

Women and Propaganda in America during World War II:
Methods in which the United States Propaganda Organizations
Targeted Various Age Groups of Women

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With the German invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939 the world was launched into the Second World War. Although the United States did not officially get involved until 1941, the United States society and economy was already absorbed in war production for their overseas allies beginning in 1939. As the war progressed and more of the men working in the factories and various other war related jobs left to join the front ranks, the economy began to look to alternative labor to fill the shortages these departures created. Women were among those citizens that the government appealed to, in large numbers, in order to make up the labor shortages.

Prior to World War II, white American women had not been urged to enter the workforce. The reigning ideology in this period was that women were meant to take care of the home and that careers were meant for men, so when the time came for the government to call on women to take the place of the men, some men and women found it hard to break away from that idea.¹ As the need for women workers grew, the United States government not only began a propaganda campaign in support of the war, but it also focused its resources on the propaganda geared towards recruiting women into war jobs and the war effort on the homefront. This transition of women into the war effort through the use of propaganda is the focus of my research. More specifically, I analyze what mediums were most effectively used in that propaganda campaign and the types of messages that were thereby spread throughout America during World War II. I will primarily focus on American white women since many black women were already working prior to the war, often as domestics out of necessity. In comparison, many white women entered the workforce for the first time in their lives during World War II.²

¹ Sylvia Whitman, *V is for Victory: The American Homefront During World War II*, (Minneapolis: Lerner Publications Company, 1993), 23.

² Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 119.

I analyze posters, movies, and radio segments from the World War II era, in order to distinguish between the different approaches that American propaganda agencies took, and the significance of the sources to women entering the workforce in that era. I have found that propaganda played an integral part in the recruitment of white women of all ages in America, through its meticulous detail in the types of messages and images that was displayed to the women of America. My work shows that the detail of the propaganda messages and images varied and depended on the types of audiences the propagandists were trying to reach. The variety of female audiences that World War II propaganda targeted included the young women just out of high school and college, along with the middle aged mothers who had other pressing obligations on top of participating in the war effort.

Maureen Honey is one of the only scholars whom I have found to have specifically researched women and propaganda in World War II.³ Her research focuses on the differences in propaganda that targeted middle- class women as compared to the working-class women in America during the war. One of her main purposes is to provide a new look into the women workers during World War II and the propaganda that was used, which eventually led to the myth of Rosie the Riveter that many students are acquainted with today. She looks at the changing statuses of women that accompanied their work in the war along with the propaganda and government agencies that facilitated this change. Another purpose of her research is to attempt to look at media works and determine if there was a difference in the way messages were created for the middle class women and the working class women. In her discussions, she utilizes World War II era magazines that targeted either the middle class, or working class women and the stories those magazines were producing. All of Honey's works are important to

³Honey, *Creating Rosie*; Honey, "The Working Class Woman and Recruitment Propaganda during World War II: Class Differences in the Portrayal of War Work," *Signs* 8, no.4 (Summer 1983): 672-687.

my research because they give insight to differences in the propaganda campaign in the United States during the war. However, it also varies from my research in that she focuses on different kinds of primary sources and a different demographic than I do.

One recent scholar has studied and analyzed World War II era posters. He looks at all the various posters that urged Americans to: ration, donate needed materials, enlist in the armed forces, join the nurse's corps, apply for a war job and so on. This scholar has no real focus; however, he does have analysis on a significant amount of posters that would have been intended specifically for American women, and he takes into account the posters' messages, along with the images that were seen within the posters.⁴ My research is different in that I specifically look at only posters that would have appealed to women during the war and not only analyze what the posters were saying but how the posters provided their message. Furthermore, I contextualize how these messages could have affected women's involvement in the war.

Other scholars have focused on the role of radio and Hollywood in propaganda during the war. These scholars argue that Hollywood and the radio were the best way to reach American citizens during the war era due to its impact in the new popular culture.⁵ The authors also document the process that these mediums took to become a major source of information for the American people and also address the important role that the Office of War Information took in overseeing that process.⁶ These sources provide a general analysis of the propaganda produced in movies and radio programs that encouraged the American people to support the war effort,

⁴ William Bird Jr., *Design For Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

⁵ Kenneth Paul O'Brien and Lynn Hudson Parsons, *The Homefront War: World War II and American Society* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995).

⁶ Gerd Horten, *Radio Goes to War: The Cultural Politics of Propaganda during World War II*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

which varies from my research because of my specific look into the effects that propaganda had on American women.

I have found the most work that has been done on white women in World War II and their role on the homefront centers around the industrial sector and the change in their roles as women. These sources provide statistics which illustrate the number of women who answered the nation's call for labor in a time of great shortages. Many of these sources address the "Rosie the Riveter" character and the move women made from their traditional roles as homemakers to the world that had previously been held for their male counterparts.⁷ These sources primarily provide background information to my research that I use to set the foundation for my research on how propaganda was used and its messages affected women's involvement into the homefront war effort.

In the following pages I provide a look into the background and factors that led to women's involvement into the war, along with how the government's use of propaganda encouraged this movement. First I discuss women's roles prior to World War II which includes certain stereotypes geared towards women at that time, along with the factors that facilitated women's movement into work on the homefront. This information provides a base for the reasons why women were so apprehensive to join war jobs along with a base for my discussion on propaganda later in my paper regarding why the United States government felt the need to use propaganda.

Second, I provide a definition for propaganda and how the government was able to use it through certain mediums in which the government devoted funds to create programs that dealt specifically with propaganda. I provide reasons for why and how American propaganda was so

⁷ Whitman, *V is For Victory*; and Doris Weatherford; *American Women and World War II*, (New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1990); and Mitchell Schechter and Mark Jonathan Harris, *The Homefront: America During World War II*, (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1984).

effective in its campaign to encourage women on the homefront through analysis of techniques primarily posters and several radio programs along with movies. My analysis shows how propaganda techniques were not only used to target the class differences of women like other historians have pointed out, but more importantly, targeted the age differences among American women. By focusing on age differences in the propaganda, the government would have been able to attract a broader range of women due to the focus of the content of posters, movies and radio programs. The government utilized those mediums to place the spotlight on ideas and messages that was meaningful to different ages of women and would persuade women to participate in the labor force and war effort, which at that time was relatively uncommon for women.

Women's Roles Prior to World War II & Movement into the War Effort

Prior to America's involvement in World War II, women found it very hard to find higher wage jobs at levels equivalent to their male counterparts. Instead, women were often limited to jobs as maids, teachers, nurses, and secretaries which required less skill, therefore resulting in lower wages. During this period, women were often thought better equipped to tending the household chores and raising the children rather than working outside the home, which encroached on the man's sphere.⁸ Women in World War II were battling the century old or longer stereotype that women were not as capable as men in certain fields, and as a result, women were excluded from trying. To try to deny that stereotype often times meant they would become a social outcast from those around them due to their refusal of traditional social norms. Participating in war work also was considered unfeminine. Prior to the war, both men and women considered factory work to be unfeminine due to safety regulations which forced women to dress and look more like men with coverall uniforms, along with the pinning back of their hair

⁸ Whitman, 22-23.

with nets.⁹ After hearing these types of stereotypical comments for so many years prior to the war, it is no wonder that many women would be apprehensive to participate in war jobs that included factory and farm work. Along with battling United States' foes across the Atlantic, women were also battling themselves and their peers over the conflict of whether to take up a more active role on the homefront or continue to adhere to values and traditions that they grew up with. Those traditions were the only thing that many of the women of World War II had known, and some women needed the encouragement that propaganda produced in order to see the other side and take a leap.

As the American involvement in the war grew, women found themselves in positions that were foreign to many of them, whether that was acquainting themselves to rationing and growing their own food or accepting jobs in the war plants. In the early days of the war, emphasis on women taking up war jobs was not as crucial and propaganda could focus on promoting war bonds and victory gardens. Many posters and films were distributed throughout the war promoting the above war goals, such as in the film *Since You Went Away*, which was a film produced in 1944 and tells the story of a well-to-do American family during World War II.¹⁰ In the film, the husband joins the army and is sent overseas to fight on the European front, while the wife is left behind to tend to her daughters and keep up the home for his return. In the early scenes of the film and throughout the viewer is shown little tidbits of the types of messages that the United States government was promoting heavily during the war especially in the beginning of the war to acquaint the American people with the idea of war. A specific example is represented in a scene in a restaurant in which the diners cannot order certain meals like steak due to the rationing. Other examples are the several signs that the characters are bombarded with

⁹ Whitman, 23.

¹⁰ *Since You Went Away*, DVD, directed by John Cromwell (1944; Pasadena, CA: Vanguard Films, 1944).

promoting war bonds such as a sign that flashes the name of a bar one second, but also flashes the order to “Buy War Bonds.” These scenes are primarily in the beginning of the film and demonstrate, to the characters in the film and to the American viewers, the nation’s gradual transition into the more pressing demands of war such as war jobs for those women who were old enough to do so.

As a result of the Pearl Harbor attack, the United States had to shift its war production into high gear and modify its war goals to something more pressing than war bonds and stamps and victory gardens. American men were being shipped overseas in high numbers and American women found themselves shifting from unemployment or clerical and domestic service positions into more durable manufacturing and industrial employment.¹¹ Many posters emphasized certain war jobs along with alerting women of the jobs that women were still needed in such as: farm workers, taxi and bus drivers, elevator operators, salespeople, and teachers etc.¹² Ordinary women during the war like Helen Putnam Rudd began to notice that “women were in demand in many fields which men formerly dominated... [and that] this experience would not have been available if the war had not started, women just weren’t being hired for such jobs.”¹³ Women were even able to float from one job to the next, picking and choosing what fit best because of the surplus of jobs that were recently available to women during the war.¹⁴ Not only were the jobs available to women but it was now socially accepted to work outside the home.

Women who had been previously confined and destined to traditional roles in the home as a wife and mother developed a new freedom with the prospect of working outside of the

¹¹ Honey, *Creating Rosie*, 23.

¹² United States, Office of War Information, “The More Women at Work The Sooner We Win!” 1942, Northwestern University Library “World War II Posters,” 2010. 1-23-2010
<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/otcgi/digilib/lscgi60.exe?mode=phrase&query=the+more+women+at+work+the+sooner+we+win®ION=&SIZE=5&db=2>.

¹³ Pauline E. Parker, ed., *Women of the Homefront: World War II Recollections of 55 Americans*, (Jefferson: McFarland and Company Inc., 2002), 108.

¹⁴ Parker, 105.

home.¹⁵ Many American women such as Grace Ridgeley Drew remember feeling that “[her] life was completely altered when [she] began to work for the government. [She] changed from a housewife financially dependent on [her] husband to a working woman earning as much as [her] husband earned.”¹⁶ The war produced sudden changes in the American home with women’s ability to enter more jobs in the work force, which for some, participation was simply to try new experiences and show their patriotism, however, for others participation was out of necessity.

For some women, war jobs were an after school affair, in which young women were able to supplement the support they received from their parents and allow them to claim that they helped in the war effort. For other women however, the war jobs in the factories and fields were necessary in order to provide for their children because the military stipend that they received from their military husband could not pay the bills.¹⁷ No matter which situation women of World War II found themselves in, they had no problem finding a war job, in fact, there were so many open positions that women could move from job to job until they found one that they really enjoyed.¹⁸ Young women during the war, like Barbara Sloan remember that “jobs [were] not hard to find, the jobs [she] had were simply offered to [her].”¹⁹ Working outside the home was at times necessary and generally expected of women during the war; however this new freedom did not come without objections.

Although there were large strides being made for women as a result of the war, there were still those men and women who did not accept the new social norms, and throughout the war women experienced a large amount of resentment from their male peers who were now

¹⁵ Julie Klam, *World War II Chronicles: The War at Home*, (Minnesota: Smart Apple Media, 1980), 30.

¹⁶ Parker, 76.

¹⁷ Parker, 102-103.

¹⁸ Parker, 105.

¹⁹ Parker, 44.

making the same wages as women.²⁰ Margaret M. Freer remembers that “contrary to propaganda, [there was] prejudice against women who took what had been men's jobs in factories. [She] had one college friend who went to work in a factory in Detroit and was subjected to considerable hostility from her male co workers.”²¹ It seemed to be a constant struggle for women to gain the respect in the workforce and want to continue to participate in such hostile circumstances, which is where employers and the government stepped in to encourage women to stick with their war jobs. The art of encouraging American women to join in the effort was perfected with the government’s use of propaganda that focused their attention on women’s inclusion into the labor market.

What is Propaganda?- WWII Government Programs, Methods, and Messages

Historian William Garber cited the definition of propaganda as “the expression of opinion or action by individuals or groups deliberately designed to influence opinions or actions of other individuals or groups with reference to predetermined ends.”²² President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his government advisors were aware of the nation’s preconceived notions and suspicions of propaganda, and strove to merge patriotic duty with entertainment while promoting American businesses and products.²³ Although the United States government did not like to label their work during World War II as propaganda, under the definition, that is what their campaigns were, in which they strove to encourage the nation to ration their food and materials and encourage women to join the workforce in many of the United States’ factories and businesses. Early on in the war, the government had actually relied more on strategies in which Americans would take it upon themselves to realize how they could help on the homefront; however, the

²⁰ Whitman, 23.

²¹ Parker, 121.

²² William Garber, “Propaganda Analysis- To What Ends,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 48, no. 2 (September 1942): 240.

²³ Horten, 41& 90.

government soon realized that with the use of propaganda, they could produce a greater effect and create a universal ideological framework attuned to life on the homefront.²⁴ With the introduction of an ideological framework compatible with America's wartime goals, the United States government was set to utilize various propaganda methods in full force.

The United States government placed a large emphasis on campaigns geared toward women and developed entire departments devoted to the effort, specifically, the Office of War Information and War Advertising Council. The war propaganda of this period focused on ideas that represented a woman's ability to perform her tasks at home and on the job, along with maintaining their femininity while working in factories.²⁵ These ideas proved important in encouraging the American women that their help in the war effort would not take away from their womanliness, especially those women who were more apprehensive than most because of their belief in the previous social norms.

Organizations such as the War Council and the Office of War Information promoted women in the work force throughout the war. Those organizations used strategically planned advertisements that highlighted positive characteristics such as the efficiency, strength and reliability that women possessed, which aided their ability to see to it that society functioned just as smoothly in the absence of men.²⁶ In order to counteract the damage done by generations of harmful stereotypes placed on women, many of the government's ads promoted women's capability to do high pressure and labor intensive work just as men had been doing in the years past. The most popular figure of the era that represented the government's promotion of women was the "Rosie the Riveter," which was represented by a woman flexing her bicep in her blue coveralls and red bandana that covered her hair and the text from her mouth reads "We Can Do

²⁴ O'Brien, 85.

²⁵ Honey, *Creating Rosie*, 117& 113.

²⁶ Honey, *Creating Rosie*, 110.

It.”²⁷ The image is supposed to present the female viewer with the idea that they too can be as strong and efficient as “Rosie,” in their duties on the homefront. Also important was the government’s use of messages that a woman’s femininity would not be lost from their transition from their female roles to their war work.²⁸ Women were portrayed as the nation’s most important asset in order to maintain a normal functioning society. America’s introduction into the war facilitated women’s movement from keeper of the home to include the keeper of the nation as well.

The use of phrases such as “keeper of the home and of the nation,” enabled the propaganda to integrate traditional gender roles with the new expected roles of women in the war. The message that women were capable of protecting the nation symbolized that women were beginning to be viewed as something more than just meaningless housewife, and that the duties and skills that women had been taught for years could be valuable outside the home when applying them to war jobs. The goal for many of the war campaigns directed towards women in the war centered on just that- to promote war goals such as factory work and rationing on the homefront by reinforcing women that their skills were invaluable to the war effort. The most prominent propaganda campaign conducted by the government, and geared towards women at this time, was known as the “Womanpower Campaign.” The campaign encompassed the idea of encouragement for American women to join war jobs, along with the attempts to persuade the public away from the traditional prejudices against working women.²⁹ Three primary mediums for the government’s propaganda geared towards women included posters, movies and radio programs, which all proved to be very efficient in reaching the intended audiences.

²⁷ J. Howard Miller, “We Can Do It!” World War II era, The National Archives “Powers of Persuasion.” 4-03-2010 <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/its_a_womans_war_too/its_a_womans_war_too.html>.

²⁸ O’Brien, 93

²⁹ Maureen Honey, “The Womanpower Campaign: Advertising and Recruitment Propaganda during World War II,” *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 6, no. 1/2 (Spring- Summer 1981): 50-56.

Posters became a large portion of United States propaganda during World War II and were produced by various federal organizations throughout the war including: the Office of War Information, War Manpower Commission, and the Public Health Organization. The messages of the posters were aimed at achieving the nation's most pressing problems such as: food and other supply shortages for the soldiers and the increasing need for help in the factories. Many of the posters stressed the need for American's to participate in rationing, buy war bonds, keep talk of the war at minimum to people they did not know, and promote every person to take up some kind of war related job to aid in the war effort.³⁰ One war goal that the government seemed to advertise the most with their poster propaganda was the need for women to join the war effort and step into the empty shoes in the factories and various other war related occupations left by men who had enlisted.³¹ Many of the posters were intended to organize and motivate women to join the war effort on the home front along with placing emphasis on how vital women were to the nation during the time of war. Other important mediums used by the United States government propagandist's were radio and movies which took advantage of the new forms of popular culture of that era.

Radio had been a major source of news for Americans in the twentieth century, however with the advent and improvement of the movie industry, radio began to have a competent rival with in America. Radio programs such as day time soaps and news stations provided the bulk of material on the air during the war which provided a large range of information and attracted a large range of people. Movies had increased in popularity since the 1930's and by the time the war began movies had become the most exhilarating form of entertainment making it a valuable

³⁰ William L. Bird and Harry R. Rubenstein's, *Design For Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

³¹ Weatherford, 116.

tool for the United States' propaganda efforts.³² The United States government took advantage of both the reigning popularity of radio programs and the new popularity of movies to advance their war effort messages. However, they generally utilized the two in very different ways, such as utilizing the film industries' use of moving pictures to portray greater emotion in stories, or utilizing the radio industries' already loyal listeners as a base with which to expand the necessity of the homefront war. Both mediums were under the direction of organizations such as the Office of War Information that would pitch different story ideas to producers that discussed American culture and would subtly teach listeners and viewers how to behave and what they could do in war efforts on the homefront.

The Office of War Information was a major organization that produced posters for the war effort, but also presented strict guidelines to the film and radio producers in order to enhance the public's understanding of the issues at hand.³³ Specifically in film, the Office of War Information developed lists of questions that producers were required to ask themselves while creating new films in order to produce conformity among films. These questions ranged from whether the film contributed to the war effort, how the film clarified issues that arose from the war, and how will the film portray America and its effort in the war and on the homefront.³⁴ World War II films included the more blatant propaganda pushing movies and the more subtle films that incorporated propaganda within the stories and dialogues. Frank Capra's *Why We Fight*, was a part of the film industries more blatant productions that discussed the evils of the Nazis and the need to work together as a complete nation.³⁵ The blatant films utilized images

³² Simon de Vere White, *The Office of War Information and the Representation of African Americans in Feature Film Propaganda During World War II*, Thesis presented to the Faculty of San Diego State University, (Summer 2000), 7.

³³ "Teacher Oz's Kingdom of History – World War II," Internet. Database available online, 4-12-2010 <http://www.teacheroz.com/wwii.htm>.

³⁴ "Teacher Oz's Kingdom of History – World War II."

³⁵ *Why We Fight*, Videocassette, directed by Frank Capra (1942-44; Good Times Home Video Corp., 2000).

clips that the United States' foes like Germany were using along with the coverage of the atrocities of the enemy to clearly state and outline to Americans what their obligations were as citizens to protect the free world. The more subtle films produced during the war incorporated war themes and goals of the nation with in a complex story line such as in the film *Since You Went Away*.³⁶ The women of the film are constantly faced with the problems that war brings to America allowing the viewers to experience the war while watching the film and immerse themselves in the United States propaganda in a way that was not intruding. The government could rely on both the subtle and blatant films to get their message across because of the film industry's growing popularity, however, the radio industry continued to have a strong foothold in many American homes.

Although the genre of movies took a big leap into becoming one of America's most popular past times during the war, radio was still continuing to hold its own within the entertainment world. The outbreak of war in Europe allowed radio to become entirely dedicated to the reporting of news in its schedule and become a part of the nation's daily routine. The radio provided listeners with fast and intelligent reporting, along with firsthand accounts and the ability to live vicariously through the various programs that the radio aired.³⁷ The most popular radio programs were the daytime soaps in which 20 million listeners tuned in every week, and a majority of them were housewives.³⁸ These statistics prior to the analysis of the radio soap's content, demonstrate the tendency of the older housewife generation of women to be more interested in the radio program's than the younger women. This is a statistic that the government would have known and been able to coordinate their propaganda methods and messages around in order to implement their campaigns and ideologies more effectively.

³⁶ *Since You Went Away*, 1944.

³⁷ Horten, 25.

³⁸ Horten, 147.

Radio soaps had been on the air for around ten years by the time World War II came around and the United States government decided to utilize them as a propaganda medium.³⁹ This gave the government quite an advantage in its propaganda through radio because many of those programs would have developed a loyal base of listeners with which to be able to steer more effectively towards the government's ideologies. In the radio daytime dramas several themes were addressed in the programs such as: ration systems, women involvement into war work, and dealing with child delinquency and life leading up to peace time era.⁴⁰ Just as in the movie industry and with the implementation of propaganda posters, the Office of War Information was very active in setting many guidelines for the soaps writers to follow for their story lines, including dialogue regarding the war efforts and women participating in various war employment.

The soaps writers were asked by primarily the Office of War Information, to demonstrate the changes that people would be experiencing in everyday life due to the war, along with incorporating many of the war themes and goals on the home front.⁴¹ In a way it would have prepared the listeners for things that would be coming in the future and put into perspective the sacrifices that they were making at the present, such as war bonds. In a way, many of the soaps' content would help make the female listeners realize that the changes they were experiencing, were in fact taking place all over the country and it was necessary to do their part. The Office of war Information extended the Womanpower campaign into the radio dramas- in which many women were shown as taking the initiative to join war jobs or participate in other strong positions which was already a part of many day time soaps stories and plots.⁴² The

³⁹ Horten, 149.

⁴⁰ Horten, 147-176.

⁴¹ Horten, 150.

⁴² Horten, 155.

campaigns such as the Womanpower campaign that the government advertised were widespread through all mediums; however posters, films and radio proved to be very effective.

Depending on which medium the government utilized for its propaganda, there were various methods that the organizations could use to attract the different groups of people to the message. To target different age groups of women, organizations such as the Office of War Information relied on a variety of images, slogans and ideas to promote the nation's goals during the war; for women these goals included participation in: the factory war plants, Red Cross events, farm work, and nursing positions. The techniques used for attracting younger generations of women and the older generations of women during the war were very similar with the use of images of women participating in the work force, however there were many differences that propagandists could focus on in order to target women in the groups specifically. Examples of the differences among the various posters can be seen in the specific looks of the women along with how the propaganda departments phrased the messages of the posters, which were utilized in both techniques for targeting younger and older generations of women.

Propaganda Techniques for targeting young women:

Many of the posters that were created for the war effort, and which targeted women specifically, can be grouped into several different categories that involved women's ages. The following analysis of World War II propaganda posters and film demonstrate the way in which those organizations would have utilized propaganda in order to target younger women in the most effective manner. In order to target younger generations of women, agencies such as the Office of War Information and the War Manpower Commission used posters along with films in which they focused on demonstrating youth and femininity while at the same time demonstrating a sense of patriotism and urgency in their participation.

Younger generations of women, such as those just out of high school and college, would have been a prime target for the government's propaganda efforts because many were very impressionable and had far less obligations such as taking care of the home for a husband and children as compared to women of their mother's generation. The government had the ability to use mediums such as posters, and movies that would have been most effective in attracting and reaching the younger women specifically. Posters would have been a prime source for propaganda to reach young women because of the ability to place the posters all over town; women who were out on the town could see a poster advertising war jobs on every corner they looked at. The Office of War Information made it known that its goal was to have these posters available for the nation to see on all buildings, fences, and windows and walls of public buildings that every citizen would have access to.⁴³ Movies were also a very effective source of propaganda to use to target many viewers including young women because they were a fairly recent technology, and during the war, the film industry exploded into a wide watched form of entertainment, which provided the nation with a new and exciting form of entertainment. Posters in particular, relied on the appearance of youth and images and messages that hit close to the heart that would play on young women's emotions in order to motivate women towards their participation in the war on the homefront.

The United States government and its war agencies developed posters throughout World War II, and utilized specific messages and images that would inspire young women on the homefront, such as posters that discussed how a young girl could help her beau fighting across seas while waiting on the homefront. One poster that represents that type of emotional appeal that the government used during the war is produced by the War Manpower Commission was titled "Longing Won't Bring Him Back Sooner... Get a War Job!," produced by Lawrence

⁴³ Bird, 11.

Wilbur in 1944 and printed by the Office for the War and Manpower Commission.⁴⁴ The first part of the slogan is in a romantic- italic font text with an authoritative text ordering the women to get a war job, while the remaining text advises the viewer to visit the local United States employment office. In the background of the poster the viewer can see a patriotic military flag that has a red and white border with a blue star in the middle of the flag, representing someone that is currently serving in the military. The main focus of the poster is an image of a young woman with gentle facial features, plump red lips, ample amount of make-up on her cheeks and eyes and nail polish on her nails. The woman has a romantic, soft look to her face as she looks off into the distance helping the viewer get an idea of the anguish she is feeling on the inside due to the war. The young woman has what looks to be a simple ring on her wedding ring finger which can be anything from a promise ring, engagement ring, or simple wedding ring, and is holding what looks to be letters close to her heart. Owing to the military flag behind her and the poster slogan that refers to longing for a significant other, the viewer can infer that the young woman is awaiting a significant other that is in the army, and the poster infers that the young woman should pass the time away from their beaux with a war job.

This image is a representation of relationships between young men and women of this time period in which many of whom were just out of high school and suddenly thrust apart by the drafts, and other young women with their budding relationships with soldiers at USO (United Service Organizations) events. Many young single women were recruited to participate in the USO events, in which they entertained the soldiers in dances and other special events in which the men and women were able to interact.⁴⁵ Many women remember becoming much attached to

⁴⁴ Lawrence Wilbur, "Longing Won't Bring Him Back Sooner... Get a War Job," 1944, The National Archives "Powers of Persuasion." 4-03-2010

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/its_a_womans_war_too/its_a_womans_war_too.html>.

⁴⁵ Parker, 42 & 70.

these soldiers and engaging in serious relationships that often times resulted in hurried marriage proposals regardless of whether the couple received permission from the young woman's parents. During war time, many thriving cities saw marriages between young couples increase in some cases by 300 percent.⁴⁶ Often times, these rushed marriages ended in divorce in the years following the war, in which the young couples really had no idea who they had married.⁴⁷ Regardless, these newly formed relationships between young women and soldiers left the young women lonely and longing for their beau once the men were shipped across seas to war. By using a message that many young women who had been left alone by their soldiers could relate to, propagandists would have had better luck in getting the public behind war issues such as: the purchase of war bonds; the necessity of victory gardens; women working in the factories; and rationing throughout the nation. The use of emotions like sadness and loneliness were not the only ways in which the propaganda organizations used posters to appeal to the sentiments of young women, in fact many posters went in the opposite direction of gloom and focused on the ideas of bright successful futures on account of a war job.

Other ways in which the posters were able to play on the emotions of young women and make young women feel that they could be a part of the war effort was by developing the idea of war jobs as possible life long careers. This pattern in posters demonstrated the government's attempts to target younger women with the production of messages that promoted war jobs that promoted to women the possibility to create a future for themselves. One poster that represents this pattern was produced by the Office of War Information, titled "Save a Life and Find Your Own" The remaining text of the poster states "Be a Nurse" and to write to the New York Office

⁴⁶ Weatherford, 247.

⁴⁷ Dellie Hahne, interview by Studs Terkel, no date, accessed from Studs Terkel "Recordings From the Good War," (2002) <http://www.studsterkel.org/gwar.php> (accessed 12 February 2010).

of Student Nurses.⁴⁸ In the image itself, a young woman in a white nurse uniform is shown looking down at her male patient tucked snugly in a hospital bed with bandages over his head. The young woman in the image once again has soft facial features with a half updo hairstyle with a nurse's cap on her head. The message of the poster indicates several possibilities to the viewer which suggest that by participating as a nurse in the war a young woman could potentially find their life passion and create a career in nursing that extends past the war, or find their potential soul mate and create a life together starting with in the hospital rooms. Whatever option the viewer takes, the poster's message is clearly pointing towards the future of the women participants in the nursing organization. Generally, the ages of women who are fixated on what the future will hold are younger women that are passing milestones in their lives such as high school and college graduations, and are not sure of what their plans are in the future.

Another telling poster that represents the pattern of the World War II propaganda organization's use of messages dealing with the anticipation of the future was produced by the United States Public Health Service nursing posters such as "Enlist in a Proud Profession."⁴⁹ The entire text of the poster reads- "Enlist in a Proud Profession... Join the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps," with subtitles explaining the ability to earn a free lifetime education for high school graduates who qualify. Women are advised to go to their local hospital or write the Nurse corps in New York, New York. The remaining poster space is dedicated to an image of a younger looking woman, which I infer from her smoother facial features that can be seen from the profile of her face with long, soft wavy hair. The woman is shown looking out ahead of her, perhaps

⁴⁸ United States, Office of War Information, "Save His Life- and Find Your Own," 1943, Northwestern University Library "World War II posters." 2010. 1-23-2010 <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/otcgi/digilib/lscgi60.exe?mode=phrase&query=find+your+own®ION=&SIZE=5&db=2>.

⁴⁹ United States, Public Health Service, "Enlist in a Proud Profession," 1943, Northwestern University Library "World War II posters." 2010. 1-23-2010 <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/>.

towards her “bright” new future now that she has enlisted in what society has claimed to be a “proud profession.” The poster’s text indicates that the woman in the image is young and still has to figure out her future, and by enlisting in the cadets she found her future. What is also indicated is that joining the cadets would provide a long term commitment that generally only young women would be able to commit to as compared to older women with families, which combined with the physical features of the poster help to develop a specific image and age that the poster is targeting. The poster displays the positive attributes of participating as a nurse in the war and the possibilities that are to come, which can be seen as geared more towards younger women of the time who were recently graduated and did not know what they had planned to do with their lives. All three posters attempt to play on a certain emotion that the viewer can relate to and be drawn to look more deeply into what the poster is trying to convey. However, one thing that the nursing posters do differently, along with many other posters from the war, is incorporate certain words into the posters and messages that can have connotations towards certain ages which would help to target women more specifically.

In many of the posters from World War II that targeted women, the way messages were ordered and the connotation of words are key aspects to look at in the analysis in order to infer what ages of women the propaganda organizations like the Office of War Information were intending to target. By adding certain words to posters, the entire content of the message could change depending on who was viewing it, more specifically, certain connotations of words would have the ability to attract only certain ages of women. In both of the previous two posters there are certain words that can have a “young” connotation. In the “Save a Life... Find Your Own” poster, the simple use of “student” in the title of the organization and the contact information, helps to infer the type of people the poster would have liked to address since

“student” tends to have a young connotation to it. Also, young female students in college or graduates from high school were used to their label as students and the use of the word on propaganda posters allowed those young women to feel more comfortable with the idea of that war job because it reassured them they were in a position that they could relate to. The word “cadet” appears in the “Enlist in a Proud Profession” poster as part of the title of the U.S. Cadet Nurses Corps. Once again, the word “cadet” has a young connotation and by incorporating the title of the organization into the poster, the message would have been more effective in making sure that the intended target of young women would notice. However, not all posters had the advantage of having their proposed organizations use words with “young” connotations in their titles, and instead incorporated small words into the poster’s messages to get their point across.

The posters that did not try to promote specific organizations with words of young connotations utilized words such as “Miss” to promote a young connotation and to convey their message to younger ages of women. A poster that represents that pattern of propaganda during the war was produced for the United States Civil Service Commission was titled “Victory Waits on Your Fingers,” and the remaining text of the poster states “Keep’em Flying, Miss U.S.A.”⁵⁰ The image of the poster has a young blonde woman with hair flowing down to her shoulders and blue and red ribbon in her hair, along with a red, white, and blue background behind the woman. The woman is saluting the viewer and has a big pearly white smile with red lips and smooth ivory skin and she is shown sitting over a typewriter. The use of the word “Miss” infers that the Civil Service Commission is looking for women who have not yet married which often times meant young women just out of school and not yet started a life outside of their family setting at home. The connotation of the word “Miss” along with the poster’s image, would help to attract

⁵⁰ United States, Civil Service Commission, “Victory Waits on Your Fingers,” World War II era, The National Archives “Powers of Persuasion.” 4-03-2010
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/powers_of_persuasion/its_a_womans_war_too/its_a_womans_war_too.html>.

young women who would be able to see themselves participating in government as a stenographer and also know that they are contributing significantly to the war. The use of certain words for their young connotations such as “Miss” and “Student” were a popular way for United States propaganda organizations to attract certain groups of women more easily. The use of certain words and messages along with the use of young women in the images, allowed for young viewers to feel more at ease with the role they would be playing in their war jobs since often times the young women would have been used to those roles and statuses; whereas older women who looked at those kinds of posters in the war would have been less inclined to examine the poster or the organization deeper because it did not exactly appeal to their positions as wives and mothers.

Overall, the specific ways that the physical features of women are portrayed in the posters suggest that these posters would have been used to target younger generations of women. The posters that seemed to have targeted younger women tended to show women wearing more make-up and more of their hair showing. Many of the posters that featured younger women lacked head coverings and placed attention on physical characteristics such as hair or facial features. The women in the posters also tended to have longer hair which was a popular style for young women of that day, and also provided the images with more free and youthful appearances along with more youthful features in the faces such as smooth skin and energetic facial expressions.⁵¹ However, it is important not to over look the content and the messages of the posters in the process of analysis because the messages of the posters would have had an effect on why certain posters would have been targeted to certain age groups. If a poster was advertising a job such as a nurse cadet, they would have wanted to target women with the ability

⁵¹ Tina Skinner and Lindy McCord, *Fashionable Clothing from the Sears Catalogs: Mid 1940's*, (Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2003), 93-107.

to pack up and move which is generally the younger generations with no children or families to take care of. Posters, however, were not the only form of propaganda that had the ability to impact young women during the war. Movies were a very efficient medium which many young people would have encountered during the war on a weekly basis, in which young women had the possibility to socialize while at the same time participate in the government's newest medium for propaganda.

The film industry allowed young people to interact with their peers while engaging in the nation's newest form of entertainment that the government conveniently took advantage of in its battle on the homefront. Films during the war tended to subtly focus on life on the homefront in which war issues were worked into the storylines. A film that depicts the life on the homefront during World War II and the way of life for many young Americans is *The Human Comedy*, which was released in 1943.⁵² The story is centered on a young man named Homer and his family which consists of an older brother in the Army, his mother, sister and younger brother. The younger brother Ulysses represents all Americans with his never-ending set of questions that he asks his mother about the war and the world in general. One of the mother's responses about when the war will end stated that the soldiers like his brother Marcus would not quit until they had won the war. Homer himself acts as the man of the house when he begins working a telegram office while at the same time continuing to go to high school. He represents many of the young people of America during this time who were forced to grow up and learn about the certain evils of world at a much faster rate due to the war. Like many of the films produced during the war, this film subtly hints to the viewers about what their obligations are to their country. This film provides a message for the general public; however it also provides messages

⁵² *The Human Comedy*, videocassette, directed by Clarence Brown (1944; Calabasas, CA: MGM films, 1944).

that would have been very influential for young women, hidden within the comedic references and the witty dialogue.

Throughout the film there are several scenes that resemble the messages and ideals found in posters and news reels of the time that were trying to reveal to women during the war. The first is a scene with Homer's sister Bess and his older brother Marcus' girlfriend, Mary. In the scene, Bess is talking with her mother about wanting to get involved more in the war besides just volunteering at the Red Cross because she feels college is so unnecessary and boring in times of war. In the same conversation, Mary expresses her desire to be a man so that she could join the army and really do something for the war, which was a repeated text on many posters displayed throughout the war. An example includes a poster that was distributed by the Navy Recruiting Stations in American cities in which a young woman is dressed in a sailor uniform with a text that read "Gee!! I wish I were a Man... I'd join the Navy."⁵³ The message in the film and the poster urges men to take advantage of their gender to participate in the armed forces, along with advising young women to participate in the war effort in ways more suited for them. Later in the film, the girls are approached by several young soldiers new to town and asked to accompany them to the movies which they accept. This scene helps to represent the importance of film as a new form of popular entertainment during the war and also how young women are expected to behave and treat the young soldiers who were busy giving their lives for the war.

The Human Comedy was a film that utilized a story made up of struggles of primarily young men and women on the homefront, and because of the young popular actors that the film used the film represents an effective way in which the Office of War Information used the film industry to promote war goals to both young men and women. The specific war goals that the film incorporates such as dialogue between the young women about war jobs and the proper

⁵³ Bird, 16.

ways to entertain the young soldiers, are ways in which this film can be analyzed for its aid in recruiting and promoting war propaganda to young women during World War II. However, there were many other popular films during the period of World War II that went even further and incorporated even more war goals and current events of the homefront in America, specifically the film *Since You Went Away*.

Many films of World War II incorporated war goals into the story line as part of the Office of War Information's guidelines. Some incorporated events of the homefront more than others such as in the film *Since You Went Away*.⁵⁴ This was a film of World War II that primarily seemed to promote propaganda for women during the war, since most of the film is centered around the mother and two daughter's struggles on the homefront, and about what they should be doing to help in the war effort. In the beginning of the film after the husband leaves for overseas, the mother and daughters consider taking in a soldier as a boarder, for the extra money but also to be more "Patriotic," in the end the family takes in an older retired military man who becomes part of the family. Later in the film, the oldest daughter, Jane, falls in love with their boarder's soldier grandson. They subsequently become engaged prior to his trip across seas, only for him to be killed in battle a few weeks later. Earlier in the film, Jane asks her mother if she could get a war job to help out and because all of her other friends are doing the same; the mother finally relents and allows Jane to become a nurse's aide. At the same time, the youngest daughter Brig had been participating in many of her school's scrap metal drives and grew her own victory garden, however she cries to her mother that she wishes she is older because then she could go out and work in the factories and do something important for the war. Up to that point the mother had not really ever considered a war job and had been more concerned with

⁵⁴ *Since You Went Away*, 1944.

keep the household affairs in order, even after a close family friend criticizes her for taking a boarder instead of going to work to make the extra money the family needs.

One scene in particular that epitomizes all of the propaganda goals that the United States was aimed at achieving was one in which an opinionated acquaintance of the mother, Mrs. Hawkins, stops by unannounced and begins to criticize Jane for taking up a war job. Mrs. Hawkins states that such “well-bred hands” are not meant for such work and should be left to others more suitable. Mrs. Hawkins is of course referring to the family’s social status and stating that war jobs should be left to the working class group of people. Jane stands up for herself and the rest of the war workers when she criticizes Mrs. Hawkins herself and others like her for being able bodied and refusing to participate more in the war effort because of their aristocratic beliefs.

The scene with Mrs. Hawkins demonstrates an important war message that urges women to work on the homefront, but also asks women and men to let go of their stereotypes of war work and how certain women should act. This type of scene could have profound effects on the young viewers because of the way the film makes Mrs. Hawkins out to be an evil antagonist who is fighting against a young woman who is only trying to make the world a better place for the fighting soldiers to come home to. As a viewer, young women would be more inclined to want to take Jane’s side rather than act as someone who is hindering the nation in its fight against the evil Nazis. The film is a solid representation of the film industry’s ability to incorporate powerful messages into the movie dialogue in which it would have helped to encourage the United State’s war goals to Americans on the homefront. The way in which the directors hide this propaganda within the complex story line enables the messages that the film presents to sink in to the viewers subconsciously. That way, when the viewer left the film and encountered the more blatant

messages from posters, the viewer would already have that idea of the storyline in the movie to push them that much further to follow through and participate in the war effort.

Films such as those above were able to encompass a cast of popular young men and women actors who young American's could relate to and look up to. After an all-star cast was put together, the directors and producers could then focus on the stories and messages that the war organizations were encouraging, which many of the young Americans would have wanted to replicate in order to be more like their celebrity heroes. So in *The Human Comedy* when Bess and Mary express their desire to participate in the war effort, many of their young fans would have taken in the film's content and perhaps choose to do the same as their on-screen peers, along with the content in the film *Since You Went Away*. While the content of the films did not differ significantly from that of posters that targeted young women, the ability of the viewer to see a moving story develop that incorporated important war goals, provided the propaganda organizations with a medium that could keep the viewer fixated on the war goal for a longer period of time. Movies along with posters utilized images of young women, people and messages that younger generations of women could relate to in order to extend the war goal's of the nation and also play on the emotions of the viewers. The ability of the government to use propaganda to convey the nation's goals did not only extend to young women but extensively targeted older generations of women in which they displayed different jobs and specific goals through diverse messages and images.

Propaganda that Targeted Older Generations of Women:

Older generations of women who participated in the war effort ranged from middle-aged housewives to even older grandmothers who volunteered their knitting and sewing skills to organizations such as the Red Cross. Propaganda techniques that were used to target older

generations of women, specifically housewives, were primarily radio programs such as the day time soaps along with many different messages targeting their generation in posters. Radio programs and radio soaps were a perfect way of specifically targeting older housewives because these would have been programs that women could listen to all day in the home while doing their daily chores.⁵⁵ The radio would have been used primarily for older women because they were generally the ones to be in the home to listen to them throughout the day, rather than young women who would have been going to classes or preferred hanging out with their friends. Posters were also a useful propaganda medium, in which women would have been exposed to the messages frequently when travelling to the grocery store or places such as that which were traditionally seen as errands that women were in charge of in America. Like posters that targeted younger women, posters that attempted to target older generations of women also depended on the evoking of strong emotions through the messages and images but for older women, the propaganda organizations tended to focus on the emotions involving family or motherly instincts.

For older generations of women during World War II, family was one of the major aspects of their life if not the only one, and propaganda organizations like the Office of War Information and the War Manpower Commission picked up on that key in order to make their posters more effective. A War Manpower Commission poster that represents that model to appeal to the emotions of older women was produced in 1944 titled, "I'm Proud..." with the remaining text stating: "my husband wants me to do my part."⁵⁶ The image within the poster has a man and woman standing in front of an American flag backdrop. The man is wearing a business suit, has graying hair and is standing with his hands on his wife's shoulder and staring

⁵⁵ Weatherford, 200.

⁵⁶ War Manpower Commission, "I'm Proud...", 1944, in Bird, *Design for Victory*, 87.

proudly at his wife, while the woman is staring straight ahead in blue overalls and a plaid shirt. The woman's attire and the motion she is holding up her arms and hands make it look as if she could work in both the factory or on a farm plowing and participating in food production. The woman has a wedding band on along with a moderate amount of make up on her face but can still see slight bags under her eyes, along with a blue and white bandana covering her hair.

By looking at both the man and the woman's features we can assume that this is a middle aged couple who have been affected by America's entrance into the war. The way in which the artist of the poster includes an image of a man and the text stating he is proud of his female counterpart for entering into the workforce represents the government's attempts to change traditional stereotypes against women. Many of the women who were apprehensive about joining war jobs because of their traditional upbringing were the older generations of women; the fact that the poster has an older couple and the text allows the viewer to believe that times were changing and the war had made working outside the home more acceptable. Along with changing the reigning stereotypes of the time period, the fact that the producer of the poster included a man in the image plays on the role of family which would have evoked certain emotions in older female viewers with families. This may have evoked in the viewer an instinct that it was her duty to please her husband and protect her family by participating in the duties placed in front of her due to the war, which would aid in the effectiveness of the posters. Still, there were other ways in which posters could play on the emotions of older generations of women and exploit their feeling of motherly instincts such as with posters that incorporated children into the posters, participating in activities that they could do together such as growing victory gardens.

Posters that would have been able to appeal to older women on a deeper level were posters that included images of families together, participating in activities that dealt with duties on the homefront. In one such poster titled “Grow your own. Can your own.,” a mother and daughter are shown in a kitchen canning their own vegetables and the remaining text of the poster is a question asked by the daughter: “We’ll have lots to eat this winter, won’t we Mother?”⁵⁷ Both the mother and daughter are dressed in the same red dress with a white apron over the front, and their blonde hair pulled back out of their faces so as not to get into the vegetables. The two have big smiles on their face, which suggests that, the process of canning your own food can be a joyful experience especially when working with your children. Another This type of image would be effective for older women with children because it would a fun and relatively easy activity to grow your own food and then can it, all in the company of their family, which would not only be helping the family but also do their part in the war effort. The Office of War Information emphasized that even participating just a little in the war effort, such as with the purchase of war bonds and rationing, could make a big difference in the United States’ fight in the war.⁵⁸ Other posters on the other hand, did emphasize the larger more pressing jobs to older generations of women in the form of messages that promoted jobs that they could see themselves doing and being able to not only work but also take care of the children.

The types of jobs that posters would have had the best luck at attracting older generations of women were the posters that promoted jobs with easy accessibility and fast training for women who often had other pressing obligations in the home. A poster that can be seen as representing that pattern was produced for the SPARS organization titled “Your Duty Ashore...

⁵⁷ Office of War Information, “Grow your own. Can your own.,” in Bird, *Design For Victory*, 39.

⁵⁸ Bird, 6.

His Afloat.”⁵⁹ The remaining text in the poster states in large text “SPARS” and provides advice to visit the nearest coast guard office. SPARS was a part of the newly created Women’s Reserve of the Coast Guard during the war, in which women were trained to serve at shore stations in positions such as lookouts, printers, pharmacists etc.⁶⁰ The poster has a background image of a man with a gun going against a crashing wave with a woman in the forefront of the poster displaying binoculars facing head on. The woman has more motherly features such as in her apparel in which she has more of a matronly hat and her eyes look a bit tired with a matronly hair style that surrounds her face at ear length. If a women were to choose to participate in the organization you can infer that they more than likely already lived near a shore line, otherwise they would have most likely picked a job in a factory, so as not to produce the need to relocate, which would be harder to do for a woman who is also trying to take care of a family. This type of job would have been more ideal for older women who had prior obligations as compared to the job of a cadet nurse, who would more than likely be required to go away for training for longer periods of time like that of serving in the armed forces. The ability to move around from one war job to the next like many other younger women had experienced because of their freedom from obligations was just not in the cards for many women.⁶¹

In the posters that targeted older generations of women, artists concentrated on posters that advertised jobs and goals that would relate to women. Older women would not have had the mobility to leave their homes to take up a war job because of the difficulties of taking care of their children and spouses. This would have required older women to be more inclined to take

⁵⁹ United States, Coast Guard Reserve, “Your Duty Ashore... His Afloat,” 1943, Northwestern University Library “World War II posters.” 2010. 1-23-2010
<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/otcgi/digilib/lscgi60.exe?mode=phrase&query=Your+duty+ashore...+His+Afloat®ION=&SIZE=5&db=2>.

⁶⁰ Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, “WAVES, WAAC’s, SPARS and Nurses,” *The American Journal of Nursing* 43,no. 2 (February 1943): 136.

⁶¹ Parker, 105.

volunteer jobs in their towns, along with factory jobs and participate in other war obligations that were close to home, so as not to interfere too much with their daily routines and family obligations. Many of the posters during the war that would have targeted middle aged women dealt more with representing women who had children and a family; this would have provided the viewer of the idea that they too could do their part in the war effort and still keep up with their prior obligations. Other key aspects of posters that may have been targeting older women were that the women in the posters tended to wear less make up, had more tired facial features, hair was covered up more with shorter hair styles consistent with older women's styles. The United States government was able to incorporate a multitude of messages and images in posters that targeted all ranges of women and efficiently persuaded those women to participate in their patriotic duty. Although posters were very accessible and efficient outside the home, radio, particularly radio soaps, was a medium in which women could receive propaganda messages while in the home, which was where most housewives during the war spent the majority of their time.

Radio could be considered the most influential form of propaganda for older generations of women during the war because of the popularity of radio soaps. An average radio broadcasting day consisted primarily of news programming and radio soap operas, especially in times of war when the nation was provided with up to minute updates about the United States progress in the fight against the Axis powers.⁶² The key reason for assuming that the radio soaps were listened to primarily by older housewives is the types of advertisements that were presented at the beginning of every episode. Generally the advertisements represented the companies that sponsored the soap, which ranged from cleaning products from certain companies and new food

⁶² "Complete Broadcast Day D- Day (June 6, 1944)," Radio, June 6 1944, Internet Archives, "Old Time Radio," 2001, 5-7-2010 http://www.archive.org/details/Complete_Broadcast_Day_D-Day.

items that could be found in the grocery store. Tradition and history tells us that the person in the household who is generally responsible for the grocery shopping and cleaning around the house was the woman of the house. Specific examples of an advertisement in a soap show was for the cleaning product “DUZ” or of “Dutch Boy”⁶³ cleaner products, in female voice in the advertisement bragged about the ability for these cleaner products to clean through tough grease or stains on clothes in the wash. Also, advertisements for food were also very popular such as those foods that would keep children and husbands happy and healthy such as cereals and new ways to cook vegetables to gain the most nutrients.⁶⁴ The advertisements and sponsors of the radio soaps clearly demonstrate that the group of people that the radio industry targeted during the war which was the housewife, however, more importantly was how these programs were utilized by the Office of War Information and War Manpower Commission departments.

Radio programs such as the daytime soaps, were utilized by the World War II propaganda organizations to promote the nation’s war time goals in much the same way that films did by incorporating those goals into the story lines. Posters were used more to blatantly motivate women to join war jobs and buy war bonds, while radio programs tended to focus more on changing women’s perspectives on the war along with subtly promoting war jobs and goals. By attempting to change women’s perspectives on what their roles were now becoming due to the war, radio soaps enabled posters and other forms of blatant propaganda to have a more promising effect on older women who were used to the idea of women taking care of the home and not working outside of it. Radio soaps accomplished this by producing programs with

⁶³ “Bachelor’s Children,” Radio, World War II era, accessed from <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s2/Radio/day/845am.html> through Wikipedia- listen to section, 5-7-2010, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bachelor's_Children.

⁶⁴ “Portia Faces Life,” Radio, episode 1411, September 3 1945, accessed from Library of American Broadcasting, University of Maryland Libraries, 2005, 5-7-2010 <http://www.lib.umd.edu/LAB/exhibits/leadingrole/MK-gallery2.html>.

storylines of strong, accomplished women who were participating in activities other than chores around the house, along with women who take on roles that were generally held for men.

Empowering women was one of the key propaganda characteristics of radio daytime soaps, which was demonstrated in many radio programs such as “Joyce Jordan, M.D.”⁶⁵ was created in 1938 and ran until 1955 and portrayed a woman in a strong and powerful position in a world for men. Joyce is an un-married woman in the field of medicine, and not as a nurse as many of her female peers were at the time, but as an accomplished doctor. A similar soap that represents the pattern for soaps to attempt to empower women was titled “Kay Fairchild,”⁶⁶ in which the main character, Kay, is a mother and stepmother who in one episode takes on the role of defending her family’s honor. In this particular episode, a supposed friend in the newspaper business has been writing gossip news that has no valid evidence about her stepdaughter. Kay barges into the newspaper office not settling for anything less than an apology and criticizes the newspaper writer for his lack of morals in front of his entire office staff. Kay is portrayed as a woman who is un-afraid to stand up to men especially men in high positions. Kay takes on the position as head of the house in which she makes sure that her family is well taken care of and protected from their enemies such as that of the gossip columnist. While these two serials demonstrate the pattern for soaps writers to place women in powerful positions in society and the family, there were many other serials that incorporated war goals that had more to do with the actual jobs and obligations that the government expected of women during the war and the writers encompassed the Office of War Information’s rules and guidelines to present the viewers with stories that actually related to the war.

⁶⁵ Horten, 155.

⁶⁶ “Kay Fairchild,” Radio, World War II Era, Old Time Radio Show Catalog, 2001-2010, 5-7-2010 <http://www.otrcat.com/kay-fairchild-p-48489.html>.

The radio soaps also took on the role of promoting war jobs as well as other important war goals of the homefront just like what many of the mass produced posters were promoting during the war. The radio soap “Amanda of Honeymoon Hill”⁶⁷ was on the air from years 1940 to 1946 which helps the viewer infer that this was a show created primarily for the war effort. In a specific episode of the show, Amanda and her husband discuss how important women are in all the work they have to do throughout the war with keeping the house in order and also working in the home the rest of the day. This type of message provided the women who were listening throughout the war with reinforcement and encouragement to continue their work and gave them a feeling that women’s work was appreciated and important. The problem that develops in this episode is that the antagonist, Bettina, convinces Amanda’s friend Jeannette that her military husband is probably cheating on her across seas. This is where Amanda’s husband Edward, comes in to ensure Amanda, and women of Ameroca, that Bettina’s accusations are far from the truth and it is important for soldier’s morale to know that their women back home have complete faith in them. Edward’s lecture to Amanda about Bettina’s accusations acts as a lecture to many of the wives listening at home who were left alone when their husbands went off to war, and perhaps did not have any contact with their husbands for months on end. This message encourages women to not let their minds wander and instead focus on what they can do to make the war effort move smoother on the homefront, which was the focus of several soaps in the war. For the radio serials that had been on the air for years prior to the war, the incorporation of war time goals into their already complex stories may have took more time, but was eventually accomplished and often very effectively.

⁶⁷ “Amanda Of Honeymoon Hill,” Radio, June 6 1944, Internet Archives, “Old Time Radio,” 2001, 5-7-2010 http://www.archive.org/details/Complete_Broadcast_Day_D-Day.

The radio soaps that had been on the air several years prior to the onset of World War II, represented the types of serials that gradually incorporated the Office of War Information's guidelines for promoting the nation's war time goals. The radio soap "One Man's Family,"⁶⁸ was on the air from 1932 to 1959 and encompassed the nation's war goals within its story line very smoothly in a set of two episodes that I was able to analyze. In "One Man's Family," Claudia and her children are preparing to head to Washington D.C. to see her husband who had left for a war job a year prior, but before she leaves she spends time with her family. In the episodes, the importance of the knowledge to can your own food, along with the advantages of growing your own food is being discussed. Along with the discussion of doing jobs yourself, Claudia's grandmother comes to the realization that it was naïve of her to not think that the changes the war had created would not affect her own family. She notices that everything around her is changing and everyone has to readjust just as Claudia is making the move to Washington D.C. to support her husband.

Later in the second episode, Claudia is saying her goodbyes to her parents and siblings in which her parents proceed to give Claudia discussions on life. Claudia's father relates how the war has brought a change to the world that he feels will never go back to the way it was before. In a way, this provides the listener with a warning to be prepared for possible ways in which the war could affect every nation in the home. Claudia then begins to contemplate all the information that her parents have entrusted to her and relates it to what is going on in her life at the moment. Claudia thinks about how many of her female friends are involved in the war such as her friend Teddy who became a nurse, along with her husband and friends choosing to risk their lives in the army. Claudia begins to understand her father's claim that many of the events of the war are

⁶⁸ "One Man's Family," Radio, World War II era, Radio Lovers, 2010, 5-7-2010
<http://www.radiolovers.com/pages/onemansfamily.htm>.

“circumstances beyond our control.” Once again, this is informing the public of how the war is affecting the world and what they should expect as American citizens as a result, such as the death of loved ones fighting over seas and the government’s involvement in food rationing and other war related activities. Propaganda was utilized by the government and its agencies in order to prepare Americans for the atrocities of war and all the changes that war brings to a nation and the use of radio soaps was no different as compared to posters or pamphlets or any other medium used for those means.

Radio soaps produced stories that complimented women’s efforts while encouraged women to do more than what tradition had laid out for them. The radio soaps provided a base for the housewife to expand their horizon when confronted with the appeals of posters to join a war job, volunteer, ration, buy war bonds and grow their own food that were produced in specific manners to target older generations of women. Radio soaps had a partial advantage over that of posters because of the ability for radio programs to develop a complex story line and continue to expand on that story. In the time of war the propaganda organizations, such as the Office of War Information, utilized the radio soaps ability to develop stories, to incorporate the United States’ war goals and promote those goals to the housewife generation. One thing that the radio soaps were lacking however, was the visual component such as that of movies, which also provided the propaganda organizations with an effective medium to promote war goals to older generations of women in America.

Films were a medium that trumped all other forms of propaganda during the war due to their ability to provide the viewers with an audio and visual message, as compared to posters and radio programs which were only able to utilize either audio or visual components. While films were a popular form of entertainment for all Americans and the Office of War Information

utilized the industry for propaganda to other groups of women, many of the films produced in the war can also be seen as effective mediums for women of older ages. One such film that can be seen as an effective use of propaganda towards older generations of women is titled *Since You Went Away* which utilizes the story of an American family during the war and the hardships that they must face, particularly that of the mother, Anne.⁶⁹ Anne, prior to the war, was accustomed to a rich country club style of living that changes when her husband voluntarily signs up to be shipped overseas. The once comfortable housewife is forced to give up many of her amenities such as her maid, and even a room in her home when her family takes in a boarder for the extra money. Although Anne accepts the changes to her life, she does not accept them without a few complaints, and throughout the remaining of the film, the viewer sees her transformation from a cushy housewife to a proud shipyard worker after she watches both her daughters give so much to their country in the war effort. It is not until the Anne's daughter, Jane, stands up to her country club acquaintance that the mother analyzes her part in the war effort, and realizes that she has been holding on to her pampered way of life and is doing nothing compared to her daughters and husband, at which point she picks up a job in the shipyard. As a propaganda tool, this kind of story would have helped older female viewers to see that participating in the war effort was an obligation for all women, not just for the women who were accustomed to working prior to the war. The goal of the United States government during the war was to get everyone behind the war effort in some way or another and the way for the government to present certain messages and goals to different ages of women was through the use of different propaganda mediums and techniques.

⁶⁹ *Since You Went Away*, 1944.

Conclusion:

Propaganda in the United States during World War II sought to encourage the nation to stand behind America's entry into the war. In order to stand behind the nation, Americans were asked to: ration, grow victory gardens, purchase of war bonds, and join war jobs in the factories. Organizations such as the Office of War Information were put in charge of creating rules and guidelines for influential industries that created material that the public had access to. These industries included the magazine corporations, producers of posters, radio producers, film corporations, pamphlet producers, and newspaper companies. The Office of War Information used these industries to promote the nation's war time goals to Americans, but no group of Americans were targeted more than women, who had become a necessity to work on the homefront.

Due to the nation's need for more men on the battlefield, women had become the alternative labor force. The war allowed women to enter more skilled jobs that had not been available to women in decades prior due to the reigning stereotypes against women and their ability to function as effectively as men. Because of those reigning stereotypes, many women still found it hard to accept the changing social norms, or many women accepted the jobs but found that the men working around them were not adjusting properly. Propaganda not only advertised war jobs and war bonds, but also tried to prepare men and women for the social changes that were now expected among women in the war. The most effective forms of propaganda used to target women that I have discussed were posters, radio daytime soaps and films which were used in several ways to target women of different age groups.

The various forms of propaganda that was used to target different ages of women, did so by producing slight changes that would catch the eye and relate to the specific age group that

they were aiming at. In my analysis of posters, I demonstrated how propagandists used images of women who maintained their feminine characteristics while performing their various duties as nurses, volunteers, or factory workers. To target young women, images of young women were shown on posters along with texts that young women could relate to in order to promote their patriotic duty. These posters also advertised jobs that would be better fitted for young women without obligations or dependents to be tied to. Posters that targeted the older housewife women used messages that referenced obligations to family along with images that showed women with older facial features, as compared to the younger poster features. Posters were not the only form of propaganda that was tweaked to target different ages of women; film and radio also met that criteria.

Films were a new form of entertainment that attracted most Americans which the propagandists utilized in several ways in order to promote war goals among different ages of women. Films utilized both young and older characters along with complex storylines that had all the characters encompass war goals. In several of the films that I analyzed, women were shown accepting the changes that war had brought to America such as women volunteering in the factories and adapting to life on the ration system. Even mothers were shown demonstrating their patriotic duty outside the home by entering war jobs in the shipyards and ammunition factories in order to take their mind off their husbands across seas. While films and posters were utilized in different ways for all ages of women, the radio soaps demonstrated a medium that promoted war propaganda ideals to primarily housewives. The daytime radio serials were largely listened to by the housewife generation who had the time to listen to those soaps while performing their “traditional” womanly duties around the house. The daytime soaps advertised products that were traditionally produced for women who were taking care of a house and a

family which demonstrated the soaps' intended targets. In the soaps, the Office of War Information took advantage of the storylines to incorporate powerful images of women in order to empower housewives. As the war progressed, so did the storylines in which many of the soaps writers incorporated women who joined volunteer services and actively participated in the war effort on the homefront.

The propaganda of World War II attempted to inform, encourage, and promote the nation's war goals among Americans. The propaganda techniques used by the government varied depending on who the intended target would be. For women, the government focused on the mediums of posters, films and radio which all provided the government with very efficient means to attract women. Different slogans and images on posters provided the means to target different ages of women most effectively. Whereas the storylines and images of women cast in films provided the basis for what types of audiences would be more inclined to watch and absorb the information presented in the film. Lastly, radio soaps proved to be a prime form of entertainment that older women could enjoy while integrating new social norms that the war had created and use that information to pursue their patriotic duty on the homefront.

However different the methods and messages were in the propaganda mediums utilized during the war, by the end of the war, there was only one message being conveyed to women which discussed women's duties to leave their war jobs and return to their traditional roles in the home. The propaganda organizations such as the Office of War Information and Manpower Commission produced propaganda during the war were under the assumption that the women, who joined war jobs to pick up the slack left by men in the military, would voluntarily leave and return to the home at the end of the war.⁷⁰ As the war was coming to a close, there were many advertisements and posters that began to circulate throughout America that discussed women's

⁷⁰ Honey; *Creating Rosie*, 28.

alternatives to war jobs and returning to peacetime work rather than promoting women in strong, powerful positions in factories as in the months after Pearl Harbor. One such advertisement that circulated in many popular magazines that represents this shift in propaganda methods was distributed in 1944 for the Adel Precision Products Corp., and it began with the question: “Mother, when will you stay home again?”⁷¹ In the advertisement, there is a picture of mother with a young daughter, both dressed in coveralls and a bandana over their heads; it looks as if the daughter ran out to catch her mother on her bicycle before she went to work. The first few lines of the remaining text states: “Some Jubilant day mother will stay home again, doing the job she likes best- making a home for you and daddy, when he gets home,” then a few words on the work the woman is doing in the Adel plant. The mother’s response to her daughter demonstrates the propaganda organizations’ attempts to shift women’s mentalities about war work and inform women of the upcoming changes due to peacetime. The government fully intended for these types of messages to uplift women’s spirits about the men coming home and reprogram women’s minds to accept traditional gender roles all over again in the post war world. Many women like Jean Reed Prentiss enjoyed returning back to life as it was before the war; Jean recalls that she “learned a lot, had some money in the bank... but [was] expecting [their] first child, and had a joyful reason to go back to ‘woman’s work.’”⁷² However there were also many women that felt the opposite and did not take a liking to the government’s push to go back to their lower wage earning jobs and isolation in the home.

Many women had become quite accustomed to working outside of the home and did not appreciate the drastic changes that society was placing on women when just months prior they had been told their war jobs were their most pressing obligation. In households such as that of

⁷¹ Honey; *Creating Rosie*, 125.

⁷² Parker, 99.

Grace Ridgeley Drew's, there were complete gender role changes due to the war since she was "working six days a week and [her] husband had Saturdays off, it became his responsibility to do the grocery shopping."⁷³ For other women who did not have their husbands home during the war, working in war plants became a necessity to pay the bills, and even when their husbands came home, many women had no pressing obligations, such as young children, to keep them from continuing their work outside of the home.⁷⁴ No matter how many types of messages the propaganda organizations produced at the end of the war for women to return to the home, women of America had several different opinions on what the future would hold for them in the workforce. The government's messages about women with strength and power in the labor force at the beginning of the war, helped to empower American women and may have doomed the traditional gender roles forever, whether the majority of the United States was ready for it or not.

⁷³ Parker, 76.

⁷⁴ Parker, 76.

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