"I'm as Patriotic as Can Be – And Ration Points Won't Worry Me!"
Propaganda, Rationing, and Women's Roles in World War II

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As World War II approached its end, the War Food Administration issued a rationing poster entitled, "Of Course I Can!" with a picture of a young woman whose arms are full of canned vegetables [see Appendix 1]. I'm as patriotic as can be," the woman boldly declares, "And ration points won't worry me." The play on words is obvious in this 1944 propaganda poster. The woman speaks of her ability to literally can foods. Canning food became a necessity for many civilians on the homefront because of food shortages and rationing during World War II. At the same time, she uses that phrase to explain that she "can" contribute to the war effort through conservation of food. Her speech is blatantly optimistic as she does her part for the war effort. Her "can-do-it" spirit in the home counters Rosie the Riveter's "can-do-it" spirit in industry. While the government also needed women in the workforce, it still preserved the image of the homemaker in wartime propaganda. The government encouraged women to join the workforce while maintaining that they had responsibilities at home vital to their femininity and the war effort.

A 1943 poster, from the Office of Defense Transportation, shows a woman in the foreground carrying her groceries and packages while soldiers march off to battle behind her. As she looks toward the viewer she says, "I'll carry mine too!" [see Appendix 2] The slogan written at the bottom of the poster reads, "Trucks and tires must last till victory." The message is that rubber, metal, and gasoline need to be conserved. However, the government aimed a message at women. The juxtaposition of a woman and the military explains the government's efforts to unite everyone in the war effort. More than that, the government wanted to show that women could fight for the war effort too. The "mine" that the woman refers to in the poster is her groceries, which for the most part consists of food. She will not only carry these weapons of the homefront to save trucks and tires, but she will bear them as her own arms to fight the war.
In World War II, food was a weapon and women were the soldiers who bore these special arms. They were the primary carriers, preparers, and users of food. Their task, the government said, was to fight with food.

Both these images portray how the government perceived women's roles on the homefront in the United States. The three primary themes in rationing propaganda were that rationing was a highly feminine duty, was a public form of patriotism for women, and women needed to be constantly educated about rationing. The government strongly encouraged American women to model their wartime habits after the women in these posters, by sending them several messages through the media. These two posters encompass the basic messages that the government sent to women. In "Of Course I Can!" the woman outright claims she is patriotic, that rationing and conservation is a way for her to carry out her duty to her country. The woman in this image is also very young, beautiful, and feminine. Every hair is in place, her apron is sitting correctly on her shoulders, and her rouge and blush are still fresh despite her efforts in the kitchen. The underlying message in this poster is that rationing provided an avenue for women to exhibit their patriotism while maintaining their femininity. In "I'll Carry Mine Too" the message of patriotism is enhanced by the soldiers in the background. The Office of Defense Transportation also provided instructions about rationing as it stated that metal and rubber needed to be conserved for the military. These instructions showed another message that the government aimed at women – they needed to be educated and reminded of what, why, and how to ration. Beauty, patriotism, and education were aspects of the rationing propaganda campaign aimed at women. The three themes in government and media messages to women about rationing were that rationing was their patriotic contribution to the war, rationing
reinforced their femininity, and that they, as caretakers of the home, especially needed constant education about the role of rationing in their lives.

To convince women of their duty to the home the government and media portrayed food and clothing rationing as a feminine responsibility. Government ads, posters, and manuals, along with the media, advised women to consider rationing as a way for them to fight the war. These mediums also attempted to soothe the fears and worries of overwhelmed housewives by providing rationing education specific to them as women. Also evident in the propaganda was the iconic image of the beautiful and dutiful housewife that every woman should aspire to be like. These themes of patriotism, education, and beauty, showed the uncertainty the government and society had toward women's roles. The government called women to ration because it was patriotic and later told them that they did not know anything about rationing by portraying them as confused individuals. Sometimes the propaganda empowered women and other times it portrayed them as unable to cope with the demands of rationing. Though these messages seem contradictory, it was important for the government establish the importance of rationing and rationing procedures. The government needed to instruct women about their roles in rationing in a variety of ways, be it through patriotic images of rationing or through images overwhelmed housewives who learned how to ration properly. Messages women received included that rationing and taking care of the home was patriotic, they were not educated enough about it, they needed to know how to prepare nutritious meals, and that by doing all this they would be considered beautiful.

This examination of rationing and women on the homefront seeks to identify the different messages the government and media aimed at the Wartime Homemaker in regard to rationing. This research seeks to answer several questions. What mediums were used to display
messages about rationing? How did women become the focal point of rationing propaganda? What messages did the government send to women about their role in rationing and conservation? All these questions will be answered through an examination of newspaper articles, magazine advertisements, and government propaganda posters. Interpretations of the images, colors, titles, and slogans used in these publications will facilitate the discussion about the initiatives of the government and media pertaining to rationing. Rationing and conservation played a role in many of these venues but as such an important entity to the homefront battle it deserves its own analysis. Most American citizens, both male and female, partook in rationing primarily because of limited resources and food shortages. Wherever people went they were reminded of the necessity to ration. In ammunition factories people saw the product of their efforts to conserve metal. Signs hung in grocery stores to remind people to only take their fair share. And in newspapers, government offices, and magazines women were the audience of the blatant rationing directives. This research suggests that every day the government and media directed women to ration through different mediums.

It is important to begin with the basic requirements of rationing to understand its scope and consequences for American citizens during the war. The following discussion will look at what rationing involved for people every day. Some regions of the United States received more rationing protocol than others. City dwellers experienced the effects of shortages more than those who lived in rural areas simply because farms could supply sustenance. Many people, though, felt the impact of rationing as valuable resources were rationed during the war. Anything from nylon to sugar to rubber needed to be distributed equally or substituted with more synthetic resources. As this paper analyzes how the government aimed propaganda at
housewives in the kitchen, this research focuses primarily on the rationing of foods, but considers the necessity to ration other resources as well.

The purpose of propaganda is also essential to understanding how the government and media influenced civilian action on the homefront. Wartime propaganda served many purposes such as unifying the country, recruiting soldiers, and promoting conservation. According to Terrence H. Witkowski, the Office of War Information had a clear message to consumers that they needed to recycle, plant Victory Gardens, can produce, and obey rationing protocol. A primary purpose of propaganda was to persuade people to conserve their resources. Conservation involved rationing, scrap drives, saving fats, and planting victory gardens. The government aimed this type of propaganda directly at women who were the keepers of the home and the primary consumers during the war. The central goal of this paper is to explain in detail the different messages that the government used to coax women into compliance of rationing protocol. A myriad of ads, articles, and images attest to the fact that the government tried different methods to reach women as it laid out themes in rationing propaganda. The two posters, "Of Course I Can!" and "I'll Carry Mine Too!" are only two examples of the ways the government and media made rationing and conservation appealing to women. These posters show how the government wanted women to be educated about rationing so that they could maintain patriotic attitudes and femininity.

Historiography

Few historians capture the relationship between propaganda, rationing, and women. Amy Bentley is one of the few who has delved into this field. In her book, Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity, Bentley examines how the government told women not only to become Rosie the Riveters but also Wartime Homemakers. Though the
government needed women to work in wartime production, it maintained that a woman's place was in the home and that one of her most important jobs was to follow conservation protocol. Bentley argues that "the media image of the 'Wartime Homemaker' defined as crucial American women's contribution to the war effort." The Wartime Homemaker image is central to understanding why rationing propaganda was aimed at women. Women were in charge of the home and therefore the food. This analysis will add to Bentley's work by explaining the themes and messages the government and media used to convince women to fulfill their rationing obligations. According to Bentley, women fit into several different molds during the war but their most important duty was to the home. It was in the home that the essence of what was American existed. Her presence in the home meant stability and her work with food and consumption only solidified that idea. Women kept this part of American society safe when they obeyed rationing protocol.

Secondary sources do not analyze rationing, women, and propaganda together. They might study the connection between two of them, but there has yet to be a thorough analysis of the relationship between all three. Aside from Bentley's work, few social history monographs are devoted solely to the relationship between women, rationing, and propaganda. To be more specific, few historical works are devoted to the Wartime Homemaker and her duties as described in propaganda. There are many books and articles devoted to Rosie the Riveter and G.I. Jane or the use of propaganda during wartime. There are even books about the creation of Rosie the Riveter through the use of propaganda. However, there are few secondary sources dedicated to an analysis of women in the home during World War II. This is partly due to the fact that many historians concentrate on the social change occurring. The phenomenon of women moving heavily into the workforce captures the attention of historians and thus they
concentrate their research on the status progression of women. Secondary sources do exclusively cover the topics of women, rationing, and propaganda.

Authors of monographs about World War II tend to devote a chapter or section of a chapter to women or rationing during the war. In regard to women, secondary sources discuss how the rate of women working outside of the home began to increase or how they quickly joined in relationships with soldiers. Kenneth Rose, author of *Myth and the Greatest Generation: A Social History of Americans in World War II*, argues that the generation that lived through the war was not necessarily an extraordinary group of people, but rather people who did what they had to for survival. In regard to women, Rose discusses how women entering the workforce changed the dynamics of the family and adjusted family values in America, more negatively than positively.\(^7\) Instead of discussing details about what they did in factories, Rose concentrates on how their jobs away from home caused them to neglect their children. This is minimally connected with Bentley's idea that propaganda represented an idyllic form of stability for the homefront. Rose argues that as women spent less time at home, the security they had once brought to the home diminished. However, Rose only connects this lack of stability with family dynamics rather than food as Bentley does. Rose separately addresses food and rationing by identifying their many problems such as the black market and bootlegging.

Other historians concur with Rose's ideas on rationing. They discuss either women or rationing but never the two together. John Jeffries addresses the politics of rationing and the control of the Office of Price Administration (OPA). According to his research, civilians were extraordinarily frustrated with the how inefficiently the OPA ran rationing programs.\(^8\) Little is said about the connection between women and rationing or rationing and propaganda. However, Jeffries touches on the topic of Wartime Homemaker by arguing that "the principal and
overwhelmingly preferred wartime role of American women was that of wife and homemaker."\(^9\) His argument is similar to Bentley's argument and he supports it using statistics from surveys and the work force.

Like Jeffries, many other social historians focus on a general history of the American homefront during World War II. In most cases, these historians focus on the subject of women and rationing as a piece of the whole homefront puzzle. Paul Casdorph, in *Let the Good Times Roll*, tries to convey the homefront events of the war by speaking plainly and not over-emphasizing one singular subject. He addresses women working and elaborates on rationing but never analyzes the significance of each subject's role in society. He even comments in a few paragraphs the idea of the "lonely wife" and how it is her duty to keep the home as it was when her husband left to fight. Women, according to Casdorph's analysis, based on *New York Times* and *Life* magazine articles, were to stay busy in the home by "doing war work, additional schooling, volunteerism, any useful activity to help them pass the time."\(^10\) His emphasis on the busyness of women is also highlighted in rationing propaganda. Propaganda instructed women to remain occupied. One way they could stay busy was by addressing rationing concerns such as how to plan nutritious meals or obliterating the black market.

Similarly, Gail Collins addresses the hardships women on the homefront faced in her book, *America's Women: 400 Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*. In her chapter about women in the forties, Collins discusses female involvement in the military, factories, and home. She begins a discussion of rationing based on the idea that women felt the consequences of rationing more than other civilians. A brief discussion of how propaganda addressed rationing closes her analysis of women at home. Collins states how Americans learned about nutrition and housewives learned about healthy diets because of rationing propaganda.\(^11\) Collins, like so many
other homefront historians, is very succinct in her discussion of women and rationing. She simply argues that rationing produced many difficulties for women on the homefront. The basics of rationing and women's frustration about it are covered in the research but historians do not discuss how women became the designated stewards of rationing.

One analysis of propaganda and its influence on women became important to this research. Maureen Honey explored the connections between women and government-issued propaganda in her book, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II*. Before delving into her study, which focuses on women in factories during the war, Honey takes time to explain how propaganda worked. She discusses Wilbur Schramm's "Bullet Theory" in which the "media shaped the audience's attitudes through presenting values in attractive packages." These values, even if exaggerated, do "reflect the assumptions, fantasies, and values of consumers." When applied to the study of women and rationing, these values show that the idea for women to oversee rationing did not just imprint itself on paper; it was a reflection of the gender values that the government and society cherished. Honey recognizes that there were conflicting messages about women during the war. As workers, women were strong but as housewives, they were vulnerable. "The role allocated to women," writes Honey, "was a complicated mixture of strength and dependence, competence and vulnerability, egalitarianism and conservatism." While most of her work focuses on the images of women in war industry, Honey explains how propaganda influenced the ideal housewife. Her analysis of the glamour image of women workers and servicewomen will carry over to this research about the image of women at home. While she refers to women's beauty in the workforce, her interpretation of propaganda is useful to the explanation of women's beauty in the home and the femininity of rationing.
Though the field concerned with the relationship between women, rationing, and propaganda is narrow in these sources, what they say about the individual elements of the field will be useful for this analysis. These secondary sources provide a general idea about women and rationing or homemakers and propaganda but do not elaborate on the relationships between them. The following research will take a deeper look at how the government and media portrayed rationing to women during the war years. Each of the mentioned historians contributes important ideas to the study of women or the interpretation of propaganda. Their research will facilitate a deeper discussion of the relationship between women, rationing, and propaganda during the war.

**Argument**

"Changes in our way of life are coming thick and fast," wrote W.J. Enright in a 1942 *New York Times* article. Realizing the impact that the war would have on Americans, the government and media prepared civilians for their new life. As Enright continued his article he noted what areas of life had already been impacted by the demands of war. Though he wrote to the general public he addressed the fact that housewives were most influenced by rationing and restrictions. "The housewife has had her first taste of rationing," Enright explains, "and has got used to tearing off bits of paper in exchange for sugar." Numerous times throughout the article he brings attention to the housewife and the fact that the shortages in consumer goods will impact her the most. As the primary consumer in wartime American society it was no wonder that Enright discussed a woman's troubles with rationing. From shortages of fish to shortages of appliances and clothing, women bore the burden of rationing.

This idea of women as the managers of rationing generated from their role as the family consumer. "Traditionally excluded from other forms of political and economic participation in
society," writes Tawnya Adkins Covert, "women have acted as the primary consumers of goods and services for the family since the 19th century." Covert continues to explain that as men worked, women remained at the home, managing the domestic duties including consumption. Covert's work analyzes how wartime advertising simultaneously told civilians to conserve and consume; two seemingly opposing concepts. Her comments about women as consumers are important to this research because they provide a basis for explaining why the government aimed rationing propaganda at women. According to Covert, "women represented the central targets of commercial and governmental messages about their responsibilities as citizens and consumers in wartime." With that said, there is much evidence from the war years that suggests that women were the primary consumers.

Government-issued propaganda recruited women to join many venues. Recruitment into the workforce or into the military was the most obvious form of female recruitment into wartime initiatives. There was also an abundance of propaganda that recruited women to keep the homefront stable by rationing and conserving. The focus of this research is how the government and media portrayed rationing and conservation to American women thus maintaining the idea of Wartime Homemaker. Women were the primary audience for government publications about the conservation of valuable wartime resources and food and clothing rationing. The government persuaded women to ration by showing them that it was a way they could fight. It also demonstrated to women that rationing made them beautiful and favorable in American society. Rationing was an exhibition of women's inward beauty because it reflected her concern for the war effort. Outwardly, women in propaganda images glowed with pride in the hard work they did. A final theme among the propaganda was that it sought to educate overwhelmed women by showing the ease with which they could transition into a rationing routine. The
government and media utilized themes of patriotism, beauty, and education in their posters, advertisements, articles, and pamphlets in an effort to maintain traditional gender roles in wartime America.

The Role of the Housewife in Rationing

All civilians, in varying degrees, were affected by rationing during the war years. Some Americans experienced the consequences of rationing less intensely than others, but the nation's economy and production experienced a drastic change that impacted all Americans in some way. From gasoline and rubber rationing to meat and fabric shortages, the daily lives of civilians were altered. The *Baltimore News-Post* addressed the ban on pleasure driving in an effort to curtail gasoline shortages in Maryland. During the summer of 1943, the Maryland State Office of Price Administration placed strict driving restrictions on Baltimoreans. The State OPA prohibited driving on Memorial Day and later in the summer expected "willing compliance from the public, since such conscientious co-operation is the condition upon which lifting of the ban depends." The message here is clear; rationing of gasoline will only be effective if citizens cooperate. In another *Baltimore News-Post* article, Anne Scarborough explicitly addressed the concerns women had about gasoline rationing in its early stages. She writes, "Housewives are also making it a point to be at home when a C.O.D. [Collect on Delivery] arrives because a return trip for the delivery man means wasted time, tires and gas." Newspaper articles addressed how women adjusted their schedules to rationing needs in order for women reading the articles to follow the example. Women played a vital role in all many aspects of rationing.

Though, gasoline rationing was important for women to keep in mind, the government primarily called women's attention to food rationing because of their roles as housewives. Rationing of important resources did not end with the conservation of gas. The meat market
became a place of controversy as people adjusted to fewer choices in cuts of meat for their tables. A black market for meat arose from the meat shortages as people supplied the butcher with under the table payments for the choicest cuts or larger quantities. Seeing the problems surrounding meat during the war, Leo McCormick, the director of Maryland's OPA, established "a State-wide Victory meat program, designed to 'take the heat off meat.'"\(^{22}\) The goal of the program was to persuade Marylanders that it was their patriotic duty "to eat the less choice cuts of meat, particularly beef, in order that available supplies may be distributed."\(^{23}\) Every Maryland citizen should be involved and participate in this way. Later in the article, the responsibilities of the housewives in regard to the meat program were addressed. The State nutritionist, Mrs. Neely, "prepare[d] daily menus designed to remind housewives and others that"\(^{24}\) even the worst pieces or kinds of meat, like pig's feet, "can be made tasty and nutritious."\(^{25}\) Again, the government, with the help of newspapers, spoke of the universality of rationing, but chose to identify women as key to its effectiveness. Without their contributions, no matter how miniscule, rationing would not work well.

The government and media throughout the war years addressed the responsibilities of the general public to ration, but somewhere in their message, whether it was an innocent image or a one sentence statement, the message always came to feature women as the citizens on whom the effectiveness of rationing rested. For example, in a 1943 poster from the national branch of the OPA, the publisher writes, "Rationing means a fair share for all of us" [see Appendix 3].\(^{26}\) "All of us" presumably meant all Americans and anyone who consumed rationed products. The poster displays two scenes. The first scene is labeled "Without rationing" and shows a woman leaving a meat counter with all the butcher's goods, while another woman approaches the counter, obviously seeking food. The butcher looks at this second woman apologetically because he has
no more food to give and points to the first lady with all the meat. In the second scene, each woman carries equally sized parcels of meat in their one arm and with their free hand they hold their ration books. The butcher holds money in his own hands this time and everyone has a smile on his or her face. The title of this poster is "With rationing." The OPA used women to show the dangers and inconveniences of not rationing. Though this was a message for all civilians, it certainly expressed how women were the managers of rationing.

By society's standards women were expected to maintain the home first, no matter what other duties they had during the war years. An irate staff sergeant stationed in Egypt wrote to *TIME* magazine expressing his frustration with women entering the military. He raged about women in the military by claiming they would be too weak physically, their hearts would not be in it, and they would not cooperate with each other. Essentially, Staff Sergeant Malmuth claimed they would be a distraction and detriment to the troops. His solution then is for them to stay at home. He writes, "Woman's place is in the home, and there they should be with their knitting and their ranges. Keep 'Em Frying!"27 Staff Sergeant Malmuth's attitude toward women abandoning their domestic duties is reflective of opposition to expanding women's roles. This was not specifically a male sentiment either; women too believed the best way they could serve was in the home. In one survey, seventy-five percent of women surveyed claimed they preferred to be a housewife.28 Even with the opportunity to expand their roles, seven of eight women remained at home during the war years.29 While women were needed to work in factories and civil defense, it seemed they felt pressure from the government to maintain the home and to make sure they provided well for it. To ensure the security of the home, housewives had to handle rationing and conservation meticulously.
Women attempted to provide their homes with available goods. They planned shopping trips and purchased what they needed for the home based on the availability of those items. A *New York Times* article addressed the commencement of rationing in the United States and what consumers could expect in the coming weeks. Housewives were listed first in the order of consumers suggesting that their role as consumer is the most important and most recognized. Along with housewives, the article also mentioned heads of households and single individuals as consumers. 30 Though "head of household" typically suggests "husband," many households did not have the traditional male figure as the head of household because he was overseas. In many cases, women acted as heads of households.

Women were the heads of the household because they provided for the basic needs of the family daily. Their rationing duties were essential to their ability to provide for their homes. When describing new plastic rationing points, a *Times* notice mentioned that women were the ones who should worry about the new points. The notice says, "The American housewife will have another item to add to the extensive collection found in her pocketbook." 31 Women's pocketbooks were already full of rationing stamps and coupons and, then, they would need to add one more thing to the growing list of rationing currency. This comment reveals how women were the primary consumers and how much they had to manage, beginning with their purses. In discussions about rationing the housewife was often mentioned before any other family member in effort to remind women that it was their job to ration and conserve.

The government and media attempted to get women to listen to their rationing messages by making women the focal point of the propaganda. These institutions reminded women that as the consumers in the family they were responsible for rationing endeavors. Early in 1943, the *New York Times* featured an article about women keeping wartime food diaries. The article
identified women as the "family shopper" who had "already felt the pinch of shortages on her shopping bag." As family shoppers and meal preparers, three thousand women across the country kept "homely statistics on the kinds and amounts of food they buy" for the government to understand eating habits of Americans. While resting on the assumption that women were the primary wartime consumers, the article also demonstrates how the government connected women’s rationing and patriotism. One woman interviewed about the food diaries said, "If it helps the government, and helps with the war, I'm glad to do it." Whether or not she actually was happy to record her family's eating habits is debatable, but the New York Times revealed that women understood rationing and helping the government were ways to demonstrate their participation in the war effort.

A Good Housekeeping article on canning shows how the government asked homemakers "to make it their patriotic duty and responsibility to see that" food is not wasted and surplus supplies are canned. Later in the article, more words associated with patriotism, like "contribution" and "victory" were used to reinforce the idea that conservation was patriotic and noble way to support the war effort at home. The media used other patriotic neologisms to convince women of their duty to the war effort. In an article about saving fats, the New York Times wrote, "Each housewife . . . has an opportunity and an obligation to make a major contribution to war production by saving waste fats." Propaganda materials suggest rationing was an opportunity for women to be patriotic, but more than that it was their faithful obligation to the war effort. From pledges to words in articles, the government and media told women that rationing was their wartime civic responsibility. The government encouraged women to adhere to the rationing process by taking the Home Front Pledge. The Pledge asked women to support the war effort by pledging their allegiance to the homefront initiatives of maintaining ceiling
prices and appropriately using their ration points. One poster encouraged women to "Keep the home front pledge – Pay no more than Ceiling Prices, Pay your Points in full." A housewife in the poster looks dutifully into the distance with her hand raised as if swearing that she will acquiesce to the government's rationing rules. Women understood the necessity to honor the government's request to obey rationing protocol. Some women would put a small version of this poster in their front window to show that they were committed to the government's initiatives. The patriotic mantra did not end with simply pledging allegiance.

Words were not the only way to reveal that women could fight the war. Many advertisements and posters during the war years supported the idea that women were fighters by comparing the home to the battlefield or food to weapons. The same article about food diaries states that the diaries were a valuable tool to remind women "that food was a weapon of modern warfare." Part of the patriotic message was that women could fight too. Food became a weapon and the home, especially the kitchen, became the front on which women fought. Remaining loyal to rationing meant that a woman would be seen as patriotic and supportive of the war. These messages did not come solely from the government or newspapers. Companies capitalized on these messages of patriotism to sell their products. For example, a Revere Copper and Brass Incorporated ad in TIME magazine congratulated the company on manufacturing durable and lasting pots and pans. Though metal was needed for war production, women who "outfit[ed] their kitchens with Revere Copper-Clad Stainless Steel utensils" could keep using those utensils because they did not deteriorate [see Appendix 4]. Other people who did not buy this product, the ad implied, constantly replaced their kitchen utensils and thus wasted precious metal. This ad sends two messages. First, it shows that women exhibit patriotism by making wise choices in their kitchen. Above the words of the advertisement is an image of a housewife,
by the name of Mrs. Parker, with a Revere pot. In the background is a battle scene. By displaying a woman in front of a battle scene Revere shows the importance of her commitment to homefront initiatives, like conservation. The second message is that the kitchen contributes to the front lines. The main slogan on the poster says, "Mrs. Parker's cooking utensils are making it hot for the Japs." Creatively connecting the heat of pots and pans to heating up action for the enemy, Revere demonstrates the many uses of their products. The pots and pans facilitate preparation of healthy meals and save metal, which ultimately serve to combat the enemy. The kitchen is where the fighting really begins. Similar to that advertisement, an Owens-Corning ad in *TIME* magazine displays a Navy officer reflecting on a homefront kitchen with a housewife pulling rolls out of the oven. The officer says, "Bombers can begin in the strangest places," referring to the kitchen. The appliances in the kitchen are made of insulating material, which gives him the idea about replacing the aluminum for warships with Fiberglass insulation, Owens-Corning's product. The underlying message in this ad is that victory overseas begins at home, and more specifically in the heart of the home, the kitchen.

A poster from the Office of War Information capitalizes on the idea that food is vital to victory. This poster displays two parachuting soldiers in the background while another parachute with a crate of food attached to it opens in the foreground. Each parachute is a different color; the back two are blue and white and the food parachute is red. The red, white, and blue, theme represents the patriotism associated with rationing. The hidden message in this poster is that those who manage the food will have to make sacrifices. The slogan on the poster reads "Where our men are fighting our food is fighting. Buy wisely – cook carefully – store carefully – use leftovers" [see Appendix 5]. Though there is no visible depiction of women in this poster it is apparent, through the mention of food activities in the kitchen, that the government wanted
women to pay attention. Women could support the soldiers overseas by acting wisely and consciously in the kitchen. Their patriotic sacrifice in the home would assist in the fight.

The *New York Times* was less subtle in its attempts to show that fighting the war began at home through rationing and conservation. In a 1943 cartoon titled, "Molly Pitcher – 1943" an "American Housewife" loads missiles into a large double barrel mortar. The smoky cloud behind indicates the intensity of the battle and her attempts to fight. At the base of the mortar is "Ration Book No. 2" and beside "American Housewife" is a large quantity of cans. The slogan on the cans reads, "The share of our food that keeps our allies fighting" [see Appendix 6]. The cartoonist poses a woman beside a powerful weapon into which she loads canned foods. The government wanted to empower women to use their skills, tools, and ingredients in the kitchen to fight in the war. The message is clear that without their diligence in rationing success on the battlefield will be difficult. They are able to show their patriotism by obeying rationing guidelines set forth in the rationing books.

Similar to that cartoon, two propaganda posters use the image of a woman assisting the front lines. The OWI published a poster with a woman's hand, evident by the trim and polished nails, pouring grease from a skillet. The grease trickles down and ignites into varying kinds of missiles and bombs. "Save waste fats for explosives," the poster admonishes. "Take them to your meat dealer." Another poster used the same idea of a female hand pouring extra grease into weapons. This poster had waste fat disposal instructions that women could tear off and hang in their kitchens. Women, again, are the primary audience of this poster because of the image of a female hand and the first word on the poster is "Housewives!" Women often earned money or received discounts on their meat purchases by exchanging their waste fats. Regardless if the meat dealer exchanged anything with the housewife, the act of her taking her grease, which
could be used for glycerin in explosives, demonstrated her concern for the war and thus her patriotism.

The purpose of these messages was to show women how they could contribute to the battler. As the guardian of food stores during the war years, women became the target of rationing propaganda. Rationing propaganda empowered women in two ways. First, through propaganda the government and media identified, if not subtly promoted, women's status in society. Posters and ads gave women a specific role to play, Wartime Homemaker, and duties to carry out, rationing and conservation, and if they did not fulfill either of these things well, then there would be negative consequences for the war effort. Secondly, propaganda encouraged women to fight. Their battlefront was the kitchen and in it they fought by being resourceful, using their ration points wisely, and disposing of wastes properly. The messages in rationing propaganda told women that they could do their part to ensure victory.

*Women's Education in Rationing*

According to an early 1943 Gallup Poll, 76% of women claimed they understood how the rationing system worked.\(^4\) It seemed that a majority of the representative female population knew how to fulfill their duties on the homefront efficiently. Though many women did understand rationing, the system constantly changed as the government issued different rationing books and put more stipulations on certain commodities. With all the change it is a wonder that women can say they understood the system. While their positive response to the Gallup Poll, propaganda displayed messages that women may not have been that confident in the system or their abilities to manage rationing tasks. Women claimed to understand the system, but propaganda materials nonetheless devoted considerable energy to women's education about rationing. For women to say they did not understand the rationing system might have revealed
that they were not following rationing protocol and they might be labeled as unpatriotic.

Ignorance about rationing was unacceptable when it was one of the few ways a housewife could support the war effort. The message that the government sent in its publications was that women needed to be educated because they were confused as to how the system worked.

The 1942 *New York Times* article, "War Will Change Life of American Families," began to address the issue of uncertainty and confusion. It listed several changes that women would need to adapt to as rationing became more involved. According to the author, women could expect to see shortages in food followed by a decrease in the availability of linens and, subsequently, clothing. Adjusting to these shortages would require extensive knowledge of how to make the most out of what they had. The government perceived that the shortages and misunderstandings about the rationing process caused many housewives to worry about their family's wellness during the war. On Christmas Day, 1943, the *New York Times* published the sentiments of the Office of Civilian Requirements (OCR) concerning what American families really wanted for Christmas. The OCR claimed that it would grant reasonable wishes but believed that Americans were asking for "simple, uncomplicated things." The OCR was surprised to find that "the shortage of butter and bobby pins, alarm clocks, and pot scourers" caused "the housewives of the nation" to fret. These items seem like a frivolous concern, writes the author, but he suggests that the reader try to "get the family off to a late start for lack of an alarm clock" or enjoy a lunch "with the latest recipe for butterless, eggless, and sugarless cake." He quips that women need to deal with more involved routines and food nutrition because rationing took away many essential resources. Women, the article suggested, were not worried about new appliances, but rather the simple things, such as basic cooking ingredients and metals, which rationing and shortages decreased. The article uses the words "fretting" and
"worry" as emotions that women experienced during rationing. Women feared they would not have enough or not be able to adapt well.

Images of women in propaganda materials also suggest they were confused and frazzled by rapidly changing rationing requirements. The War Food Administration's poster "Of Course I Can!" implies how women worried despite their diligence in rationing and conservation. The housewife in the picture has her arms overloaded with cans and by the way she holds them it looks as if she is trying hard to keep them from falling. Her posture indicates that she is trying to manage many things simultaneously. She wants to manage her home, canning, and rationing efficiently. It is her face, however, that really captures her overwhelmed state. With her head tilted back because of her overloaded arms and her cheekbones taught underneath wide-open eyes, she appears very overwhelmed. Though "ration points won't worry" her, the stark contrast between her physical expression and her speech suggests that they really do. Her physical features do not match her claim to an unnerved patriotism. Yes, she is doing her part, but it is obvious that she is overwhelmed by canning and rationing.53

A Budweiser beer advertisement from Anheuser Busch conveys a similar message. This ad features a Revolutionary War homefront scene at the center of which is a young mother stirring the cauldron in the fireplace and rocking an infant in his cradle. To her right stands her middle child, a boy, churning butter and to her left her daughter sews a garment. The small living area is cluttered with the family valuables – a table and chairs, pots and pans, tools, dishes, candlesticks, and a rifle and horn displayed on the mantel. As if the clutter and the fact that she is doing several things at once were not enough to indicate her overwhelmed state, the mother's expression is one that says, "Oh dear, please help." She seems very worried with all her duties. Underneath the image are several paragraphs explaining Anheuser-Busch's positive perspective
of women at home during the war. It supports the idea of women maintaining the home in its rhetoric and images. The advertisers compare the 1940s housewife to the minuteman's wife in the 1700s. Anheuser-Busch claims the wife "was a Jill of all trades, too – cook, spinner, weaver, pork salter, candle maker, baker, laundress and gardener" [see Appendix ?]. Then, the ad explains how 1940s women "grow Victory gardens, preserve fruits and vegetables, cook, serve, sew...save fats, can and paper...make things last...carry their own bundles, [and] keep the family cheerful." The image of the housewife, with her troubled expression, solidifies the idea that women were overwhelmed by the expectations put on them. To make the point even clearer Anheuser-Busch continues to applaud women's work by saying, "The women of America have proved their resourcefulness in the kitchen in countless ways. Many have discovered that a glass of cold, golden Budweiser makes their simple wartime meals taste better." Women had so much to think about and do for rationing and conservation that they topped off their day with a glass of beer to unwind. Women worked hard to follow rationing protocol and preserve the homefront but these images suggest that the government and companies believed women were overwhelmed with these expectations.

These images indirectly showed the conditions in which women found themselves, but a New York Times cartoon directly created the idea that housewives were in an overwhelmed and confused state of mind. In the center of article cartoon entitled "Lesson for Today" is are the letters "O-P-A" personified with human hands which hold two pieces of paper, one in each hand. In OPA's left hand is a paper with the title, "Instructions to Retailers and Wholesalers" which a butcher and a businessman are facing and scratching their heads. The use of several exclamation marks in the form of thoughts indicates that they are alarmed by the long list of new rationing instructions. The paper in the OPA's right hand is titled, "The Point System." A "Housewife"
faces the chart enveloped in a cloud of confusion with exclamation points coming from her head as well.\textsuperscript{57} It is obvious that as the caretaker of the kitchen she is frazzled and confused by the new points system. While the cartoon criticizes the OPA, it also serves to identify who had to deal with the mess the OPA created; housewives. The housewife is clearly overwhelmed by the extensive list of foods and household items on the list. Interestingly, just a month before the \textit{New York Times} published this cartoon, it released an article in which the first line says, "Point rationing will be simplified for housewives," based on "a series of charts now available."\textsuperscript{58} According to the cartoon, the charts did not simplify rationing for housewives. Despite the lack of foresight on the OPA's part, there was an extensive initiative to educate women about rationing. Propaganda revealed the fearful, confused, and overwhelmed states of women in an effort to set up conditions for acceptance of rationing education. The government and media portrayed a problem – confused housewives – and suggested several solutions. The government, newspapers, and companies provided encouragement to women and instructions on how to adapt easily to rationing.

One indirect reason for rationing efficiently was because it showed patriotism, but, it was necessary to ration because goods would be in short supply and rationing was a method to make sure goods were distributed equitably. According to propaganda materials, women needed to be educated about rationing or they might not do their part for the war effort. Worry and confusion could easily cause them to become disenchanted with the idea of rationing and not perform to their potential in the home. In an effort to make things clearer for women and to help them take rationing step by step, the government and media published a variety of educational articles and posters about rationing. Instructions about where to take wastes or how to prepare a nutritious meal with meager ingredients dominated propaganda. Before providing instructions on how to
ration, the government and media answered why it was necessary for them to ration. An OWI poster pictures a woman in a grocery store aisle scanning the selection. The slogan on the poster reads, "Rationing safeguards your share."\textsuperscript{59} The government and media began educating women with the basics of rationing by explaining its purpose. It was necessary to ration to ensure everyone would have essential food resources.

Another part of rationing education was to inform women that by not following protocol they looked ignorant of homefront initiatives to help the war. The government sought to educate women about obeying ceiling prices in an OWI ad published in \textit{LIFE} magazine. The OWI discusses five foolish women who do not help keep ceiling prices down. Ceiling prices were just one aspect of the rationing system. The OPA set prices of goods so that everyone had an equal opportunity to purchase those goods without being outwitted by a wealthier person or someone with more points. Many women, supposedly, were not checking ceiling prices. The OWI published interviews with five women and asked them why they were not doing their part. Their responses ranged from "It's too much trouble" to "We can afford to pay more" to, even, "I just don't want to do it." To that last response the OWI wrote in outrage, "No – and our boys don't want to fight! It's up to you on the home front to do your part to head off rising prices and inflation."\textsuperscript{60} Housewives need to be very conscious of their purchases because if they were not the government would accuse them of being foolish, disloyal, and unpatriotic. Creators of propaganda portrayed these qualities as detrimental to the war effort. To remedy these defects, propaganda materials told women that obeying rationing protocol was essential to showing their support for the war.

With education about why housewives needed to ration came instructions as to how they should ration. One of the first commodities to be rationed was sugar. With the start of sugar
rationing in May 1942, households were only able to purchase a half pound of sugar with the appropriate ration coupon. When women reached the cash register with their goods they were to present their ration booklet to the cashier and he would detach the coupon from the book. In the early stages of rationing, the same ration book designated for sugar could be used for other commodities, but later as rationing became more involved so did the use of rationing currency. There was a need for different rationing systems as the government placed more goods on rationing lists. Throughout the war, the government produced several more stamp books, each with its own rules. Sometimes women could use stamps and sometimes they used coins. The need to educate women on the different methods of purchase was evident in propaganda materials. An article that specifically addressed how women in Brooklyn could be actively involved in the war instructed women to get a copy of "A Guide for Family Food Requirements" to help them understand ration points charts. This was a public service for these housewives who had questions about the OPA's tabulations concerning canned, dried, and frozen foods. To supplement the rationing worksheet, there would be community talks given to women about rationing. Women teamed up to help their peers understand what rationing really involved.

Educating women was not simply an initiative of the local media. OPA administrator Prentiss M. Brown spoke directly to women in an article that the NYT published. His instructions regarding Ration Book Two are aimed directly at women. Brown claims "that price control in her food store will become a lot simpler for her to understand." Then, he lays out some helpful hints to make the transition to point rationing easier. He suggests that women "make up [their] shopping list in advance and figure out in advance the exact point values [they] are going to spend." He also discusses the logistics of meat rationing and price control. Also in the article is an image supplementing his message. The image is of the League of Women
Voters answering questions about rationing and another image of a volunteer explaining the new point rationing plan. To conclude his message, Brown reminds housewives, "Wars must be won on the fields of battle, but they can be lost at home."

Directly from the government, women receive instructions about rationing, but they also receive a warning that the fate of the war is their responsibility. In a foreboding tone, Brown enforces the idea that women needed to ration in accordance with the prescribed methods. Women needed to know how to physically ration and to understand the importance of it during wartime.

Other articles gave more detailed instructions about how to ration. A notable distributor of practical methods of rationing and solutions to shortages in the home, Good Housekeeping magazine published an article that outlined women's concerns. In the introduction, Katharine Fisher wrote, "From now on, if you want to be sure of your fair share of certain products, you must learn the point rationing system. Here it is – clear and simple."

Fisher then addressed primary concerns about rationing. Her topics included "How the Point System Works," "Plan Meals Ahead," and "Use Coupons Carefully," to name a few. She gave detailed explanations regarding each topic to help her confused readers understand rationing. Fisher's adamant tone about understanding the system suggests that there was little tolerance for ignorance when the new system was instituted. Other media sources published further explanations of Ration Book 2 and the new system that came with it. One article described exactly how many stamps of each color, blue and red, would be in each ration book. It also discussed the time frame in which housewives could spend a certain number of points. The details with which these articles explained the rationing process show how concerned the government and media were about effectively initiating new rationing procedures. Women were the focal point of such articles as the writers mentioned how the responsibility of understanding the rationing system was theirs.
Teaching Conservation

Along with learning about the rationing process itself, housewives learned about effective conservation from the government and media. Warnings about not conserving correctly graced the pages of many advertisements and articles and became a primary purpose of rationing propaganda posters. Propaganda materials created the idea that women who did not conserve well neglected the war effort. Conservation propaganda showed the importance of women's roles on the homefront while instructing women how to conserve. Not only were women portrayed as the consumer, but also they held the role of the household conservationist. The Office of Production Management issued a poster about recycling resources. The words on the poster provide directions about what can be reused – waste paper, old rags, scrap metals, and old rubber – but the image provides a snapshot of different family member's roles in conservation. While the father and son in the image tie newspapers and gather scrap metal, the housewife stands over them as if orchestrating the action taking place. She is in charge of conserving resources. The OPM conveyed the idea that she was the image of a successful homefront.  

A majority of items that were highlighted as necessary for wartime conservation could be found in the home. From metals to fats, women were warned to use these reuse these resources or take them to a specific place where they would be transformed into war goods. Civilians were even asked to monitor their electricity usage because light bulbs were necessary for war vehicle production plants. Sylvania, a major producer of lights and fixtures, published an advertisement in LIFE magazine about conserving light bulbs. The main image is of a lit kitchen as it would appear looking from the outside of the house at night. Underneath the image is the question, "Who left the light on in the kitchen?" The kitchen was a feminine sphere meaning this ad was
meant particularly for women. Again, women were portrayed as the conservationist. Some women would even dust off their light bulbs thinking that it was part of their patriotic duty. 

Conservation began in the home, but more specifically, in the kitchen. The government encouraged women to save their waste fats and take them to local meat dealers. Fats had glycerin which could be turned into explosives. An incentive program was instituted in 1945 to get women to bring in more waste fats. "For each pound of fats turned in," reported the New York Times, "every housewife is entitled to 2 red points" which they could then use to purchase meat. After explaining points the article adds, "Women are urged to save every drop, every spoonful of grease possible and keep saving until final Victory over both Germany and Japan." The government called women to fight in the war through conservation and proper disposal of waste. A 1943 War Production Board poster emphasized the idea that women could fight with food because of their resourcefulness. A woman's arm is visible holding a can of food that is attached to several other cans. As the cans fade toward the gun in the background they turn into ammunition rounds. The slogan reads, "Save Your Cans: Help Pass the Ammunition" [see Appendix 8]. How could women help? Simply by saving their cans or not purchasing canned goods. Whatever women did not use or throw away would be salvaged and sent to help the war effort.

It was easier for housewives to save cans with the advent of canning just prior to the outbreak of war. Many propaganda images about conservation centered on the idea that canning would alleviate the excessive use of tin cans found in grocery stores. The OWI advocated the canning method by claiming that it was indeed "a real war job!" in a 1943 poster. A large image of an empty glass jar lies atop a plethora of fruits and vegetables. The can's label reads, "Can All You Can" signifying the necessity to partake in such a form of conservation. The
process of canning required housewives to cultivate an abundance of produce, not all of which they would be able to consume before it spoiled. Whatever remained after the initial consumption would be canned and set in a pantry for later use. Canning took the strain off of tin can manufacturers to provide for consumers and wartime production. The process of canning also taught women about general food conservation as well. Canning was the duty of the women in the family, evident in another canning poster from the OWI. In this poster a smiling mother and daughter work together to put the finishing touches on jars of canned vegetables. The daughter asks, "We'll have lots to eat this winter, won't we Mother?" [see Appendix 9]. Based on the abundance of already canned produce behind them, it is obvious that they will be well-nourished. Similar to the poster with the mother, husband, and son sorting scrap, this poster conveys that conservation was a way to promote family togetherness. According to propaganda materials, the housewife presided over the family's conservation initiatives, whether those initiatives pertained to collecting scrap, saving waste fats or canning. The government educated women on their role in conservation while telling them how to conserve as well by collecting, saving, and canning.

*Planning Nutritious Meals*

Housewives did not only need to be educated about the rationing system and conservation. The conservation piece required them to become innovators in the kitchen. They needed instruction on how they would make do with so little. The government and media publications assuaged women's concerns about providing nutritious meals and enough food for their families, by giving them basic instructions about proper cooking and use of available resources. The government and media sought to help the rationing programs and women in the kitchen by publishing and distributing wartime guides to food consumption. It was necessary for
women to use less in order to conserve valuable goods. Sugar became the primary commodity that the government required distributors to ration. To convince women to use less sugar, Good Housekeeping suggested that it would be better for them and that they might actually enjoy recipes with less sugar. The government also required several other foods to be rationed such as meat and butter. The Good Housekeeping Cook Book was created in 1942 and revised in 1944 with rationing protocols in mind. Katharine Fisher, a writer for the Good Housekeeping magazine, wrote the introduction to the Good Housekeeping Cookbook with Dorothy B. Marsh. In the introduction, Fisher and Marsh write, "This book is concerned with plain cooking. But with good plain cooking . . ." They later write about the special attention the recipes in this book give to foods which may be "scarce or restricted by budget." They claim that the recipes have been tested thoroughly to help housewives use "limited supplies of meat, butter, shortening, sugar, and other commodities" wisely. With that they also provide information on substitute ingredients that will not sacrifice "palatability, good nutrition, and ease of preparation and serving." A need for education about proper nutrition and meal preparation became clear to Good Housekeeping.

Ruth Moncrief, a young adult during the war, was a proud owner of a copy of The Good Housekeeping Cook Book and claimed that "everybody had it." There was a definite need for baking and cooking instructions specific to the wartime scarcity of prized ingredients. Women in New England experimented "with meatless menus and substitute protein dishes" with the onset of meat rationing. Like these women, Moncrief practiced the art of cooking and baking with fewer ingredients. Rationing did not only affect New Englanders, as a majority of Americans had to make adjustments to their diets. Despite the government's intent to ensure rationing guaranteed a fair distribution, people still worried that their needs would not be met.
To help alleviate these fears, the housewife needed to learn to prepare food in such a way to conserve resources.

Along with *Good Housekeeping*, other forms of media distributed lessons in efficient meal preparation. General Electric, a popular appliance manufacturer, not only advertised its appliances but also mini how-to books in *Good Housekeeping* magazine. In the summer of 1943, General Electric created nine new booklets with titles such as "How to Get the Most Out of the Food You Buy" and "How to Take Care of Work Clothes" [see Appendix 10]. The names of the booklets were followed by short descriptions of what the consumer would learn in each book. For the booklet "How to Get the Most Out of the Food You Buy" the description reads, "New edition. Contains simple plan to help solve rationing problems." The booklet titled "How to Make the Most of the Meat You Buy" explains "How to keep meat and meat flavor in your meals in spite of rationing." For only three cents a housewife could obtain three different books and ease the difficulties associated with rationing. The advertisement also contained a picture of a housewife holding a loaf of bread in one hand and the "Quick Breads" booklet in the other while saying, "Look what I found on page 4!" Her excitement at having the handy booklet is obvious. While General Electric's main purpose is to make a profit off of American housewives, it does also try to address a need in society at that time.

*A New York Times* article cautioned people not to become impatient with the "feminine head of the household" as she "will spend a lot of time cooking the essentials of a meal, and that she will have little time for the trimmings." Meals would obviously be simpler as foods became scarce. The article provided practical tips on how "to make the most of their monthly allowances," by doing such things as planning ahead and disguising leftover vegetables. It also suggested a daily diet to ensure that food and points would be stretched to for the duration of the
rationing cycle. A simple "shopping trip turned into a major assignment of financial planning." The Borden Company captured the idea of providing housewives with meal planning tips, too. The Borden Company, a dairy product manufacturer, published an advertisement in *LIFE* magazine to reinforce food conservation and meal planning. It encouraged housewives to know what products were good for certain meals and how to be creative with those products. For example, Borden's Wej-Cut Cream Cheese could be used in sandwiches instead of butter. The advertisement portrays every Borden's product as one that would provide the proper nutrients that every person would need but could not get because of food shortages. With nutrient shortages in mind, *Good Housekeeping* ran an article specifically about ensuring that children maintained adequate diets. The author, Dr. Josephine H. Kenyon, explained how mothers should purchase foods for their children based on essential groups of food. In this quasi-food pyramid, dairy and grains should be the major components of children's diets because of their nutritional value, ability to fill hungry stomachs, and, in the case of grains, their availability and inexpensiveness. Dr. Kenyon also provides a sample daily menu to help mother's plan for the needs of their children. She encourages mothers to "build [their] menus around such simple, wholesome, everyday foods as milk and dairy products, eggs, green vegetables, fruits, cereals, and breads." The importance of planning wisely and understanding how to cook and bake with less was a predominant theme in the education about rationing. Mothers and wives needed to understand that they could survive with less if they were meticulous in planning.

Women could find instructions for easier adjustments from the government and food related manufacturers in the media. It was important for women to know what the rationing process entailed, how to conserve precious foods, and how to provide nutritional and simple meals. The government, private businesses, and the media realized that American housewives
were faced with daily challenges pertaining to food and sought to alleviate some of their stress by providing informational and educational opportunities for women in regard to food rationing. The government and media used images, articles, and advertisements to convey the necessity for women to learn about their homefront roles in rationing.

Rationing as an Exhibition of Femininity

Wartime propaganda displayed images of the perfect, loving, happy, and devoted woman. Regardless of the purpose of propaganda – conserving resources or rationing correctly – the image of the ideal Wartime Homemaker remained constant. She was to be diligent in her tasks and perform them with a smile on her face. An underlying message in rationing and conservation propaganda was that these duties allowed women to exhibit their beauty. In almost every mass-produced advertisement or recruitment poster aimed specifically at housewives, the women in the images appear not only dutiful but also beautiful. The government and media glamorized wartime household duties to send the message to women that if they did these things well they would be inwardly and outwardly beautiful. Though household duties would not destroy the traditional image of women, the government and media used the tactic of beautifying women to, first, maintain the femininity of the overwhelmed housewife, second, to show women that rationing and conservation were ways for them to exhibit their beauty, third, to maintain traditional gender differences, and fourth, to counter depressing images of the war.

A common theme among housewife images is that the woman is young. The housewife from the War Food Administration poster "I'm as Patriotic as Can Be!" appears to be very young. Her physical features come together to create an iconic image of beauty. Her hair is placed perfectly while her make-up, from her rosy blush to her fresh lipstick, accentuates her facial features. She is thin, yet strong as she carries her load of canned goods. This woman is made
even more beautiful by the fact that she is helping the war effort and claiming she is patriotic. She understands her role in the war and she will carry out her duties with willingness and enthusiasm. These characteristics make her beautiful.

These beautiful images of women did not only exist in the minds of the government and media. One salesman believed that housewives who complied with rationing regulations were beautiful. Though rationing forced many housewives to do without certain luxury items, there were opportunities for them to compensate their losses. After seeing an increase in purchases of hosiery, candy, and jewelry, a salesman noted, "Perhaps this war has encouraged women to be sweet and look sweet." The sweetness of women's appearance began at an early age. In the "Can Your Own, Grow Your Own" poster a mother and daughter set about their canning duties with smiles on their faces. The artist of this poster gave the daughter an almost angelic countenance suggesting that she is a saint for helping the war effort. The girl's face also acts as a reflection of her mother's face, of which the audience only sees the profile. The girl is adorable and her mother is beautiful. Like so many other images of housewives, this one too has her apron on correctly, her hair set in place, make-up jut right, and the ever present optimism of performing domestic duties for the war evident in her smile.

The government and media wanted to send the message that rationing and conservation needed to be carried out with the utmost enthusiasm. Smiling housewives pervaded rationing propaganda and advertisements that represented propaganda's perception of the optimism women had about these ventures. Ball Jars ran an advertisement in TIME magazine telling women, "You won't be hungry if you can!" With this slogan at the end of the advertisement, the rest of the ad is filled with a description of the product and an image of a housewife canning. The housewife is in her kitchen adding sugar to her Ball jars, while a pressure cooker sits in the background.
Again her hair is styled nicely and her apron is neatly placed on her shoulders and snug around her waist. She looks down at her task with a smile of obvious satisfaction. By using glass and saving metal, the housewife knows she is doing a proper activity to support the war effort. Similarly, Dixie Cups used the iconic image of the beautiful housewife to encourage purchases of its paper products. Dixie Cups advertised it products by suggesting "three simple ways to help keep your men on the job" [see Appendix 11]. The first "way" to keep men on the job is meant for employers to read. They can prevent the spread of germs by using Dixie cups at their water fountains. Similarly, in the third "way" soda fountain owners can prevent the spread of disease by serving customers in Dixie cups. The second "way," though is of greater concern. Dixie aims the message of this "way" at housewives by saying, "If you are a wife or mother of a defense worker" pack him a nutritious "lunch to keep him a top physical efficiency." Beside these instructions is a housewife preparing her husband's lunch with the help of Dixie Cups products. This young housewife displays beauty in her heels, pearl earrings, and ribbon in her styled hair. She sets about her task with a smile on her face because she is happy to use a great product and understands the importance of providing for her working husband and not using metal containers. The government and media relied on images like these to make the monotony and stress of rationing and conservation appealing. Women could do all the tasks the government asked them to do while simultaneously developing into beautiful women.

The government and media continued to spread the idea of housewives’ beauty in rationing and conservation propaganda by contrasting their soft image with the harder image of working men. Honeywell Control Systems created a conservation ad comparing the duties of men and women in the home. The advertisement begins by addressing Mr. Home Owner and Mrs. Home Planner. The man is the home owner and the woman the home planner. In the
advertisement's sequence of images, the home planner carries out duties related to the kitchen while providing support to her husband as he attempts to solve their heating problems. Unlike other images of young housewives, this housewife appears a more mature in years. With her arm around her husband in one part of the advertisement and optimistically looking out a window seemingly into the future in another part of the advertisement, she smiles conveying her beauty. To Honeywell home planners were beautiful if they were conscious of their family, resources, and domestic duties.

The Office of War Information made another attempt to show how rationing and conservation maintained women's femininity in its "Use It Up – Wear It Out – Make It Do!" poster. In the picture a man bends over a lawnmower attempting to fix it as his wife stands behind him and sews a patch onto the backside of his pants were he ripped a hole in them. Beside her lies a sewing basket with all the necessary tools to successfully salvage the pair of pants. While her face is not visible, her bright yellow dress and red heels are a stark contrast to the work clothes her husband dons. She performs a dainty task while her husband gets his hands dirty with the yard work. Her beauty is exhibited in her effort to get her husband working again and her attire.

The Borden Company also capitalized on the masculine and feminine images found in rationing and conservation propaganda. In a format similar to a comic-strip, The Borden Company displays a family of cows – Beulah, the daughter, Elsie, the iconic housewife, and Elmer, the patriarch – canning and storing their abundant harvest. In the first sequence of the storyboard, Elsie ties an apron on Elmer and puts him to work performing a feminine task. Throughout the story Elmer tries to get out of work or at least do as little as possible. Elsie attempts to explain the benefits of canning, which Elmer, a male, cannot understand.
Throughout the story, Elmer is seen doing tasks that reflect his masculinity, such as carrying a heavy bushel of apples or smoking a pipe. When the family finishes canning at the end of the story, Elmer throws off his apron and dashes out of the kitchen. It is very evident he does not belong there. In his conversations with the ever-patient Elsie and Beulah, Elmer appears gruff and cynical. The women take it in stride and continue their duties wholeheartedly. Their enthusiasm and devotion to the task provided an example for reading housewives. Women needed to work diligently in the kitchen to support the war effort. The contrast between the sweet Elsie and grumpy Elmer revealed the femininity of conservation. Though a cow, Elsie is beautiful because of her attentiveness to canning.

A Firestone advertisement similarly contrasts femininity and masculinity. On one page of the two-page advertisement is a soldier with a stern face overlooking the "war front." The title of this side of the ad reads, "Producing for war" and contains images of war equipment such as barrage balloons and tanks [see Appendix 12]. Firestone used its factories and stores of rubber, metal, and plastic to produce machines for war. On the other side of the advertisement is a dainty and gorgeous housewife overlooking the "home front" and carrying a serving platter with a meal and toaster on it. Her side reads, "Preparing for Peace" and has home appliances on display. The main message of this ad is that victory begins at home as civilians conserve resources, but that once victory is ensured by Firestone war machines, it will be able to create quality products for the home. Several aspects of this advertisement coincide with the ideas of femininity and beauty that rationing and conservation establish. First, all of the appliances on the housewife's side, except for a lone tire, are related specifically to the home and the feminine parts of it such as the kitchen, washroom, and bedroom. The housewife takes care of all those venues in the home and the equipment in each. Second, the housewife is very beautiful. She is
the epitome of the young dutiful American housewife as she serves her soldier in a flirty apron, polka-dotted dress, nicely styled hair, and high heels. Her image is a stark contrast to the roughness of the soldier on the other side of the advertisement. She exhibits profound beauty by her awareness of conservation.

Portraying rationing and conservation as feminine was a tactic adopted by the government and media to help maintain traditional spheres of influence but to also show women that helping the country in this way made them beautiful. The government needed a beautiful image of the home to counter the destructive and depressing images that war created. It was essential for the government and media to portray women in rationing and conservation images with smiles on their make-up enhanced faces as they performed a domestic chore. The housewife reading or viewing those same images would learn to serve the war effort with optimism and enthusiasm. The message was clear, rationing and conservation enabled women to exhibit their beauty.

Conclusion

Three topics, central to the historical study of the World War II homefront, meet in this research. While historians have seldom focused on the wartime relationship between rationing, propaganda, and women, this paper illustrates the complex interconnectedness between these three elements of World War II. Rationing has been discussed frequently, but briefly in social histories of the war. Propaganda always enters wartime discussions because it was used to motivate people to action. Discussions of women focus on their transition into the workforce. This research combines the three broad topics and attempts to create a concise narrative about the relationship between them. The government and media used a variety of communication mediums to explain to women what their domestic duties were during the war.
There are still other subjects to consider in this research. It would be beneficial to know how women reacted to rationing and conservation propaganda. They would have a more realistic perspective of these tasks and be able to explain whether or not they did ration and conserve as a patriotic act. Their understanding of the rationing and conservation systems would benefit the analysis of the education opportunities the government and media established. Another aspect to consider is how men felt about the propaganda and the idea that a majority of rationing and conservation fell under the domestic tasks of women. Though the government and media targeted women, men probably bore some of the burden of rationing and conservation inside the home. There is still room to elaborate on the relationship between propaganda, women, men, and rationing.

The Wartime Homemakers on the American homefront during World War II experienced monumental changes in their daily domestic tasks. The government enlarged their list of responsibilities with the additional tasks that rationing and conservation brought, such as canning and budgeting ration stamps. They had to acquire ration books, plan meals and shopping trips based on ration points and stamps, acquire canning materials, recycle, and go without in order to support the war effort at home. What adds to the study of the homefront is how the government and media portrayed rationing and conservation specifically to women. The government delegated to the housewife the tasks related to rationing as she was the primary consumer of the family. It did this by distributing images of women in grocery stores, at the meat counter, at a lecture on the points system, and in the kitchen. By displaying women in these environments the government revealed who would ensure a victorious rationing and conservation campaign.

Though women could not fight in the war directly, they were permitted to fight at home with the kitchen as their battle station and food as their weapons. Following this ideal, women
could then exhibit their patriotism and their support for the war effort. The government and media condemned women who did not adhere to rationing protocol because it meant that they were unpatriotic and uneducated about the rationing system. The government and media took initiative by providing women with rationing manuals or advice about creating nutritious meals with fewer ingredients. The education initiative encompassed much of the propaganda related to rationing and conservation. Along with educating women to ensure their understanding of rationing, the government needed to make this homefront task more appealing. In an effort to show women how rationing could help women, rationing posters and advertisements portrayed women as the iconic housewives who were thin, smiling, and radiating their enthusiasm and concern for rationing duties.

To help create a unified homefront, the government and media showed women that rationing was the simplest way they could be patriotic and help the war. At the same time, the publications addressed concerns that women had about the rationing system. To ensure as much participation as possible, the government, magazines, newspapers, and companies published instructional guides about rationing for housewives. Rationing propaganda also served to maintain traditional gender roles and accent the femininity of the homefront. All these themes highlight the attempts of the government and media to encourage the Wartime Homemaker to perform her duties well.
"OF COURSE I CAN!"

I'm patriotic as can be—
And ration points won't worry me!"

http://digital.library.northwestern.edu/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-73.jpg.
Appendix 3

Mrs. Parker's cooking utensils are making it hot for the Japs

Thanks to the kind of planning that went into the building of the American defense, all our homes are being equipped for the fighting forces, and thousands of modern, highly efficient, Revere copper and brass kettles are being shipped by rail, by truck, and by barge to the allies across the water.

The Japs have always been a small nation, but the Japs have never been afraid to use copper and brass as their primary resource. They have used these materials extensively in the manufacture of their weapons, and now they are using them to make their kettles even more efficient.

"We'll have lots to eat this winter, won't we Mother?"

Grow your own
Can your own

Nine New Booklets — A 3¢ Stamp Brings Any Three!

FIND out for yourself how helpful the General Electric Consumers Institute can be in solving your wartime homemaking problems. Ideas, suggestions and helpful information are packed into 9 new up-to-the-minute G-E booklets. Look over the list, select any three and just enclose a 3¢ stamp with the coupon.

(2) Bread, Baking, Made Easy — Six simple steps to successful bread baking. Valuable to expert and novice alike.
(3) Quick Breads — Just what the title says — over 80 recipes for rolls, muffins, coffee cake, etc.
(4) How To Make The Most Of The Meat You Buy — How to keep meat and meat flavor in your meals in spite of rationing.
(5) How To Store Perishable Foods — How correct storage can increase capacity of your refrigerator.
(7) How To Take Care Of Work Clothes — Safe, simple methods for cleaning wartime work fabrics.
(8) House Cleaning Made Easy — How to work out a cleaning schedule (with charts) and how to keep it.
(9) How To Take Care Of Your Appliances — Check-fif of information on how to keep appliances in tip-top shape.

Appendix 10

Appendix 11

3 SIMPLE WAYS TO HELP KEEP YOUR MEN ON THE JOB

1. If you are an employer, cut down the chances of contagion—the spreading of colds and other illnesses among the men. Provide individual paper Dixie Cups and eliminate possible mouth contact with anything that has touched the lips of others.

2. If you are a wife or mother of a defense worker, put delicious salads, steamed fruits and other nutritious foods in his lunch to keep him at top physical efficiency. Easily packed in Dixie Cups, easily carried, easily disposed of after eating.

3. If you are a soda fountain owner, you can help keep the community healthy—keep the men well and on the job, by reducing the chances of contagion. Serve your customers in Dixie Cups, that are used but once and then destroyed. Careless dishwashing is eliminated, health is safeguarded.

DIXIE CUPS
ONE OF THE VITAL HEALTH DEFENSES OF AMERICA-AT-WAR

Notes

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