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Shifting Spheres

Gender, Labor and the Construction of National Identity in U.S. Propaganda during the Second World War

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Abstract: *U.S. Government propaganda during the Second World War promoted an opportunistic shift in gender and labor ideology. This article examines wartime posters to argue that a new definition of "home" was created during this era by media-based labor recruitment campaigns which redefined the private sphere to include the national "home front," maintaining an ideological separation from the public sphere of international and military action. This conceptual transformation allowed the participation of women in the labor market while supporting the ideological location of women within the homesphere, thus maintaining (and reinforcing) the hierarchical gendered separation of public and private domains.*

Keywords: Second World War; propaganda; labor; home front; race; gender; media; women and war; U.S. history

Introduction

Between 1941 and 1945, the United States activated some sixteen million troops to fight in the Second World War in the European and Asian theaters (Gilbert 2004). In response to this historical event, approximately six million American women entered the labor market for the first time, many working in industries historically dominated by men. In total some eleven million female workers took on jobs left vacant by men who served in the armed forces during the course of the war (Bentley 1998). The bravery and sacrifice of the men and women of this generation have been of interest to a number of scholars (Goldin 1991; Honey 1995; Milkman 1987; Westbrook 1990). While their contributions to the war effort are well known, less widely-understood are the complex relationships between gender and wartime propaganda (Bentley 1998; Winchell 2008) and gender and labor (Kessler-Harris 2003) due to this massive demographic shift in the workforce. This article contributes to that ongoing dis-

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cussion by examining the role of the U.S. Office of War Information (OWI) in crafting a temporary national "home space" in the wartime labor industry that both reified the place of women in the private sphere during peacetime and allowed them to meet the labor needs of the nation without upsetting social norms governing the appropriate roles for men and women.

A significant part of the U.S. government's wartime propaganda effort was devoted to motivating large numbers of women to join the labor force to replace male workers who joined the military (Lavine and Wechsler 1940). While the recruitment of women on a large scale was necessary in order to maintain, and even increase, industrial production during the war, it also involved a radical departure from the socio-cultural ideology of pre-war gendered labor relations in the United States. Public ideals of "family" in this era had borrowed heavily from those of the Victorian middle class, and depended on a strict gendered division of labor which shaped the separate spheres of public life (inhabited by men) and private family life (inhabited by women) (Coontz 2005). In practice, however, there was a significant gulf between reality and the idealized notion of strictly separate spheres. Pre-war social norms did permit certain categories of women to work in paid employment. Working-class white women and women of color had been part of the American workforce for generations, while single white women in the lower middle class were often expected to work in feminized roles such as secretaries before they married. Married, white, middle-class women, however, were not expected to work outside their own homes. The gendered separate spheres ideology was, therefore, not simply a description of the "way things are," but an imperative for the "way things should be."

The first half of the 20th century was an important time for U.S. labor and gender relations (Kessler-Harris 2003) and was marked by the construction of a gendered public-private dichotomy that reflected the social power and labor superiority of men. Not only were notions of the superiority of the work that was done by men used to justify gendered wage differentials, but they also legitimated the intellectual notions of cultural superiority and masculine power that acted as a foundation for the national identity. U.S. national identity was constructed as the end result of a linear development of culture that rests on a clear dichotomy between "barbarism" and "civilization" (McClintock 1995). These colonizing ideas were a central part of the national discourse and were dependent on raced and gendered ideas of white male superiority. This racist patriarchy was central to the national identity which, in turn, acted to shape American labor relations between men and women before, during and after the Second World War.

Before the Second World War, therefore, labor relations were based on historically complex gendered and race relations which developed during the First World War and were further shaped by economic conditions during the Depression (Kessler-Harris 2003). While women joined the work force in substantial numbers during the First World War, most occupied roles that could be viewed — at least in the popular discourse — as nurturing (Kessler-Harris 2003). In addition, most of the women who were employed during the war were not new to the workforce but were working-class women who moved from domestic labor to jobs in the public sphere (Braybon 1990). Gendered discourse during this time focused primarily on women as symbols of national or war aims, rather than on women as workers, and the U.S. government's use of gendered propaganda during the First World War focused on expanding female roles to meet the needs of the war, while maintaining feminine passivity (Shover 1975).

The gendered discourse during the Second World War was similar but, in many ways, much more effective and far-reaching. This was due in part to a complex discursive framework used by the Office of War Information that simultaneously sought to expand the place of women in the work force and to redefine the very notion of a woman's place. In this framework, the private sphere acted both as a legitimating moral center and a primitive emotional "Other" in contrast to the rational, civilized and masculinized public sphere. The private sphere demonstrated the traditional definition of "home," the physical dwelling and site of most female reproductive and unwaged labor. Yet, with the loss of so many male workers to military service, a new definition of the home was created: the home front was designated as the new "home" and private sphere. This conceptual transformation allowed the participation of women in the labor market while maintaining the conceptual location of women within the sphere of the home, thus both permitting and concealing a fundamental shift in the labor roles which were socially-acceptable for women to occupy.

This article analyzes a collection of 300 posters produced by the U.S. Office of War Information[1] during the Second World War to explore the kinds of conceptual models that were employed to maintain the ideological integrity of the nation state and to examine the ways in which shifts in the definition of "home" acted both to empower women and to contain their labor in socially necessary spaces. The article examines and discusses commonly-used propaganda images from this period as both representative of and contributing to the social construction of a national identity which was necessary for the successful transformation of labor during the war. Such images are located within a framework of strategic gender norm construction and were used both to reinforce the gendered dichotomy of public and private spheres and to reconstruct the specific conditions of those spheres in order to meet the conceptual and practical labor needs of the nation state. Nation building was conducted both practically through the labor of women, and conceptually through the ideological division of self and "Other." The maintenance of foundational notions of women's place within the private sphere was achieved by reestablishing the definition of the home sphere practically, if not conceptually, during the Second World War. The maintenance of a separate spheres philosophy allowed practical labor needs to be met, while maintaining a notion of national progress based on a foundation of traditional ideas that functioned to legitimize a gendered and hierarchical home space. Thus, in order to effectively maintain support for the war it was necessary that the wartime cultural norms established by U.S. propaganda did not fundamentally undermine the basic social expectations of the era.

Theorizing the Nation

The role of women is central to the development and establishment of state and national identities and to understanding the ideological and cultural transformations of the Second World War. Understanding the role of power in the cultural, social and economic interactions that build a national identity is equally important. Further, the role that patriarchal gender constructions, backed by public authority and cultural legitimacy, play in establishing and maintaining national identity is substantial. Particular constructions of masculinity and femininity also play significant roles in maintaining state power (Enloe 1990). The examination of propaganda during the Second World War therefore becomes a kind of case

study in examining the importance of gendered roles and identities in establishing and maintaining local and global economies in the face of social upheaval.

U.S. government propaganda during the Second World War is representative of the tendency to dictate women's identities in service to the nation and articulates necessary changes in women's "natural" and "proper" place as temporary, acceptable and reversible. The nature of these changes is discursively constructed and reinforced using a system of cultural artifacts (McClintock 1995). The bodies of women become a traded commodity, as the nation requires them to replace absent men in the work force and then return to their proper sphere after the war in order to facilitate the material replacement of citizens, as well as to confirm the location of women in the original homespace.

The importance and power of the "home" is tied to notions of a gendered self/other dichotomy. The meta narrative of "civilization" embraces a view of the male-dominated public sphere as poised in a place of power: "the image of global history consumed, at a glance, in a single spectacle from a point of privileged invisibility" (McClintock 1995, 37). This imagined space of "civilization" is only able to exist in opposition to an "othered" group, which is constructed as uncivilized, prehistoric, atavistic and irrational (McClintock 1995, 40). This "othered" group is linked to the feminine home sphere within a patriarchal social system. The separation between public sphere nation and private sphere home is deeply gendered and both internalized norms and social institutions act to maintain a hierarchical status quo.

Historically speaking, the relationship of family to nation gender norms is a generalizing of family hierarchies to the national identity (Coontz 2005). This is demonstrated by the traditional roles that women and men play within the nation. Men become the "protectors" while women are the "protected." Some authors theorize the ways that women are constructed as the symbols of a nation (Enloe 1990). Thus woman, the symbol of a nation, is protected by men. However, this analysis can be expanded to indicate that the connection between family and nation is strategic and reciprocal.

The nation reinforces the idealized patriarchal family by privileging the notion of the power of the father and masculine ideals. Challenges to the ideal of masculine domination and father as ruler are often construed as attacks on the nation (Enloe 1990; McClintock 1995). Women who challenge traditional ideals are labeled "divisive" or even subversive to the nation. Thus, the nation protects the masculinity ideals of the family, and the family in return creates and protects the nationalist agenda (McClintock 1995, 338–340). Based on this idea, it is possible to articulate the place of woman within this dichotomy as central because she acts as a symbol of the nation, to be protected, possessed or conquered. Often whether a women was defined as a symbol to protected or to be conquered and owned was tied to her social position, factors such as age, family affiliation, social class and race all worked together to define her nature of her symbolic status. Her treatment is dictated by a family structure of masculine superiority and feminine submission, in which race and color ultimately define woman's place as wife or servant. Thus, the relationship between family and culture are integral to the understanding of gender and nation.

Theorizing the War

At the beginning of the Second World War, the only socially "appropriate" roles for white married women were within the home. Yet the proportion of married women working out-

side the home rose during the war years from 13.9 percent in 1941 to almost 23 percent by the time the war ended in 1945. In fact, during the course of the war, women eventually comprised over 36 percent of the total U.S. civilian work force (Hartmann 1982). The number and proportion of women working in jobs which were previously regarded as "male" increased even more significantly.[2] Female employment in the defense industry, for example, increased by 492 percent during the course of the war (Hartmann 1982). This increase was due, at least in part, to the practical needs of the nation. Roughly sixteen million American soldiers were deployed overseas during the Second World War. Most of these were the young males who previously made up a large part of the work force in the manufacturing sector (Gilbert 2004). The loss of so many workers combined with the increasing requirements for the production of war goods and weapons resulted in a very real labor shortage. The OWI was charged with addressing this problem by tapping a previously underutilized pool of workers: women. The U.S. government identified white, middle and working class married women in particular as potential members of the wartime labor force (Coontz 2005).

Thus began a careful and delicate balancing act on the part of the architects of OWI propaganda. It was absolutely necessary to bring women out of the home and into the workforce in order to meet the manufacturing demands of the war. Yet, doing so had the potential to fundamentally change the gendered and raced balance of power that supported the militarized imperial national identity. The potential loss of support of a foundational homespace was significant. The understanding of the nation-as-future was dependent on the existence of an ideological homespace which legitimated public action by establishing a "starting point" that required protection and provided emotional support. The strength of the national identity as a progressive public sphere was grounded in a legitimating and unchanging private space.

In order to support a militarized, imperial and colonizing wartime national identity, women were needed in two separate but equally important conditions. First, they were needed to act as the "protected," the romanticized young, white, female and above all vulnerable bodies of popular culture that legitimized the use of force in engagement with a racialized, demonized other. In order for this ideological construction to exist, the nation state needed to maintain its identity as a progressive, all knowing, "civilized" entity (McClintock 1995). This in turn was dependent on a notion of women as inhabitants of the private sphere, thus maintaining a "natural" and legitimate foundation for hyper-masculine imperial progressiveness. Second, women were needed to function in what had been historically defined as a public space: the work force. It was fundamentally necessary to redefine and rearticulate the meaning of public and private spheres to allow the practical needs of the nation to be met without compromising the national identity. This was achieved, successfully, through the strategic and deliberate creation and dissemination of propaganda.

On Propaganda

Propaganda is a term that is loaded with historical and moral meaning. It can be loosely defined as a systematic and deliberate process by which images, information and ideas are used to influence public opinion (Jackall 1994; Shulman 1990). Propaganda is a deliberate and systematic construction of social discourse, often with socio-political meaning. Scholars debate the moral implications of propaganda as a tool of governments (Schlesinger 1989;

Green 1988; Jackall 1994) Often researchers divide propaganda into three main types. *White propaganda* is issued from an acknowledged source. *Grey propaganda* does not clearly identify any source. Finally, *black propaganda* purports to emanate from a source other than the actual source (Linebarger 1954; Herman and Chomsky 1988).

The effectiveness of propaganda in influencing public opinion is closely linked to the nature of the discourse, as well as the population being targeted. It was in the twentieth century that propaganda gained its most impressive victories, as well as its moral ambiguity. This is largely due to the rise in mass media communication outlets and sources. Some of the most effective propaganda campaigns have been created and sustained by governments during times of war (Green 1988, Jackall 1994). The sustained campaign by the OWI to influence private life choices in the service of the public good during the Second World War stands out as one of the most effective campaigns in modern history.

The propaganda created by the U.S. government during the Second World War was characterized by contradictions and ambivalences; it professed old exclusions and new inclusions. It depicted white women as both motivation for war, and as a new source of labor. It appeared to be opening up new spaces for women and, at the same time, it changed the nature of those spaces to reinscribe women into old patterns of behavior. While the media of the time appeared to open up jobs to white women, it also reinforced messages of masculine domination and feminine submission. For some women of color, new options were becoming available, for others, whole new patterns of repression were being created.

Method

Most of the data for this work was collected through in-depth document analysis of the World War II Poster Collection housed at the Northwestern University Library in conjunction with Northwestern University Government Publications & Maps Department. This is a collection of 338 Second World War–era posters that were issued by various U.S. government agencies between 1940 and 1947. The images are publicly available at the collection's website: http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters. According to information provided by the U.S. government, the posters were displayed in schools, libraries, factories and other public places. The images are divided into the following categories by the collection housing website:

- Encouragement for women to work in factories or military support positions
- Instructions to women on how to behave in these situations
- Efforts to encourage conservation of materials and rationing in the home
- Encouragement to workers to increase productivity and quality
- Warnings about leaking defense information to enemy agents
- Nutrition and family care
- Investment in war bonds (Northwestern University Library 2007)

All 338 posters in the collection were examined and notes were taken on their text and imagery, focusing specifically on the way in which gender and race were utilized. Several common gendered and raced themes that are linked to redefining homespaces and public spaces in nation/state terms are evident in this collection. These include the redefinition of

home into home front, related notions of gendered duty, themes of protection, racialized threats and issues of reward and sexuality. The images and text for many of the posters and flyers from this period had complex meanings that contributed to a multi-faceted discourse of nation-building and national power.

The Rise of Rosie the Riveter

Arguably the single most famous image of American propaganda from the Second World War is that of Rosie the Riveter (Figure 1), a brightly colored image of a physically powerful white woman dressed in factory worker attire claiming, "We Can Do It!" (Miller 1941–1946). Rosie appeared in song, in films, on magazine covers and on posters beginning in 1942 and she continues to be an icon today. The creation of this character was part of one of the most sustained government-funded propaganda campaigns of the era. Women had, of course, been working both within and outside of the home since before the founding of the nation (Kessler-Harris 2003). However, the socially appropriate location for women within the U.S. national story/discourse was in the home. For white women, that meant staying home with their own children and for women of color, particularly African American women, it meant domestic labor in other people's homes (Honey 1995). In either case, the association of women workers with the home, or "nurturing" labor in the private sphere, was deeply entrenched in the popular imaginary. The symbolic association between the private homespace and women relegated both to a support system for the civilized public sphere, which was tied to both masculinity, and the nation state.

With the loss of working men to the military, the nation was unable to produce the goods and services necessary to function during wartime. Thus the War Department, utilizing the OWI, began a systematic effort to change the minds of American women about their proper place in society (Coontz 2005, 221). This was by no means a new practice; in fact, nation-states have done a lot of discursive work concerning the nature of femininity (and masculinity) in order to maintain systems of power, particularly in times of military action (Enloe 2001). Elements of this practice were evident in the First World War (Shover 1975). Yet during the Second World War, the scale of military action required a massive national effort in the U.S. to rearticulate the contemporary discourse around women's roles. Women needed to be redefined as physically capable, as Rosie demonstrates with

Figure 1: "We Can Do It" (National Archives and Records Administration Still Picture Branch).

her strong upper body and confident physical appearance. To the OWI, it was essential that young white women remain inscribed in domestic spaces and maintain traditional ideals of femininity. Military and government leaders depended on a national identity of militarized masculinity and a civilized progressive ethos to fill the need for soldiers and to maintain support for the war (Enloe 2001). Such a national identity requires a series of "others" in order to establish hierarchy and maintain boundaries, and women's status as caretaker meant that reward and motivation was tied to her construction as vulnerable and ensured her conscription into the home/private sphere. Rosie, unless constructed carefully, had the potential to disrupt the ideological symbol of vulnerable femininity that was utilized to motivate soldiers and justify military action.

In order to avoid this potential problem, OWI strategists focused on changing the nature of public spaces into private ones and tying contemporary needs for working women to traditional ideals of being caretakers. The U.S. government began to reject the pre-war stance of American isolation from international relations during the Second World War prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 (Ware 2002). This isolation was the basis of the cultural definition of the United States as a private homespace or "homeland." Wartime propaganda films often used terms such as "women working back home" to "support our boys overseas" (Field 1987). The use of such language began to rearticulate the concepts of private and public spheres to American citizens. Language and images of "home" as being synonymous with locations within U.S. borders was a common theme of propaganda films and music (Doherty 1999). Ideologies of the homespace were closely linked to conceptualizations of "duty" for both men and women.

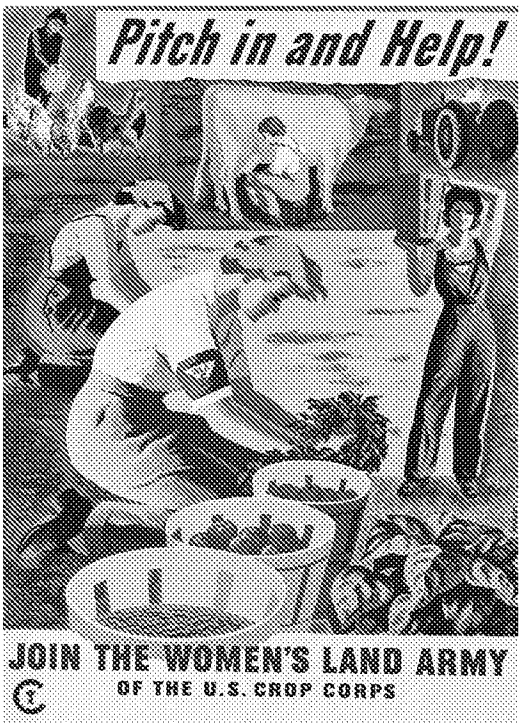


Figure 2: "Pitch in and Help!" (Northwestern University Library)

White women working in factories in the U.S. were constructed by the OWI as fulfilling their traditionally defined duties in two ways. First, they were "taking care" of the servicemen fighting in the military by producing products such as clothing and weapons for them to use. The notions of duty and female responsibility for the basic needs of fighting men are essential points. Note the text and image on a food production poster (Figure 2). The header, "Pitch in and Help," in conjunction with women working in agricultural food production, attempts to evoke a spirit of gendered communal labor in producing food for soldiers (Morley 1944). The notion of feeding and care work as being women's work was a common cultural norm and a powerful means of conscripting traditional women's work into national service (DeVault 1994; Bentley 1998). This was sending two clear messages. First women should be producing

food, clothing, etc. for the fighting forces. This reinforced gendered expectations about care work, food work and female identity. Second, by encouraging women's participation in government controlled food and manufacturing production, an important labor force was established.

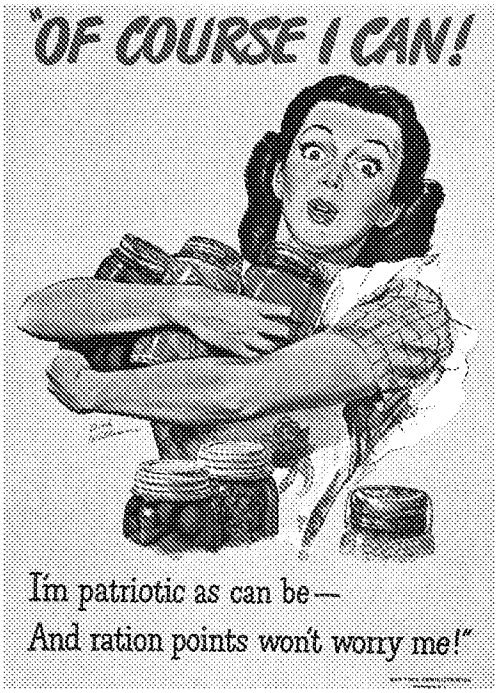
By constructing women as being part of "the war effort" back "home," a discourse emerged that allowed women to work in factories while maintaining their status as caretakers of the material needs of men. Home was transformed as being within national borders, instead of only within the physical confines of a domicile. Thus, women remained at "home" while working at factories and doing other necessary wartime tasks. For example the next poster (Figure 3) shows a young and attractive white woman assembling airplane components (Office of War Information 1943d). The header, "The More Women at Work the Sooner We Win," trades on the notion of women's duty as laborers to help win the war. This labor recruitment poster encourages women to move into the work force, into previously masculinized jobs, in order to fulfill their caretaker obligation to help with the war effort. The woman pictured is attractive, well-dressed and fully accessorized, sporting make-up and neatly manicured nails. The carefully dressed and hyper-feminine worker also sends an OWI message about the value of women's beauty and status as objects of attraction. Women are reinscribed into traditional roles as objects of attraction through the use of repeated stereotyped images. The power of representation to shape social attitudes and guide social behavior is immense (Lester and Ross 2003). Further in the text, the use of the term "sooner" implies a quick return to traditional ideals, where everything goes back to "normal." Media-generated discourses that demanding that women to "get a war job" also served the secondary function of tying such non-traditional behaviors to traditional identities while helping preserve gendered roles. Thus, the rearticulation of the nation as a "home" functioned to both increase comfort with changes in labor behavior and reinscribe women into homespaces.

Figure 3: "The More Women at Work the Sooner We Win" (Northwestern University Library).

The War at Home

The discursive conflation of wartime jobs, gender roles and the construction of domestic activities as acts of patriotism resulted in multiple, carefully-constructed messages that worked to shape new behaviors while maintaining existing social attitudes. One example of

this was the victory garden phenomenon, in which vegetable gardens were planted and cultivated, primarily by women, in order to supplement food supplies for the civilian population. The increase in privately-produced food allowed more commercially-grown food to be shipped overseas to soldiers. The next image (Figure 4) is an example of the common victory garden poster (Office of War Information 1943c). The poster utilizes a combination of images featuring fresh food, workers and the text "our food is fighting" to encourage behavioral changes; in this case the planting of a victory garden. The focus on establishing and maintaining support and acceptance for the war, and war rations, uses emotionally-powerful symbols of families working together, which conflates and connects notions of home, family and duty to nation.



These posters were often paired with information about rationing and government information and support for domestic planning. This type of poster acted as a means to blur the lines between public and private sphere activities within the confines of the nation-state. Observe the next poster (Figure 5) which shows a young white woman who says, "Of Course I Can!: I'm Patriotic As Can Be — And Ration Points Won't Worry Me," while she awkwardly holds home-canned goods (Williams 1944). This poster demonstrates the blurring of public and private spheres, as the government becomes increasingly involved with previously private sphere activities such as food preparation. This blurring acted by discouraging and encouraging certain behaviors deliberately and systematically in service to the nation. Further, by tying food preparation, a very gendered behavior that is often linked ideologically to home and family (DeVault 1994; Bentley 1998), to patriotism and working in support of nation, the clear lines between home and

Figure 4, top: "Plant a Victory Garden"; Figure 5, bottom: "Of Course I Can!: I'm Patriotic as Can Be — And Ration Points Won't Worry Me" (both photographs, Northwestern University Library)

duty to nation are blurred. Focusing on private sphere activities, such as food preparation, and making it a national issue, is one way to contribute to the redefinition of home as nation.

Propaganda was often linked to issues of caretaking and duty where the language of sacrifice, such as "Do with less, so *they'll* have enough," is employed (Figure 6). This poster utilizes an emotionally-charged image of a smiling young soldier holding a battered tin cup which fulfilled dual roles for the national discourse: it encouraged the support of a desired behavior (consumer rationing) and at the same time re-inscribed woman's role as domestic caretaker while making her actions within the home into acts of public value (Office of War Information 1943b). The blurring of the lines between public and private sphere activities had practical value for the nation. Women's out of home labor could be utilized without undermining the notion of women's place in the home by transforming the U.S. itself into a symbolic homespace.

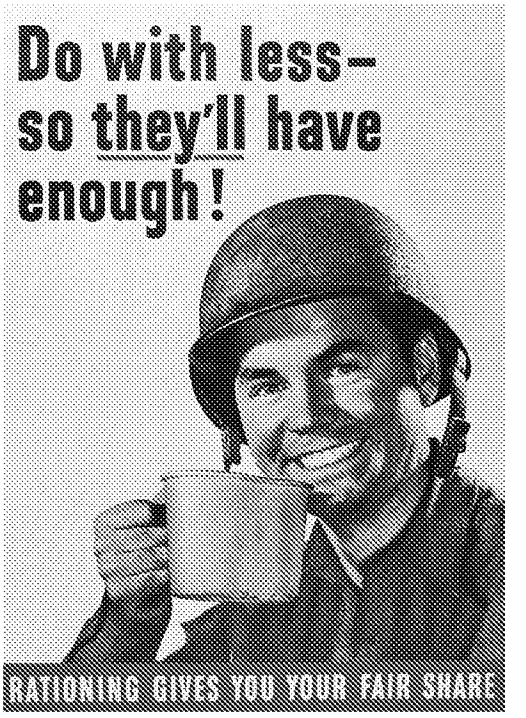


Figure 6: "Do with less, so *they'll* have enough" (Northwestern University Library).

Sex and Reward

According to the national discourse, women's bodies themselves became representative of the homeland. The rise of "pinup girls" and the sexualization of women's bodies continued to be constructed as a motivating factor for young men fighting overseas. The number and popularity of pinup girls increased throughout the war. The images were constructed with the idea of the women's bodies as prizes or rewards for the soldiers (Westbrook 1991). The next image (Figure 7) in particular, explicitly promises female sexuality as a reward (Capp 1945). This print ad for war bonds, targeted at soldiers, features a blond, blue-eyed woman dressed in revealing clothing reclining in a semi-prone position on the ground. "Daisy Mae," a character from the Li'l Abner[3] comic, is completely devoted to the comic's title character and is portrayed as hard-working, loyal and submissive. The use of this popular culture icon in the poster encourages soldiers to buy war bonds in order to make sure they can have a "Daisy Mae of their own." While on the surface this immensely popular series is simply humorous, it also demonstrates important aspects of the gendered discourse present in popular culture during the Second World War. The use of humor to discuss or present information about taboo topics is common in popular culture (Emerson 1969). The message that women are a sexual reward—whether for bravery or for purchasing war bonds—is clear.

This is another example of the OWI deliberate blurring public and private boundaries, along with the explicit construction of women as a reward waiting "at home," which re-inscribes women into the home sphere and further defines women's status as sexual objects or possessions. The image of a hyper-sexualized and simplistic female body was constructed as both a reward and a motivation for soldiers. The importance of sexuality and sex-as-reward during the Second World War is complex, forming an odd mixture of pornography and propaganda. The focus on the ideal "American Girl" as ready and waiting "back home" sent multiple messages (Kakoudaki 2004). Female bodies were constructed by the OWI as a motivation for young men to fight. The idea that young men were fighting for their nation, and their nation was represented as being sexualized or vulnerable young women, was used repeatedly in wartime propaganda.

Figure 7: "Buy Bonds the G.I. Way!" (Northwestern University Library).

The militarization of the female body as an object of conquest was closely tied to the military control of "American values" and the need to make economic and personal sacrifice worthwhile to the U.S. public (Kakoudaki 2004). The sexualized woman comes to stand for a specific set of values as it created clear gender identities that were tied to the division between the public and private spheres. For young men, a form of masculinity emerges that is constructed of a hyper-heterosexuality combined with a symbolic, militarized, violent prowess (Kakoudaki 2004). For women, this resulted in a discourse of sexual availability, reward and female submission. These ideas functioned to strengthen the ideological conscription of placing men into the public and women into the private sphere. Further, the establishment of hetro-normativity as a fundamental part of a soldier's identity was necessary to combat same sex sexual relationships. Militarized environments and battle fronts functioned as spaces in which normative behavior rules were suspended or transformed due to physical and psychological distance from social structures typically used to reinforce cultural norms (Kakoudaski 2004; Zeeland 1996). The discourse that supported the preexisting link between female sexuality and women in general with "home" functioned alongside the military discourse of the "home front" or the nation-state as *the* homespace. Thus *the* discourse aimed at soldiers focused on causing fighting in service to the nation to become synonymous with fighting to control/protect the home, with its attendant meanings of female sexuality and place.

Women were ideologically linked to the homeland or homespace and were constructed simultaneously both as a figure in need of protecting and as a prize to be won (Enloe 1990). As prizes for returning soldiers, women were expected to maintain their sense of feminin-

ity even while their bodies engaged in work traditionally assigned to men. One such example is the next poster in which women are reassured that while they are somewhat masculinized, they are still attractive to men (Figure 8). This poster is one from the "Jenny on the Job" series of posters in which an attractive young white woman is depicted doing physical labor while maintaining her feminine appearance (Kula 1943). The Jenny posters are designed to send a message that women can work in the factory jobs necessary to wartime commerce but still maintain their identity as objects of beauty and recipients of masculine admiration. This point is essential to maintaining the normative expectation of the time that women should be valued based on their looks and suitability as mothers and wives. Women's physical presence outside the private sphere space is a danger to this ideology of female place. Thus, women must remain conceptually within this ideological home even as they enter into the workforce. This becomes possible as the result of the homespace definition being expanded to include the militarized notion of the home front.

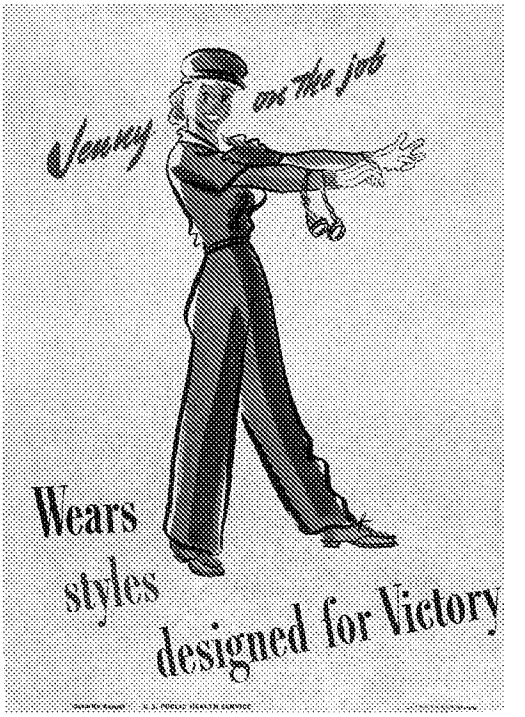


Figure 8: "Jenny on the Job Wears Styles Designed for Victory" (Northwestern University Library).

The Threat of the "Other"

While hyper-sexualization was one aspect of this kind of strategic discourse around women's bodies, the inspiration and encouragement of fear was also propagated by the OWI. The Second World War discourse that encouraged arguably the most support for wartime activities in the U.S. was the use of fear and the construction of the Other/outsider as a threat to the nation's women and children. In the next image, (Figure 9) a dark threatening hand imprinted with the symbols of Nazi Germany menace a group of children, in which a young boy stands "guard" over a small blond girl and a very young boy (Smith 1942). Threats to children, as the most vulnerable members of the population have immense emotional power to viewers. Variations on this image are represented repeatedly in wartime propaganda. These posters are designed to inspire fear and incite protective feelings, both among American women and among U.S. soldiers fighting abroad. This poster serves as an example of war propaganda that focused on the idea that children and home were in danger from outsiders. Compliance and acceptance of wartime duty, in this case the purchase of war bonds, are projected as a means to counter such threats. Further the placement of the figures reinforces a theme of masculine protection over female bodies, even among children, subtly

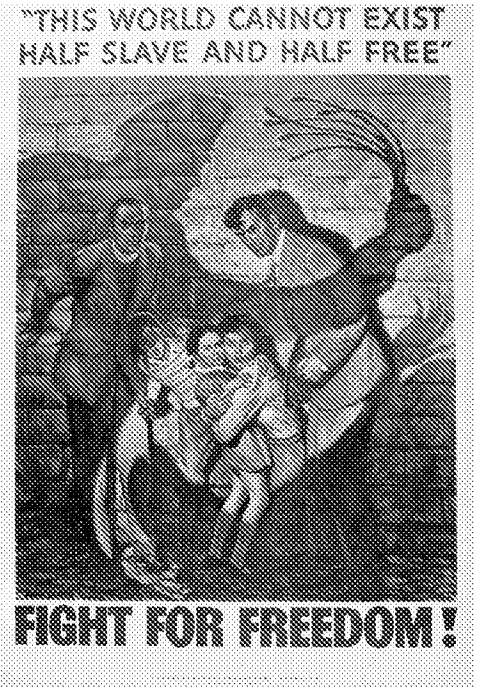


Figure 9, left: "Don't Let That Shadow Touch Them: Buy War Bonds"; Figure 10, right: "This World Cannot Exist Half Slave and Half Free: Fight for Freedom!" (both photographs, Northwestern University Library).

demonstrating compliance with gender stratification. Other examples show more complex images of family and children under threat. The next poster (Figure 10) depicts shadowy threats to a family unit, ostensibly protected by nearby masculine figures, represented by a priest, which acts as a symbol for institutionalized religion (Falter 1942). Similar themes, including the threat of "outsiders" to women and children, tied with masculine and iconic images of masculinity send a clear message about women's need for male protection, as well as the importance of religion as a social force.

The threat of physical harm is just one story employed in which white women's bodies become characters in the national discourse which the OWI used to fill the U.S. government's need for soldiers. The inclusion of raced and gendered imagery presented in this examination is dependent on the philosophy of the public and private sphere dichotomy. The white female body is inscribed into the private sphere, which is expanded to include the nation/state. This relies on already existing and institutionalized norms about male and female spheres while transforming the nation into the home and relying on the gendered norms of masculinity as protector. Furthermore, it allows for the inclusion of women in the workforce without disrupting the public/private sphere gendered dichotomy.

The propaganda machine during this time was remarkably silent on the issue of women of color, but that very silence was part of the discourse that surrounded women's bodies and their relationship to the nation. The national identity of the time largely embraced white women while ignoring the identities of women of color. There was a single exception to this experience, and it was highly problematic. Women of Asian descent were implicated in the

racial hysteria of the era in many ways. In 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 that suspended the civil rights of Japanese-American citizens and more than 110,000 of these individuals were moved to concentration camps (Cott 2000). Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the anti–Japanese sentiment in the United States expanded to include all Americans of Asian descent. Widespread racism was supported by discourse that demonized Japanese people and, by association, other Asian-American groups (Ware 2002, 197).

In the case of Japanese-American and Asian-American women, their gendered identities as women were subjugated (along with those of their male counterparts) in the greater national discourse. Their identities were subsumed into a discourse that emphasized racist propaganda of the kind displayed in final poster (Figure 11), "Honorable Spy Say ... Thanks for the Can You Throw Away" (Office of War Information 1943a). People of Asian descent, particularly Japanese who were referred to simply as "Japs," were depicted as toothy caricatures, in some cases resembling animals, such as apes, parasites and forms of vermin. This propaganda, aimed at the American public portrayed people of color, particularly Asians, as vicious, dangerous, animalistic and amoral, so called "primitives" (Ware 2002). The portrayal of the looming threat from these types of racialized evildoers was strategic and effective. This kind of imagery functioned as a re-inscription of these groups into a discourse where racial minorities are perceived as "primitives" and women as "childlike."

The fact that most wartime propaganda ignored women of color is also symbolic of the way in which they were marginalized and erased from popular thought. While the OWI propaganda materials seeking to increase number of workingwomen were targeted at white women, the practical result of the labor shortage was a new accessibility to paid employment for all women, including women of color. Women of color became, in essence, a silent workforce who followed the greater national discourse but did so without any acknowledgment of their own standing within that discourse. While their physical bodies were involved with necessary work, the nation displayed a complacency that assumed it was unnecessary to encourage them to enter the workforce. Some women of color were more fortunate and experienced a loosening of the restrictions on their lives and ability to work in the United States. Native American women, for example, were able to enter the workforce both on and off reservations and developed new roles in activism and in their communities (Cott 2000). Latina women achieved some successes as well with the creation of unions and labor organizations for Latinas during the war that demanded better working conditions and pay. However, they too were subject to the erasure of their bodies from the popular discourse surrounding the national workforce.

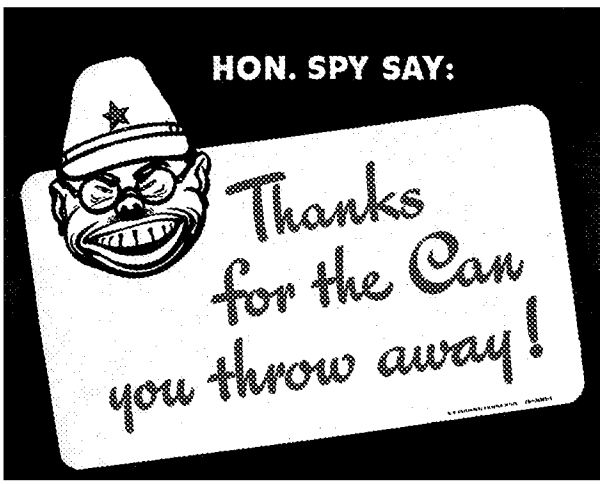


Figure 11: "Hon. Spy Say: Thanks for the Can You Throw Away!" (Northwestern University Library).

African Americans, both male and female, made up a significant portion of the American workforce during the Second World War. In every industry, African American women were virtually always confined to the most difficult, most dangerous and most menial jobs. Some African American women were able to access new opportunities in work and in education (Field 1987). Cultural changes and the massive migration of African American women to the northeastern United States helped facilitate their increased numbers in the workforce. During the course of the war, African American women were also able to make advances in their treatment relative to that of other women workers (Field 1987). Their entry into the public entertainment industry was another part of the greater discourse surrounding African American women in the 1940s. The hyper-sexual African American woman earned new opportunities with increased popularity of entertainment and Blues clubs during the war (Koppes 1995).

The bodies of white women and women of color were both used in the practical, material sense by the military during the war. Not just limited to the home sphere, access to actual military jobs opened up for women during this time. However, like their presence in other public locations, the discourse surrounding these jobs was firm in its belief that women's access to them was acceptable only so far as it was temporary and reversible. For women who actively served in the military, there were specific limitations on available jobs that kept them in the caretaker or "homemaker" roles that they had previously been expected to inhabit. The U.S. armed forces expressly sought to present the female recruit as feminine and domestically inclined. She was to be seen as pretty, young and feminine (and white), concerned about clothing and taking care of men, either the wounded in hospitals or by satisfying their needs for food, clothing and supplies by working as clerks in other "domestic" themed jobs.

After the War

Ultimately, the use of women and their bodies during the Second World War was of strategic importance to the OWI. American power and American patriotism were forced to overcome the discourse of woman as homemaker in order to maintain the national power structure. The lack of men to fill necessary jobs made the incorporation of white, middle class women into the workforce a necessity. The propaganda surrounding the working women of the era was deliberately designed to encourage women to work but to maintain an image of femininity suitable for marriage. When the nation shifted from a need for women's bodies as workers to a need for women's bodies as sites of reproduction, the discourse changed as well. After the war ended, the propaganda promoting "Rosie the Riveter" disappeared and the focus returned to presenting the duties of women as homemakers and mothers (Field 1987).

Due to U.S. casualties during the war and declining birthrates in the prewar depression, the need for women's bodies as producers of children was a significant issue on the national agenda (Cott 2000). A new kind of propaganda was created by the nation for the Cold War that placed its emphasis on families. As women were no longer needed to provide peacetime physical labor, they were fired and advised to join in reproductive labor. As in the propaganda of the Second World War, the primary focus was on a single group: young, white, married women. While racial and class divisions existed, when it came to having

babies, every group experienced an increase in the birthrate in the later 1940s and 1950s (Coontz 2005).

The postwar normative behavior for middle class white Americans was expressed to the nation through television programs such as "Leave it to Beaver" and "Father Knows Best" which featured white middle class women as full-time homemakers who existed solely in nurseries and kitchens (Hixon 1997; Coontz 2005). No longer was the OWI responsible for reinforcing the national discourse on its own. Instead, the private media companies took over that responsibility with their television programming. The stories were ones of domesticity and showcased women who stayed firmly in their place at home. Working class white families where lampooned in TV programs such as "The Honeymooners," and people of color were stereotyped in programs including "Amos and Andy" (Cott 2000, 502). Yet in some ways, the era also demonstrated that the power of the working woman could not be so easily silenced by the return to a prewar national discourse. Social justice issues including women's roles and racism that were largely silenced in the 1950s would rise again in the 1960s and 1970s and have transformational impacts on the foundation of American society (Coontz 2005; Baxandall and Gordan 2000).

Conclusion

The shifts in the expected cultural norms of an era are dependent on the needs of the powerful within that culture. American propaganda of the Second World War and post-war television programming are examples of the ways in which the story which is being told about women's bodies changes relative to the needs of the nation. When the nation needs soldiers, women's bodies become prizes to be won and vulnerabilities to be protected. When the nation needs workers, the national identity morphs to allow women's bodies to become those of workers. Finally, when the nation needs babies, changes in discourse allow those same bodies to be transformed into sites of reproduction. The silence regarding women of color is symptomatic of a greater exclusion and erasure that surrounds the voices and bodies of people of color. While white women may be targeted most by these changes in discourse, the greater silence that surrounds women of color remains.

The images produced for the propaganda campaign of the Second World War were strategically created to meet the needs of industry while maintaining existing social structure and power hierarchies. Maintaining the gendered public/private dichotomies conceptually, if not practically, allowed the nation to maintain its identity as evolving and progressive. The nation-state identity of the United States in the first half of the twentieth century was dependent on the notion of viewing itself as civilized, linearly progressive, and evolving toward a higher plateau of social existence. This narrative of progress is possible only when it is legitimated in contrast to the existence of a static and unchanging non-progressive space. For the colonials, a barbarian primitive "other" acted as this foundational space. For America during the Second World War, the gendered embodiment of home epitomized in the view of woman as wife, mother, and caretaker fulfilled that role. The nation depended on this legitimating, unchanging and simplistic space to validate its sense of being a progressive civilization.

The practical need to increase the U.S. labor force during the Second World War made it necessary to include women in the previously masculinized workforce. This resulted in

the need to reshape the discourse surrounding working women, allowing them to maintain their roles in the private sphere, while rendering their labor useful to the nation. The duty of crafting this change fell to the OWI, which was responsible for a sustained propaganda campaign that systematically created an ideological redefinition of "home" that maintained women's role as caretaker. This served the dual purpose of meeting both the needs of industry and reinforcing the national identity in a time of social strife.

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Notes

1. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Office of War Information (OWI) with Executive Order 9182 on 13 June 1942. This government department was a consolidation of the Office of Facts and Figures, the Office of Government Reports and the division of information for the Office for Emergency Management. Its purpose and powers were complex and wide ranging, but in general it did indeed control the flow of war information within the U.S. and to foreign countries. The wartime director of the OWI was CBS news reporter Elmer Davis. The OWI approved the design and content of the U.S. government posters during the war (Winkler 1978; Blue 2002).

2. Congress established the U.S. Department of Labor Women's Bureau in 1920. It is still the only federal agency designed exclusively to represent the needs of wage-earning women in the public policy process. According to the Bureau's web site, its stated mission is "To improve the status of wage-earning women, improve their working conditions, increase their efficiency, and advance their opportunities for profitable employment" (Women's Bureau — Mission and Vision Statements) This organization helped to identify and negotiate training, additional job opportunities, better pay and safer conditions for women workers during World War II (Women's Bureau — An Overview).

3. Li'l Abner is a popular comic by Al Capp that ran from 1936 to 1977. In many respects the comic acted as both a mirror of national values and issues and also a satirical examination of some of those same values. While the comic, taken as a whole work, expresses a complex satire of Americana and is at times subversive, it is also in many ways a powerful reflection of the discourse of the day (Berger 1994).