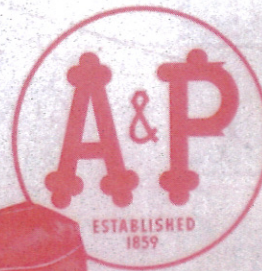
Speaking of *VITAMINS*...

Choose the brand that's "enriched" with vitamins and minerals in excess of minimum Government requirements!

SPEAKING of vitamins (*and who isn't?*), Marvel "Enriched" Bread gives an extra boost to your wartime health by *boasting* the amount of precious vitamins and minerals it now contains... over and above the minimum amounts set by your Government. Remember, too, Marvel uses only the finest laboratory-tested ingredients to assure you of *quality*... and it's "dated daily" on the wrapper to guarantee you *freshness*. Try a loaf of Marvel, today! Remember, Marvel Bread is an A&P exclusive! **SOLD AT ALL A&P FOOD STORES**

MARVEL "ENRICHED" BREAD CONTAINS
IN EXCESS
OF MINIMUM U. S. GOVERNMENT STANDARDS

56% More Iron 23% More Thiamin
35% More Niacin 14% More Riboflavin



Serve **MARVEL "Enriched" BREAD** at every meal!

© 1944 The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company.

Figure 13⁶⁹

⁶⁹ A&P Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, February 1944, 117.

In addition to presenting equality outside the home, advertisers promoted balanced relationships with men inside the home as well, shown in an Ivory Snow advertisement (Figure 14). Compositionally, the ad uses strong diagonals in the first two images of the man and woman to present tension and reinforce the idea that they are arguing. In the final image they end up back to back, celebrating the completion of a household chore. Content wise, the man is helping by holding a dishtowel in the first image and being concerned about the type of soap. He wears an apron and is responsible for his part of “the second shift.” This is not to say housework is instantly an equally shared duty; the man is not burning his hands and is instead urging his wife to hurry as she washes the dishes. However, advertisers directly speak to women’s doubts about working all day and still being in charge at home by presenting a husband who is clearly comfortable in the kitchen and is actively willing to help with chores. By linking their household product with efficiency and even pleasure (in the last picture the woman appears to be singing), Ivory Snow presents its product as the obvious choice for women who work “the swing shift and the kitchen shift.” By emphasizing relationships with men that imply steps towards equality, the images in this ad connect Ivory Snow with gender progress, while still urging women to buy their product.

While some ads displayed automatic equality with men, advertisers in wartime magazines realized the complexities of shifting gender roles and the potential problems working could create between married couples. By including an ad that specifically lays out steps about what to say to potential objections, Kleenex directly interprets the WAC campaign urging women to talk to their husbands and provides an example for other female readers to follow (Figure 15). Compositionally, the creators of this ad recognize the husband’s role as the stereotypical decision-maker of the household by placing him in front of the woman and larger than her in all

I'm on the swing shift... and the kitchen shift!

NO WONDER DISHWASHING GOT ME DOWN...
UNTIL IVORY SNOW CAME INTO MY LIFE!



1 I'm keen on doing my bit for Uncle Sam. And George, my husband, pitches in on the double shift, too. "But, gee, Hon," he said one day, "isn't there some better soap for washing dishes? That mild bar soap you use because it's easy on your hands is sure a slow sudser." The lad had something there!

Away with slow bar soaps!



2 Quick as a flash, I netted on George's idea. I started using my strong granulated soap for speed in the dishpan. But it wasn't the answer! It made suds fast, all right. But, oh, my poor hands got all red and rough! "Gosh, Honey," George said, "this will never, never do!"

Away with strong soaps!



3 So what? So why didn't I think of this before! Ivory Snow—that I use for my nicest undies—is the perfect soap for dishwashing, too! It's Ivory-pure and mild, so I can count on its gentleness to my hands. And it's granulated so it whips into simply magical suds quick as a wink. And how those suds make dishes shine!

WONDERFUL IVORY SNOW is as safe for your hands as the mildest bar soap, but far faster... and it's as fast as the strongest granulated soap, but far safer!



SAVE SOAP
Every way... every day!

- 1. Scrape grease from dishes.
- 2. Wash glasses first; then silverware; then dishes.
- 3. Soak pans beforehand in plain hot water.
- 4. Use less water... and you'll need less soap... to make abundant suds.

If your dealer is out of Ivory Snow, don't blame him. We're making it as fast as we can, and he'll have it soon.

IVORY SNOW For Speedier Dishwashing

For Snow-White Hands

Figure 14⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ivory Snow Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, February 1944, 16.

What to tell your husband

if he objects to your getting a war-time job



BUT I CAN SUPPORT OUR FAMILY!

1. ANSWER: It isn't a question of pride! Millions more women must take jobs or our war effort will bog down! It means winning the war—saving the lives of our boys! It's up to each husband to help his wife get a job.



BUT HOW DOES A CIVILIAN JOB HELP?

2. ANSWER: Just as fighters need weapons, so civilians must have restaurants, stores, laundries, buses, etc. to keep going. That's why housewives, who take vital civilian jobs, help speed victory just as much as girls in war plants!



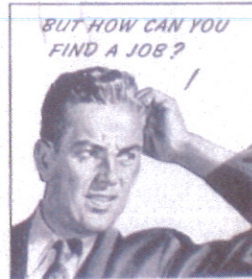
BUT I MIGHT GET DRAFTED SOONER!

3. ANSWER: A wife's job does not, in itself, affect her husband's draft status in any way. And it's better for you to get a job now... if you're called anyway... and have a definite plan to support yourself and your family?



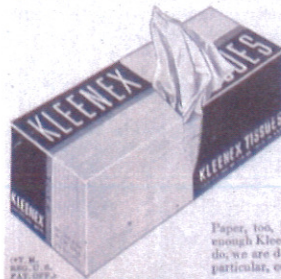
WE'LL TALK ABOUT IT SOME OTHER TIME!

4. ANSWER: Right now is the time to discuss it! Because your country needs women *at once!* Millions of them! With or without experience! Full time or part time! In war plants and in civilian jobs.



BUT HOW CAN YOU FIND A JOB?

5. ANSWER: Easy! The want ads in your newspaper show the kind of jobs in your town. And you can get free advice at your local U. S. Employment Service Office. "*The More Women at Work - The Sooner We'll Win!*"



Published in the interest of the war effort by *Kleenex Tissues



Paper, too, has a war-time job... that's why there's not enough Kleenex to go around. But regardless of what others do, we are determined to maintain Kleenex quality in every particular, consistent with government regulations.

Figure 15⁷¹

⁷¹ Kleenex Advertisement, *Ladies Home Journal*, February 1944, 117.

four frames where they are pictured together. The woman is off to the side, often in profile, or is much smaller in the background. However, she is compositionally dominant in the second to last frame because she faces the viewer, takes up more space, and is located in front of the man. In this way the ad shows the contested nature of arguments facing married couples about wartime work. The text of the ad tells the viewer that the woman succeeded in getting “her” way, simply by saying a certain thing to convince her husband. Placing only a small image of the product at the bottom of the page and adding the Womanpower campaign logo alongside it, Kleenex linked its brand with government messages. By specifically asking women to take wartime jobs and addressing possible barriers, the company directly addresses difficulties laid out by the WAC. They are also able to explain how their own products are helping in the war effort. While this ad’s depiction of argument may be overly simplistic, it attempted to reach women whose spouses were uncomfortable with the idea of war work and who may have otherwise given up on the conversation. Once female viewers knew other husbands were at first resistant to their wives leaving the home, their own struggles would seem more manageable and they could find reassurance that private businesses still wanted them to apply.

Since creators of ads in women’s magazines did not have to take into account the opinions of male viewers or fear alienating them as possible consumers, advertisers were able to place women in situations that directly threatened established gender roles and thus would have been considered unacceptable to place in magazines such as *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Specifically, by implying women were motivated by excitement and opportunity, portraying complex femininities, and presenting relationships with men that emphasize equality, these images of women workers show a marked contrast from magazines with male readers. By using realistic and complicated representations of women, private advertisers built upon already-

established modes of visual communication to maintain goodwill with female consumers and connect with them in ways that would motivate them to take war work. Presenting women whose motivation and social roles were not monolithic, advertisers promoted a type of citizenship and American identity that directly opposed the vague, obligatory patriotism of government propaganda and general audience advertisements. Embracing the complexities and contradictions inherent in public life, these portrayals of women workers feature femininities that are multi-faceted and accurately reflect the layered social roles for American women during WWII.

Conclusion

As a quasi-governmental organization that distributed literature for OWI and WMC information campaigns, the WAC had to balance its appeals to private magazine advertisers with its commitment to state-sponsored propaganda. In order to recruit businesses to provide ad space for the Womanpower campaign, the council created pamphlets and booklets outlining the best way to appeal to potential woman workers. These bulletins encouraged advertisers to recruit females using methods that were firmly rooted in established gender roles, assuming women as home-makers, physically weaker, and possessed of innate feminine ability. While some pamphlets do encourage layered identities, WAC literature mainly relies on shallow patriotic duty as the main motivation.

Creators of advertisements in general audience magazines interpreted advice from the WAC by reinforcing established gender roles in their portrayal of the woman worker. By presenting Rosies who were motivated by patriotic duty, encouraging generic feminine identities, and representing unequal relationships with men, these advertisers presented an idealized version of the American home that was strongly linked to women's domesticity. In presenting their products as something to look forward to after the war, private businesses linked postwar prosperity with the assumption that women were only working for the duration. Using patriotism, duty, and sacrifice as assumed motivations for women workers was key to the success of these advertisements in general audience magazines because the images reinforced established gender roles. Creators of ads had to balance appeals to female viewers without alienating potential male consumers. The idea of a supposedly perfect American home was a powerful and necessary marketing tool that encouraged women to buy vacuums, refrigerators, and other appliances after the war.

While private advertisers in women's magazines also had to promote their brand name and products, these businesses chose to depict women workers in a way that actively challenged established gender roles. In portraying females who approached working as an opportunity, promoting complex femininities, and encouraging equality in relationships with men, advertisers in these magazines created images that markedly contrast those also seen by male viewers. By linking their products with excitement, layered female identities, and gender equity, businesses built upon already-established modes of communication that successfully sold products to women. Since men were not potential viewers, advertisers were able to promote private businesses without flattening the image of the woman worker into a mythical cultural icon such as the patriotic heroine or sex kitten.

Through a close visual culture analysis of representations of women workers, it is clear these images functioned on many levels to urge consumers to buy products as well as honor the wartime effort. Advertising agencies were not monolithic entities that promoted a unified representation of the woman worker. Instead, creators appealed to many different values, including patriotism, adventure, opportunity, and economic gain. Presenting their own products as well as promoting government propaganda, advertisers interpreted WAC literature differently depending on their intended audience. Building upon strategies of communication that were already thoroughly entrenched in their visual vocabulary, private advertisers actively shaped images of women workers in ways that would best appeal to anticipated consumers.

Understanding the historiography of what is considered "feminine" is important because it allows us to step back and understand the arbitrary nature of our own systems of reference. Media images play a role in our personal constructions of what we consider appropriate, desirable, fashionable, acceptable, inspiring, or undesirable. They give us reference points and

markers, indications of how we “should” look, examples of role models. Advertisements are especially revealing of a particular moment in our national psyche because they reveal the strongest fears and desires of the population; or, more specifically, they reveal what the creators of the ads perceive to be American’s strongest fears and desires. While the ultimate aim of an ad is always to sell a product, advertisers intentionally craft their message to appeal to a certain group of people. During WWII, shifting gender roles threatened established definitions of American identity, definitions that advertisers and the government had great interest in maintaining. However, the fact that businesses chose to appeal to complex feminine identities when communicating directly with women shows that advertisers could not ignore or downplay expanding gender roles.

I initially undertook this research because images of women have always held my interest. Contemporary media depictions of women in advertisements are deeply troubling to me because they promote obscene standards of thinness, assume female and male viewers are overwhelmingly shallow, and utilize overly simplistic identities; yet ads still present all of this as something desirable. Even with my own inclination to analyze these images and tendency to mock them, these present-day representations of women influence my own ideas of beauty, success, and identity.

Images of women workers interested me because I could easily think of the famous “We Can Do It” Rosie the Riveter government propaganda poster, but had no idea where this depiction had started or why. Almost any American could identify Rosie the Riveter; how did a cultural image attain that kind of instant recognition even 70 years after it was created? I was interested in whether Rosie was intentionally crafted by one advertising agency or created by the government. For me, women workers during WWII were historical inspirations of female

strength and ability. However, I found it upsetting that their active participation in traditionally male industries had not led to massive leaps forward in gender equality. When I started this project I thought women had returned en masse to the home once the war ended, effectively undoing their wartime work. I was also bothered by the pervasive legacy of the 1950's housewife and the overall conservatism of postwar America. How could these women make such a drastic change in only five years?

It seemed the government, advertisers, and businesses had all collaborated to use women for their own purposes during the war, assuming women would instantly be on board to sacrifice during the war then immediately return to the home. But as I began researching, I realized I had made the mistake of assuming a one-dimensional conception of the woman worker. I had flattened her into a single image, a single representation, and a single monolithic entity. While I had questioned her origin and what her creators wanted from her, I had never considered that there were multiple images of women workers used by both advertisers and the government. I also realized how instrumental it was to conclude that the government and media had "used" women; I had assumed women as passive observers and absorbers of information and completely oversimplified women's own active participation in American life. At the beginning of my project I had no idea that the U.S. government and large businesses were so intimately connected during WWII. I knew the government had created wartime propaganda and many businesses changed their production, but the letters among leaders of government, business, and advertising revealed far more intricate connections. Before starting this project I did not understand the concept of a cultural myth and had also never analyzed historical images using visual culture studies. Learning about both these things were very exciting for me as a historian.

After analyzing the portrayal of women workers in U.S. advertisements, it is clear representations of women and conceptions of gender roles were highly complex and functioned on many levels. While these images attempted to shape public opinion, they were not intentionally didactic and were more concerned with selling products than in promoting a monolithic conception of feminine identity. The historical legacy of Rosie the Riveter is the woman who could do it all, who worked six days a week in a factory and still took care of her children while her husband was off at war, who sacrificed it all for America. But the complex depictions of women workers presents a much more nuanced conception of the citizens who actively participated in WWII war work. Through researching and writing this thesis I learned a great deal about the complexities of gender relations in the United States, and about my own personal biases when judging what is “masculine” or “feminine.” Analyzing visual representations of the women worker during WWII has given me insight into contemporary advertising tools and revealed my own tendencies to oversimplify historical and present-day gender identity. After exploring a seemingly straightforward advertisement and understanding the cultural and social ideas it promoted, I am much more conscious of the narratives and characteristics advertisers are asking me to relate to in my own life. I am also more acutely aware of who is absent from images in American history: there was only one woman of color in any advertisement featuring female workers, even though these women actively participated in war work. Through this project I have gained a deeper appreciation for the multiple and layered conceptions of gender roles occurring during WWII and postwar America. This has helped me develop a more complete understanding of American identity, social expectations, and cultural value systems that are rooted in our nation’s history.

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