

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Title: "Pretty and Patriotic": Women's Consumption of Apparel During World War II

Abstract approved:

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The War Production Board issued limitation order 85 in April 1942 in order to conserve fabric and manpower needed for the war effort. The L-85 order froze the silhouette so no major style changes in women's wear would occur during the war. It is clear that on the one hand the United States government hoped to curb, at least temporarily, the purchase of apparel and other goods to help support the war effort by restricting those materials needed for the war; on the other hand, the apparel industry was one of the leading consumer industries in the United States and putting it on hold was not only impractical but could potentially be harmful to the domestic economy. The United States apparel industry even marketed goods as patriotic to stimulate, not curb, consumer spending. This creates something of a dilemma. What we do not know is how consumers of women's apparel felt about the regulated apparel styles. The purpose of this research is to examine how female consumers of women's apparel were influenced by the federal regulations of women's apparel and adornment during World War II.

To learn how wartime affected women's purchase and use of apparel styles, patterns, and fabric, I asked thirty women who were at least 13 years old in 1941 about their purchase of these items and to discuss their feelings about the government

regulation of dress and adornment under the limitation orders. Extant wartime garments were also examined to evaluate their adherence to the order.

This sample of thirty women were not explicitly aware of the federal limitation orders on apparel. However, some remembered that wartime apparel styles were shorter and plainer than pre-war styles, and that there was a drastic change in styles after the war. Like many women during this time, many respondents made or their mothers made many of their clothes, and apparel purchases were generally fewer in number and often memorable. Memorable purchases related to changes in the body due to a pregnancy, a special occasion like a wedding, a dance or Easter, purchased for a new job, made while traveling or purchased with wages earned during a summer job. As indicated during their interviews, their purchase and use of apparel appeared to be more influenced by the pre-war economy, their age, their or their parents income, and whether they worked, went to school, raised children or a combination of these factors.

This study makes it clear that not all consumers were aware of the L-85 orders, and as illustrated by the extant garments examined for this study, the orders weren't that limiting. Extant garments had style details like raglan and leg-of-mutton sleeves, allover pleats, pin tucks, wide pant legs, French cuffs, wide sweeps to name a few of the details that either stretched the limits of the L-85 order or outright violated it.

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"Pretty and Patriotic": Women's Consumption of Apparel During World War II

by

Jennifer M. Mower

A DISSERTATION

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Presented September 22, 2011

Commencement June 2012

Doctor of Philosophy dissertation of Jennifer M. Mower presented on September 22, 2011.

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Jennifer M. Mower, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank my husband, Paul for his support. He has always supported my academic pursuits, but he has been especially encouraging and helpful after our daughter Eva was born. I also want to thank Jean and Mike Waters for their help with Eva. Knowing that she is loved and in good hands when I am working has given me peace of mind.

I want to thank my committee for their help and guidance with this project, and for taking time out of their schedules to serve on my committee. I especially want to thank my major professor Elaine Pedersen. Throughout my master's and doctoral programs Elaine has always pushed me to improve my research and writing. She truly cares about her students and their success. I am truly honored to have learned from and worked with her these many years. Thank you.

I want to also thank the women who took the time to be interviewed for this study because without them this study wouldn't have been possible. I also want to thank the Oregon State University Alumni Association and Anne Hatley with the Center for Healthy Aging Research for providing me with contact information for many of the women who were interviewed, in addition to soliciting friends and members of her church on my behalf. I want to also thank Kim Burgel at the Oregon Historical Society, Amy Gamblin at the Lane County Historical Museum, Mary Gallagher at the Benton County Historical Society and Museum, and Elaine Pedersen at the Design and Human Environment Historic and Cultural Textile Apparel Collection for their assistance with the extant wartime garments.

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“Pretty and Patriotic”¹: Women's Consumption of Apparel During World War II

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Modern war is *total war*. Total war is fought with the total resources of all the people of the nation. . . . Not only is the whole population exposed to war's hazards, but every citizen is in a measure a soldier, called upon to make his or her contribution to the total effort according to his capacity, talent, or passion. And, most significant to us as consumers, *the entire economic life of the nation is mobilized for war.*²

Before the United States entered the second world war on the side of the Allies in December 1941, the federal government began to encourage the switch from the production of civilian goods to the production of goods needed for war. "In the summer of 1940, President Roosevelt declared that America would serve as 'the arsenal of democracy' " providing Great Britain with weapons, tanks, uniforms and food after the Nazis took over France and launched a massive bombing attack on London.³ The War Production Board (WPB) was the federal agency created by the Roosevelt administration to oversee the conversion of products originally intended for civilian use to goods needed for the war effort.

The women's apparel division of the WPB was created to manage women's apparel in order to prevent the shortage of textile fibers; through the limitation orders, the WPB helped keep war-time styles similar to what they had been before the war. The restrictions on women's apparel were designed to prevent a change in apparel styles that might influence shoppers to go buy the latest fashions; the United States government

¹ *Vogue* 1 May 1942: 41.

² James Carleton Yocum, "The Problem of Consumption in Wartime," in *Consumer Problems in Wartime*. Kenneth Dameron, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1944), 34.

³ Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 181.

needed the textile materials being used in apparel (e.g., cotton, silk, nylon and wool) for uniforms, parachutes, ammunition bags and other necessities of war.

Purpose Statement

It is clear that on the one hand the United States government hoped to curb, at least temporarily, the purchase of apparel and other goods to help support the war effort by restricting those materials needed for the war; on the other hand, the apparel industry was one of the leading consumer industries in the United States and putting it on hold was not only impractical but could potentially be harmful to the domestic economy. The United States apparel industry even marketed goods as patriotic to stimulate, not curb, consumer spending. Many consumers had more money in their pockets to facilitate spending on clothing and other non-durable items due to massive federal spending in the defense industries.⁴ This creates something of a dilemma. What we do not know is how consumers of women's apparel felt about the regulated apparel styles. The purpose of this research is to examine how female consumers of women's apparel were influenced by the federal regulations of women's apparel and adornment during World War II.

To learn how wartime affected women's purchases and use of apparel, patterns and fabric, I asked women who were at least 13 years old in 1941 about their purchase of these items and to discuss their feelings about the government regulation of dress and adornment under the limitation orders. Did these women feel the need to “make do and mend” their existing wardrobes as federal propaganda campaigns suggested? If women worked in the defense industries, did they buy more apparel products because they had more money to spend on consumer discretionary items like apparel and accessories? For

⁴ Sandra Stansbery Buckland, “Fashion as a Tool of World War II: A Case Study Supporting the SI Theory,” *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 18(3) (2000): 144.

women who sewed their own and their family's clothing, did the apparel restrictions influence homemade clothing? In what other ways were these women's lives affected with regards to their apparel purchases? In summary, the primary research question was how, if at all, were women influenced by United States government restrictions on apparel during World War II?

Assumptions

I was not able to find a study focused on women's perceptions of how the limitation orders affected their purchase of apparel during the war. It may be that women did not consciously think about how the war influenced their consumption of apparel since the effects were largely out of their control. However, I assumed that women were influenced by the L-85 restrictions, and that there were still women alive today who could accurately remember how they were affected.

Limitations

Oral historians are often asked "How do you know that your informants' memories are accurate? How do you know that they are appropriate representations of the events they purport to describe?"⁵ War correspondent Cornelius Ryan had some criticism of the interview process. After conducting over six thousand interviews with army combatants, this is what he said about the interview process:

I discovered that interviewing is not reliable. I never found one man who landed on Omaha Beach who could tell me whether the water was hot or cold. I never found one man who landed on Omaha Beach who could tell me the exact time when some incident occurred. . . . Gathering the material after was very, very difficult indeed, and it did not lend itself to total accuracy.⁶

⁵ Alice M. Hoffman and Howard S. Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History: The Case for Memory." *Memory and History: Essays on Recalling and Interpreting Experience*. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 107.

⁶ Hoffman and Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History," 108.

In defense of the oral history method, Alice M. Hoffman conducted an experiment where she interviewed her husband, a mortar crewman during World War II, about his experiences and to evaluate the accuracy of his memory. What she concluded was that her husband's memories were "stable . . . [and] . . . reliable to the point of being set in concrete. They cannot be disturbed or dislodged. It was virtually impossible to change, to enhance, or to stimulate new memories by any method that we could devise."⁷ Hoffman adds that her husbands' memories were "not accurate with respect to exact dates or to whether 'the water was warm or cold.' In this respect Cornelius Ryan is probably right. Our findings suggest that if it is details of this sort that are needed, oral history and oral interviews are probably not the best source."⁸

For this study I do not expect the respondents to accurately remember how much they spent on a dress, what color it was, or what day of the week it was purchased. These types of questions are not only irrelevant to this study, but they will not reveal how women felt about the regulations of women's apparel, how the war influenced their purchase of apparel, whether they had more money to spend on apparel and other questions pertaining to apparel consumption during World War II.

⁷ Hoffman and Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History," 124.

⁸ Hoffman and Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History," 124.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter contains a brief discussion of the years leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States involvement in World War II, focusing specifically on domestic politics, the economic situation and New Deal policies. I will then examine the United States involvement in the war, federal wartime agencies and their policies, particularly the ones relating to the regulation of women's apparel, a history of women's wartime employment in the Pacific Northwest, an analysis of the United States fashion industry and a survey of pre-war and war-time apparel styles.

The United States before World War II

The 1930s were not only a decade of economic hardships but a decade of political and social transition away from Republican political domination since the 1896 election (with a two-term hiatus during the Wilson administration) to an era of Democratic political control. The 1932 United States presidential election between Democratic nominee Franklin D. Roosevelt and Republican incumbent Herbert Hoover took place amidst the most significant economic depression in United States history. Roosevelt won the presidency on a platform that promised relief to the masses of unemployed industrial workers and farmers, reform in business and banking and economic recovery under New Deal legislation.

The New Deal illustrated the transition away from a laissez faire capitalism toward an economy regulated by government intervention. This was a revolutionary approach to free market capitalism in the United States, but the New Deal was, according to historian Richard Hofstadter, "a chaos of experimentation." Historian Alan Brinkley

argued that the New Deal lacked a cohesive principle to unify its various policies. Under the New Deal, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) provided assistance to the unemployed. The FERA instituted the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which provided jobs for the unemployed. Enacted into law was the Agricultural Adjustment Act. As a result of this act the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) subsidized farmers to limit production of agricultural products. In May 1933 Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act and established the National Recovery Administration (NRA) to create "codes of fair competition." In addition, the NRA set minimum wages, maximum working hours and guaranteed workers the right to form unions. Also created was the Public Works Administration (PWA), a multi-billion dollar stimulus plan aimed at providing mostly construction jobs.⁹

Other New Deal policies included the Social Security Act and the National Labor Relations Act, also called the Wagner Act (1935). The Wagner Act granted labor the right to form unions. Also created was the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which was responsible for building roads and other infrastructure, in addition to putting to work writers and artists under the Federal Writers and Art Projects. Later, some of the writers and artists would find employment in the Office of War Information when these New Deal programs were eliminated in 1943.¹⁰

⁹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 307; Alan Brinkley, "The New Deal and the Idea of the State," in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, eds. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 86; Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 86 and 107.

¹⁰ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. (London: Verso, 1996), 46. The Office of War Information, formerly the Office of Facts and Figures, was created in June 1942, "to coordinate the dissemination of war information by all federal agencies and to formulate and carry out, by means of the press, radio and motion pictures, programs designed to facilitate

In an attempt to balance the budget in what seemed like a return to normalcy, the Roosevelt administration cut funding for many New Deal programs in 1937. Some attribute this policy reversal to Republican criticism and the loss of House and Senate seats during the 1938 Congressional election. Economists believe that this reversal was premature and contributed to the 1937-38 recession; Roosevelt responded by asking congress for another multi-billion dollar stimulus package.

World War II

Modern warfare . . . tests to the utmost the industrial capacity of a country and the ingenuity of the people to meet wartime requirements. This calls for careful planning and screening of the construction and facilities program. New plants and facilities must be constructed and old ones expanded, and the war construction and facilities program must be integrated with the scarcities of raw materials in order to conserve critical and strategic items.¹¹

Initial Stages

After World War I, many thought "that a new age of democratic government had dawned."¹² The rise of the dictatorships in Japan, Spain, Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union erased any hopes that the world was safe for democracy. With the rise of these dictatorships, the United States grew increasingly cautious and isolated in their foreign policy, not wanting to enter another European war. In 1937 and 1939 Congress passed the American Neutrality Act, which placed restrictions on the sale of arms to the chagrin of

an understanding in the United States and abroad of the progress of the war effort and of the policies, activities, and aims of the Government." John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 31.

¹¹ *The Facilities and Construction Program of the War Production Board and Predecessor Agencies: May 1940 to May 1945*. R. C. McGrane. Historical Reports on War Administration: War Production Board, special study no. 19, April 5, 1946, 1.

¹² Michael J. Lyons, *World War II: A Short History*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), 29.

Britain and France.¹³ In September 1939 Germany invaded Poland resulting in a declaration of war by Britain and France. Wanting to help the Allies without outright declaration of war and further limiting his chance for re-election, Roosevelt urged Congress to repeal the arms embargo, which authorized "the sale of arms [to the Allies] on a 'cash and carry' basis."¹⁴ This meant that Britain and France could buy US arms and munitions but had to transport them back over the Atlantic Ocean in their ships, risking interception from Nazi submarines. This move brought the United States one step closer to war, igniting a debate between interventionists and isolationists.

Relations between the United States and Japan became increasingly tense in the late 1920s and early 1930s with the United States support of Chaing Kai-shek's regime in China. After a series of aggressive Japanese acts on the mainland (Japan's conquest of Manchuria in 1931 and invasion of China in 1937), the United States enforced an embargo on fuel and other raw materials to Japan. In September 1940 Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, which guaranteed their assistance if one was attacked by another power. Throughout 1941 Japan continued to invade Indochina causing the United States to freeze Japan's financial assets in the United States in addition to enforcing stricter sanctions on United States exports to Japan. These trade restrictions forced Japan to seize British Malaya to continue its war machine.¹⁵

After the 1940 presidential election, Roosevelt was in a position to offer additional aid to Britain who had been battling the Nazi Air Force since summer 1940. Despite isolationist opposition, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Bill in March 1941,

¹³ Mark A. Stoler and Melanie S. Gustafson, eds. *Major Problems in the History of World War II*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2003), 1-10.

¹⁴ Lyons, *World War II*, 146.

¹⁵ Lyons, *World War II*, 149-150.

which gave the president the authority to "lend or lease" munitions to Britain and the Soviet Union with deferred payment. In August 1941 Roosevelt met with Churchill to draft the Atlantic Charter, a document that would uphold the right of all people to select their own government, affirmed the United States and Britain's commitment to peace after the war and rejected any territorial gains that would result from an Allied victory. Ultimately the United States would enter the war due to the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, resulting in Germany and Italy declaring war on the United States soon after.¹⁶

United States Involvement

Without pressure from the federal government, businesses would not on their own convert from the production of civilian products to goods needed for war. Roosevelt had a solution; the government signed deals with large corporations to build ships, airplanes and munitions on a cost plus a fixed fee basis. War contracts made primarily with large corporations helped facilitate full employment, which erased, almost overnight, the conditions of the Depression. Seventeen million new jobs were created during the war, and while the production of civilian goods was reduced, it remained high enough "that Americans knew no serious deprivations." The return to full employment allowed many Americans to start to purchase many of the consumer goods that they had been unable to purchase for more than a decade.¹⁷

In the total war situation of World War II men joined the armed services, and both men and women joined the workforce to produce munitions, ships, aircraft and other

¹⁶ Lyons, *World War II*, 147-148. In exchange for warships, the United States would retain "ninety-nine-year leases on British bases in the Western Hemisphere." Stoler and Gustafson, eds., *Major Problems*, 3.

¹⁷ Blum, *V Was for Victory*, 90-91 and 122.

goods needed for the war. Despite the fact that many Americans had more money to spend on consumer goods, they were also expected to make temporary changes in their daily lives as consumers of food, clothing, recreation and transportation in order to achieve a victory and to defend democracy.¹⁸ Caroline F. Ware author of *The Consumer Goes to War: A Guide to Victory on the Home Front* urged her mostly female audience to be wary of "wasteful spending, [to] shop carefully, [and] prefer utility over frills."¹⁹ Ware argued that victory abroad begins at home with educated consumers and all "possible resources" devoted to the war effort. The *Consumers' Victory Pledge* written by the Consumer Division of the Office of Price Administration stated:

As a consumer, in the total defense of democracy, I will do my part to make my home, my community, my country ready, efficient and strong.

I will buy carefully.

I will take good care of the things I have.

I will waste nothing.²⁰

However, these "calls for sacrifice" came during a period of "rising prosperity."

As chief director of the Office of Price Administration remarked in the years after the war "Never in the long history of human combat have so many talked so much about sacrifice with so little deprivation as in the United States in World War II,' especially compared with what America's allies and enemies suffered in material destruction and lost lives."²¹

¹⁸ Hazel Kyrk, "Consumers and the War," in *Consumer Problems in Wartime*. Kenneth Dameron, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1944), 25.

¹⁹ Daniel Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979*. (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 44.

²⁰ Caroline F. Ware, *The Consumer Goes to War : A Guide to Victory on the Home Front*. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942),106. Also cited in The Spool Cotton Company, *Make and Mend for Victory*, 1942.

²¹ Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 45.

After restrictions on textiles were announced in April 1942 the American fashion industry tried to promote apparel products without creating too much demand.²² The fashion industry focused on patriotism among its female customers who were told that it was their duty to “look attractive for morale.”²³ The war helped change the way American women thought about and consumed fashion; in addition, war spending helped stimulate an economy that had been depressed throughout the thirties.²⁴ According to *Vogue’s* editor, the fashion industry was one of the leading industries in the country in the early 1940s.²⁵ Between 1943 to 1945 personal consumption of apparel and upkeep increased from \$98 per person to \$117.²⁶

During the war, the GNP increased in real dollars at an average annual rate of 9.2 percent. In current prices, disposable personal income grew from \$70 billion in 1939 to \$150 billion in 1945. . . . The greatest increase in expenditures--items for which spending more than doubled between 1939 and 1945--were for food, alcoholic beverages, women's clothing, jewelry and watches, telephone service, private hospitals, health insurance, public transportation, nondurable toys, and sports supplies.²⁷

Wartime Government Agencies

The Nazi invasion of France, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands and Belgium in the spring of 1940 raised American’s concerns about their own military preparedness should the United States find itself involved in the war. President Roosevelt created the national defense program on May 29, 1940. However, Roosevelt was reluctant to go too far towards mobilizing the nation for war since there was a vocal constituency who

²² Sandra S. Buckland, "Promoting American Designers, 1940-44: Building Our Own House," in *Twentieth-Century American Fashion*, eds. Linda Welters and Patricia A. Cunningham (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 116.

²³ Buckland, "Promoting American Designers," 116.

²⁴ Blum, *V Was for Victory*, 90-91.

²⁵ *Vogue* 1 January 1941: 27.

²⁶ Geitel Winakor, "The Decline in Expenditures for Clothing Relative to Total Consumer Spending, 1929-1986," *Home Economics Research Journal* 17(3), March 1989: 196.

²⁷ Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 35.

advocated isolationism. After the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the federal government, the military and the American people recognized that the nation was in a state of emergency, and that the United States needed to radically change their military objectives. The Office of Price Administration (OPA) was established in April 1941, and the War Production Board (WPB) was established in January 1942; these agencies were put in charge of economic mobilization.²⁸

Office of Price Administration

Before the United States turned its attention to war and victory, Americans had lived through the thirties, a decade of the worst economic depression in history. Before war started in Europe in 1939, the economy had been on a slow recovery; it would take a world war and massive government spending and federal programs to bring the United States economy back to full stabilization. The New Deal included Depression-era measures intended to prevent price inflation of consumer goods and services (i.e., food, clothing, automobiles and rent) during a time of massive unemployment. Labor, particularly the newly created mass production industries united by the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), helped to increase worker wages during a time when employers wanted to reduce production, layoff employees and increase the price of goods to counter price deflation. New Deal programs also allied with consumer groups largely made up of working and middle-class housewives concerned with keeping goods affordable.²⁹

²⁸ McGrane, *The Facilities and Construction Program of the War Production Board and Predecessor Agencies*, 1 and 71; Stoler and Gustafson, *Major Problems in the History of World War II*, 43.

²⁹ Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence* and Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*.

Politicians, consumers and workers alike recognized that without the ability to purchase goods at affordable prices, consumers could not afford to make purchases and businesses would fail to yield a profit. During the war, consumers relied on the Office of Price Administration (OPA) to tame inflation and preserve purchasing power through price controls and rationing. The OPA managed rents in strategic defense areas and rationed consumer goods by issuing ration books. Despite government controls, inflation continued to be a problem during the war. Food and clothing were most affected; the "average department-store purchase rose from two dollars in 1940 to ten dollars in 1944."³⁰

As the war came to a close, the OPA retained support among labor and consumers. However, this strength influenced an opposition movement among business, farmers and other producers who did not want to see OPA's powers extended beyond the war. In their resistance to OPA regulations, businessmen turned to the WPB for help, since this agency had the power to influence the availability of commodities. The two agencies deviated primarily over the production of lower-end commodities. After Roosevelt issued the Hold the Line order on April 8, 1943 manufacturers started producing higher-end products to yield greater profits.³¹

War Production Board and Limitation Orders

Roosevelt appointed former Sears Roebuck vice president Donald M. Nelson as chairman of the War Production Board (WPB), and Frank L. Walton served as the

³⁰ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 200.

³¹ Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics*, 212.

director of the Textile, Clothing and Leather Division of the WPB.³² The WPB was created to handle the domestic problems of war production. The WPB allocated "strategic materials" for civilian use and managed the manufacture of civilian goods. Rationing of tires began in 1941; sugar, coffee and gasoline were rationed through stamps, which expanded to include shoes and food items like oils/fats, meats and cheese.³³ In April 1942 restrictions expanded to the textile industry (i.e., fibers, facilities and labor). Certain dye colors were also restricted due to the chemicals needed for the war effort. In addition to fibers and dyes, metal used for closures (i.e., zippers, hooks and eyes, and buttons) were "banned except for military or the most essential use."³⁴

At one time during the war "almost all controls were centralized in Washington," and later the responsibility decentralized and shifted to WPB field offices. Policies were tested by trial and error, and adjustments were made only when it was apparent a change was necessary. After the war WPB economists evaluated the policies and judged them to be largely ineffective. They argued that national defense policy needed to include instructions and procedures for future industrial mobilization at time of war, people who specialize in domestic war production strategy and a permanent agency to work with the military services under civilian direction.³⁵

³² Frank L. Walton was "one of the few dollar-a-year men 'drafted' from the business world who brought with him a helpful background of experience from the last war. . . . and has been in the textile business for more than 30 years." F. W. Walton, *Thread of Victory*. (New York: Fairchild Publishing Co., 1945), "Introduction."

³³ McGrane, *The Facilities and Construction Program*, 71; D. Novick, M. Anshen, and W. C. Truppner, *Wartime Production Controls*. (New York City: Columbia University Press, 1949), 5; Robert James Maddox, *The United States and World War II* (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1992), 193; Jane Farrell-Beck and Jean Parsons, *20th-Century Dress in the United States*. (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 2007), 114.

³⁴ Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 139.

³⁵ Novick, Anshen, and Truppner, *Wartime Production Controls*, 6 and 35.

The War Resources Board (1939), the National Defense Advisory Commission (1940) and the Office of Production Management (1941) were agencies with similar responsibilities that predated the WPB and focused on legislation rather than administration. These agencies failed to understand that modern war interrupted the peace-time economy due to disruptions in the supply chain. If production changes were not significant enough, the changes of an allied victory were thought to be reduced.³⁶

As a result the WPB was focused on diverting civilian production of goods to the production of goods necessary for war, without creating civilian panic and disrupting the domestic status quo. The WPB's initial act to regulate domestic production for the war effort was their issuance of the general preference order P-1 on March 12, 1941. P-orders assigned "preference ratings" for materials needed to manufacture industrial equipment and goods needed for the war. Almost immediately, problems emerged which required additional policies so next the "M" series of codes limited civilian use of specific materials (i.e., conservation of materials). M orders were issued in March 1941. By the summer of 1941 it became clear that certain materials were in limited supply and needed to be reserved for the war effort. "L" orders were introduced. The "L" orders suspended or limited the use of specified materials all-together. The first L-order was issued on August 30, 1941.³⁷

Stanley Marcus, co-owner of Neiman-Marcus the luxury department stores, was asked to head the women's and children's sections of the clothing division of WPB on December 27, 1941. Acting as the WPB's Chief of the Apparel Section Marcus called together representatives of the various branches of the apparel industry from fiber and

³⁶ Novick, Anshen, and Truppner, *Wartime Production Controls*, 7; Kyrk, "Consumers and the War," 24.

³⁷ Novick, Anshen, and Truppner, *Wartime Production Controls*, 36, 54-55, 68, and 74.

fabric producers, garment manufacturers, fellow retailers and fashion editors like Carmel Snow of *Harper's Bazaar* and Wilhela Cushman of *Ladies' Home Journal* to ask their advice on ways to conserve textiles for civilian use, reducing yardage and labor to direct to the war effort.³⁸

Various industry committees were created to represent different geographic locations of the country, large and small producers and different price points. Ready-made clothing available at bargain basement retailers like Filene's Bargain Basement were at the lower end of the price point. At the middle and upper ends were ready-to-wear and couture. Separate apparel industry committees were created for dresses, coats and suits, children's wear, lingerie and corsets. After speaking with various industry professionals each committee developed restriction suggestions, which were then agreed upon by the counsel. Representatives would then meet with Marcus to develop specific limitation orders that would produce savings needed for war but would not disrupt civilian production.³⁹

Marcus recalls that it was difficult to convince some committee members "that shortages could *ever* exist in the United States. Most of them . . . were confident of their own abilities to scrounge for fabrics if things became as tough as [Marcus] . . . predicted." Even non-committee members were critical of Marcus's regulations. Earl

³⁸ Stanley Marcus, *Minding the Store: A Memoir*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 107 and 112; *Time* 20 April 1942: 17. Carmel Snow, Jessie Daves, Kay Vincent, Alice Hughes, Mary Braggiotti, Aimce Larkin, Willa Cushman, Eleanor Ambrose, Martha Stout and Marion Corey all came from the New York fashion industry to Washington to consult with Marcus "Fashion Experts Discuss Impact of WPB Apparel Order on Styles," *Women's Wear Daily*, April 8, 1942: section 1, p. 1; "The Men Who Helped to Frame Order L 85" included "Alexis Sommaripa, textile consultant for the Division of Civilian Supply and Fessenden S. Blanchard, representing the Division of Industrial Conservation in the Textile end . . . Cleon O. Swayzee, textile man in the Labor Division. Morton J. Baum . . . is in the Men's Wear end of the Apparel Section, but takes an interest in the Women's Wear end also." *Women's Wear Daily*, April 8, 1942: section 2, p. 9.

³⁹ Marcus, *Minding the Store*, 113.

Puckett, President of Allied Department Store, asked Marcus “Why are you going through this silly conservation rigamorle? There’s not going to be any shortage.”⁴⁰

The belief that even in wartime, the availability of fabric and other consumer-goods would remain available stemmed from an economy pumped up by federal investment, the governments’ lend-lease policy that prevented foreign debt to the United States and continued production and export of United States munitions and domestic goods. In addition, before federal regulations and restrictions, domestic production and consumption had been gaining strength from its depressed levels of the thirties. Increased levels of production and massive government spending contributed to the decrease in unemployment and rise in personal incomes. It is likely that Earl Puckett and other colleagues of Marcus’s figured the United States economy was thriving and would continue to profit during the war.⁴¹

Under Donald Nelson's authority Marcus was instructed to write regulations to save fabric and to develop orders that would "freeze fashion as it was in 1942." Marcus could not just issue a specified yardage of fabric to apparel manufacturers that they produce a predetermined number of garments; this would have required “an army of enforcement agents . . . to check for compliance.” Rather, Marcus and his associates decided on specific prohibitions, which would be easy to observe whether the manufacturer was in compliance with the apparel regulation. For example, if a boutique was selling full pleated skirts and bodices with full, leg-of-mutton sleeves, it would not

⁴⁰ Marcus, *Minding the Store*, 113.

⁴¹ Blum, *V Was for Victory*, 90-91.

only be considered out-of-fashion but unpatriotic.⁴² Therefore, Marcus' "enforcement agents" were the customers as well as the apparel retailers who were in competition for consumer dollars; it was believed that only retailers offering patriotic, regulated fashions would be patronized by customers. Manufacturers and retailers caught violating the L-85 restrictions were threatened with monetary fines and/or jail.⁴³

Before announcing the L-85 order to the public Marcus leaked the "order" to *WWD* so designers had a chance to create sketches incorporating the restrictions before Marcus officially announced the order in April 1942. Fashion magazines, according to Marcus, were supposed to "interpret conservation" to their target readers. Marcus understood that magazines were marketing tools that had influential power over readers and consumers, and that they were useful tools in the conservation program.⁴⁴

On 8 April 1942 *Women's Wear Daily* published the "General Limitation Order L-85, Restrictions on Feminine Apparel for Outerwear and Certain Other Garments," which prohibited style and construction details that required excessive fabric.⁴⁵

Exceptions included children's apparel, wedding gowns, maternity dresses, clothing for

⁴² According to one writer at *Women's Wear Daily* "We predict that the influence of this order will . . . achieve a new and patriotic cooperation between buyer and manufacturer, between retailer and customer." Marcus, *Minding the Store*, 115-116.

⁴³ Jonathan Walford, *Forties Fashion: From Siren Suits to the New Look*. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 67; *Women's Wear Daily*, April 8, 1942: Section 1, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Marcus, *Minding the Store*, 117.

⁴⁵ Some examples of style and construction details that were restricted included French cuffs and double material yokes. French cuffs are "formed by turn-back of broad cuff-band fastened with cuff buttons." Yokes are a "fitted portion of a garment, usually over shoulders or hips, to which the rest of garment is sewed." Mary Brooks Picken, *The Fashion Dictionary: Fabric, Sewing, and Apparel as expressed in the Language of Fashion*. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1973), 98 and 422. Restricted sleeve styles included dolman and leg-of-mutton sleeve styles. Restricted style details include "allover tucking, shirring, or pleating." Also restricted were inside pockets or patch pockets made of wool, and interlinings made of wool. Other L-85 restrictions limited hem circumferences on skirts and length of garment; it should be noted that these figures depend on size. Also restricted were coats with "separate or attached cape, hood, muff, scarf, bag or hat;" no daytime or evening dresses "with a separate or attached belt exceeding 2 inches in width;" no evening dresses or suits or skirts and culottes "with a hem exceeding 2 inches in width;" no jackets "with sleeves cut on the bias or with cuffs on long sleeves;" no slacks "with a cuff." *Women's Wear Daily*, April 8, 1942, Section 1.

people with physical abnormalities, "burial gowns, [and] robes or vestments as required by the rules of Religious Orders or Sects."⁴⁶ United States restrictions on dress remained in effect until 1946.⁴⁷ See Appendix A for maximum measurements for all size ranges in women's and misses' daytime dresses.

Following the April WWD publication, on May 1, 1942 *Vogue* announced the WPB's restrictions on women's apparel. The editor explained to readers that the "new edicts won't actually affect the clothes you wear until . . . autumn." But despite this the editors explained that the "regulated clothes" would be similar to the current styles. Unlike *Vogue*, *Ladies' Home Journal's* fashion editor, Wilhela Cushman, waited until spring 1943 to use the word *limitation* in her editorial.⁴⁸ Cushman does not explicitly mention the WPB L-85 restrictions on women's dress, probably because as a whole *Ladies' Home Journal* was less fashion-centered than *Vogue*. Each month apparel-focused stories only accounted for five pages on average in each publication, whereas the majority of *Vogue* was entirely focused on women's fashion. *Ladies' Home Journal* treated fashion as one of many interests of the ideal, middle-class woman.

L-85 restrictions also changed the way women could purchase apparel. Before restrictions manufacturers and retailers sold apparel as a single unit (i.e., "a coat with a suit, a jacket with a dress or a coat with a dress"); restrictions prohibited "selling more than two articles of apparel at one unit price."⁴⁹ Jackets, shawls, capes, hoods, handkerchiefs, petticoats, aprons, or pinafores were allowed to be sold with a dress or

⁴⁶ Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 3rd ed. (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1998), 391.

⁴⁷ Valerie Mendes and Amy de la Haye. *20th Century Fashion*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 119.

⁴⁸ "We American women are in the unique position . . . of living in a country where the industry of fashion still exists . . . still no feeling of limitation in color or design detail" Wilhela Cushman, "Spring in America 1943," *Ladies' Home Journal* (March 1943): 28.

⁴⁹ *Women's Wear Daily*, 8 April 1942.

jacket for a one unit price.⁵⁰ The war also had an effect on mail-order catalog offerings. Montgomery Ward suspended their tire section and reduced their selections of household appliances made of metal (e.g., refrigerators, vacuum cleaners) and expanded their apparel and soft goods selections.⁵¹

In the summer of 1942 Stanley Marcus remarked that "[t]he result of the order has been as anticipated in that the majority of mass manufacturers are working up to the full limitation of measurement. But the top designers, in order to have distinction, are working below limitations."⁵² In Spring 1943 some U.S. designers "announced . . . that their spring designs reflected a desire to conserve even more fabric than the government asked."⁵³ As rumors continued to spread that clothes would have to be rationed despite the L-85, the WPB announced revisions to the order in May 1943 that "created a body basic, a more strictly defined silhouette, for all styles and introduced a yardage restriction by imposing 'square-inch limitations on the amount of material which [could] be used for all trimmings, collars, pockets, etc., and by imposing restrictions on the size and design of those trimmings."⁵⁴

Also passed in April 1942 was L-90 which "reduced the amount of elastic" for girdles and bras, and even though the restriction was repealed in 1944 "elastic supplies remained tight."⁵⁵ Rubber and nylon, used in the manufacturing of girdles and stockings, was also restricted for military needs. According to Marion Dixon, a journalist, women

⁵⁰ *Women's Wear Daily*, 8 April 1942.

⁵¹ Paul D. Casdorff, *Let the Good Times Roll: Life at Home in America During World War II*. (New York: Paragon House, 1989), 41.

⁵² Nona Baldwin, "Says Design Gains By Dress Limiting," *The New York Times*, 15 August 1942, 7.

⁵³ Winifred Spear, "Dress Designers Surpass the WPB in Effecting Savings in Material," *The New York Times*, 27 March 1943, 10.

⁵⁴ S. S. Buckland, (1996). "Promoting American fashion 1940 through 1945: From understudy to star," (PhD diss., Ohio State University), 173.

⁵⁵ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 126.

were angered with the thought of not having their girdles. Women complained that without support from foundation undergarments

there was no way that a woman past thirty could keep her posture erect or do physical work without tiring. 'Certainly,' Dixon concluded, 'Uncle Sam does not want American women to wear garments that would menace their health or hamper their efficiency, especially during wartime, when every ounce of energy and effort is needed.'⁵⁶

After numerous complaints from women, the WPB repealed this order, determining that "foundation garments were an essential part of a woman's wardrobe, and as such could continue to be manufactured, despite the precious rubber involved!"⁵⁷

L-119 limited the amount of fabric in sleepwear. In July 1942 the WPB also issued L-171, which restricted some cosmetic lines due to the ingredients or materials required in its packaging. For example, lipstick production was reduced by 20 percent due to the metal packaging. On September 1, 1942 Order L-153 regulated patterns.⁵⁸

Women's Wartime Employment in the Pacific Northwest

Before America's entrance into the war in December 1941, women's lives were focused on their families and taking care of their homes. Since the 1930s there was a general belief among many Americans that women's place was in the home. Working women were thought to be "selfish" and "greedy" since, it was believed, their employment took jobs away from unemployed men. Despite this widely held belief, one

⁵⁶ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time: Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt: The Home Front in World War II*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 355-56.

⁵⁷ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 355-56.

⁵⁸ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 126; Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture*. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), 244-245; Wade LaBoissonniere, *Blueprints of Fashion: Home Sewing Patterns of the 1940s*. (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 1997), 6.

study revealed that a majority of employed women worked out of economic necessity. Other American women hoped to work until they got married.⁵⁹

Attitudes toward female employment began to change when the increase in the armed forces reduced the supply of male workers in war-production centers. While federal campaigns targeted housewives, the largest number of women workers were those already employed as domestic workers and/or in the apparel and textile industries. Another group of female war workers were high-school graduates. However, many women remained in the home, believing that they would best serve the war effort by taking care of the children, cultivating victory gardens and managing a pantry because of shortages and rationing.⁶⁰

Once the local population was tapped out, the shipyards, the aircraft industry and other local wartime industries needed to recruit workers in other parts of the country. Washington and Oregon received large numbers of migrant workers during this time; many found employment at the Kaiser shipyards in the Portland-Vancouver area and the Boeing Airplane Company in Seattle and surrounding areas.⁶¹ Individuals and entire families migrated west for more money and better opportunities. One writer for *The Nation* commented that once he was “westbound from St. Paul, in fact, it seemed as if EVERYONE was westbound. With the hum and rhythm of the bus there was an

⁵⁹ Sandra Stansbery Buckland, “Fashion as a Tool of World War II: A Case Study Supporting the SI Theory,” *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 18(3): 143; Maureen Honey, “Maternal Welders: Women’s Sexuality and Propaganda on the Home Front During World War II,” in *The American Experience in World War II. The American People at War: Minorities and Women in the Second World War*, vol. 10. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 485.

⁶⁰ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 364; Carlos Arnaldo Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History*, 2nd edition. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 416.

⁶¹ “Other war facilities in the Portland-Vancouver area employed from a few hundred to several thousand workers. Subassembly plants for ships and airplanes, and industries manufacturing wartime chemical, aluminum, steel, and other products were also located in Portland. Elsewhere, smaller plants like the Pacific Car and Foundry Company in Renton converted from making logging trucks to Sherman tanks. Eighty-eight ship- and boatyards in Washington--including the navy's big facility at Bremerton--employed a total of 150,000 workers in 1944.” Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest*, 411 and 412.

undertone of talk—words—Seattle—Portland—San Francisco—Seattle—shipyards—Vancouver.”⁶²

Boeing

In preparation for war, Boeing assembled plants in the Puget Sound area of Washington, employing more than one thousand people. After some negotiation and a split-contract deal with rival aircraft maker Douglas, Boeing received a federal contract for 250 aircraft. Production of both the B-17 and B-29 significant man-power. Ten-hour workdays were common; wages started at 62.5 cents an hour.⁶³ When labor became scarce in early 1942, the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction announced that some women would be trained for the aircraft industry. By 1944 women made up nearly 50% of the total Boeing workforce. In 1940, there were 6,200 women working in manufacturing; in 1945, there were 40,800.⁶⁴

According to Serling, some “Rosies turned out to be prostitutes from an Alaskan red-light district.” After the Army shut down the brothels, the alleged prostitutes migrated to Seattle for “more honorable employment.”⁶⁵ This may have been an exaggeration. Sheila Tropp Lichtman focused her dissertation on women working in California shipyards during the war, and she suggests that this male attitude was a competitive reaction to women working along-side them. In these situations the male employees

⁶² Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front 1941-1945*. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1976), 69-71.

⁶³ Kathy Hogan, *Cohasset Beach Chronicles: World War II in the Pacific Northwest*. Introduction by Lucy Hart and Edited by Klancy Clark de Nevers and Lucy Hart. (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1995), xx; Robert J. Serling, *Legend and Legacy: The Story of Boeing and Its People*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 52 and 60.

⁶⁴ Karen Anderson, "The Impact of World War II in the Puget Sound Area on the Status of Women and the Family." (University of Washington, Ph.D., 1975), 26 and 30; Serling, *Legend and Legacy*, 58.

⁶⁵ Serling, *Legend and Legacy*, 58.

would often accuse women of only working in defense to "be near men."⁶⁶ Despite making up almost half of the total workforce at Boeing in 1944, supervisors still found it difficult to take women seriously when they believed that their working status was only temporary.

Kaiser Shipyards

Before the war, Henry Kaiser had built the San Francisco Bay Bridge and various regional dams. Kaiser was new to shipbuilding, but at the end of the war he had developed multiple shipyards on the Pacific coast. Oregon Shipbuilding, built in 1941, was the first shipyard built in the region. After Pearl Harbor, the second yard was built in Vancouver. In March 1942 a third shipyard broke ground at Portland's Swan Island. Willamette Iron and Steel (WISCO), Commercial Iron Works and Albina Engine and Machine Works were also located in the area, and these smaller companies also received government contracts. Almost one year after Pearl Harbor, the Portland area shipyards employed nearly 95,000.⁶⁷

The small prewar population of the Portland-Vancouver area caused a shortage of labor at the start of America's entry in the war, which led to the recruitment of women. The first women workers went to work at the Oregon Shipyard plants in April 1942.⁶⁸ Most women, regardless of race, class, or title started out as sweepers or helpers, but as

⁶⁶ Sheila Tropp Lichtman. "Women at Work, 1941-1945: Wartime Employment in the San Francisco Bay Area." (University of California, Davis, Ph.D., 1981), 111-112.

⁶⁷ Amy Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities: Women Shipyard Workers in Portland and Vancouver During World War II and Reconversion*. (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990), 13; Karen Beck Skold, "The Job He Left Behind: Women in the Shipyards During World War II," *Women in Pacific Northwest History*. Edited by Karen J. Blair. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988), 159.

⁶⁸ Until this time the only women to work at the Oregon Shipyards were office workers or nurses who worked in the infirmary. *The Bo's'n's Whistle* vol. 2, no. 4 (26 February 1942): 11.

the number of male employees dwindled due to the draft, the number of female welders increased.⁶⁹

In 1939 there was only a handful of women working clerical jobs at the shipyards. At the height of the war, women made up 27 percent of the Kaiser workforce.⁷⁰ Depending on job title, women made approximately "\$63 a week."⁷¹ Shipyard work was some of the highest paying defense work in the country. Betty Cleator was amazed by the shipyard wages, "It was an unbelievable amount of money, just unbelievable. I'm not sure but what I was making more than my father, and he was a professional forester."⁷² Jean Clark commented that "the money was too good to pass up." Clark dropped out of high school in order to work in the shipyards.⁷³ However, not everyone agreed that the shipyard wages were so great. Kathy Hogan author of a weekly editorial in the *Cohasset Beach Chronicles*, ran into one woman whose husband worked at a shipyard who claimed that "it's all hooley about the big wages; that she has to scrimp and scramble to make ends meet for her family."⁷⁴

There were a variety of reasons women sought employment in the war production centers. Many women were attracted to the high wages or the sense that they were contributing to the war effort. "'Actually what attracted me [to factory work],' Juanita Loveless explained, were the ads 'Do Your Part,' 'Uncle Sam Needs You,' 'V for Victory!' I got caught up in that patriotic 'Win the War, Help the Boys.'" However, for many women war workers economic need was more important than patriotism. Kathryn

⁶⁹ Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 6, 15 and 38.

⁷⁰ Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 21.

⁷¹ Skold, "The Job He Left Behind," 161-62.

⁷² Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 29.

⁷³ Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 29.

⁷⁴ Hogan, *Cohasset Beach Chronicles*, 101.

Blair explained that "There's no use in saying I did it for patriotism. It was pure economics. It was the one thing where I could make enough money to get along."⁷⁵

United States Fashion Industry

Prior to World War II, the United States fashion industry did not receive the widespread attention that Paris or London received; however, the "American fashion industry did not suddenly appear in 1940; it had been maturing for nearly a hundred years."⁷⁶ The United States fashion industry gained an advantage during the German occupation of France; during the occupation, the United States fashion industry had the opportunity to show the American market and the Western world that it was a fashion contender. The United States apparel industry was aided by the newly established trade publication *Women's Wear Daily* and other widely read publications like *Ladies' Home Journal* and the *New York Times*. During the occupation of Paris, fashion editors for *Vogue* and other high fashion magazines turned their editorial attention to American designers.

World War I had been a "dress rehearsal" for the American fashion industry. The war nearly decimated France, and the United States fashion industry had to make do without French inspiration. For the first time, the United States fashion industry looked to American designers to fill the void. After the war it took some time for Paris to recover,

⁷⁵ Goodwin, *No Ordinary Time*, 365; Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 29.

⁷⁶ Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 3. Although Sara B. Marketti and Jean L. Parsons argue that it was not until the beginning of the 20th century that the "emerging idea of American design began to grow . . . almost at the same time that the women's ready-to-wear apparel industry started taking its first steps." Sara B. Marketti and Jean L. Parsons, "American Fashion for American Women: Early Twentieth Century Efforts to Develop an American Fashion Identity," *Dress* 34 (2007): 79.

but soon Paris once again took center stage, relegating the American fashion industry to the periphery throughout the 1920s.⁷⁷

The 1930s was an important decade of transition for the American fashion industry. The US fashion industry was aided by federally-sponsored technological advances during the Depression-era. These included a WPA project for standardizing women's dress sizes, new engineering processes that allowed workers to produce garments by the section method (specializing in individual sections of a garment) that speeded up production by 20 to 25 percent and the development of spun rayon that could be worked on machines set up for cotton. These innovations provided manufacturers "the ability to quickly produce an economically competitive product that" competed with French and English markets. By 1939 the United States "ready-to-wear industry was solid and strong" with trained patternmakers, "skilled cutters, fitters, [and] operators."⁷⁸

Styles: Pre War and World War II

Pre-War Styles

In the early 1930s, skirt lengths had dropped to the ankle, but by the end of the 1930s skirt lengths had gradually risen to the just below the knee.⁷⁹ In 1940 the "silhouette for . . . women's clothing was largely unchanged from the previous couple of years." The stylish female silhouette had wide, padded shoulders; a nipped-in waist; narrow hips; and most skirts fell below the knee.⁸⁰ Formal wear "remained long and full, sometimes with knife-pleats or overdrapes."⁸¹ Suits were a staple item in women's

⁷⁷ Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 8 and 10.

⁷⁸ Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 16-17.

⁷⁹ Tortora and Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 398.

⁸⁰ Patricia Baker, *Fashions of a Decade: The 1940s*. (New York: Facts on File, 1992), 5.

⁸¹ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 124.

wardrobes; many suit styles were styled after men's suits. Jacket lengths were long with long, narrow lapels at the end of the thirties.⁸²

Before the war, retailers began to market sportswear, a casual version of day wear. Wool sweaters made with both long and short-sleeves were worn. Some sweaters were worn with belts. Belted coats remained in style, as did boxy-shaped short jackets and full-length coats. Slacks in full-length and cropped 'Capri' styles were also worn. Accessories, particularly hats, were considered an "essential" part of a woman's dress and came in a wide variety of styles. Military motifs became popular even before the United States entered the war, reflecting the influence of the war in Europe. Patriotic colors, star motifs and insignia were just some of the details to appear on women's apparel in January 1941 eleven months before the U.S. entered the war in December of that same year.⁸³ See Figures 1a through 1g for examples of pre-war apparel styles.

⁸² Tortora and Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 399.

⁸³ Tortora and Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 399; Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 124-125; Baker, *Fashions of a Decade*, 5.



Figure 1a. Charlotte Johnson, "Relay Your Wardrobe," *Ladies Home Journal*, February 1939: 27.



Figure 1b. *Ladies Home Journal*, October 1939: 25.



Figure 1c. Charlotte Johnson, "Earmarked--Youth," *Ladies Home Journal*, January 1940: 23.

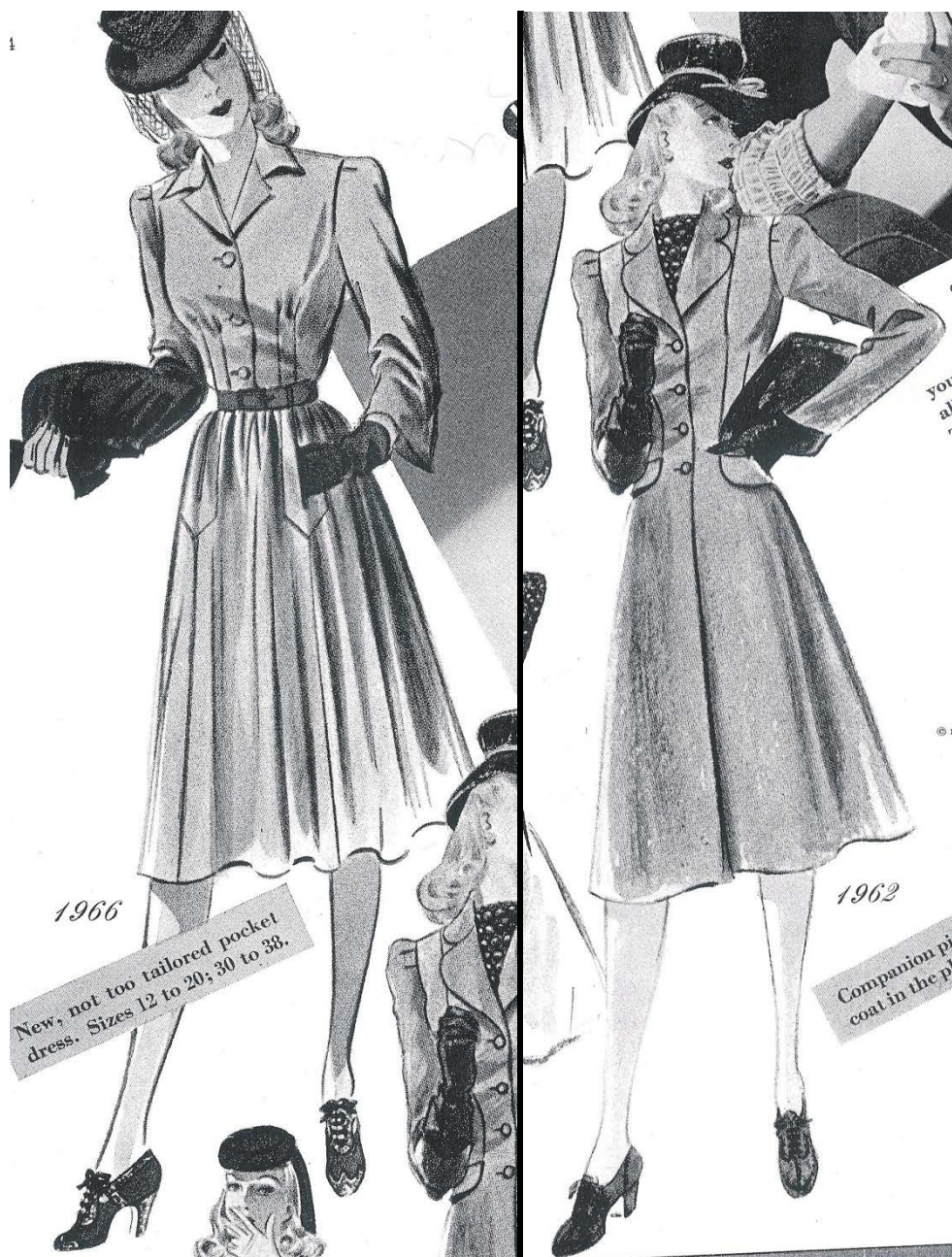


Figure 1d. Wilhela Cushman, "Our Hollywood Fashion," *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1940: 24.



Figure 1e. Ruth Mary Packard, "This Is My Trousseau . . . And My Summer Wardrobe," *Ladies Home Journal*, May 1940: 26.

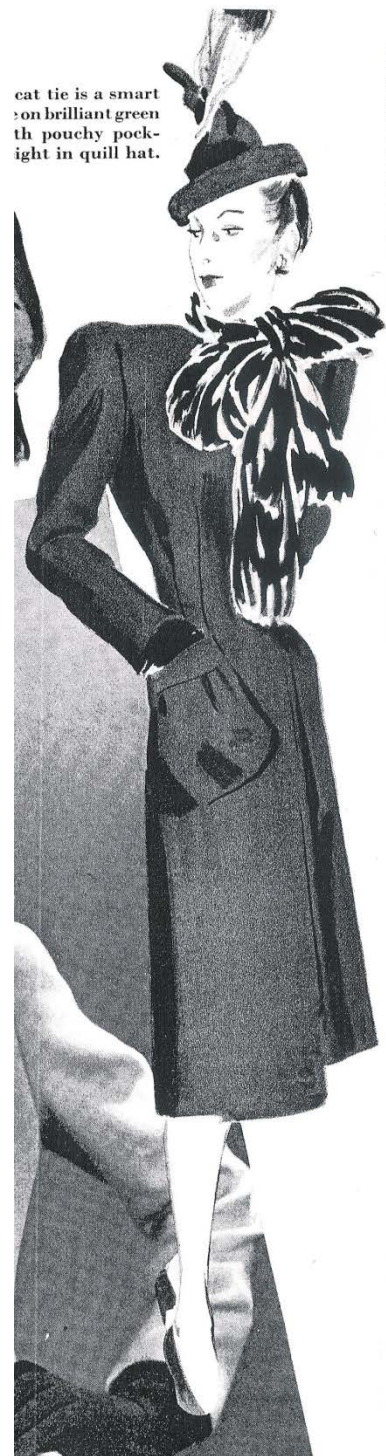


Figure 1f. "Fall-Winter Fashions," *Ladies Home Journal*, November 1940: 22.



Figure 1g. Wilhela Cushman, "Looking Forward to Spring," *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1941: 26.

World War II Styles

During the war, apparel styles were essentially frozen "styles of the late thirties and 1940-1941." Skirts shortened to just below the knee; shoulders broadened, and "shoulder pads were inserted into all garments to provide greater width. Bias cut [popular in the 1930s] was rarely used."⁸⁴ There were a variety of styles of shirtwaist dresses that were worn. "Separates became popular because of their versatility."⁸⁵ Shorter jacket-styles were particularly popular. The broad-shouldered look and slim body remained stylish throughout the war. However, by 1946 the natural shoulder lines became popular particularly among younger women.⁸⁶

There were a variety of suit styles; some of the more commonly worn styles included suits worn with short bolero jackets or Eisenhower jackets "that were slightly bloused above the waist, gathered to a fitted belt at the waist."⁸⁷ Slacks were popular by 1942, but this was "not . . . without controversy."⁸⁸ Initially promoted as "glamorous casual dress" pants were usually paired with pearls, hats, heels and other accessories. In Akron, Ohio advertisements for pants changed when women started working in factories in larger numbers; ads now illustrated women wearing practical pants working in factories.⁸⁹ Working women also wore coveralls and bib overalls.⁹⁰

During the war, hats were "increasingly replaced by . . . head scarves and turbans, especially for women involved in war work in factories."⁹¹ Bathing suits also underwent

⁸⁴ Tortora and Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 398

⁸⁵ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 124.

⁸⁶ Tortora and Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 398; Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 124.

⁸⁷ Tortora and Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 399.

⁸⁸ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 125.

⁸⁹ Buckland, "Fashion As A Tool," 146.

⁹⁰ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 125.

⁹¹ Baker, *Fashions of a Decade*, 5.

change due to the apparel regulations. The government "ordered a 10-per-cent reduction in the amount of cloth" needed to make a bathing suit, resulting in a "two- rather than one-piece outfits."⁹² See Figures 2a to 2d for examples of wartime apparel styles.

⁹² Blum, *V Was For Victory*, 95.



Figure 2a. Wilhela Cushman, "It's The Order of the Day," *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1942: 30.



Figure 2b. *Ladies Home Journal*, September 1944: 33.



Figure 2c. *Ladies Home Journal*, March 1945: 34-35.

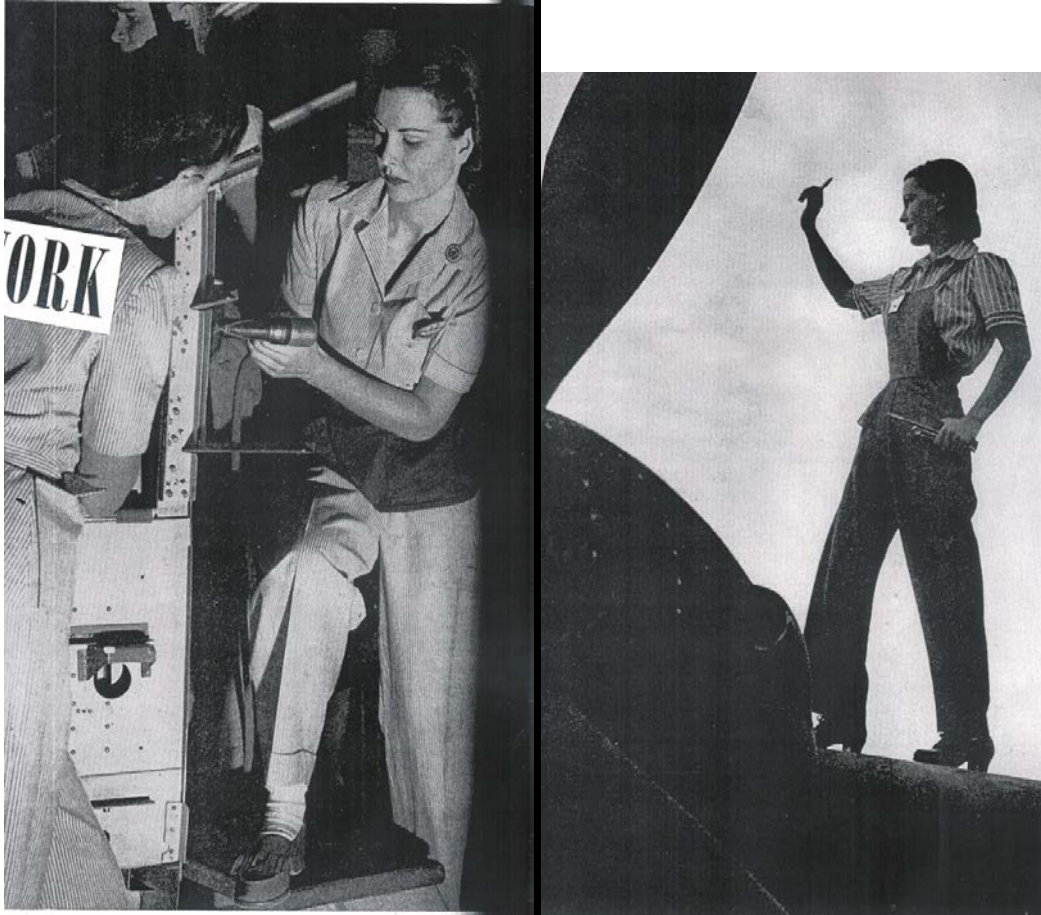


Figure 2d. Wilhela Cushman, "Now It's Woman's Work," *Ladies Home Journal*, May 1942: 28-29.

Tamara Clayton examined wedding dresses illustrated in U.S. *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazar* between 1939 and 1945. While L-85 restrictions were not applied to wedding dresses, many designs lacked prohibited style features like "prohibited sleeve styles . . . wide sashes . . . and the use of ruffles."⁹³ Clayton found that high fashion magazines of the period illustrated traditional, yet simpler styles of wedding dresses. Dresses were primarily made of man-made fibers like rayon. Many styles were made without trains and had little applied ornamentation or other details. Clayton concludes that the wartime wedding dress styles were influenced by the war and that the limited use of restricted details was likely due to conservation attitudes.

Women's Wartime Work Clothes

Women's presence in the shipyards and other industries was reflected in the culture that developed in these traditionally male-centric environments. Articles in the Kaiser Shipyards publication of the *Bo's'n's Whistle* contained descriptions of women's appearance.⁹⁴ Some women resented the focus on women's appearance, "particularly when it resulted in the neglect of women's real experience and needs."⁹⁵ After interviewing shipyard women to find out about work clothes, several women complained that they were spending their day's off searching for work clothes. Many had been "trying to fit . . . into men's clothing . . . [and what] they really wanted was a practical, warm garment" that fit a woman's body.⁹⁶ What they got was a "sample suit [made by a]

⁹³ Tamara Clayton, "World War II Wedding Dress as Presented in United States High Fashion Magazines:1939-1945," (Master's thesis, Oregon State University, 2007), 39.

⁹⁴ Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 53. Doris Trachsel was pictured wearing a "drum majorette" uniform in full make-up striking a seductive pose. Trachsel worked as an office worker at one of the Kaiser shipyards in the Portland-Vancouver area. *The Bo's'n's Whistle* vol. 2, no. 6 (26 March 1942): 6.

⁹⁵ Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 58-59.

⁹⁶ *The Bo's'n's Whistle* vol. 2, no. 20 (22 October 1942): 11.

Portland manufacturing concern known for its smart ski clothing.”⁹⁷ According to *The Bo’s’n’s Whistle* shipyard workers spent ten percent of their paycheck on apparel.⁹⁸ Local retailers also understood that women factory workers had more money from their factory wages, and they would likely spend some of this money on work apparel.⁹⁹ Work apparel ranged in fabric quality, durability, and quality of craftsmanship, and therefore ranged in price from \$3.50 to \$24.50.¹⁰⁰

Possibly in response to this need, in November 1942 Oregon Shipyard hosted a fashion show of women's work clothes. A few months later the fashion designer Muriel King was invited to "develop a line of ‘fleet fashions’ suitable for shipyard work in the . . . Pacific Northwest.”¹⁰¹ King is also credited with developing a line of work-wear for women working in the aircraft industry and designing "a combination lunch box and beauty kit." King was not the only designer to develop work clothes for women war workers. Vera Maxwell designed coveralls for women working at Sperry Gyroscope Corporation. Mainboucher designed uniforms for the WAVES of the Women's Naval Reserve Corps.¹⁰²

The United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Home Economics clothing specialist, Clarice L. Scott, created "functional clothing for working women."

⁹⁷ It was made of a wool-cotton blend that “is warm, resists tearing, and is water-repellent. The color is slate blue. The garment is of one-piece coverall style, belted to give the appearance of a two-piece garment. It has concealed buttons, a zippered cigarette and coin pocket, and two roomy slash pockets in the trousers.” *The Bo’s’n’s Whistle* vol. 2, no. 20 (22 October 1942): 11.

⁹⁸ “Where Does the Shipworker’s Payroll Dollar Go?” (after Federal income taxes are deducted): .10 War Savings Bonds; .32 Food; .10 Clothing; .16 Rent; .05 Fuel and Electricity; .04 Furnishings; .05 Transportation; .03 Medical Care; .09 Household Operations, Recreation, Personal Care; .04 Contributions, Gifts and Savings; .02 State Income Taxes.” *The Bo’s’n’s Whistle* vol. 2, no. 18 (27 September 1942): 5.

⁹⁹ From 1943 to 1945 personal consumption on “apparel and upkeep” increased from \$98 per person to \$117. Winakor, “The Decline in Expenditures,” 196.

¹⁰⁰ *The Bo’s’n’s Whistle* vol. 2, no. 22 (26 November 1942): 11.

¹⁰¹ Kesselman, *Fleeting Opportunities*, 58-59; See also November 11, 1943 edition of the *Bo’s’n’s Whistle*.

¹⁰² Laboissonniere, *Blueprints of Fashion*, 53.

These garments were made without the ornamentation that could get caught in machinery and cause harm to the wearer.

Each of the USDA designs had to meet the following specifications: free action and coolness for comfort; safety features for work around the stove, for stooping, for getting up on ladders; time and energy saving features, ease of entry, easy to iron, useful pockets; simple to make; durability of materials and workmanship; attractiveness.¹⁰³

Home sewing

In the lean years of the 1930s, "the home-sewing industry thrived" and the interest in home sewing continued during the war as women tried to deal with the limited supply of goods and "make do" with the things they already owned. One survey indicated that before the war, half of the females in the United States "knew how to sew, and that by 1944, 82% sewed at home." American women sewed for a variety of reasons: to save money by mending their family's clothing, for the fun of it and to help with the war effort.¹⁰⁴

During the war, consumers were constantly reminded in federal ad campaigns and popular magazines to be thoughtful consumers. Caroline F. Ware stated that the "patriotic consumer must be handy with the needle, the hammer, the wrench . . . [and] must be able to mend the window screen, fix the faucet, make over Johnnie's clothes."¹⁰⁵ First published in 1942 by the Spool Cotton Company *Make and Mend For Victory* helped women cope with the restrictions.¹⁰⁶ The booklet instructed home sewers on how to mend, patch, alter and restyle an existing wardrobe. It also provided patterns for transforming old clothes into new garments. Department stores picked up on the home

¹⁰³ Laboissonniere, *Blueprints of Fashion*, 45.

¹⁰⁴ Laboissonniere, *Blueprints of Fashion*, 25.

¹⁰⁵ Ware, *The Consumer Goes To War*, 107-108.

¹⁰⁶ The Spool Cotton Company, *Make and Mend for Victory*. 1942.

sewing trend and updated "their piece goods departments" in an attempt to stimulate their sales of material, patterns and other sewing supplies. In addition, stores offered refresher courses in sewing. Sears, Roebuck and Co. sold fabrics, notions and patterns in their mail-order catalogues.¹⁰⁷

Sewing was not the only way women helped with the war effort; many women took up knitting as a way to both show support for American soldiers and to fill the down time whether working at home, in a factory or as a nurse. Local chapters of the American Red Cross, church groups and other clubs knitted socks, vests, mufflers, sweaters and other articles to keep Allied soldiers warm. Despite wool shortages, the WPB granted the Red Cross priority status to receive wool for all the women volunteers knitting garments for soldiers.¹⁰⁸

Summary

The war was a catalyst for many changes throughout the world and the United States. In the United States the Roosevelt administration stopped at nothing to achieve victory, resulting in political, economic, social and cultural changes to the American way of life. Many of the Depression-era programs were suspended during the war, unemployment ceased to be a problem for most Americans and money trickled down from the federal war contracts to the industries and workers developing goods needed for war. The geographic face of the United States changed as individuals and families migrated to where the jobs were, and, despite wartime inflation, people spent money on goods and entertainment. The Pacific Northwest was a region that rapidly changed during

¹⁰⁷ Laboissonniere, *Blueprints of Fashion*, 25-26 and 38.

¹⁰⁸ Paula Becker, "Knitting for Victory--World War II," *HistoryLink.org Essay 5722*, 19August 2004. Available from http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File_Id=5722.

the war. New shipyards were built and existing ones grew to fulfill the need for Liberty ships and other watercraft needed in the Atlantic and Pacific. Boeing and other corporations built aircraft needed for the war.

Despite federal regulation of apparel styles and rising prices, nationwide consumption of women's apparel increased. The United States fashion industry blossomed partially influenced by the occupation of France. Many United States fashion designers did their part for the war by innovating and designing work wear for the increased number of working women. During the war, more and more women took jobs in factories to fill the need for labor while their husbands, fathers and brothers fought in the war. While some saw this as temporary, many stayed in the workforce even after the war ended. Not all women took factory jobs, but many women were encouraged to do their part for the war. Many started victory gardens to supplement the pantry during rationing, while others took up or continued to mend or sew clothing for themselves and their families.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The purpose of this research was to examine how female consumers of women's apparel were influenced by the federal regulations of women's apparel and adornment during World War II. To accomplish this purpose I interviewed women who were at least 13 years old in 1941 to learn about how the war affected their purchase of apparel. I was particularly interested in knowing how women felt about the government regulation of women's apparel under L-85 (Limitation Order) or if they knew about the restrictions at all. The purpose of this research is to examine how female consumers of women's apparel were influenced by the federal regulations of women's apparel and adornment during World War II.

Research Design

Historic Research

Louis Gottschalk defines history as "the past of mankind."¹⁰⁹ There are many explanations and definitions of what history is, but most involve some systematic ordering of past events through a researcher's objective examination of artifacts, records, or documents from the past. Typically, a historian begins with a research question and develops a research method that permits the analysis of appropriate sources in order to draw conclusions.¹¹⁰ Generally, a historian derives research questions from an

¹⁰⁹ Louis Gottschalk, *Understanding History: A Primer of Historical Method*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 41.

¹¹⁰ Richard Beringer, *Historical Analysis: Contemporary Approaches to Clio's Craft*. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 2-5.

examination of artifacts or documentary sources from the period in question.¹¹¹ Since interpretation and ordering of research is required, and therefore subjective, the historian must be careful to avoid broad generalizations and assumptions. To be useful, historic analyses must be shared with others in the field.¹¹²

Historic research on clothing has gained a great deal of attention since the 1970s because the study of physical adornment reflects social and cultural changes.¹¹³

Depending on the research question other methods may be more appropriate or used in conjunction with the historic method; for example, content analysis, artifact analysis or oral history. Content analysis is used to procure quantitative data from visual sources. A researcher using the content analysis method often records the data on a unique instrument inspired by explicit or implicit data.¹¹⁴ In studies using the artifact analysis approach, the research question is designed around a particular object or group of objects.¹¹⁵ Supplementary data sources (i.e., primary and secondary) are used to access the social and cultural value of the object. Oral history records information from people who have firsthand knowledge of historical events. Oral history uncovers the everyday lives of "ordinary" people in order to provide a more complete picture of a particular

¹¹¹ W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History*. (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1958), 18.

¹¹² Gottschalk, *Understanding History*, 16.

¹¹³ C. R. Jasper and M. E. Roach-Higgins, "History of Costume: Theory and Instruction," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 5(4) 1987: 1-6.

¹¹⁴ W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006), 44-45.

¹¹⁵ E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1973): 153-173; Robert S. Elliot, "A Case Study in New Brunswick Material History: Testing a Method for Artifact Analysis," *Term Paper History* 6700, 1984: 17-32; Thomas J. Schlereth, "Material culture and culture research," *Material Culture: A research guide*. (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1985): 1-34.

place and time. These recorded accounts create "a new 'document' through the tape-recorded interview."¹¹⁶

Oral History

Oral History Method

There are three types of oral history--topical, biographical, and autobiographical.¹¹⁷ This project is a topical study focused on a specific theme or topic (i.e., regulation of women's dress) in order to gather information about a particular time (i.e., during World War II).

A Brief History of Oral History

Prior to the late 19th century, history was traditionally communicated orally. By the late 19th century these methods fell out of favor with the rise of the scientific movement. Sometime later, historians began to recognize that something was missing from their body of evidence; this turned out to be oral accounts from living participants. By the early 20th century historians "began to see oral history accounts as valid."¹¹⁸

During the Depression, the writers for the Federal Writers' Project, a New Deal program established under the Works Progress Administration, collected first person

¹¹⁶ David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty, *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*. (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History), 111; Ronald J. Grele, "Oral History as Evidence," in *Handbook of Oral History*. T. L. Charlton, L. E. Myers, and R. Sharpless, eds. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 48; Sherna Gluck, "What's So Special About Women?: Women's Oral History," in *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. D. K. Dunaway and W. K. Baum, eds. (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1996), 217.

¹¹⁷ Gluck, "What's So Special About Women?," 217. Oral histories can be divided in other ways. For example Mary A. Larson explains that they can be "categorized into four basic types: subject-oriented histories, life histories, community history, and family history." Mary A. Larson, "Research Design and Strategies," in *Handbook of Oral History*. T. L. Charlton, L. E. Myers, and R. Sharpless, eds. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 106.

¹¹⁸ Rebecca Sharpless, "The History of Oral History," in *Handbook of Oral History*. T. L. Charlton, L. E. Myers, and R. Sharpless, eds. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 19-20.

accounts "from ordinary Americans."¹¹⁹ During World War II oral history was used to capture the experiences of war combatants. As a discipline oral history began to be used by academic scholars in the post-war era, and in the 1960s oral history themes expanded in conjunction with the civil right and feminist movements.

Women's oral history was one result of that expansion, and women's oral history can be characterized as an "effort to bring forth women's voices . . . [and] make visible and give voice to those who had been rendered historically invisible and voiceless."¹²⁰ Sherna Berger Gluck believes that women's oral history "is a feminist encounter, even if the interviewee is not herself a feminist." Women's oral history constructs a language that is more appropriate to view and interpret women's lived experiences. Women's oral history "is the communication among women of different generations; it is the discovery of our own roots and the development of a continuity which has been denied us in traditional historical accounts."¹²¹

Procedure

Sample

To learn about women's perceptions of their purchasing patterns during World War II, I interviewed 30 women, who in 1941, were between the ages of 13 and 29. Many of these women shared similar life experiences and could be grouped into four categories: (1) those who were either in high school, college or business school during

¹¹⁹ Sharpless, "The History of Oral History," 20.

¹²⁰ Sherna Berger Gluck, "Women's Oral History: Is It So Special?," in *Handbook of Oral History*. T. L. Charlton, L. E. Myers, and R. Sharpless, eds. (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2006), 359.

¹²¹ Gluck, "What's So Special About Women?," 217.

the war, then graduated and went to work (n=13);¹²² (2) those who were in high school, college or business school during the war, graduated, got married, worked, traveled the country following their husbands who were in the service, had a child, and returned home, often to their parents (n=9); (3) those who were in high school or college, worked and were married (n=2); and (4) other (n=6). Women who fell into the “other” category had experiences similar to the other women; they may have gone to school, married, traveled, had a child or worked but they didn’t fit neatly into the other three categories.¹²³ See Appendix B for Wartime Demographics by Respondent.

When asked to compare their wartime situation to other women's experiences that they knew about during this time, nine explained that they chose to work or go to college, but they knew that many women were focused on getting married and having children. Carolyn explained that she was "single, employed, had more money and more time [since] I didn't have a family and kids to take care of." Joann just didn't want to be like other girls who stayed in the county they were born in: "people sometimes thought it was odd that I . . . a farm girl . . . [went] to Los Angeles." Marcia stated the opposite; that she decided to get married and have children, but that she knew that other women were going to school or were working, delaying starting a family. "We who had babies did just about what I did and those . . . [who] didn't marry or their husbands . . . were gone . . . they would work."

¹²² One woman completed her bachelor’s degree, went to graduate school and then got a job at the YWCA.

¹²³ One woman explained that she was married and traveled to be with her husband; one was already married before the war began, but she worked and had a baby during the war. Another woman divorced at the start of the war, worked and joined the army. One woman graduated high school and went into a nursing program. One woman went to college but didn’t complete her degree, was married, worked, traveled to be with her husband, and returned to her parents’ home when her husband went overseas. Finally, one woman was both a high school and college student during the war.

To discover potential study participants I mailed a letter introducing myself and my study to Oregon State University alumnae who were enrolled in the home economics department during the war and women listed in OSU's Center for Aging Research database. The letter let them know that I would contact them to see if they were interested in participating in the study and contained my contact information if they wanted to contact me. In addition, I also advertised my study at museums and senior centers.¹²⁴ I mailed these institutions a poster advertising my study and a letter to publish in their newsletters inviting interested participants to contact me. I also encouraged participants to pass on my information to friends or family who may be interested in participating in my study. See Appendix C for the recruitment poster and Appendix D for the newsletter invitation. I emphasized that the focus was women's apparel, so those who remember 1940s apparel styles were encouraged to participate.

Limiting my search to the Pacific Northwest naturally prevented me from obtaining a representative sample of the nation. While I had no intention of limiting my search to white, middle and upper-middle class women, my sample was entirely white, middle and upper-middle class women since these are many of the people who frequent historic museums, live in assisted living homes, or attended college in the 1940s. I met 29 respondents at their place of residence; one respondent was interviewed over Skype because she lived in Southern California.

¹²⁴ Museums included Benton County Historical Society and Museum, Albany Museum and Southern Oregon Historical Society and Museum. I contacted event coordinators at the various senior centers in Corvallis, Oregon. I sent them my poster and letter for the newsletters. The event coordinators circulated this information to people they thought would be interested in participating in my study. However, no senior center participants were pertained through these means. I did interview women who lived in senior centers but they were all referred to me by other respondents.

I encouraged participants to invite family or close friends who may be interested in learning about 1940s apparel styles to the interview. Inviting friends or family members to listen to the interview was designed to help the respondent feel more relaxed during the interview. I also encouraged respondents to invite friends or family who were alive during World War II and were interested in participating in the study. If the friends or family members also provide useful information they were asked to sign an informed consent document. Also, if the interviewee had age related memory problems, a third party helped ease the situation. In more than one interview, respondents had their daughters present. The daughters had no trouble reminding their mom's what question I had asked was or to reign them back in when on an unrelated tangent. However, one daughter heard her mother's wartime stories so often, she started interrupting her mom to answer the questions for her. I made sure I kept asking the questions to the respondent and eventually the daughter was not able to answer the questions.

Participants were also encouraged to share pictures, garments, letters, or any other war-time memorabilia during the interview; personal items were thought to aid in memory recall and help the participant recall more valid or accurate memories. With the respondents permission, I took pictures of these items to use in my analysis.

Almost all of the women interviewed were high school or college age during the war, and few recalled styles other than the sweater/skirt combination, so to provide a fuller picture of civilian war dress I also examined 32 extant garments from three museums and one university collection in the Willamette Valley: Oregon Historical Society,¹²⁵ Lane County Historical Museum, Benton County Historical Society and

¹²⁵ The Oregon Historical Society had 30 garments that were dated "1940s." However due to time and monetary limitations I could not examine all 30. All garments with labels were examined because I

Museum and Oregon State University's Design and Human Environment Historic and Cultural Textile Apparel Collection.¹²⁶ The garments were dated by museum and university staff using primary (e.g., catalogs and magazines) and secondary sources (e.g., textbooks, clothing dictionaries and so forth). Unless I state otherwise none of the garments had information about the original wearer/owner.¹²⁷

I also consulted women's and fashion magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Glamour*, the national news periodical *Time*, the Portland, Oregon newspaper the *Oregonian* and the nationally read newspaper *The New York Times*. These publications were selected because they were read by some of the women interviewed.¹²⁸

Interview Questions

I developed the interview questions based on a review of relevant literature. I asked participants general questions about their apparel consumption during the war, whether they knew about federal regulations of apparel, and their interest in fashion.¹²⁹ When relevant, I asked questions about their wartime employment how they spent their wages and questions relating to clothing budgets. However, questions related to clothing

assumed that some information could be located for garments with labels since none of the 30 garments had information about the original owner/wearer. In order to analyze a variety of garment styles additional garments without labels were selected. In all twelve garments were examined.

¹²⁶ Nine dresses that would have been worn for dressy occasions were examined; in addition, 6 day dresses, 6 suits, 3 blouses, 2 jackets, 2 full-length coats, 1 pair of overalls, 1 pinafore, 1 swim suit, and 1 sweater were examined. Unfortunately, time and money limitations prevented me from recording length and sweep (i.e., circumference) information on all but the DHE garments.

¹²⁷ Only four garments (12.5%) had information about the original wearer/owner.

¹²⁸ Seven respondents read *Ladies Home Journal*; two respondents read *Glamour*; three read *Time*; six respondents read the *Oregonian*, and one just remembered reading a Portland, Oregon newspaper. One respondent recalled she read the newspaper when she was living in New York. I assumed she read *The New York Times*.

¹²⁹ For example, did women read *Vogue* or other fashion periodicals? How often did they go shopping or browse new apparel styles?

budgets¹³⁰ were not asked consistently, because early in the study respondents who were asked these questions indicated that they did not have any idea about what portion of their or their family's budget went towards clothing. Two other questions, "Did you spend more money on clothing during the war than you did before the war?" and "Did you spend more money on clothing after the war than you did during the war?" were thrown out because they were leading questions. For example, Sylvia retorted "Well the obvious answer would be yes."¹³¹ The remaining interview questions appear to have face validity; in other words, face validity implies that the questions appear to "make sense" and measure the concepts under analysis.¹³² For example, "Did you follow fashion?" and "How did you follow fashionable styles?" appears to evaluate participants interest in fashion.

Before starting the interviews I interviewed one respondent in order to evaluate the questions. While the questions seemed to evaluate women's purchase and use of apparel during World War II, this respondent was too old to finish the interview and was not included in the sample total. After a few interviews I realized that respondents were not remembering questions related to clothing budget, and, as mentioned, these questions were dropped from the list of questions.

¹³⁰ Do you have a sense of what portion of your salary or the family's salary went to clothing purchases? and Did you spend more money on clothing during the war than before the war? Did you spend more money on clothing after the war than you did during the war? Did you buy more clothes during the war than you did before the war? Did you buy more clothes after the war than you did during the war?

¹³¹ To protect the anonymity of the interviewees their names have been changed. Excluding one interview over Skype, all interviews were conducted in person and tape recorded with the interviewees' permission. Interviews began on June 8, 2010 and were completed January 28, 2011.

¹³² Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 192.

Data Collection

At the beginning of each interview I reviewed the Informed Consent Document with the participant, answered any questions they had about the study, had the respondent sign the document, and then, with their permission, I turned on the audio tape recorder. See Appendix E for the Informed Consent Document. I intended to show respondents pictures of 1940s apparel styles to stimulate their memories but after a few times doing this I realized that respondents were only remembering what they were being shown. I stopped showing respondents pictures of 1940s apparel styles since many seemed to review their own photo albums before the interview. I started by asking the respondent demographic questions that included questions about their marital status during the war, where they lived during the war, their occupation during the war, and so forth. I used a semi-structured interview format with the 30 respondents. "In structured interviewing, the interviewer asks all respondents the same series of preestablished questions."¹³³ However, because not all questions were appropriate for each respondent, the interview questions were a guide but I omitted some and supplemented others for clarification or as the need arose. See Appendix F for the interview questions.

In summer 2010 I contacted the OSU Alumni Association, Center for Aging Research, and historical museums and senior centers throughout the Pacific Northwest to inquire about interested participants and to submit an advertisement in their upcoming newsletters. I completed interviews in Winter 2011.

¹³³ Andrea Fontana and James H. Frey, "The Interview: From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text," in *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*, 2nd ed., eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 68.

Data Analysis

After each interview, I transcribed the interviews. During the transcription stage, I began writing memos noting any reoccurring patterns and begin coding the data using open and selective coding methods. Using open coding, I read the transcripts looking for themes, patterns or unique behaviors. Mid-way through data collection, I started analyzing the data using common themes. This process is called focused coding.¹³⁴ After coding all the transcripts and field notes, the data were "grouped into major emergent themes."¹³⁵ At this stage I began writing the analysis, integrating other primary source evidence when available. After the completion of my analysis, I will donate copies of the transcripts to the Valley Library and Oregon Historical Society for future research. I will ensure the participants that their names have been changed to maintain anonymity.

Reliability

The term *reliability* is typically reserved for quantitative research.¹³⁶ Terms like credibility, neutrality, confirmability, consistency, dependability, applicability, or transferability are used more often when referring to qualitative research.¹³⁷ According to Brody, there are "three methods for seeking" credibility, confirmability, and dependability (i.e., trustworthiness): thick description, triangulation, and reflexivity.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, "Processing Fieldnotes: Coding and Memoing" in *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 143.

¹³⁵ Heidi P. Scheller and Grace I. Kunz, "Toward a Grounded Theory of Apparel Product Quality," *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal* 16(2), 1998: 58.

¹³⁶ Nahid Golafshani, "Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research," *The Qualitative Report* 8(4): 2003: 601.

¹³⁷ Golafshani, "Understanding Reliability," 601.

¹³⁸ Howard Brody, "Philosophic Approaches" in *Doing Qualitative Research*, vol. 3, eds. Benjamin F. Crabtree and William L. Miller (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1992), 177.

Triangulation is when the researcher "seeks trustworthiness in data collection by trying wherever possible to use multiple methods and divergent data sources."¹³⁹ For this study, interviews with multiple respondents adds depth (i.e., perspectives and backgrounds) to the study. Using more than one participant is referred to as "triangulation of observers."¹⁴⁰ In addition to triangulation of observers, Neuman discusses triangulation of method and triangulation of theory as methods to achieve trustworthiness.

"Triangulation of method" can be achieved by comparing participants' responses to one another and through the analysis of other historic documents (i.e., newspapers, store advertisements, photographs, recorded oral interviews, and so forth). In addition to triangulation, thick description is "a rich, detailed description of" specific events, observations, or conversations.¹⁴¹ To evaluate trustworthiness, "one must know in great detail the precise similarities and differences between" participants and their experiences during World War II.¹⁴² In qualitative studies, the investigator is "the research 'instrument'" and as such, the investigator must be aware of "preconceptions and assumptions that may have influenced data gathering and processing."¹⁴³ This self-awareness is called reflexivity.

In this study it is important to understand the time in which these women lived. There were fewer opportunities for women outside the home, and this was reflected in all parts of American society. I believe I had an easier time than some researchers relating to and understanding these women and their wartime experiences. First, I am a woman and a historian. My participants may have had an easier time recounting their lives to another

¹³⁹ Brody, "Philosophic Approaches," 177.

¹⁴⁰ Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 150.

¹⁴¹ Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 382.

¹⁴² Brody, "Philosophic Approaches," 178.

¹⁴³ Brody, "Philosophic Approaches," 179.

female. Also, being a historian interested in women, their roles, and experiences has prepared me to be far more understanding than historians with other areas of specialization.

In oral history research reliability is also concerned with “the consistency with which an individual will tell the same story about the same event on a number of different occasions.”¹⁴⁴ While this study is focused on women with some interest in fashion, many participants may have never thought about let alone discussed these topics before. John Neuenschwander argues that participants who spend less time rehearsing memories may provide more accurate and reliable information compared to others who repeatedly recall and rehearse past events.¹⁴⁵ It could be argued, however, that if the time lapse between the interview and the period under question is too great, memories may be lost or inaccurate; “nine out of ten historians would probably still subscribe today to the general rule that reliability is always inversely proportional to time-lapse between event and recollection, the closer the document is to the event it narrates the better it is likely to be for historical purposes.”¹⁴⁶ Therefore, subject’s memories may not be completely reliable.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, one could argue that studies relating to memory can be just

¹⁴⁴ Alice M. Hoffman and Howard S. Hoffman, “Reliability and Validity in Oral History: The Case for Memory.” *Memory and History: Essays on Recalling and Interpreting Experience*. (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), 109.

¹⁴⁵ In the late 1970s John Neuenschwander interviewed “survivors of the American Expeditionary Force in Siberia” between 1918 and 1920. When compared to the “official records of the American Expeditionary Force-Siberia at the National Archives” accounts from respondents who “rarely recounted their experience in public” were more accurate than accounts from respondents “who reminisced frequently.” John Neuenschwander, “Remembrance of Things Past: Oral Historians and Long-Term Memory,” *Oral History Review* 6(1): 50.

¹⁴⁶ Neuenschwander, “Remembrance of Things Past,” 52.

¹⁴⁷ I have decided not to perform a memory exam for each respondent, because these measures may not accurately assess one’s memory. William J. Hoyer and Paul A. Roodin, *Adult Development and Aging*, 5th ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2003), 275-76. In addition these measures are very invasive and do not lend to the development of rapport. “Experience has shown that the stronger the rapport between interviewer and interviewee, the richer the return in terms of source material.” Neuenschwander, “Remembrance of Things Past,” 47.

as (un)reliable as other primary source data. Therefore, it is my job as the researcher to try to corroborate memories with both primary sources and scholarly evidence.

Cross-checking the participants' accounts with other documents will help achieve external consistency. According to Neuman, external consistency "is achieved by verifying or cross-checking observations with other, divergent sources of data."¹⁴⁸ For my study I used newspapers and magazines to cross-check participants' accounts. I also used extant garments to add to the study because participants were not remembering much about wartime apparel like I thought they would.

Internal consistency may be more difficult to evaluate. Internal consistency "refers to whether the data are plausible given all that is known about a person or event."¹⁴⁹ In other words, I evaluated whether the statements made by each participant sounded logical given what I knew about the person. For example one respondent was a sandblasted steel spot welder in an airplane factory during the war. She kept insisting that she sewed everything she had ever worn. However, during the interview she did admit to buying two dress coats that were on sale; "one had a red fox-fur collar and the other had a neck collar." Given the age of participants I generally feel that I achieved internal consistency. While there were some inconsistencies in respondents' memories, overall respondents did recall major events (i.e., where they were when they learned about the attack on Pearl Harbor) and what they did during the war (i.e., where they worked, where they lived, and where they traveled). Respondents generally recalled rationing of food, tires, gasoline and the difficulty buying stockings.

¹⁴⁸ Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 404.

¹⁴⁹ Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 404.

Validity

In qualitative research, validity refers to "the truth or accuracy of the representations and generalizations made by the researcher."¹⁵⁰ An interpretation is valid if it accurately represents "those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorize."¹⁵¹ In oral history "[v]alidity . . . refers to the degree of conformity between the reports of the event and the event itself as reported by other primary source material, such as documents, diaries, letters, or other oral reports."¹⁵² There are three checks to validity in qualitative research that apply to this study: ecological validity, natural history, and member validation.¹⁵³

Ecological validity "is the degree to which" the researcher's analysis "matches the world of members."¹⁵⁴ It is important that my analysis is representative of the people I have interviewed. Likewise, it is equally important that any sources used to corroborate or enrich the analysis are meaningful to the study. For example, it would be useful to

¹⁵⁰ Johanna Moisander and Anu Valtonen, *Qualitative Marketing Research: A Cultural Approach*. (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 24.

¹⁵¹ Moisander and Valtonen, *Qualitative Marketing Research*, 24.

¹⁵² Hoffman and Hoffman, "Reliability and Validity in Oral History," 109. Electronic version: www3.baylor.edu/Oral_History/Hoffmans.pdf

In an experiment to evaluate the reliability of human memory, Alice M. Hoffman conducted interviews with her husband, Howard S. Hoffman on his experiences in World War II. The first recall interview took place in 1978; all three interviews were conducted over a ten year span. Howard's memories were compared to the company's official records, photographs, and other interviews with crewmen from Howard's battalion. Howard's memory contained more description and depth than the company records provided. At times the records corrected the order of Howard's memories. Interviews with other crewmen provided similar accounts. Some remember events more vividly than others. Over time, Howard's accounts did not vary all that much. In one of the later interviews, he had trouble remembering the order of events. For example, Howard recalled being in the Vosges Mountains when he heard about the death of FDR; however, Howard and his battalion were in Germany at the time of the presidents' death. The Hoffman's concluded that people tend to remember things verbally or by mental image. For long-term memory storage, people must rehearse the event via mental cognition or conversation for the memory to be stored. Without this process, the memory may be lost over time. Memories are often coded and objects may aid in the individuals' ability to recall information or events with more accuracy. Memories are more salient when they are recounted in chronological order.

¹⁵³ Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 405.

¹⁵⁴ Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 405.

compare responses from women who worked in factories in the Pacific Northwest to other published accounts from women who worked in the region during the war. It would be less valid or relevant to compare responses to women who worked in British factories during the war.

Natural history is a "description of how the project was conducted. It is a full and candid disclosure of a researcher's actions, assumptions, and procedures for others to evaluate."¹⁵⁵ In reporting my procedures, I have included a detailed description of how I conducted this study; this includes my interview questions. There is no doubt that if this same study was conducted by a different researcher, they would go about the study in a different way, ask different questions, or draw alternate conclusions. This does not mean that my methods are not adequate. However, it does mean because of different methods and my analysis being influenced by my personal experiences and knowledge, the results most likely will not be exactly the same. This is the nature of historical analysis and interpretation.

¹⁵⁵ Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 405.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Wartime regulations on apparel are often discussed in relation to the impact of the war on the home front during World War II. In these terms much has been written on the L-85 order, but after a casual conversation with my major professor we thought it would be interesting to find out what consumers really knew about the order before this population was no longer alive to ask. Did these women feel the need to “make do and mend” their existing wardrobes as federal propaganda campaigns suggested? If women worked in the defense industries, did they buy more apparel products because they had more money to spend on consumer discretionary items like apparel and accessories? For women who sewed their own and their family’s clothing, did the apparel restrictions influence homemade clothing? In what other ways were these women’s lives affected with regards to their apparel purchases? Therefore the purpose of this research is to examine how female consumers of women’s apparel were influenced by the federal regulations of women's apparel and adornment during World War II.

Research Thesis

In April 1942 the War Production Board issued regulations that prohibited certain apparel styles in order to "preserve both materials and factory capacity to make such products."¹⁵⁶ The purpose of the L-85 order was to freeze the 1940s pre-war silhouette so no major style changes would occur during the war when materials and manpower was needed for the war. Before the order was issued in April 1942 apparel styles featured

¹⁵⁶ Jane Farrell-Beck and Jean Parsons, *20th-Century Dress in the United States*. (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 2007), 114.

fitted bodices and full skirts which fell just below the knee.¹⁵⁷ While no major style changes occurred until after the war (i.e., the New Look) some style variation did occur during the war. Fashionable wartime apparel styles soon became more slim-fitting with narrower skirts that were knee-length or just below the knee-length and bodices with broad shoulders.¹⁵⁸ In an attempt to regulate women's apparel the WPB helped create this style variation, and while it technically was not a new silhouette (i.e., pre, during and post war are all considered an hourglass silhouette), it was and still is recognizable as the "wartime" style. Therefore, I assumed that the women I interviewed would have some awareness of the regulations on apparel due to the noticeable style changes that occurred in this period. However, I found quite the opposite. Not only were the women who were interviewed not aware of the regulations, the extant wartime garments did not always conform to the L-85 regulations.

I propose that the reason for this difference is that manufacturers of affordable ready-to-wear apparel, the type of clothing this sample of women purchased, worked "up to the full limitation of measurement."¹⁵⁹ In other words, the clothes that these women purchased during the war were not that different from styles they had already been wearing. These thirty women were not consumers of designer ready-to-wear garments which had more fashion forward form-fitting silhouettes than mass manufactured styles, because many U.S. designers aimed to work below the limitations "in order to have distinction."¹⁶⁰ In other words, these designers tried to use less fabric than the L-85 order

¹⁵⁷ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century dress in the United States*, 124; Shirley Miles O'Donnol, *American Costume, 1915-1970*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 126.

¹⁵⁸ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century dress*, 124; Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume*, 3rd ed. (New York: Fairchild Publications, Inc., 1998), 398.

¹⁵⁹ Sandra Stansbery Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion 1940 through 1945: From Understudy to Star" (Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1996), 170.

¹⁶⁰ Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 170.

permitted in order to create a name for themselves.¹⁶¹ As indicated during their interviews, these women's wartime purchases and use of apparel appeared to be more influenced by the pre-war economy, their age, their or their parents' income, and whether they worked, went to school, raised children or a combination of these factors. Gloria explicitly stated that the clothing she wore was less influenced by the war and more influenced by where she was in life. She explains that she was "going through a different phase in my life from going to school to starting to teach so I changed from sweaters and skirts and bobby socks more to dresses."¹⁶² Other clothing purchases were indirectly influenced by the war. For example, Joyce remembers having to buy clothing in Norfolk, Virginia because she was unprepared for the heat. She had been living in Corvallis, Oregon and moved to Virginia to be with her husband who was stationed there.

Memories of War

When asked what they remembered about World War II some of the women interviewed remembered what they were doing when they learned about the attack on Pearl Harbor. Ruth recalls that she and her family were at her uncles' home playing musical instruments, and they had the radio on when they learned about the attack. Kathleen was also listening to the radio and reading the comics with her sisters when they learned about the attack. Janet was in graduate school in Boston at the time of the attack. She had been sitting around having coffee after dinner listening to the radio, and when

¹⁶¹ Before the war American fashion designers weren't widely known like European designers; "[t]hrough media coverage of the WPB's efforts to conserve textiles, the public regularly saw both American designers' names and visuals of their creations." Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 174.

¹⁶² To protect the anonymity of the interviewees their names have been changed. Excluding one interview over Skype, all interviews were conducted in person and tape recorded with the interviewees permission. Interviews began on June 8, 2010 and were completed January 28, 2011.

the news was announced she recalls that "everything was changed right from then on . . . In Boston they thought they were going to get attacked by the Germans and so we had to quit going to school" and go into the basement to avoid the threat of German attack.

Marjorie remembers she was at Sunday School where she "heard some rumblings" and was told about the attack when she came home. Judith remembers seeing a picture in a newspaper or magazine after the attack and thought that it looked like "complete defeat." She remembers that the Willamette University football team was in Hawaii at the time, and she was concerned for them. Beverly recalls that she was a freshman in high school, and the brother of her seat partner was killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor and that after this point all the attention of everyone was on the war. Maria recalls that after Pearl Harbor the numbers of students went down because "all the fellas . . . went into the military."

Sacrifices

For those whose husbands, friends and family were overseas they were scared they would not return home. Nancy explains that "[t]hey took my husband overseas, that was the greatest sacrifice I made." Beyond the temporary or permanent loss of husband, friends and family, those interviewed did not recall making any real sacrifices during the war. They mentioned that tires and gasoline, some food stuffs and shoes were rationed, but that they made do with what was available. Because of the Depression many of the women were used to making do with what was available, and for others who had been younger during the Depression, they probably did not know or observe any differences.

War is always discussed in terms of sacrifice, but compared to European nations who were devastated by war "severe deprivations" never occurred in the United States.¹⁶³

Phyllis explained that her "mother was a fantastic manager and a very good cook so I don't really remember we had to make great sacrifices; we didn't have a lot of money to spend but we were always very well fed and very well clothed." Judith recalls that shoes were rationed, and "I think my feet must have still been growing because I had a pair of shoes that . . . [were] too tight and became too short and just ruined my feet but there was nothing else I could do, you just had to wear them." Beverly went through old letters and found one she had written to her mother dated April 1944: "Mother, when is my shoe stamp out? Edna said it wasn't good after the 30th. Is that right? If it is I really could use a new pair . . . probably dress shoes. I'm going to have my navy shoes re-heeled again. This makes the third time this winter."

Interest in fashion

When I first contacted respondents over the telephone I tried to make it clear that I was interested in wartime apparel. Despite this stipulation, during the interview half of the women reported that they were not interested in fashion. "[T]he war was your full attention that was it you just did what you had to do and got through it, and everybody was so busy so I don't think very many people concentrated on clothes those years; you didn't have to be fancy." Another respondent explained that "fashion was at the bottom of everyone's priority at that point. Just existing and waiting for your family to get home

¹⁶³ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century dress*, 114. "Because it had entered the conflict late and the mainland was never under attack, the country was relatively prosperous, and its industries were never really devastated." Beverly Gordon, "Showing the colors: America" in *Wearing propaganda: Textiles on the home front in Japan, Britain, and the United States, 1931-1945*. (New York: Yale University Press, 2005), 239.

from overseas the war just permeated everything; it was primary." These sentiments differ from the themes expressed in many retailer and manufacturer advertisements; "[i]n promoting fashion merchandise, retailers emphasized two major themes -- quality investments in clothing purchases and women's responsibility to look attractive for their men's morale."¹⁶⁴

The other half of the women reported an interest in fashion; two expressed that teenagers are always interested in fashion and appearance. Norma explained that she was interested in fashion and keeping up on the latest styles, but she was not too involved "because I didn't have that much choice in what was available or occasion to [wear fashionable apparel during the war]." Rosemary remembers going to fashion shows at the Portland, Oregon department store Meier and Frank; "[o]h my, everyone wanted to go to Meier and Franks to see what they were having this year so we always made an effort to do that and . . . it seems to me that [Charles F.] Bergs had times when salespeople were modeling . . . we paid a lot of attention to what was in."¹⁶⁵ Other stores also had fashion shows. For example, Lipman-Wolf, another Portland, Oregon department store, hosted an annual fashion show for college students, and in August 1942 they advertised regulated styles.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 191.

¹⁶⁵ Charles F. Bergs was a apparel boutique store in Portland, Oregon.

¹⁶⁶ "Store Shows 'War' Clothes," *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 21 August 1942: Section 2: 6. In September 1942 *The New York Times* "announced that it would sponsor a fashion show that would highlight 'the progress in American fashion leadership after two years of independence of the former style capital.' The paper repeatedly stressed that this show, eventually called 'Fashions of the Times,' would . . . [emphasize the] innovations in both designs and fabrics necessitated by the war. . . . With each presentation, the shows gained in popularity, and tickets soon became scarce." Sandra S. Buckland, "Promoting American Designers, 1940-44: Building Our Own House," in *Twentieth-Century American Fashion*, eds. Linda Welters and Patricia A. Cunningham (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 117. See also Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 208-214.

Even though only half of the respondents stated an interest in fashion, it may be that those respondents expressing no interest were interested in their appearance but the concept of "fashion" made them think of high fashion rather than just an interest in clothing, contemporary styles and trends. It is understandable that not all of the women interviewed had an interest in fashion, but it is difficult to believe that more women did not have some interest in it. Even Anita who was most outspoken in her indifference toward clothing showed me a picture of herself and two friends wearing suits, hats, heels and carried clutch purses. All three look fashion-forward, happy to have been all dressed up and have their picture taken. See Figure 3.



Figure 3. Anita (center) and friends.

I asked the women whether they read newspapers and magazines, which periodicals they read and which features they liked to read in order to evaluate their interest in fashion. Twenty-four of those interviewed read newspapers during the war.¹⁶⁷ Seven read the *Oregonian* or the *Sunday Oregonian*.¹⁶⁸ Many recall reading the local newspaper at wherever they were living. Eight women stated they read the latest war news, headlines or local news stories; seven read the comics; six read the women's section, fashion section or retailers' advertisements;¹⁶⁹ five read the social page, editorials and the advice column; five looked at the sports sections; four read the whole paper. The *Oregonian* and other newspapers had a fashion editor and a women's interest section, but editorials focused on apparel and the latest styles were not in every edition of the paper. It is likely that newspapers were less a source of fashion information than magazines or other sources like the movies or window shopping. However, the *Oregonian*, and likely other major newspapers, had an in-house fashion editor who wrote articles about the latest styles including the limitation order and the influence on dress.

On 9 April 1942 the *Oregonian* reported the regulations on apparel;¹⁷⁰ fashion editor Jane Allen tried to alleviate female readers' fears that the limitation orders would necessitate a whole new wardrobe in an article titled "Relax! Ladies."¹⁷¹ Jane Allen also wrote about how exercise and foundation garments would help women achieve that "nice

¹⁶⁷ Two interviewees said they did not read newspapers; one said she did not read newspapers or magazines because she could not afford them. Four respondents could not remember if they read newspapers at this time.

¹⁶⁸ The *Oregonian* featured a section titled the "Daily Home Magazine" that contained articles on women's interests (i.e., fashions, home keeping, and so forth).

¹⁶⁹ Joann explained that newspapers would advertise department stores who would "advertise their clothing and show a picture and it was usually . . . a drawing but they were really quite nice and . . . in quite good detail and you take the drawing like I could and make a dress like it."

¹⁷⁰ "Washington. A suit design approved by the war production board to conserve materials has a shortened jacket and a narrower skirt." "New War Fashions Replace Old Patterns; Restrictions Placed on Materials," *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 9 April 1942: Section 3, 4.

¹⁷¹ Jane Allen, "Relax, Ladies!" *Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 26 April 1942.

lean, long look."¹⁷² Among the things the *Oregonian* fashion editor focused on were college-aged females and their wartime apparel styles; one photograph caption read: "Here are two extremes of the college wardrobe, the campus coat of timmie tuft fabric, which may also do duty as an evening wrap, and the new evening gown conforming to both government and fashion regulations."¹⁷³ Six women explained that they looked at the fashion section if it was present but based on their responses, clearly the fashion section was not the focus when they read the newspaper.

Nineteen of the women read a weekly or bi-weekly news periodical like *Look*, *Life*, or *Time*.¹⁷⁴ Fifteen read a women's periodical that contained articles related to home-keeping, clothing, and recipes like *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Women's Home Companion*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *McCall's*. Thirteen respondents read general family-interest periodicals like *Saturday Evening Post*, *Reader's Digest*, and *National Geographic*. Five women read magazines focused on fashion or sewing including *Glamour*, *Vogue*, and *Buttericks*. Rita read *Etude*, a periodical focused on music, and Joann read *Sunset*, a lifestyle magazine focused on cooking, gardening and travel particularly in the western U.S., because her mother had a subscription. Many of the women who expressed an interest in fashion clearly read periodicals that featured the latest fashions or pictures of Hollywood stars. But not all of the women who expressed an interest in fashion read magazines. For example Phyllis explained that "I don't think we read magazines . . . we had a lot of studying to do . . . and we didn't have a lot of time to do recreational reading."

¹⁷² "Cloth-Saving Styles Denote Sleek Figures," *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 19 August 1942: Section 2: 1.

¹⁷³ "Contrasts in College Fashions," *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 28 August 1942, Section 2, 1.

¹⁷⁴ *Look* and *Life* both had heavy photographic content, which may have been a source for fashion information.

Wartime Clothing

Recalled

Twenty-seven of the women interviewed were in school at sometime during the war, and many reported wearing similar styles of clothing. Eighteen respondents remembered wearing pleated wool skirts, Pendleton plaid if you could afford it, blouses and sweaters and bobby socks and saddle shoes or penny loafers. According to a "Campus Poll" conducted by *Design for Living: The Magazine for Young Moderns* the "average college girl spent "75% of her waking hours in the sweater-skirt ensemble."¹⁷⁵ See Figures 4 and 5.

¹⁷⁵" 'Miss Average College Girl,' 1941" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. <http://chronicle.com/blogs/tweed/miss-average-college-girl-1941/21010> (accessed June 10, 2011). Inter-Library Loan could not located the original *Design for Living: The Magazine for Young Moderns* for examination.



Figure 4. Kathleen's pleated wool skirt.



Figure 5. Girls wearing pleated wool skirts, May 17, 1944. Photograph provided by Kathleen

The "Campus Poll" questioned girls from a variety of private and public universities and found that college girls had a minimum of three formals, three skirts, three and one half blouses, three dresses, three sweaters, three pairs of stockings, one dickey and one hat. Six of the respondents discussed having only three outfits (i.e., one in the wash, one you were wearing and one for church). Rita was over six feet tall, and she explained that she was not a "sweater girl" because the sweaters were too short on her. Five of the women interviewed mentioned skirts were about knee-length, and some recalled the longer lengths after the war.

In a 1942 *Ladies' Home Journal* article titled "Wear Last Year's Clothes for a Change" a student from Cornell was featured. The author discusses that the student owned "[t]wo tailored suits, a navy-blue wool dress, a white jersey, a pale blue tweed coat" that were purchased in the previous season, but in the spirit of "making do" with what you already owned, the article instructs girls to "make them different this year" by dyeing the coat, changing the hood collar, inserting "felt or velveteen revers, buttons or pocket flaps on your suits, plaid ribbon down the front of a wool dress" or make a patchwork skirt. The article instructs girls to "[u]se your imagination" to stretch your pennies.¹⁷⁶

When asked to discuss what they remember about wartime clothing, five women volunteered that they never wore pants; four recalled that they did wear pedal pushers and slacks but only for sports and casual occasions.¹⁷⁷ Beverly recalls wearing corduroy pants to class, but Sylvia recalls that pants could be worn on campus but not in class. Phyllis

¹⁷⁶ Ruth Mary Packard, "Wear Last Year's Clothes for a Change," *Ladies' Home Journal*, August 1942, 80. I did not ask women whether they repurposed their clothes during the war. In future interviews this question needs to be added to the list of interview questions.

¹⁷⁷ Women weren't asked about pants specifically. These 9 women volunteered this information when they were asked to discuss what they remember about wartime clothing.

worked in the office of Oregon Shipbuilding, and she remembered some of the female shipyard workers wearing overalls.¹⁷⁸ Joann worked for Western Fashions designing sportswear. She recalls that during the war she designed cargo pants for women, but that she was disappointed that the style was not selected for manufacture. She thought that it may not have been selected because of the extra fabric required by the pockets. It is also likely that the pants were not selected because it was still controversial for women to wear pants at the time.

Four women were pregnant at least once during the war and needed to get clothes to fit their changing bodies. Nancy remembers that she had to buy a whole new wardrobe because she gained so much weight during her pregnancy. Marcia remembers buying a maternity dress that was blue with white polka dots, but most things were made by her mother. "[M]other made me a couple of maternity [dresses] for that second pregnancy she made me a couple of little, well we called them smocks . . . now girls wear a tight thing that emphasizes the baby bump but then we just covered it up like don't say a word about that."

¹⁷⁸ "Faded blue denim slacks ensembles for women are growing as important as blue denim overalls for men, say Portland retailers, who are merchandising them in sportswear departments in the time-honored technique evolved for overalls but glamorized for feminine appeal. Simultaneously Meier & Frank Co. and Lipman Wolfe & Co. devoted corner windows to practical denims suggested for defense work and active sports. Coordinated with large windows and interior displays, both stores ran quarter-page advertisements on the merchandise. Other large specialty shops and department stores have been highlighting denims for women in like manner. Charles F. Berg, Lipman Wolfe, and Meier & Frank have all opened special denim shops within their sportswear departments. Storage space is interesting because it is of shelves separated in bins exactly like men's overall sections have used for years. Styles are kept in the bins according to size. Volume price ranges on separate slacks, jackets and culottes fall in the \$2 and \$2.50 bracket. Coverall suits and two-piece slacks ensembles are volume numbers at \$3.95 In addition a growing number of bicycle-riding, war-gardening, and sports-enthusiastic women are making single ensemble selections in denim. It is found women are selecting a jacket with slacks and culottes for various endeavors. Culottes have sold so well in one department store that a sold-out condition developed early." "Slacks Keep Star Place in Retail Selling: Portland Retailers Sell Women's Overalls From Bins as They Do With Men's—Report Easy Selling to Organized Defense Groups—Culottes Active," *Women's Wear Daily*, April 6, 1942, 14.

Five women recalled that wooden shoes were popular. Wooden shoes did not require a shoe stamp, and they kept feet dry in the rain.¹⁷⁹ The shoes had wood soles and leather uppers. Carolyn purchased her wooden shoes in Albany, and others remembered that they purchased the shoes from Oscar Ostead who owned a shop in the Multnomah Hotel in Portland.¹⁸⁰ See Figure 6. What these women remember about wartime apparel is consistent with the literature written about teenage apparel styles in the 1940s.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ *Multnomah Leather Shop*. <http://www.multnomahleather.com/History.html> (accessed June 10, 2011).

¹⁸⁰ Ostead sold the shoes to other retailers in the Willamette Valley. *Eugene Register-Guard* September 17, 1941.

¹⁸¹ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century dress*, 112.



Figure 6. Kathleen's wooden shoes. The shoes have wooden soles and leather uppers.

Twenty-four of the women discussed how it was difficult to get silk stockings during the war, and seven recalled that they or someone they knew used leg makeup and drew on a faux seam down the back of their legs.¹⁸² Irene was in the Army Air Corps, and she jokes that "we were very much disliked by the Army girls [because] we were issued nylons And [they were issued] cotton, heavy cotton stockings." Janet had a friend whose father worked "at DuPont, and he sent her one pair of nylon stockings and nobody had ever seen that before, and I know that was before 1940, and they weren't available, and then the war came and of course nothing was available." Some had a general understanding that nylons were introduced during this period, but that the war made them impossible to find. Chris Lennon recalls that her nylons were tough, and "they'd lose their color so you just dipped them in tea water to get some color back in them."

Extant

After completing two-thirds of the interviews I realized that few of the women recalled styles other than the sweater/skirt combination, so to provide a more complete picture of civilian war dress I also examined 32 extant garments from three museums and one university collection. I also examined six garments that belonged to the women who were interviewed.¹⁸³ Refer to Appendix G for the individual extant garment descriptions. Assuming the garment manufacturers followed the apparel regulations, an analysis of extant garments revealed that the order was generous and not very "limiting" since it has

¹⁸² "But this summer you'll try leg makeup. Because you want to save your precious stockings. Because it's cool and comfortable. Because it looks and feels right with shorts and dirndls. . . . Taking a comprehensive view of the situation, there are three general classifications of leg make-up: the lotion and cream type that you apply with your hand, the dark transparent liquid tint that you apply with cotton, and the solid stick variety that you stroke directly on." "Leg Make-Up: How to give yourself a good tanning," *Glamour* (July 1942): 17.

¹⁸³ 9 dresses for dressy occasions; 8 casual everyday dresses; 7 suits; 3 blouses; 2 skirts; 2 jackets; 2 sweaters; 2 coats; 1 swim suit; 1 pair of overalls; 1 pinafore were examined.

been reported that many of the U.S. apparel manufacturers worked "up to the full limitation of measurement."¹⁸⁴ This analysis also revealed that the order was not always followed.

The amount of fabric for a garment depended on the style, where the garment was intended to be worn (i.e., day or evening) and size of wearer. Without knowing the size of the extant garments, the lengths and sweeps of most of the DHE garments fit in the range of acceptance based on size.¹⁸⁵ While most garments fit into the length and sweep (i.e., circumference of skirt) requirements, some of the style details of all the extant garments that were examined like cuff and sleeve style may have been followed less strictly.¹⁸⁶ In some cases there were style characteristics not regulated that might have saved material.¹⁸⁷

There were nine garments (28%) that violated the order; they had French cuffs, leg-of-mutton sleeves, pant legs that exceeded the 19-inch circumference allowed under the order, allover pleated skirts¹⁸⁸ and three coats that exceeded the sweep allowed for

¹⁸⁴ Nona Baldwin, "Says Design Gains By Dress Limiting," *The New York Times*, 15 August 1942, 7.

¹⁸⁵ Due to time and money limitations length and sweep information was only collected for the DHE garments. Three coats in the collection exceed sweep allowances for fitted coat styles. Note: length and sweep requirements varied by size: Misses' sizes were listed in 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20. For misses' size 10 day dresses could have a length up to 41 inches and a sweep (other than wool fabric) of 74 inches; misses' size 14 day dresses could have a length up to 42.5 inches and a sweep (other than wool fabric) of 76.5 inches; misses' size 20 day dresses could have a length up to 44 inches and a sweep (other than wool fabric) of 81 inches. "Fashions for Victory: General Limitation Order L-85," (1942, April 8). *Women's Wear Daily*.

¹⁸⁶ "Any person who willfully violates any provision of this order, or who in connection with this order willfully conceals a material fact or furnishes false information to any department or agency of the United States is guilty of a crime, and upon conviction may be punished by fine or imprisonment. In addition, any such person may be prohibited from making or obtaining further deliveries or from processing or using material under priority control and may be deprived of priorities assistance by the War Production Board." F. W. Walton, *Thread of Victory*. (New York: Fairchild Publishing Co., 1945), 265. I haven't been able to find any discussion of order violations.

¹⁸⁷ For example the one "designer" garment examined not only had shoulder pads, but each should pad had a "Jan-ette made in California" manufacturer label. If material was trying to be conserved, would not these labels be spared?

¹⁸⁸ "Pleating, tucking, or shirring" were prohibited when the use of these elements exceeded "the prescribed sweep of that particular size." Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 269.

box and fitted coats. In addition, a box coat was part of a matching 3-piece pin striped suit; the sale of two-piece ensembles was permitted, but the order prevented retailers from selling a suit with matching coat at a single unit price. We do not know the circumstances under which this ensemble was purchased; it is possible the owner paid separately for the matching coat.

Fifteen extant garments pushed the limits of the limitation order with button and loop closures, fabric covered buttons, metal ornamentations, raglan sleeves or excessive hem circumferences. While button and loop closures, fabric covered buttons and rick rack trim do not require much fabric the garments could have been designed with different closures and ornamentation to save fabric. Padded shoulders, a popular wartime feature were considered part of the "body basic."¹⁸⁹ However, it should be noted that shoulder pads require additional fabric. A shirtwaist style dress with short, raglan sleeves was examined. though raglan sleeves were not included in the limitation order they can require more fabric than a set-in sleeve. Two cotton print dresses were examined. Both have fairly wide sweep, which may have exceeded regulations. A garment with bright green fabric insets at the bodice was examined. The use of a bright fabric is interesting since dyestuffs were scarce.¹⁹⁰

A dress with an all-over "brass nail-head" design was examined; this use of metal appears to defy the conservation of metal. Similarly, slide fasteners better known as zippers became restricted to military and "the most essential use."¹⁹¹ However, an analysis of the 32 extant garments revealed that 14 garments (44%) had zipper closures. In addition, two had two sets of zippers; one dress had a zipper used as ornamentation

¹⁸⁹ *Women's Wear Daily*, 8 April 1942.

¹⁹⁰ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century dress in the United States*, 123.

¹⁹¹ "Old 'zippers' were reclaimed" from older garments. Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 139.

and a left side seam zipper closure. The other dress had a zipper at the back of the bodice and at the left side waist. The designer/manufacturer of these garments may have used reclaimed zippers like Walton indicated but zippers definitely were not that difficult to obtain.¹⁹²

The remaining extant garments fell within the guidelines of the order. Generally, the extant garment styles reflected what is typically referred to as the "wartime style." For example, there were suits and two-piece ensembles with narrow, just below the knee-length flared skirts. Bodices were fitted with padded shoulders. Style details (i.e., collar style, pockets, ornamentation and so forth) varied but fell within the limitations. Some of the fabrics used to make the extant garments reflect the use of alternative, man-made fabrics like rayon and nylon which gained popularity just before and during the war.¹⁹³

Wood was also an alternative material used for shoes, belt buckles, and buttons. The

¹⁹² "Before the full effects of the metal cutoff were felt, the zipper manufacturers flourished. With demand fueled by the anticipation of shortages, 1941 turned out to be Talon's best year ever But the strategic requirements finally bit, and zipper production plummeted. . . . [but] the zipper did not disappear completely. Talon and some other makers avoided total cutoff by persuading the government that the military itself would sorely miss zippers if they were banned from production. Lighter and shorter zippers were made in order to stretch available metal supplies." In addition manufacturers began experimenting with alternative materials like plastic with some success. Robert Fridel, *Zipper: An exploration in novelty*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994), 200. "By the late summer of 1943 the sense of urgency that had driven the early war effort had waned, and controls on civilian production began to be loosened. In May 1944 the Slide Fastener Manufacturers Association put together an exhibit for the War Production Board presenting the argument for the overall savings to be realized from unrestricted zipper manufacture. In trousers, it was claimed, two million yards of cloth could be saved by using zippers rather than buttons; in handbags the savings could be as much as nine and a half million yards; and in dresses, the projected savings were as high as twenty-five million yards of cotton and other fabrics. The zipper makers were allowed to resume nonmilitary manufacture, although there was no full recovery until 1945-46." Fridel, *Zipper*, 202.

¹⁹³ Rayon supplemented the shortage of silk and nylon for hosiery during the war. During the war rayon "fabric has become very popular in the apparel trade for both outerwear and underwear as well as for linings." Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 47. "Just prior to the war Nylon was a new product, still in process of refinement, but which had already quickly made a place for itself as a competitor of silk and had actually proven itself better than silk for hosiery and certain other items where fineness and strength were required." Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 42.

manufacture of new fibers¹⁹⁴ and the use of wood illustrates the innovativeness that textile manufacturers and apparel designers and manufacturers showed during the war.

Assuming that museum dates are correct and that the garments were purchased and not homemade, the use prohibited sleeve styles or bias cut fabric, yokes, fabric covered buttons and loop closures, metal details, tucks and pleats, peplum-like pockets, and pleats to name a few of the extant style details illustrate the leniency of the limitation order. According to Frank Walton, the director of the Textile, Clothing and Leather Division of the War Production Board between March 1941 and October 1943, "[w]omen's apparel consumes a very large quantity of fabrics . . . [and it] was recognized that style changes could change the cloth consumption in this field enormously."¹⁹⁵ But more reductions in cloth consumption than actually regulated were possible.

The limitation order was designed to prevent rationing of wartime apparel by reducing the amount of yardage required for women's apparel by 15%.¹⁹⁶ Though the purpose of the L-85 order was to restrict material use for non-military apparel it was recognized in popular media of the time that style changes were minimal, and this analysis confirmed this perception.¹⁹⁷ Textbook authors discuss the L-85 order and the

¹⁹⁴ Nylon came out was a new fiber that was "still in the process of refinement" at the start of the war. Consumer manufacture of nylon products was entirely converted to military use in March 1942. Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 42. DuPont developed an acrylic fiber called Orlon in 1941, but was not used for consumer products until after the war. http://www2.dupont.com/Heritage/en_US/1941_dupont/1941_indepth.html. Rayon was not a new fiber but it's U.S. manufacture more than tripled between 1933 and 1943. Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 46. Barbara recalled using a new fiber made of skim milk during the war. See pages 91 and 103 for more discussion.

¹⁹⁵ Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 76.

¹⁹⁶ O'Donnol, *American Costume*, 114.

¹⁹⁷ Interestingly, cloth, leather, boots and shoes, and other clothing and textiles were among the items the U.S. sent to the Soviet Union after the Lend-Lease program was extended to them in November 1941. If the U.S. government and industry professionals really feared a shortage of textiles, would we have committed our supplies to the Soviet Union? van Tuyll, Hubert P. *Feeding the Bear: American Aid to the Soviet Union, 1941-1945*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 25, 158. The U.S. sent 162,811,000 yards of

impact on wartime apparel, and students are lead to believe that all wartime apparel met these requirements. Some authors even make sweeping, often incorrect, assessments about how the L-85 order influenced apparel. For example one textbook author states that "[j]ackets were shortened, and vents, patch pockets, and belts were eliminated." Through the examination of extant wartime garments we see that vents, patch pockets and belts were not "eliminated."¹⁹⁸

Acquisition of Apparel

Before the war most of the women interviewed purchased some apparel items and either sewed for themselves or their mothers sewed for them. Seven recalled that their clothing was exclusively purchased. During the war respondents generally purchased their clothes, but they also made some. Rosemary explains that her family "bought . . . things like underwear or swimming suits, things that didn't lend themselves to being done on a sewing machine." Ten women exclusively purchased clothing during this time.

Few respondents made clothes when they were traveling around the country with their husbands who were in the service and relied on purchasing clothes when they needed them. Joyce remembers when she was in Norfolk, Virginia and needed to purchase some summer clothing because the only things she had brought were cool weather clothes made of wool. Virginia recalls that she purchased most things when she lived at home in Eastern Oregon, but when she went to live in the South "there was nothing you could buy down there that was attractive so I made all my own things."

cloth, 46,161 tons of leather, \$4,3 million in boots and shoes, nearly \$13 million dollars worth of clothing, nearly \$15 million in "other textiles," nearly 15 million pairs of boots, over 2.5 million belts, and nearly \$1.6 million in buttons.

¹⁹⁸ O'Donnol, *American Costume*, 114.

Purchases

Carolyn, who worked as a secretary and dental assistant during the war, said she purchased apparel "[e]very pay day . . . I got something new every month or so." Kathleen worked at a department store after school and on weekends and says she likely "bought . . . a dress or a skirt and blouse . . . something like that at least once a month. Maybe just one item not a whole outfit." She and others recalled that they would get a few more items (i.e., "several skirts, several sweaters, more things") at the beginning of the school year. For others apparel purchases were less frequent and more memorable. Memorable purchases typically related to changes in the body due to pregnancy, a special occasion like a wedding, a dance or Easter, purchased for a new job, or made while traveling. It is clear that age influenced respondents' apparel purchases. The younger women who lived at home may have had a part-time job to earn spending money, whereas women who were on their own or had their own families likely had less money to spend on clothing.

Four women recalled they shopped while traveling. Carolyn recalls going to Seattle to visit a friend and doing some shopping, but she did not recall the stores she visited or making any purchases. Joyce purchased summer clothing while in Norfolk, Virginia; Marcia purchased a maternity dress in Tacoma, Washington; and Rosemary remembers shopping at Lord and Taylor while living in New York City and thinks she probably purchased some things while working at Gimbals department store in Philadelphia. Most of the women interviewed recalled shopping at the same stores after the war unless the stores went out of business.

Respondents also recall purchases made with earnings from a job. One woman went into detail about one summer spent in Alaska visiting family and working odd jobs to earn travel money home, "and I had 20 dollars left over to buy a coat." Maria recalled buying a yellow dress that she purchased during the summer between her sophomore and junior year of high school. She saved the dress to wear when she was a USO hostess and got to go to the dances out at Camp Adair. She also recalls a time when she bought a tablecloth from a variety store and made it into "a nice dirndl skirt."

When asked how frequently they bought clothing, most replied that they did not buy clothing that often; they maybe got some things at the beginning of the school year. Fourteen women remembered that they liked to go downtown and browse the stores and look at the new styles. Janet remembered that she and friends would take the bus or street car to downtown Seattle and shop in the big department stores, though they "usually didn't end up buying anything." Many of the women not only liked to browse the styles, but many said they would see something they liked and go home and try to make it. When asked how often and why they would replace clothing, some explained that they did not replace clothing, that they kept everything until it wore out or became too small, and then they usually passed the garments that were too small down to other family members; a practice that was likely learned during the Depression. Five recalled a change in style being the motivation for new clothing: "Change of style most of the time. Never wore out but change of style."

Eight women recalled that they would usually buy something new or their mother's made them something for Easter, maybe a new hat, pair of shoes or a dress. Seven said they would get something new for Christmas: "Clothing was often a

Christmas present or a birthday present." Four women reminded me that it was not very patriotic to splurge, and you made do with what you had. Anita who was working in an airplane plant explains that "we didn't even know half the time when . . . [holidays] come around. We was working. At that particular time there was not much play time or anything like that it was a very serious time everything you thought of was war."

Nine women remember shopping or think they shopped at lower end department stores like J. C. Penney's or shopping from Montgomery Ward's and Sears catalogs. Seven women shopped at stores in Corvallis, Oregon including J. M. Nolan's, Georgeanne's, Roger's, Miller's, Mode-a-Day, The Paris, and Kline's. Four of the women shopped at stores in Portland, Oregon including Meier & Frank, Lipman Wolfe, Olds & King,¹⁹⁹ which were the three main department stores. Some of the smaller Portland dress shops included Nicholas Ungar's boutique, Bedelle's, Charles F. Berg's, and Armishaws for shoes. Two women shopped at local Albany, Oregon stores, and two shopped at local Salem, Oregon stores. Respondents also shopped at department, specialty and general stores in their home towns or places they moved to with their husbands.

Apparel Construction

Nineteen women said they sewed and made something to wear during the war, but only six had the machine going all the time. When Rita left home in 1943 to go to school she brought her sewing machine with her and would "whip up whatever I needed . . . I was busy sewing a lot and when other people went home for vacation I often stayed at the house and did sewing." Many women recalled sewing with their mother. Rosemary remembers "coming home from college one time and wanting a new dress for a formal in

¹⁹⁹ In 1943 the name was changed to Western Department Stores Incorporated. *Olds Wortman & King*. http://www.pdxhistory.com/html/olds___king.html (accessed June 10, 2011).

the spring . . . [and] my mother and I had it all made before I went back to school."

Gloria recalls that her mother made her a skirt out of a pair or two of her brothers' Navy pants. She also recalls that she had made her a "negligee for my wedding out of parachute silk with tiny buttons up the front." She did not know where her mother obtained the parachute.

In the *Oregonian's* "Daily Home Magazine" college girls were encouraged to enter a sewing contest where they could win one of six 100 dollar war bonds. The editor explained that college girls enjoy making their own clothes because "their clothing needs are simple." The author goes on to explain that college girls "find it easy to sew and save, but, more important, they learn the value of owning good serviceable clothes that are individual." This individuality is achieved "by having unusual plaids and interesting tweeds."²⁰⁰

Beverly's mother made or re-made some slacks and sent them to her. The following is a letter from Beverly to her mother dated January 1944:

I got my slacks in the mail today. They really fit swell and are just the right length with the cuff turned up like you had it. The only thing is that they are a little bit too tight around the waist, but I set the button over and it will be all right till I get home. I noticed that you cut the band long enough just in case.

No one recalled there being any regulations on apparel patterns even though in 1943 "orders were issued that required the makers [of apparel patterns] to produce patterns in accordance with the regulations for apparel . . . the home dressmaker would make a dress in the new pattern style and less yardage would be required."²⁰¹ Although regulations would not affect patterns already in use. Those who did sew and used apparel

²⁰⁰ Marie Hornbeck, "College Girls Plying Needle For Prizes: Big Interest Taken In Sewing Contest," *The Oregonian* (8 April 1942): Section 2, 1.

²⁰¹ Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 115.

patterns said there was not any difficulty in finding apparel patterns; Phyllis recalled that there were "loads and loads of patterns available" at department stores and five and dime type stores. Some recalled going to browse the patterns for fun; "if we had time to waste downtown we would just go to the yard goods department and look through the pattern books for fun there were scads of patterns books and all sorts of stuff to pick from, and the yard goods were also apparently from my recollection in relatively plentiful."

When asked if fabric was restricted, Barbara mentioned that silk fabric was not available for lining. In her tailoring class she explained that they used a fine cotton fabric and "everyone was really happy when the synthetic silk" came out. She also recalled that wool fabric was difficult to find during the war and as a replacement they used a fabric made of skim milk, a new innovation. Barbara explained that she made a dress out of this fabric, but when she wore it to go to the movies with her boyfriend, the dress started to emanate a sour milk smell, and she never wore it again. In a letter home to her mother Beverly writes that her friend Lenore "has to make a suit during spring term, but her mother looked for some wool and couldn't find it. Didn't Turner's have some when we were there?" Rosemary did not

remember having any trouble getting anything I wanted, but I didn't want an awful lot, and I don't, I'm sure you didn't buy silk. There wasn't any silk available, cotton yes, of course, the synthetics like nylon were only just being invented so they had not really come into play; there wasn't as much available in wool but we still had wool sweaters.

Postwar Apparel Acquisitions

At the end of the war, Rita remembers shopping for items for her trousseau and trying on a dress that she liked but thought was too long. She recalls that the sales clerk warned her to not shorten it because by "fall you will find that it will be too short, and she

was right I didn't get my money out of the dress I wore it only a few times." Janet recalls that after the war

there was a big revolution in women's styles . . . they put something out called the New Look . . .and they had much longer hems and I remember this distinctly because a little shop in Seattle where I had bought clothing it was never very expensive but they got in all these New Look dresses . . . and I tried on one after the other and they all fit . . . and my husband or my husband to be I can't remember which one it was. . . he said get them, I tried on 6 of them and he said get them all. Because they were something like \$3.95 I know they weren't even 4 dollars so I remember he said get them all.

Many recalled that women started wearing pants after the war, and things became more casual. "I remember like pedal pushers we began to wear pants and . . . thongs which they called flip flops we did that a lot we began to not do hats and gloves."

After the war, more women remembered purchasing their clothes compared to before the war when most women recalled that they both made and purchased their clothing. While most women recalled purchasing most of their clothes after the war, many still made some things for themselves or their children. A few women recalled shopping right after the war and noted the longer skirt lengths. "[D]uring the summer of '47 the skirts started going down and by fall of '47 they had dropped drastically. That showed what women wanted something different and then material was available and so anyway they were fuller and longer and swooshier."

Budget

Whether the women purchased apparel with the money they earned or their family's money was used really depended on whether they were in school and still dependent on financial support from their parents or whether they were working or were married with children. Carolyn who was not married but was working said that at that age

"it was all my money. Mother might have bought me something at Christmas." Those who were still dependent on their parents typically used a combination of their parents money for clothing during the war and the money they earned themselves. Kathleen explained that her father "gave us each a clothing allowance, and we had to . . . use that money . . . for the whole year, and my older sister liked to spend . . . her's immediately and then not have any the rest of the year, and I liked to make mine last the whole year." Kathleen also worked part-time at a department store, and explains that she spend most of the money she earned on clothing from the store.

Ten of the women had some job related to the war, but only one mentioned anything about wages; Phyllis worked in the offices at Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation in Portland, Oregon, and she explains that she felt

really lucky to get that job [because] most of my friends were having a horrible time getting a job that paid any money and were working at like Meier and Franks or something . . . [it was] just a real plum because I got a lot more money than all my friends were making and I don't remember how much it was but it seemed like a lot at the time.

It may be that the other nine women who worked in war related jobs made good wages too, but the rising cost of consumer goods and living expenses made that wage increase less noticeable.²⁰²

Respondents with siblings figured their parents spent more on clothing than families with only one child. Ruth's father owned his own business, and she explained that "it depended on how the business went cause he . . . carried a lot of people on credit so you know we were more flush when business was better." Janet had this same

²⁰² Despite government controls, inflation continued to be a problem during the war. Food and clothing were most affected; the "average department-store purchase rose from two dollars in 1940 to ten dollars in 1944." Meg Jacobs, *Pocketbook Politics: Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 212.

sentiment; her father "never made a salary it depended on whether the drug store was doing well or not. I don't remember that they ever lacked for good clothes." Marcia who was married with one child at the time explains "We never budgeted and I was very careful manager, Herald earned it and I managed it. And I have no idea. If we needed something we got it."

In 1942 *Ladies' Home Journal* published the "How America lives" series that followed families across the United States, and one of the features of the articles was the family budget. Income ranged from \$1,279.20 for a single mother of one living in Buffalo, New York, to \$8,593.00 for a Senator of Minnesota, his wife and three children. The amount of money spent on clothing differed but ranged between 4 and 10 percent of the total budget. One family, the Andreason's had four children and lived in Eugene, Oregon. They had a total income of \$4,536.56 and spent \$450 on clothing or ten percent of their budget.²⁰³

According to a survey conducted by *Design for Living: The Magazine for Young Moderns* the "average college girl" spent \$240.33 a year on clothing.²⁰⁴ In an *Oregonian* article titled "Day of Idle Women Gone for Duration As War Calls for Sensible Styles" the author explains that "girls who work in clerical jobs for the government have small clothes budgets--no more than a little over \$100 a year."²⁰⁵ Clearly the amount of money spent on clothing depended on whether you were employed, whether your parents

²⁰³ "Meet the Andreasons and their four adopted children of Eugene, Oregon." (September 1942) *Ladies' Home Journal*, p. 83-86.

²⁰⁴ 'Miss Average College Girl,' 1941 (February 2, 2010) *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/blogs/tweed/miss-average-college-girl-1941/21010>. I have been unable to locate the original source.

²⁰⁵ The author of the article is making it clear to readers that the working woman is the "new objective of styles . . . [and the] fashion-makers are doing their best to find out what the girls in war jobs . . . want to wear." The author continues to explain that these women and "the older women who work, like the restrictions of WPB because suits and dresses now come in clean, neat lines and look better." *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon). 18 October 1942: 7.

supported you, how many siblings you had and whether you went to school, among other factors.

War Inspired Clothing

When asked if patriotic style and design elements made their way into clothing most said that they did not think so. Gloria explained that she "had a red coat . . . but it wasn't because I was patriotic." Rosemary recalls that girls did not wear red much before the war, but that she and a group of girls liked to wear red sweaters; the head mistress of her dorm did not approve because she thought the red sweaters "excited the boys." The color red may have been more associated with the age of the wearer. Rita explained that she made herself a red stroock coat;²⁰⁶ she recalled going shopping for the fabric with an older woman associated to her sorority. When Rita was trying to decide between black and beige fabric this woman urged her to get the red fabric explaining that "when your my age . . . you won't wear red so I think you should get red." Five women said that there was some influence of the war on apparel. Kathleen recalls "sailor suits . . . and navy looking hats . . . were in style." In a 1943 advertisement that ran in the *Oregonian* a nautical motif was clearly the inspiration for a line drawing of a two-piece navy dress that could be purchased from Grayson's, a Portland, Oregon retailer. The dress was illustrated with a shawl collar and tie and white trim on the collar, cuffs and patch pockets. The skirt had all-over pleating, which was prohibited under the L-85 orders.²⁰⁷ It may be that the

²⁰⁶ Stroock Co., Inc. was a New York manufacturer of "rare, expensive fabrics--camel hair, llama, cashmere and vicuna." "Manufacturing: Stroock's Fleece," *Time*, 2 January 1939. Retrieved from <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,760580,00.html> (accessed on August 25, 2011). Rita used the term "stroock" to mean the type of swing coat that she made with the fabric she purchased in San Francisco.

²⁰⁷ *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon). 3 January 1943: 4.

patriotic themed clothing was used in advertisements but that consumers themselves did not buy those garments because they were not seen as long term investments for their wardrobes.

Joyce explains "I don't remember specifically red, white and blue stuff, but I think there was a more tailored look to clothes." Diane explains "I think we probably wore red, white and blue quite a bit; there were, I think there was, probably prints, material or ready-made clothing with a red, white and blue or stars or sometimes sailor motifs." This statement is somewhat confirmed by both extant garments, textile fragments and photographs. At the Benton County Historical Society and Museum I examined a dress with red, white and blue floral print. The original owner wore this dress to both USO dances and to a V-J Day parade. Clearly the wearer intended to show her patriotism wearing a red, white and blue print dress.

The DHE Textile and Apparel Collection has three textile swatches from the "B.A.A.C. Prints" that were made in New York City; "10% of all fabric sales" go toward the "British-American Ambulance Corps." These textiles were "among a collection of propaganda textiles manufactured and sold in March 1941 as a fund-raiser for the British-American Ambulance Corps, a New York based volunteer ambulance corps. In March 1941, the United States had not yet entered the war, so the textiles were intended to provide moral and financial support to a beleaguered Britain. Other featured slogans included 'Bravo Britain' and 'Friends Across the Sea,' in colors called English Channel blue and Buckingham Palace red. To promote the textiles, which were marketed nationally, a fashion show was held in Manhattan featuring socialites clad in dresses created from the various textiles. Astute readers probably noticed that the text in the

detail image appears backwards. This collection of textiles was intentionally printed with 'mirror-writing' which could be read properly only when reversed."²⁰⁸ See Figures 7a-c.

²⁰⁸ FIDM curators don't know why the print is reversed but we can speculate that it was intentional. The wearer could look at herself in the mirror and "there it is, a subtle reminder that 'there'll always be an England.'" "Propaganda fashion" (2010, January). *FIDM Museum & Galleries*. Retrieved from <http://blog.fidmmuseum.org/museum/2010/01/propaganda-fashion.html> (accessed August 25, 2011).



Figures 7a-c. Fabric swatches. Courtesy of the Design and Human Environment Textile and Apparel Collections.

After the war Maria recalls that she and her girl friends "robbed [the fellas of] their clothing because we wanted their khaki field jackets, and we wanted the tags and stuff they had." In an *Oregonian* article titled "Color Shows War Motif" the author explains that "one of the first manifestations of the war's effect on color in dress" could be seen in dresses and summer suits made of a fabric called "parachute white or wartime white." This fabric "was introduced . . . in a collection of celanese [sic] fabrics for summer and is a natural development of the government restrictions in the quantities of chlorine compounds which may be used for bleaching textiles."²⁰⁹

Only "15 shades of textiles . . . were to be offered to apparel manufacturers" after industry insiders predicted a scarcity of dyestuffs.²¹⁰ Farrell-Beck and Parsons theorize that prints were popular during the war "perhaps as a way to stretch" supplies of dyestuffs, or because they masked "the flimsy quality of materials."²¹¹ Neutrals like gray, beige and black became staple colors.²¹² Many of the extant garments were made of neutral colored fabrics, but the garments made of printed cloth had brighter colors like sky blue or multiple colors. An analysis of more extant garments would be needed to lend support to Farrell-Beck and Parsons theory of prints.

In an *Oregonian* article titled "Sheath Frock With Detailed Trim Popular," Jane Allen discusses the popularity of black dresses with little trim that can be accessorized

²⁰⁹ "Mollie Parnis, another pioneer in the development of practical style ideas, is doing a collection of lovely unbleached cloth dresses which she called 'primordials' -- giving an effect comparable with the natural tones in unbleached wood." *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 29 April 1942.

²¹⁰ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 123.

²¹¹ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 123.

²¹² According to one historian "dyestuffs needed for military uniforms (navy, and shades of yellow, brown, and olive) could not be used in civilian dress." Gordon, "Showing the colors," 240. However, many of the extant garments that I examined were made of brown or tan colored fabric. Clearly some brown dyestuffs or existing brown material was available.

with jewelry, scarves, handbags, and so forth to create different looks.²¹³ In December 1941 *Time* reported that

Designers of women's clothes, always eager to ride a trend, worked their imaginations overtime. Sally Victor created a fireproof glass-and-asbestos hat, padded inside against cold and bumps, with a flash light in the brim. War-born was a handbag containing a bottle of luminous paint and a flap on which messages could be written.²¹⁴

Apparel Regulations

When asked to describe war time clothing Brenda said that they were "vanilla, just plain vanilla." Joan said they were "basic, simple not a lot of frills." Despite these comments that hint at the federal regulations and dye restrictions, respondents were not aware of the apparel regulations even though they most likely listened to the radio and read newspapers and magazines where the order was discussed.²¹⁵ Some retailers even acknowledged the limitation order in newspaper advertisements and store windows.²¹⁶

See Figure 8.

²¹³ Jane Allen, "Sheath Frock With Detailed Trim Popular," *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 21 October 1942: Section 2, 1.

²¹⁴ "Panic Buying," *Time* (22 December 1941): 34.

²¹⁵ Walton, *The Thread of Victory*, 11, 35, 81 and 106. On April 9, 1942, the day after WWD published the limitation order, the *Oregonian* ran a brief article titled "New War Fashions Replace Old Patterns; Restrictions Placed on Materials." "Washington. A suit design approved by the war production board to conserve materials has a shortened jacket and narrower skirt The new jacket is two inches shorter and has a gored skirt with 58 1/2-inch sweep instead of 76." Accompanying the article was a large picture of a woman wearing a suit before and after regulations. *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 9 April 1942.

²¹⁶ " 'We, the people, at war,' is the theme of a series of six dramatized window displays to be shown in the Alder Street windows of Olds, Wortman and Kink for a week starting Sunday. The series, which is being shown at leading stores throughout the country, is meant both to portray the enormity of America's war effort and to show means by which the average citizen can help. The work of the Red Cross and civilian defense groups, the war on waste, sale of war bonds and stamps, the danger of careless talk and scenes of America's armed forces in action are features of the series." *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 26 April 1942.

at 1225 S. W. Alder Street. "A Letter From Bevell" and Virginia

Fall Fashion
by Uncle Sam

**All-American Beauties
In New Drape Silhouette**

You would never have guessed you could look so smart, so much slimmer simply by eliminating all tussy details. American designers have created wonderfully feminine draped silhouettes that are utterly irresistible. Bevell complete fall collection is ready for your approval.

Sizes 12 to 20; 38 to 44;
Half sizes 18½ to 24½.

BEDELL
SIXTH AVENUE CORNER ALDER

A. New side-saddle drape with attractive contrasting detail. Misses' sizes. **18.05**

B. Silk, smooth fit around the hips with drape from the center waistline. Misses' sizes. **25.00**

C. Sequin trimmed fitted bodice, low waistline, full draped skirt. Misses' sizes. **20.00**

Figure 8. Advertisement for Bedell's in Portland, Oregon. "Fall Fashion by Uncle Sam." *Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon) 23 August 1942: Section 5: 9.

There was an advertisement for brands and designers who adhered to the L-85 in the August 1942 issue of *Glamour*. The caption for the advertisement read:

In shopping this Fall, don't try to be an interpreter of OPA, WPB, and other government fashion rulings. Clear your pretty head of technicalities about fabric content, color simplification and the frozen silhouette. Shop as you always have . . . with serene confidence in trademarks.²¹⁷

Clearly some consumers learned about the order over the radio as can be seen in the following letter to the War Production Board, where one woman expressed her concern with the L-85 order and what it might do to morality:

Dear Sirs:

I have just heard on the radio that your Board has made a law where the women of this so-called free country must wear their dresses only to the knees. -----Christian people should not have to do this. -----you are trying to ruin people's character who are trying to live right. You should be trying to win the war. -----It would be just as crazy for the men to cut their pants legs off at the knees. -----Dresses to our knees are only for other men to look at. -----There is too much sin already. ----
-----If this would win the war it would be different but you on the Board had better get down on your knees and pray and maybe we will get somewhere. -----

It was also stated in the papers that WPB had today invaded a field where few husbands dare to tread. -----Is that any of your business? -
-----I prefer my dresses below my knees so that when I sit down no one else need know what I have on. -----That is my business and my husband's business. -----If you want to be that kind, it is up to you. -----But I will do my best to serve my country. -----A better idea would be to limit the number of dresses a woman could have and let us wear the length we please. -----Think this over and give the women of this grand country their freedom of length. -----And don't forget to read your Bible. -----God even clothed Adam and Eve. Try this

²¹⁷ Brands included Gold Mark Wearlons, Murray & Lanman's Florida Water, Jackie Hill juniors, Tippecanoe, Bonwit Teller, Celanese Rayon Fabric, Sutra, Saks Fifth Avenue, Lord & Taylor, Helena Rubinstein, Ship 'n' Shore, and more. "Trademarks a girl can Trust . . . IN A WAR-CHANGED WORLD." *Glamour* (August 1942): 20-21.

remedy first before making laws you don't know anything about. -----
 -Keep these dresses down and there won't be so many divorces. -----
 Yours truly,

-----²¹⁸

Joyce thought that there probably were apparel regulations but that they "would be in the manufacturing end." Most women were not this intuitive, and one assuredly said that apparel was not regulated.

The changes in wartime apparel were implied by some women's comments, saying that wartime clothing was shorter, "skimpy" or "tight." Marcia remembers that wartime apparel was "[s]kimpy, short and . . . not a lot of . . . big lapels and that sort of thing." Most recalled that shoes were rationed and hard to find, some fabric or notions were of lesser quality, more difficult to find or not available, and that nylon/silk stockings were difficult to find or not available. The only thing Kathleen recalls being regulated were shoes; she recalls that she and her sisters tried to get their fathers' shoe stamps "because he wore the same shoes longer . . . and he didn't need as many changes of style." Maria was the eldest of eight children, and she recalls her parents struggled to provide shoes for the children.

Barbara recalled that "in tailoring class we couldn't get nice lining and so we would get a . . . fine cotton . . . and those who didn't get the cotton would get . . . rayon." Barbara also discussed the innovated fabric made of skim milk. Gloria recalls that it was hard to get stockings, she was supposed to teach in stockings and that

the only things . . . available was rayon stockings and they bagged around your ankles . . . and they were so ugly that my roommate's mother had a place on the beach, and she and I would go to the coast and get our legs tanned and in those days all stockings had stripes²¹⁹ so we would eyebrow pencil seams down the

²¹⁸ Walton, *The Thread of Victory*, 78-79.

²¹⁹ The "stripe" refers to a stocking seam.

back, and we said if the principle got close enough to tell the difference he was too close...and he never called us on it.

When asked if she remembers any changes to wartime apparel, Gloria explains that the change came more from the transition from being a student to entering the workplace where her dress requirements changed. "I was going through a different phase in my life from going to school to starting to teach so I changed from sweaters and skirts and bobby socks more to dresses." This is a theme that many of the women touched on. Some were either leaving home to attend college and needed more and different types of clothing (i.e., formals), getting married and transitioning to a new lifestyle, entering the workforce and needed professional work clothes, following their husbands around the country to places with different climates than they were used to, or having children and needing maternity clothing.

When asked if there were any shortages of clothing, many women reiterated that shoes and nylon/stockings were hard to find. Diane remembers having a hard time finding a wedding dress, so she bought a formal gown instead. She also recalled that the shoes she wore to her wedding were relatively easy to find because they "were not practical, they were high heeled white sandals . . . people were not spending a shoe stamp on those kinds of shoes." Janet also mentions that she had a hard time finding a wedding dress for her wedding in early 1946; she borrowed her cousin's wedding dress that was about five years old. Her bridesmaids also borrowed their dresses so none of them matched. Ruth and Gloria explained they had a hard time finding soft goods for the home. Marjorie said she had a hard time finding work clothes to wear on her family's ranch that fit her. She tried to wear jeans with "a safety pin on either side of the waist . . .

there just were . . . no work pants available so what I did was wear . . . bib overalls . . . they were still too big around the waist but because they had good straps up at the top . . . they fit.”

Discussion

The War Production Board issued Limitation Order 85 on April 8, 1942 in order to conserve fabric and manpower needed for the war effort. The purpose of the L-85 order was to freeze the silhouette so no major style changes would occur during the war. Industry insiders like Stanley Marcus, the head of the women's and children's sections of the clothing division of WPB, may have anticipated the arrival of the "New Look" (i.e., longer and voluminous skirts), but the war made it necessary to put the style change on hold. Marcus hoped to "make U.S. women wear old clothes" by instructing editors of women's and fashion magazines, news periodicals and newspapers to inform consumers "that 1942 models would be no more fashionable than 1941's."²²⁰ Even though L-85 was intended to "freeze" apparel styles wartime dress actually became a new style as the focus changed from skirt fullness popular in 1939 to 1941 to slim skirts popular between 1942 and 1946.²²¹ Jane Allen, the fashion editor for the *Oregonian* even wrote about how exercise and foundation garments would help women achieve that fashionable slender figure.²²² Dress historian Sandra Buckland explains that this style variation occurred because U.S. fashion designers tried to "conserve even more fabric than the government

²²⁰ "Wartime Living: In the Stretch," *Time* (20 April 1942), 17.

²²¹ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century dress in the United States*, 124.

²²² Jane Allen, "Cloth-Saving Styles Denote Sleek Figures," *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 19 August 1942: Section 2: 1.

asked," and in 1943 the limitation order was revised to create a more "strictly defined silhouette."²²³

It was in American fashion designers best interest to create a name for themselves while Paris, the leader of Western fashion, was occupied by Nazis. Therefore, many U.S. designers tried to gain publicity by designing wartime styles that used less material than the L-85 order requested, capitalizing on the press related to the war and the L-85 order. The federal government and American fashion designers innovated a wartime style that trickled down to consumers of mass manufactured apparel. But by the time the slim wartime silhouette became widely available (i.e., sometime after Spring 1943), two years of war (the years of U.S. involvement) had already passed the threat of Axis domination was coming to a close and by 1945 the war was over. Since the U.S. never received a direct attack and knew no "serious deprivations," unlike England and Germany, the post-war scarcity of clothing was never realized.

During this period of uncertainty apparel manufacturers and retailers needed to find ways to encourage consumers to spend money, and they did this through advertisements that integrated public support for the war, fear and patriotism into their marketing campaigns. Department store advertisements in the Portland, Oregon newspaper the *Oregonian*, and likely other newspapers around the country, reflected the war and some mentioned or alluded to the limitation orders.²²⁴ For example, in 1942 Grayson's advertised navy-inspired dresses, Charles F. Berg advertised a Churchill-

²²³ Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 173.

²²⁴ *New York Times* fashion editor Virginia Pope "inaugurated the new 'Fashion Forecasts' section by writing: 'A new fashion season is dawning, one of the most vital in the history of American design. Operating under wartime restrictions and completely freed from any foreign influence, designers have met the challenge and are creating authentic all-American styles, suited to the needs of the emergency.'" Buckland, "Promoting American Designers, 1940-44, 117.

inspired coat for women,²²⁵ Meier and Frank advertised "Furlough fashions,"²²⁶ and in 1943 Robert's Bros. ran an advertisement that urged consumers to "Sew For Victory."²²⁷ In 1942, Grayson's also ran an advertisement for blouses with a headline that urged consumers to "Stock up now for the duration . . .", which was the opposite of what the WPB hoped consumers would do.²²⁸

On the one hand the United States government hoped to curb, at least temporarily, the purchase of apparel and other goods to help support the war effort by restricting those materials needed for the war; on the other hand, the apparel industry was one of the leading consumer industries in the United States and putting it on hold was not only impractical but could potentially be harmful to the domestic economy. Industry insiders like Earl Puckett, president of Allied Department Store, even questioned why Stanley Marcus worried about fabric conservation;²²⁹ similarly Walton, director of the Textile, Clothing and Leather Division of the War Production Board, wrote that Americans were considered "clothes conscious" with textile and clothing consumption that was "the largest in the world." Walton mentioned that "[o]ur manufacturing facilities are ample to

²²⁵ *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon). 21 August 1942: 3.

²²⁶ "Last year we called them 'date dresses' . . . but this year Furlough Fashions because those precious hours when the man of the moment is on leave he deserves the very best from you. Look your prettiest in these 'morale-building' frocks." Advertisement for Meier and Frank. *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 3 September 1942: 20.

²²⁷ Besides being downright thrifty and smart --it's patriotic to make your own clothes! It helps conserve fabric, too--saves money you can invest in War Savings Stamps and Bonds!" *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 3 January 1943: 3.

²²⁸ "Grayson's 'Wonder Blouses' at a wonder price! \$1.99 Fine fabrics that are growing more precious by the moment! Exquisite detailing of the kind usually found only in expensive blouses!" *Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 25 October 1942: 7. On 20 April 1942 *Time* elaborated that the purpose of the limitation order was to "spend as little as possible on new clothes. To make U.S. women wear old clothes, . . . [and] prevent a rush of panic hoarding." "Wartime Living: In the Stretch," *Time* (20 April 1942), 17. "As steadily as a butcher's slicing machine, the War Production Board trimmed new layers of fat off the U.S. standard of living. . . . Every time WPB said, *That's all there is; there isn't any more*, a new spasm of hoarding was touched off. But more & more citizens began to take pride in getting along with what they had. Some of their ideas were funny; some were good common sense: Shorter shirt tails—one inch would save 4,000,000 yards of cotton a year." "That's all there is," *Time* (13 April 1942), 19.

²²⁹ Stanley Marcus, *Minding the Store: A Memoir*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974), 113.

produce not only what we need but even for luxurious quantities. As a rule we are overproducing. . . . [and] the public . . . has benefitted by that condition."²³⁰ This ambivalence or conflict must have confused consumers if they paid attention. Sandra Buckland has written at length about the effect of the limitation order on the American fashion industry, but until now, little research has focused on consumer behavior and consumers' knowledge of the federal regulations on apparel.

Therefore, this study's primary research question was how, if at all, were female consumers influenced by United States government restrictions on women's apparel during World War II? The L-85 order was reported on by newspapers, magazines and sometimes referenced in window displays. Though the thirty women interviewed for this study were not explicitly aware of L-85 and its influence on apparel some did indicate that wartime apparel was shorter, skimpier and plainer than pre-war styles. It is understandable that these women were not aware of the limitation orders because the order was not that restricting, and this sample of women were not consumers of high fashion which, according to Buckland, was more restrictive than mass manufactured apparel.²³¹

One research question I asked was: *Did women feel the need to "make do and mend" their existing wardrobes as federal propaganda campaigns suggested?* A few weeks after the L-85 order was issued, *Oregonian* fashion editor Jane Allen tried to calm readers' fear of the order by explaining the lack of effect the order would have on clothing in an article titled "Relax, Ladies! If You Expected a Strip Tease Edict From Uncle Sam, You're All Wrong--New War Styles Aren't Much Altered." In the article Allen explains

²³⁰ Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 23.

²³¹ Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 170.

to readers that "[y]ou already are wearing many items which conform to the new regulations without your even being aware of it."²³² However, "[i]n May 1943 the WPB announced revisions to the L-85 order that created a body basic, a more strictly defined silhouette"²³³ after top U.S. designers created Spring designs "below [the allowed] limitations"²³⁴ saving even more material than requested by the order.

For the most part the women I interviewed never got rid of their clothing; if something no longer fit and they could not pass it down to a relative or friend they gave it to charity. Barbara explained that "even if you didn't like it you would hang on to it." These women made do and mended but not because federal propaganda urged them to, they did it out of economic necessity born out of the Depression era. Nancy was the only respondent to claim that if her clothes wore out she threw them out. She knew how to repair clothing but she did not do so. Nancy followed her husband around the U.S., worked and had one child during the war. Not mending her own clothes was likely the result of not having the time and having enough money to replace the clothes when they wore out. However, not all of the women interviewed had the money to replace their clothes and many recalled that they or their mothers repaired their clothes. Beverly showed me a letter to her mother where she talked about the pants her mother sent her after she had either made or altered them. It is likely that these women did not remember

²³² Allen goes on to explain what specific effects the regulations will have on upcoming Fall and Spring apparel styles including the lack of wool lining in jackets and coats. "Have you looked at the linings of these same garments during the past few years? You probably had a good-looking rayon satin lining plus a cotton daisy cloth interlining and you were none the wiser and if you had been you wouldn't have cared anyway because the garment was warm enough as it was." "The WPB says no more patch pockets at least on lined garments. But why the wait? Can't you remember the year when you wouldn't have been caught dead with patch pockets simply because fashion said it wasn't being done? And how much do you carry in those patch pockets anyway? Follow that line of reasoning and you will have to admit that pockets on women's clothes usually are pure decoration and a clever designer can think up other less fabric-using forms of clothes enhancement." Jane Allen, "Relax, Ladies!" *Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 26, April 1942.

²³³ Buckland, "Promoting American Fashion," 173.

²³⁴ Nona Baldwin, "Says Design Gains By Dress Limiting," *The New York Times*, 15 August 1942, 7.

much about wartime clothing due to memory loss, but it is just as likely that they did not remember much about wartime clothing because they did not have many outfits or garments that stood out among the sweaters and skirts that they wore in those years.

An analysis of extant wartime garments revealed the leniency of the limitation order. Some of the extant garments like the pinafore and dresses with wide skirt sweeps, and style details like fabric loop closures, bias cut fabric, yokes, raglan sleeves used more material, and some extant garments outright violated the L-85 order through the use of leg-of-mutton sleeves, wide pant legs, excessive coat sweeps and all-over pleating, confirming that mass manufactured apparel stretched the boundaries of the limitation order. Only one garment with a designer label was examined, and as Buckland explained, the suit fell well within the length and sweep requirements set for daytime dress.

Women who were used to purchasing more fashionable apparel, maybe some of the respondents' mothers,²³⁵ may have noticed that wartime apparel was not as elaborate and detailed as it had been before the order, but the sample of women interviewed in this study were used to basic skirt and sweater combinations. Many of the women interviewed recalled that some fabrics were harder to find or of lesser quality, shoes were rationed and stockings were hard to come by and that all of these changes were war related.

Interestingly, women who were home economics majors in college or had taken apparel construction classes in high school were not more aware of the limitation order than those without this background, but some were more aware that fabric was either harder to come by or of lesser quality. A few even remembered using fabric substitutes for silk and wool, which were in short supply during the war.

²³⁵ I did not ask how much their parents earned or what social-economic class I thought they had belonged to during the war, but I can make some estimations that a few of the women belonged to middle to upper-middle class families.

Most women did not have a lot of their own money to spend on clothing as many were still living with or supported by their parents. However, some of the money these women earned working part-time jobs after school, on weekends and during summers was spent on apparel or fabric to make apparel. Several women were starting to have their own children and either could not afford or did not have the time or inclination to spend a lot of money on apparel. Most were used to not spending much on apparel since they grew up during the Depression, and many were used to their mothers making their clothing or helping their mothers make their clothing. However, many of the women indicated that they purchased at least some of their clothing ready-made, and some exclusively purchased their clothing, indicating an important shift in the lifestyles and consumption patterns occurring in many households across the United States from the Depression years.²³⁶

If working in defense industries did they buy more apparel products because they had more money to spend? Ten of the women worked in defense industries, but none of them indicated that they had more money to buy apparel than they had before the war. Phyllis explained that she was lucky to get the job at Oregon Ship in Portland because it paid better than her friends were making working at a department store, but I do not think this extra money was enough to buy more apparel than she would have without the better paying job. Phyllis was interested in fashion and the extra money may have bought her an extra sweater from Charles F. Berg's or fabric to make up a new outfit or formal for

²³⁶ John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II*. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 90-91 and 122.

college. But the money she earned was likely spent on the rising cost of everyday consumer goods (i.e., inflation).²³⁷

For women who sewed their own and their family's clothing, did the apparel restrictions influence homemade clothing? Gloria remembers that her mother made her a skirt out of her brothers' navy uniform pants and a negligee out of parachute silk, and Maria recalls making a dirndl skirt out of a table cloth. After the war Marcia explained she made her son a coat out of her husbands' navy uniform. The war may have influenced their decisions to remake old clothing/fabric into new garments, but it is more likely that their behavior was influenced by the Depression and making the most out of what they already had.

Some respondents recall that some fabric was harder to find or of lesser quality, while others remembered that fabric was plentiful. Therefore, it may be that the war may have influenced some areas or regions of the country more than others. For those enrolled in the Home Economics Department at Oregon State College, it may have been difficult to find the quantity of good lining material and other fabric needed for tailoring and other apparel construction classes. Therefore the students used lesser quality substitutions like rayon, a fine cotton or innovative fabrics made of skim milk.

Respondents who sewed recalled that there was not any difficulty in finding apparel patterns. They also had not noticed any style changes even after the government regulated new patterns in 1943 to fit the L-85 requirements. However, this is not that

²³⁷ Phyllis told me a story about a roommate she had while going to Oregon State College; she explained that her roommate came from a wealthy Portland family. This roommate had multiple cashmere sweaters and Phyllis recalls that she "would have given [her] . . . front teeth for a cashmere sweater." Phyllis was annoyed by her roommate because she was "such a slob and [Phyllis] . . . would go to her closet and there was her sweaters on the floor in the dirt and dust and I'd hang them up." Phyllis explained that her father made her a deal that if she got a 3.0 or higher GPA he'd buy her a cashmere sweater. She recalled that she made it and she finally got her cashmere sweater.

notable considering they were not aware of the regulations in the first place, and some likely reused patterns they already owned or borrowed them from friends or family. In one letter home to her mother Beverly mentions that her friend would like to borrow her pattern.

In what other ways were these women's lives affected with regard to their apparel purchases? The war indirectly influenced the way some women consumed apparel. For some, the location where they purchased apparel changed because they were traveling with their husbands to different training camps around the country. Irene joined the army so the war directly influenced her apparel choices. Others got married before their husband was sent overseas and needed wedding attire. For those who sewed their own clothing, especially here at Oregon State College, respondents used fabric substitutes because of the shortage of silk and wool. Similarly the war directly influenced consumers consumption of shoes as these were rationed. It is difficult to evaluate how the war influenced respondents clothing choices because the previous decade of the Depression was a strong influence on the amount of money these women had to spend on clothing and the quantity of the clothing they owned. The war definitely impacted their lives, but I believe it had less of an influence on their clothing choices than older women and women with larger clothing budgets.

Time appeared to have erased many memories of the wartime style and design details, but overall, respondents remembered the general styles they wore (i.e., skirts and sweaters), and some even remembered specific apparel purchases. Even though some women mentioned changes to wartime apparel (i.e., that skirts were shorter or outfits plainer), some remember changes to wartime apparel that had nothing to do with the war.

Rather these changes had more to do with life transitions like clothing requirements for college, getting married, starting a new job or being pregnant. Despite the lack of details that the women interviewed remembered about wartime clothing, these women's responses were strikingly similar, which lends to the reliability of their memories and contributes to what is known about wartime apparel and women's wartime experiences.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

On 8 April 1942 *Women's Wear Daily* published the War Production Boards' "General Limitation Order L-85, Restrictions on Feminine Apparel for Outerwear and Certain Other Garments," which prohibited style and construction details that required excessive fabric. To learn how these limitations affected women's purchase and the use of apparel styles, patterns, and fabric, I interviewed 30 women who were at least 13 years old in 1941 about their purchase of apparel and accessory items and to discuss their feelings about the government regulation of dress and adornment under the limitation orders. Through oral interviews I created "source material that [was] otherwise inaccessible" and shed light on selected wartime consumer behavior that until now has been hidden to historians.²³⁸ In addition to adding to what is known about wartime consumer behavior, this study expands on what is known about the home front and consumer behavior relative to apparel during the war.

To achieve a victory and to defend democracy, all Americans were expected to make temporary changes in their daily lives as consumers of food, clothing, recreation and transportation.²³⁹ However, these "calls for sacrifice" came during a period of "rising prosperity" in U.S. history.²⁴⁰ Federal defense spending created jobs and the economic conditions left over from the 1930s Depression was soon a thing of the past. The Roosevelt administration created the War Production Board to oversee the conversion of

²³⁸ Ida Juul, "Educational narratives: educational history seen from a micro-perspective," *Paedagogica Historica* 44(6) (2008): 707.

²³⁹ Hazel Kyrk, "Consumers and the War," in *Consumer Problems in Wartime*. Kenneth Dameron, ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1944), 25.

²⁴⁰ Horowitz, *The Anxieties of Affluence*, 45.

the manufacture of civilian goods to goods needed for war without creating civilian panic. In April 1942 restrictions expanded to the textile industry (i.e., fibers, facilities and labor); the L-85 restricted selected style details to conserve fabric and manpower. Certain dye colors were also restricted due to the chemicals needed for the war effort. In addition, fibers, dyes and metal used for closures (i.e., zippers, hooks and eyes and buttons) were also affected by the regulations.²⁴¹ L-85 restrictions also changed the way women could purchase apparel. Before restrictions manufacturers and retailers sold apparel as a single unit (i.e., “a coat with a suit, a jacket with a dress or a coat with a dress”); restrictions favored selling items, such as a coat or dress, separately.²⁴²

In the summer of 1942 Stanley Marcus, head of the women's apparel division of the WPB, remarked that “[t]he result of the order has been as anticipated in that the majority of mass manufacturers are working up to the full limitation of measurement. But the top designers, in order to have distinction, are working below limitations.”²⁴³ For example, in Spring 1943 some U.S. designers “announced . . . that their spring designs reflected a desire to conserve even more fabric than the government asked.”²⁴⁴ As rumors continued to spread that clothes would have to be rationed despite the L-85, the WPB announced revisions to the order in May 1943 that created “a more strictly defined silhouette.”²⁴⁵ Before the initial order had been issued in April 1942, bodices were fitted,

²⁴¹ “Metal was needed for war purposes so metal buttons, buckles, hooks and eyes, 'zippers' and eyelets were soon banned except for military or the most essential use. . . . Conservation measures were adopted and many substitutes found. . . . Some plastic closures were developed and pearl buttons also helped out. Old 'zippers' were reclaimed from the dresses you discarded and in devious ways the needs have been met.” Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 139.

²⁴² Winifred J. Ovitee, “Industry Owes Appreciation For Fashion Understanding In Rulings of Order L-85,” *Women's Wear Daily*, April 8, 1942: section 1, p. 3.

²⁴³ Nona Baldwin, “Says Design Gains By Dress Limiting,” *The New York Times*, 15 August 1942, 7.

²⁴⁴ Winifred Spear, “Dress Designers Surpass the WPB in Effecting Savings in Material,” *The New York Times*, 27 March 1943, 10.

²⁴⁵ Buckland, “Promoting American Fashion,” 173.

and skirts were full and fell just below the knee.²⁴⁶ Fashionable wartime apparel styles became more slim-fitting with narrow, knee-length or just below the knee-length skirts and broad shoulders.

None of this study's sample of thirty women were explicitly aware of the federal limitation orders on apparel. However, some remembered that wartime apparel styles were shorter and plainer than pre-war styles and that there was a drastic change in styles after the war. Like many women during this time, many respondents made or their mothers made many of their clothes, and apparel purchases were generally fewer in number and often memorable. Memorable purchases related to changes in the body due to a pregnancy, a special occasion like a wedding, a dance or Easter, purchased for a new job, made while traveling or purchased with wages earned during a summer job. As indicated during their interviews, their purchase and use of apparel appeared to be more influenced by the pre-war economy, their age, their or their parents' income, and whether they worked, went to school, raised children or a combination of these factors.

The results of this study makes it clear that not all consumers were aware of the L-85 orders, and as illustrated by the extant garments examined for this study, the orders were not that limiting or in some cases, the order was not always strictly followed. Extant garments had style details like raglan and leg-of-mutton sleeves, allover pleats, pin tucks, wide pant legs, French cuffs, wide sweeps to name a few of the details that either stretched the limits of the L-85 order or outright violated it. These details confirm to what Sandra Buckland (1996) found in her dissertation in which she focused on media's role in promoting the U.S. fashion industry during World War II. In other words, mass

²⁴⁶ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century dress in the United States*, 124; Shirley Miles O'Donnol, *American Costume, 1915-1970*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 126..

manufactured apparel worked up to the limitations, and designers often tried to be more strict in their collections.

The women interviewed in this study were not consumers of high fashion, most bought budget ready-made apparel, or as mentioned, they or their mothers made their clothes, and they generally were not aware of the changes to wartime apparel. The answers of the women interviewed in this study were remarkably similar, and thus it is likely that their experiences were similar to many teenagers and twenty-something's in the United States during World War II.

This study is particularly valuable because until now, no one has asked consumers whether they were aware of apparel regulations or what they remembered about wartime apparel. Textbook authors discuss the L-85 order and the impact on wartime apparel, and history of apparel students are lead to believe that war-time apparel styles were just another wartime sacrifice that people knowingly and willingly endured in support of the war, and that all wartime apparel met these requirements. Some textbooks do not even differentiate between late 1930s and pre-war 1940s styles and wartime styles. While other textbooks make sweeping and often incorrect assessments about how the L-85 order influenced apparel. For example, one textbook author states that "[j]ackets were shortened, and vents, patch pockets, and belts were eliminated." Through the examination of extant wartime garments we see that some jackets were indeed waist length or just below waist length but some jackets were hip length, and vents, patch pockets and belts were definitely not "eliminated." The author continues to explain that the "wearing of pants [among women] was more universal than in the thirties."²⁴⁷ Among the sample of

²⁴⁷ O'Donnol, *American Costume*, 114.

women interviewed for this study I can conclude that the wearing of pants was not "universal."

This study also makes clear how important cross-checking oral history sources with "other, divergent sources of data."²⁴⁸ In this case respondents' memories were compared to newspaper and magazine articles and extant wartime garments. Overall wartime memories were consistent with what scholars have written about the war. Respondents recalled that shoes were rationed, stockings were hard to find and that as teenagers and women in their early twenties, they wore skirts and sweaters. However, respondents did not know about federal restrictions on dress even though magazines and newspapers including store advertisements discussed the L-85 order.

Limitations

The most obvious limitation to this study is the respondents' memories, but the common answers among them lends to their reliability, and the findings of this study add to the literature on wartime consumer behavior. If this study was completed a few decades ago and an older sample of women had been interviewed (i.e., women in their 30s and 40s in 1941) then the answers to these questions would likely be very different; perhaps an older sample of women would remember more about wartime apparel. In other words, the results of this study are valuable, but they do reflect a younger demographic. About half of this sample of women reportedly were not interested in fashion which may also account for their lack of wartime apparel memories.

It is important to keep in mind that this study is not meant to represent what all women were doing during the war. Since only white, middle class women were

²⁴⁸ Neuman, *Social Research Methods*, 404.

interviewed this analysis cannot be thought to represent all women; however, it is important to note the similarities in their responses, and how these memories may reflect the experiences of many young American women during World War II. Their recollections of war and wartime clothing are generally similar to what is already known about wartime clothing, which adds to the reliability or consistency of the findings.

Since most respondents could not remember specific details about wartime apparel, I also examined extant garments and consulted newspapers and periodicals to supplement what time has most likely erased. If time and money was not a factor, I would have liked to examine more extant garments in order to evaluate manufacturers and designers adherence, or lack of, to the limitation order. In addition to respondents' memories, another limitation to this study is the researchers' use of a structured interview format. While easier and often needed because respondents are reluctant to talk, structured interview questions can be leading and can prevent the openness that a less structured format might encourage.

Future studies

This study is the first to examine female consumers' memories related to the influence of federal regulation of apparel during World War II. Future researchers should look at men's apparel and men's consumer experiences. A timely completion of such research is particularly important because this population is rapidly diminishing. In addition to men's consumer experiences, it is important to interview women from different regions of the country and to seek out alternative voices from different races and ethnicities to give a better picture of women's wartime consumer experiences in the

United States. Future research should include a content analysis of periodicals to determine what message was being communicated to consumers (i.e., make do and mend/repurpose existing clothing; or buy the new, regulated styles). Additionally, continuing to examine photographs and extant garments would give a better picture of what was actually worn versus what was promoted. Future researchers could also compare wartime apparel from the United States with England's utility garments. Likewise, a comparison between consumer experiences between the two nations would add to what is known about wartime consumer behavior in these two nations. I have also discovered that many of the women were not terribly interested in fashionable apparel. This view is somewhat representative of some women of today. This discovery raises questions about how to market apparel to women who may not be that interested in apparel. Future researchers may want to focus on older women or any person who is reportedly not interested in apparel in order to see what marketers of retail apparel could do to attract this consumer market.

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APPENDICES

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Appendix A. Maximum measurements for all size ranges various women's and misses' daytime dresses²⁴⁹

Misses sizes	10	12	14	16	18	20			
Lengths	41	42	42.5	43	43.5	44			
Wool sweep 9 oz. or less	68	69	70.5	72	73.5	75			
Other than wool sweep	74	75	76.5	78	79.5	81			
Hem	2	2	2	2	2	2			
Sleeve circumference	13	13.25	13.5	14	14.5	15			
Junior misses' sizes	9	11	13	15	17	19			
Lengths	39.5	40.5	41	41.5	42	42.5			
Wool sweep 9 oz. or less	68	69	70.5	72	73.5	75			
Other than wool sweep	74	75	76.5	78	79.5	81			
Hem	2	2	2	2	2	2			
Sleeve circumference	13	13.25	13.5	14	14.5	15			

²⁴⁹ "Fashions for Victory: General Limitation Order L-85," (1942, April 8). *Women's Wear Daily*.

Women's stout sizes	38.5	40.5	42.5	44.5	46.5	48.5	50.5	52.5	
Lengths	45	46	46.5	47	47	47.5	47.5	48	
Wool sweep 9 oz. or less	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	
Other than wool sweep	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	
Hem	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
Sleeve circumference	15	15.5	16	16.5	17	17.5	18	18	
Women's odd sizes	35	37	39	41	43	45	47	49	51
Lengths	45	45.5	46	46.5	47	47	47	47.5	48
Wool sweep 9 oz. or less	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90
Other than wool sweep	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94
Hem	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Sleeve circumference	15	15.5	16	16.5	17	17.5	18	18	18

Appendix B: Wartime demographics by respondent

<u>Name</u> ²⁵⁰	<u>Age in 1941</u>	<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Children</u>	<u>Student</u>	<u>Employment</u>	<u>Places lived</u>
<u>Kathleen</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>high school</u>	<u>Department store employee</u>	<u>Eugene, OR</u>
<u>Maria</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>high school</u>	<u>Cleaned houses; Picked crops in fields in Lebanon, OR</u>	<u>Wren, OR and outside Philomath</u>
<u>Carol</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>some college</u>	<u>Telephone company</u>	<u>Corvallis, OR and Forest Grove, OR</u>
<u>Marjorie</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>high school; college</u>	<u>Family ranch; Helped cook for the haying crew; Haying; Cafeteria at Waldo Hall</u>	<u>Salem, OR; Burns, OR; Vancouver, WA</u>
<u>Beverly</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Registrar's office at Manchester College; Delco Radio; Bookkeeper at a laundry</u>	<u>Sims, Indiana; Kokomo, Indiana; North Manchester, Indiana</u>
<u>Judy</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>high school; nursing school</u>	<u>General store; Orange packing house</u>	<u>La Habra, CA; San Francisco, CA</u>
<u>Rita</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Chemistry labs at UC Berkley</u>	<u>Cleveland Heights, Ohio; Berkley, CA</u>

²⁵⁰ Names have been changes to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

<u>Judith</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>On the family farm</u>	<u>Salem, OR</u>
<u>Diane</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>married (44)</u>	<u>yes (46)</u>	<u>high school</u>	<u>Pear packing house in Medford; Stenographer; Cafe; Office of the American Fruit Growers in Medford; Department store in Seattle over Christmas; Typed bills for a water heater/plumber company</u>	<u>Jacksonville, OR</u>
<u>Sylvia</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>married (44)</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>high school</u>	<u>Warrants office at Camp Roberts; Albany court house in the tax department</u>	<u>Albany, OR and Camp Roberts, CA</u>
<u>Nancy</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>married (44)</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>high school</u>	<u>Air Service Command HQ Clerk; Rikes Department store clerk</u>	<u>Springfield, NJ; Pendleton, OR; Tucson, AZ; Spokane, WA; Dayton, OH; Danvers, MA; Paterson, NJ; Tucson, AZ</u>
<u>Marcia</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>married (42)</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>high school</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Polson, MT; Seattle, WA; Tacoma, WA; Hot Springs, MT; Bozeman, MT</u>
<u>Phyllis</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Babysat; OPA in their legal enforcement division; For an attorney; Oregon Ship</u>	<u>Portland, OR and Corvallis, OR</u>
<u>Barbara</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Nyssa, OR and Corvallis, OR</u>
<u>Ruth</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>J.M. Nolan's dept. store pricing</u>	<u>Corvallis, OR; Las Vegas, NV</u>

					<u>merchandise</u>	
<u>Virginia</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>married</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Enterprise, Alabama and Corvallis, OR</u>
<u>Eileen</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Personal secretary for wife of president of UC Berkley; Secretary for west coast Vogue</u>	<u>Los Angeles, CA; Berkley, CA</u>
<u>Norma</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>married (43)</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>some college</u>	<u>Telephone operator</u>	<u>Scio, Oregon; New Jersey; Whidbey Island, WA</u>
<u>Gail</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>married (43)/widowed (44)</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Bullet casing factory; Picked cherries</u>	<u>Chicago; Delhart, TX; Beulah, Michigan; Northfield, Minn.</u>
<u>Shirley</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>married (43)</u>	<u>not sure</u>	<u>some college</u>	<u>Payroll department at Camp Cohler in Sacramento; Payroll department at Camp Adair; A radio station in Corvallis</u>	<u>Sacramento, CA; Camp Cohler, CA; Corvallis, OR</u>
<u>Anita</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>married</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>Aircraft plant as sandblasted steel spot welder</u>	<u>Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Baltimore, MD; Tennessee and more</u>
<u>Brenda</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>married (40 or 41)/divorced (45)</u>	<u>yes (43)</u>	<u>high school; business school</u>	<u>Aircraft plant in San Diego</u>	<u>San Diego, CA; Illinois; Dallas Texas</u>

<u>Joann</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college;</u> <u>trade</u> <u>school</u>	<u>Housework for a doctor; A 10¢</u> <u>store; Made Hollywood</u> <u>costumes; Western Fashions</u> <u>designing sportswear</u>	<u>Corvallis, OR and Los Angeles, CA</u>
<u>Rosemary</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>married (43)</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Navy dispersing office at in</u> <u>Portland at Swan Island;</u> <u>personnel department at</u> <u>Gimbals' in Philadelphia;</u> <u>substitute kindergarten teacher</u> <u>in Detroit; two days at a Navy</u> <u>manufacturing facility in New</u> <u>Port, RI</u>	<u>Corvallis, OR; Portland, OR;</u> <u>Philadelphia, PA; Detroit, Mich.;</u> <u>New York; New Port, RI; San</u> <u>Mataeo, CA</u>
<u>Gloria</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>married (45)</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Teacher; Waitress</u>	<u>Berkley, CA; Whittier, CA;</u> <u>Riverside, CA; Mexico; Sequoia</u> <u>National Park, CA</u>
<u>Carolyn</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>business</u> <u>school</u>	<u>Secretary; Dental assistant</u>	<u>Albany, OR</u>
<u>Joan</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>married (42)</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Civil service jobs where husband</u> <u>was stationed in Navy (i.e.,</u> <u>stenographer, secretary, pay roll</u> <u>accountant)</u>	<u>Texarkana, Ark.; Magnolia Ark.;</u> <u>Hawaii; places in Florida; Bethesda,</u> <u>MD; San Diego, CA; Port Lyautey,</u> <u>French Morocco; Hayward, CA; San</u> <u>Rafael, CA; Medford, OR and</u> <u>Ashland, OR</u>

<u>Joyce</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>married (42)</u>	<u>yes</u>	<u>college</u>	<u>Demonstrating products for a food Distribution Company; PG&E home economist dealer demonstrations; Chemist in a foundry; Nursery school teacher</u>	<u>Yakama, WA; Seattle, WA; Sacramento, CA; Corvallis, OR; Norfolk, VA; Dufur, OR; The Dalles, OR</u>
<u>Janet</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>single</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>college; graduate school</u>	<u>Camp Fire Girls; Program Secretary for the YWCA</u>	<u>New York City; Boston, MA; Seattle, WA</u>
<u>Irene</u>	<u>29</u>	<u>divorced</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>no</u>	<u>Timber grader at the Hammond Lumber Company in Samoa, California; WACs (Women's Air Corps)</u>	<u>Grants Pass, OR; Arcadia, CA; Eureka, CA; Fort Oglethorpe, GA; Alpine, TX; Palm Springs, CA; Greiner Field, NH; Manchester, England; Paris, France</u>

Appendix C: Recruitment Poster

“Pretty and Patriotic” : Women's Consumption of Apparel During World War II



- During World War II the U.S. government issued restrictions on women’s apparel.
- We want to ask you about 1940s clothing and how the war influenced your purchase of apparel.
- If you are a woman born in 1926 or earlier, remember wartime fashions, and are interested in participating in this study, you are invited to take part in this study.
- If you are interested, please contact:

Elaine L. Pedersen, Associate Professor
Design and Human Environment
Oregon State University
220 Milam Hall Corvallis, OR 97331
541-737-0984
pedersee@oregonstate.edu

Jennifer M. Mower
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220 Milam Hall Corvallis, OR 97331
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Appendix D: Recruitment Letter to be Placed in Institutions' Newsletters

Greetings,

During World War II the U.S. government issued restrictions on apparel in addition to restrictions on coffee, rubber and other consumer goods to help the war effort. We are interested in learning about women's purchase and use of apparel during World War II. If you are a woman born in 1926 or earlier, remember wartime fashions, and are interested in participating in this study, you are invited to take part in this study.

What do you have to do?

We want to interview you about your war-time purchase and use of apparel. Interviews can take place at your home or at a location of your choosing. Interviews will last approximately 2 to 3 hours. You are encouraged to bring photos, apparel, or other war-time memorabilia. You are also welcome to bring a friend or family member who may be interested in listening to your experiences or an individual who also qualifies for the study. If you are interested, please contact us to ask questions or to schedule an interview. We will also visit the **(insert name of institution)** on **(insert date)** to answer any questions you may have about the study and to schedule an interview if you would like to do so.

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Appendix E

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Demographic Questionnaire and Structured Interview

Project Title: “Pretty and Patriotic”: Women's Consumption of Apparel During World War II

Principal Investigators: Elaine L. Pedersen, PhD.

Co-Investigator: Jennifer M. Mower

What is the purpose of this study?

This project is designed to learn more about women’s purchase of apparel during World War II.

What is the purpose of this consent form?

This document gives you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study. Please read the information carefully. You may ask any questions about this study, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a participant, and anything else that is not clear. When all of your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not.

Why am I being invited to take part in this study?

You are being invited to take part in this study because you were old enough to be a consumer of women’s apparel during World War II.

What will happen during the interview and how long will it take?

We ask that you voluntarily complete a questionnaire with basic demographic information and mail it back to the researchers. We will then call you to schedule an interview that will last for approximately 2 to 3 hours. Your responses will be recorded by a note-taker and recorded on a digital voice recorder. You have been encouraged to share photographs, garments or other war-time memorabilia. With your permission we will take photographs of these items to use in our study and any future presentations and publications of this research. However, we will not take any photographs of you, the subject during the interview.

The recordings will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked OSU office. The student researcher will transcribe the interview. As soon as we have captured the recording on paper and checked its accuracy, we will erase the recording to ensure the confidentiality of responses. No identifying information or symbols will be associated with individual responses. Only members of the research team will have access to the recorded conversations. Your real name will not be connected to your comments. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym that will be used instead of your real name. Your comments will be used in a way that ensures that your identity remains unknown. You can refuse to answer any question or stop the interview at any time.

Are there any risks and/or benefits of participating in this study?

There are minimal risks involved in participating in this study. Participation in this study will take time. You may find that some questions bring up some emotions as you discuss your experiences during the war. If this occurs, you may refuse to answer these questions or take a break. Although there are no direct benefits to you, the information you provide will be instrumental in adding to what is known about the purchase of women's apparel during World War II.

Will I be paid for participating?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You will not receive compensation for participation in this study.

Who will see the information I provide?

Your identity will not be shared with the public. Results will be used in an analysis and submitted to the OSU graduate school for the completion of a doctoral dissertation. Results may also be used in a manuscript or presented at a conference. After the completion of the study, we will donate copies of the transcripts to the Valley Library and Oregon Historical Society for future researchers. All identifying names and information will be changed to maintain the anonymity of the respondents.

Do I have a choice to be in this study?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you decide to take part in this study, it should be because you really want to. You are free to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw from the study at any time.

What if I have questions?

If you have any questions about this research project, please contact:

Elaine L. Pedersen, Associate Professor
Design and Human Environment
Department
Oregon State University
220 Milam Hall Corvallis, OR 97331
OR 97331
541-737-0984
pedersee@oregonstate.edu

Jennifer M. Mower
Graduate Student in the DHE

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220 Milam Hall Corvallis,

541-908-3667
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If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Signature: Your Signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

Witness's Name (printed):

(Signature of Witness)

(Date)

Appendix F: Interview Questions

Demographic Questions

1. Please state your name for the record.
2. Where were all the places you lived between 1940 and 1946?
3. What was your marital status between 1940 and 1946?
4. What was your father's/husband's profession during the war?
5. Did you mother work during the war?
6. If yes, what was your mother's profession during the war?
7. Did you work during the war? What type of work did you do?
8. What is your highest level of education?
9. What is your date of birth?
10. What racial group do you belong to?

General Questions

11. What do you remember about the war?
12. What do you remember about 1940s clothing?
13. How did you acquire apparel before the war?
14. How did you acquire apparel during the war?
15. How did you acquire apparel after the war?
16. During the war, families were asked to make sacrifices. What do you remember of the sacrifices your family made?
17. Can you remember if a sense of patriotism was evident in wartime apparel?

Regulations

18. Were you aware of any regulations on apparel during the war?
19. If yes, what do you remember about it?
20. Do you remember any changes with regards to wartime/regulated apparel?
21. If so, describe how the regulations influenced women's apparel?
22. Were there any apparel shortages where you lived?

Purchase of Clothing

23. Did you buy clothing during the war? If so, do you remember where you shopped, what stores you shopped in?
24. Were these the same stores in which you shopped after the war?
25. How frequently did you buy clothing? Did you ever go just to browse?
26. When buying apparel during the war did you spend your money or was it your family's money that was used?
27. Do you have a sense of what portion of your salary or the family's salary went to clothing purchases?
28. How often and for what reasons did you replace clothes during the war.
29. Did you repair your clothes?
30. Did you spend more money on clothing during the war than before the war?
31. Did you spend more money on clothing after the war than you did during the war?
32. Did you buy more clothes during the war than you did before the war?
33. Did you buy more clothes after the war than you did during the war?

34. During the war did you acquire new clothing for special occasions like Christmas, Easter or other events or holidays?
35. If yes, for what holidays or events did you acquire new clothing?
36. And, if yes [on 34], how did you acquire the new clothes, did you buy or make the clothing?
37. When clothing was purchased in any form and type for you or your family, who generally did the buying?

Clothing Production

38. Did you make any of your own clothing during the war?
39. [If yes] Did you make your own clothing before the war?
40. Were there difficulties in buying apparel patterns? Were patterns restricted?
41. Was fabric restricted?
42. Where did you buy fabric during the war?

Employment and Clothing Budget

43. Did you work outside the home before the war? If you did, where did you work?
44. Did you work outside the home after the war? If you did, where did you work?
45. [If individual worked before and during the war, ask] How did your earnings during the war compare with your earnings before the war? In other words, did you earn more money during the war compared to before the war?
46. [If individual worked during and after the war, ask] How did your earnings during the war compare with your earnings after the war? In other words, did you earn more money after the war compared to before the war?
47. [If respondent worked during the war, ask] Was some of the money that you earned during the war spent on clothing?
48. Compared to your clothing budget before the war, did your clothing budget change during the war? If so how?

Fashion Interest

49. How would you describe the war-time styles?
50. How did war-time styles differ from the styles before the war?
51. How did war-time styles differ from the styles after the war?
52. During the war were you interested in fashionable styles?
53. Describe the clothing you wore during the war.
54. Did you read newspapers during the war?
55. If yes, which ones?
56. Do you remember the newspaper sections that you were particularly interested in?
57. Did you read magazines during the war?
58. If yes, which ones?
59. What magazine features did you enjoy the most?

Comparability and Context

60. Describe how your situation compared to other women's experiences that you knew about during the war years.

61. Thinking of both the men and women who stayed in the United States during the war, do you think women's purchasing of apparel differed from the men's apparel purchases??
62. If yes, will you explain ?

Appendix F: Extant Garment Descriptions

Three women had civilian garments from this time period including the allover pleated skirts and wooden shoes that Kathleen showed me during her interview.¹ Beverly saved a sweater she knitted and a floral print rayon dress worn by her mother during this time.² The knee-length dress has a draped v-neckline, shirring at the shoulders, short sleeves, a center yoke, gathers into the top of the yoke and pleats from the bottom yoke seam into the skirt. The skirt has two patch pockets. See Figure 9. Janet had saved an olive green corduroy shirtwaist-style dress she wore when she worked for the YWCA. The knee-length dress has a v-neckline, notched collar, gathers at the shoulders, French cuffs,³ buttons down the front, and patch pockets at the breast. The bodice is somewhat fitted with gathers into the waistband. See Figure 10.

¹ Irene shared her Army Air Corps uniform.

² The author relied on donor information for fiber content. The use of rayon in the U.S. grew from "216,000,000 pounds produced in 1933 to the record production of 663,000,000 pounds in 1943." Frank L. Walton, *Thread of Victory*. Fairchild Publishing Co., New York (1945), 46. "[T]he hosiery industry would have been shut down except that rayon was available . . . but much rayon goes into many other things. For instance, approximately 1,500,000,000 linear yards of fabric were produced in 1942. Rayon fabric has become very popular in the apparel trade for both outerwear and underwear as well as for linings." Walton, *The Tread of Victory*, 47.

³ French cuffs were prohibited under the L-85 order.



Figure 9. Dress worn by Beverly's mother.



Figure 10. Dress worn by Janet as a YWCA program secretary.

Oregon Historical Society

I wanted to examine twelve of the thirty garments that were dated to the 1940s; however, I omitted five garments that appeared to be from the 1930s or early 1950s.⁴ Therefore I will only describe the remaining seven garments. I examined two casual, everyday dresses. According to museum records, one dress is made of indigo colored, sheer nylon fabric with white polka dots called "dotted swiss."⁵ If museum records are correct, the use of nylon is interesting since this fiber was taken over for military use in March 1942.⁶ The fitted bodice has a round collarless neckline, short cap sleeves, bust darts and lace trim. There is a waist seam that joins the bodice to the flared skirt, white buttons down the front with a metal hook-and-eye closure at the neckline, and a belt. While I was not able to measure the length of the dress or sweep of the skirt of this dress, the dress is approximately calf-length and the sweep appears to be within the regulations.

The second dress is a shirtwaist style dress made of blue-green colored fabric, probably cotton, with white buttons down the front. It has short, raglan sleeves,⁷ rounded neckline, a pointed collar, two patch pockets with flaps,⁸ flared

⁴ The Oregon Historical Society had 30 garments that were dated "1940s." However due to time and monetary limitations I could not examine all 30. All garments with labels were examined because I assumed that some information could be located for garments with labels since none of the 30 garments had information about the original owner/wearer. In order to analyze a variety of garment styles additional garments without labels were selected. Twelve garments were analyzed.

⁵ When fiber content is stated, the author relied on museum records for fiber content information.

⁶ Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 42. It's possible this dress was acquired before this time.

⁷ A raglan sleeve "extends to neckline and has slanting seamline from underarm to neck in front and back." Mary Brooks Picken, *The Fashion Dictionary*. (New York: Funk Wagnalls, 1973), 341. Interestingly, raglan sleeves were not included in the limitation order.

⁸ With regards to day dresses, garments could not have more than two pockets or "any patch pocket exceeding 42 square inches of material before reduction" Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 266. These pockets do not exceed the order.

skirt and a belt with a wood buckle.⁹ The princess, raglan and cuff seams are double top-stitched. The dress is approximately calf-length, and the sweep appears within the regulations.

I examined three dresses that would have been worn for dressy occasions. Two of these dresses have a Eisenberg & Sons label;¹⁰ one calf-length dress is made of black wool crepe with a grape and leaf motif created using brass nail-heads.¹¹ The draped bodice has a bias front inset, heavy padded shoulders and short sleeves. The dress has a collarless v-neckline and gathers into the waist seam that joins the bodice to the skirt with a back tie. The dress also has a zipper closure. The use of a zipper closure is interesting because zippers were restricted to military and "the most essential use."¹² However, Walton explains that "[o]ld 'zippers' were reclaimed" from older garments¹³ "and shorter zippers were made in order to stretch available metal supplies,"¹⁴ therefore zipper closures appear to have still been available and used in the manufacture of apparel during the war. The skirt sweep appears within regulation.

The second Eisenberg & Son dress is a full-length gown made of black crepe fabric. It too has a empire waistline with an inverted v seam, collarless v-

⁹ Wood may reflect the use of alternative materials for civilian use during the war. This can also be seen in the popularity of wooden shoes among some Oregon women.

¹⁰ Eisenberg & Sons, Inc. was established in 1914 and manufactured clothing and perfume for women. To boost sales in the late 1930s the firm began making costume jewelry to accessorize their line of dresses. The jewelry was so popular the company stopped designing and selling dresses in 1958 and focused on jewelry. *The history of Eisenberg jewelry*. www.lifescrript.com/Life/Timeout/Chill/The_History_of_Eisenberg_Jewelry.aspx (accessed June 10, 2011).

¹¹ The metal used in this dress seems to contradict the conservation of metal for the war.

¹² Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 139.

¹³ Walton, *Thread of Victory*, 139.

¹⁴ Robert Fridel, *Zipper: An exploration in novelty*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994), 200.

neckline, heavy padded shoulders and capped sleeves with underarm gussets.¹⁵ The sleeves have an open-work scroll design with jet bead trim. The skirt sweep appears within regulation for evening dresses.¹⁶ The dress has a zipper closure.

The third garment is a calf-length dress with matching jacket. Both the dress and jacket are made of black crepe bias cut fabric.¹⁷ The fitted jacket has princess seams, long, leg-of-mutton sleeves,¹⁸ slight v-neckline with a short stand-up collar, eighteen fabric covered buttons and loop closures¹⁹ and is trimmed with gold cord and rhinestones. There are seven black plastic buttons that run down from the top of the center back. The sweep of the dress appears within regulation.

I also looked at a fitted, beige colored jacket with a blue-green lining from Meier & Frank, a Portland, Oregon department store. The hip-length jacket has long, sleeves, gathers at the shoulder, shoulder and waist darts, button and loop closures and top-stitching on the rounded notched collar.

In addition I examined a knit blue sweater with white deer and snowflake motif with a Jantzen label.²⁰ According to museum records the sweater was purchased at Charles Berg, a Portland, Oregon retailer. Una May Arras owed the

¹⁵ A gusset is a "[t]riangular . . . piece of fabric . . . inserted in garment . . . for additional strength, room, or to adjust the fit." Picken, *The Fashion Dictionary*, 170. The use of an underarm gusset may reflect the fitted look popular during this time. Before the limitation order the dress designer may have used a different sleeve style, one that required more fabric, but the L-85 order most likely prevented this making an underarm gusset necessary.

¹⁶ For evening dresses, the length cannot exceed 59 inches, and the sweep cannot exceed 144 inches for a misses' size 16.

¹⁷ Interestingly, fabric cut on the bias was not a violation of the L-85 order except for jacket and coat sleeves.

¹⁸ Note that leg-of-mutton sleeves were prohibited under the L-85 order.

¹⁹ If the date is correct, the loop closures were an interesting choice; while they don't require that much fabric, they could have been designed with an alternative closure to save on fabric.

²⁰ A Portland, Oregon apparel company.

same sweater that also had a Jantzen label.²¹ Beverly made a similar sweater.²²

Three similar extant sweaters may reflect their popularity among college-age women. See Figures 11 and 12.

²¹ Una May Arras was not interviewed. Una May is Leslie Burns mother. Dr. Burns allowed me to examine some of her mothers' apparel and photograph the collection from the 1940s. Una May Arras was born in 1925, making her 16 in 1941. Una May remained single through the war. She went to the University of Montana, where she graduated with a degree in 1947. The sweater also had a Jantzen label, and according to the retailer label was purchased at the Mazola Mercantile in Mazola, Montana.

²² Beverly explained that she also made a similar sweater for her future husband. They both took the sweaters with them when they entered public service right after the war. She explained that someone stole his sweater when they were living in Poland doing reconstruction work.



Figure 11. Jantzen sweater. Courtesy of Oregon Historical Society, 89-12.7



Figure 12. Sweater knitted by Beverly.

Lane County Historical Museum

I observed eight civilian garments dated to the 1940s; however, I omitted one garment that appeared to be from the 1950s. Therefore I will describe the remaining seven garments. I looked at two casual, everyday dresses. One dress is made of blue and white polka dotted printed fabric. The dress has a "Betty Baxley Frocks" label.²³ The bodice is fitted with tucks from the waist seam; there are two metal snap closures on the left side seam. It has a rounded collarless neckline, short sleeves, a single patch with flap pocket over the left breast, belt, and cord trim around the neckline, short sleeves, and pocket. The bodice has two white decorative buttons. The knee-length skirt has a fairly wide sweep, which may exceed regulations.

The second dress is made of a floral print crepe fabric. It has a collarless v-neckline, short sleeves and has small, clear glass or plastic buttons down the front and four metal snap closures on the left side. There is some shirring at the armhole to create a slightly puffed sleeve. The upper bodice has narrow rows of horizontal stitching which creates a slight draped effect on the bodice to the waist seam. The calf-length skirt has a slight flare, and the sweep appears within regulation.

I examined three dresses that would have been worn for dressy occasions. Two gowns are both floor length and made of black crepe fabric with short sleeves. One gown has sequin detail on both sides of the collarless square-shaped neckline. The short sleeves have gathers at the sleeve opening. The bodice is slightly fitted with tucks and darts. The gown has a belt made in the same black

²³ No information could be located about this designer or manufacturer.

fabric and a left side seam zipper closure. The gown appears to be within length and sweep regulations.

The second gown has short sleeves, heavy padded shoulders, a collarless v-neckline, pin tucks on the bodice to the waist seam,²⁴ and at the waist into the skirt a draped pleat detail. The back of the dress has princess darts and a left side seam zipper closure. The gown has a "Eleanor Green California in Duplex Sanchilla Rayon Crepe Bur-Mil Quality" label.²⁵ The length and sweep appear within regulation.

The third dressy garment is a two-piece dress. The dress has a cream-colored, silk under-bodice or camis attached to a red, crepe skirt with a center front kick pleat and one metal snap closure at the waist. The matching red crepe bodice is fitted with short, cap sleeves with gold topstitching and gold buttons on the shoulder line. There is a tie at the back that starts at the front that is made to look like welt pockets and three left side seam metal snap closures. The length and sweep appear within regulation.

I also looked at a jacket and a swim suit. The jacket was a black crepe hip-length jacket with multi-colored embroidery in a horizontal stripe pattern. The jacket has a v neckline with peaked lapel and gold and black buttons down the center front. It has a "Barbara Page Originals" label.²⁶ The two-piece swimming suit had a halter style top and shorts both made in a red, white and blue beach

²⁴ Included in the restrictions were "fabrics which have been reduced from normal width or length by allover tucking, shirring, or pleating, except for minor trimmings." This is pretty vague but the extant garments had what would have been considered "minor trimmings."

²⁵ No information could be located about this designer.

²⁶ No information could be located about this designer or manufacturer.

motif fabric. The halter-style top has tucks at the chest and tucks at the panels that wrap around the waist. The shorts has a waist band with faux wood buttons.

Benton County Historical Society and Museum

I examined three garments dated to the 1940s, and all three were owned and donated by Beth Russell.²⁷ A day dress made of blue fabric with a small red and white floral pattern was examined. The fitted bodice has princess seams that join to the waist seam, which is also shirred giving a fairly wide sweep to the skirt, which may exceed sweep restrictions on day dress. The dress has a below-the-knee length skirt with a gathered waist with white floral plastic buttons down the front. It has a peter pan collar, short sleeves with gathers at the shoulder, with turned back style cuffs. There is a belt made of same fabric with white plastic buckle. Museum records indicated that the dress was dated 1943; the donor said she wore the dress to USO dances in Corvallis, OR and to a V-J Day parade in Corvallis, Oregon on 15 August 1945.²⁸ See Figures 13 and 14.

²⁷ The Russell family owned a hatchery in Linn county that raised eggs and chicken for national market. During WWII Beth was a USO hostess. Beth Russell was not available to interview for this study.

²⁸ The dress in figure 9 may be the same dress worn in the photograph in Figure 10. However, the pattern size seems to be larger in the photograph. Nevertheless, they are similar dresses both attributed to the same donor.



Figure 13. Dress. Courtesy of Benton County Historical Society and Museum.
Gift of the Beth Russell estate, 2001-099.0001 A-C.



Figure 14. Photograph of dress or similar dress in Figure 14. Courtesy of Benton County Historical Society and Museum. According to museum records this photograph was taken on VJ Day in Corvallis, Oregon on Madison Avenue next to the Benton Hotel. 1995-001.0093.

I also looked at a pinafore made of red and white striped gingham fabric. It is sleeveless except for a flounce over shoulder edged in two rows of small white rick-rack. Pockets are exposed and triangular-shaped that extend peplum-like beyond the yoked waist; pockets are also edged in two rows of rick rack. There are ties attached at the waist that tie in the back. There are nine large white buttons that close at the back. It has a square neck at the front and a v at the back. Pinafores, aprons, overskirts and petticoats were permitted under the order, but they could not be sold with a dress for a one unit price. Finally, I examined a pair of overalls made of multicolor seersucker cotton fabric. The bib top has a large patch with faux flap pocket in the middle ; the bib top is attached to the pants with a fairly wide waistband. There is a zipper closure at the back. The pant legs are 27.5 inches wide at the bottom, much wider than the 19-inch circumference per pant leg permitted under the L-85 order.

**Department of Design and Human Environment Historic and Cultural
Textile and Apparel Collection**

I examined sixteen garments and ensembles dated to the 1940s; however, one garment appeared to be a post-war style dress so I omitted it. I will describe the remaining fifteen garments. Since there were no time and money constraints, I also recorded details such as garment length and skirt sweep.²⁹ I examined five two-piece ensembles and one three-piece ensemble with a skirt and bodice or jacket.³⁰ The first ensemble has a flared skirt and bodice made of the same

²⁹ Sweep refers to hem circumference.

³⁰ The one three-piece ensemble has a skirt, jacket and matching coat.

matching green and white print rayon fabric with matching belt.³¹ The fitted bodice has a shawl-style collar, tucks to the peplum, short sleeves, heavy padded shoulders and fabric covered buttons down the front. The skirt had a left side seam zipper closure and a single plastic button on the waist band. The skirt is 32 inches long with a 53.3 inch sweep, well below the 68 to 75 inch sweep permitted for misses sizes 10 through 20.

The second ensemble is a suit (i.e., skirt and jacket) made of gray wool crepe fabric and is lined with a rose-colored fabric. The hip-length jacket has a collarless v-neckline, an asymmetrical closure with a single patch with flap pocket accented by a large button detail. It has long sleeves with turned-back style cuffs. The skirt has a front and back vent and left side zipper. It has a "Tailored Lass" label. The skirt is 29 inches long with a narrow 45 inch sweep.

The third ensemble has a short-sleeved hip-length fitted bodice with bodice tucks into the peplum made of brown and beige colored printed fabric, with fabric covered buttons, matching skirt and belt. It has a v-shaped shawl-style collar in brown fabric; however, the right side of the collar has a asymmetric collar that features rhinestones. The sleeves have turned-back cuffs. The garment has an "Astor of Philadelphia" label. The skirt has a left side seam zipper. The skirt is 30 inches long with a 64 inch sweep.

The fourth ensemble is a hip-length bodice made of ivory-colored acrylic fabric³² with matching flared skirt.³³ The slightly fitted bodice has princess seams,

³¹ The author relied on museum records for fiber content.

³² The author relied on museum records for fiber content. In 1941 DuPont created the first acrylic fiber called Orlon but this fiber was not widely manufactured into fabric until the 1950s; therefore the collection records may be inaccurate. *Orlon: 1941*.

a v-neckline, notched collar, short sleeves with turned back style cuffs, two patch with flap pockets and white buttons. The flared skirt has left side seam zipper closure, a kick pleat and is 28 inches long with a 69 inch sweep.

The fifth ensemble is a suit made of caramel colored wool. The below the waist-length jacket is fitted with a matching belt. It has a v-neckline with a collar-like fabric appliqué. It has long, slim sleeves, and pearl and wood buttons down the center front. The jacket has small pin tucks from the padded shoulder line to the waist. Each shoulder pad has a "Jen-ette made in California" manufacturer label. There are two welt pockets on the bodice. It has a label by "Louise Barnes Gallagher, Inc."³⁴ and a Nicholas Ungar retail label.³⁵ The six gored skirt has a left side seam zipper closure with a single hook and eye closure. It is mid-calf length or 29 inches long with a 52 inch sweep.

The sixth ensemble is a black with white pinstripes suit with matching coat. The hip-length jacket has a v-neckline with notched collar, a single large button closure, padded shoulders and two flap pockets with smaller-scale button closures. The skirt has a left side seam zipper closure and is 30 inches long with a 44 inch sweep. The jacket is 29 inches long, and the matching coat is 41 inches long with a 70 inch sweep. The jacket and coat have a "Fashionbilt [sic] The Well

http://www2.dupont.com/Heritage/en_US/1941_dupont/1941_overview.html (accessed June 10, 2011).

³³ The donor files state that the garment was either made, purchased or worn in 1943.

³⁴ "Louise Barnes Gallagher continued in the 1940s to be associated with the sheer wool known as Gallagher mesh. Her ready-to-wear designs were fairly expensive; for example, a day-into-evening dress and matching jacket went for \$155 in 1940. . . . Although Gallagher worked with the broad-shouldered silhouette, her lines were softer, with fitted bodices, narrow waists, and skirts arranged with some movement to the drapery." Caroline Rennolds Milbank, *New York Fashion: The Evolution of American Style*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1996), 152-153.

³⁵ A Portland, Oregon apparel boutique.

Made Garment" label.³⁶ According to the donor files, the ensemble was a "going away suit for a wedding."

The DHE collections also contained four dresses. The first dress is made of purple-blue colored rayon crepe fabric.³⁷ The bodice has a v-neckline in the front with a center front zipper detail and band collar only at the back. The dress also has a left side seam zipper closure. It has a net yoke with all-over braid ornamentation. It has long, slim sleeves, fabric covered belt and buckle, and a floor-length flared skirt with a box pleat outlined with braid trim. From shoulder to hem, the dress is 46.5 inches long with a skirt sweep of 74 inches.

The second dress is made of black wool jersey fabric. The bodice features Kelly green diagonal insets at the center front below the high v collarless neckline. The bright green fabric is interesting since dyestuffs were scarce.³⁸ It has long slim sleeves, padded shoulders and a back neck and side seam zipper closure. The dress has a fabric covered belt. The bias cut flared skirt is approximately knee length. The garment from shoulder to hem is 46 inches long with a 76 inch sweep. The donor files state that the garment was "designed by Nettie Rosenstein;" however I could not find any label on the garment to support this.

The third dress is made of black crepe fabric with long sleeves. There are three seam lines that radiate from the end of the asymmetrical v-neckline and are highlighted with half-circle blue trim. The slightly gathered bodice and skirt are joined at the waist seam which is covered by a belt with rhinestone buckle. There

³⁶ No information could be located about this designer or manufacturer.

³⁷ The author relied on museum records for fiber content.

³⁸ Farrell-Beck and Parsons, *20th-Century Dress*, 123.

are five fabric covered buttons at the back. From shoulder to hem the dress is 47 inches long with a sweep of 68 inches.

The fourth dress is made of a brown fabric with a white and black floral print. The knee-length dress has short sleeves, a collarless, draped v-neckline and two-piece center yoke. There are tucks at the bodice into the yoke and from the yoke to the skirt. There is a left side zipper closure. From shoulder to hem the dress is 43 inches long with a 58 inch sweep.

The DHE collection contained three blouses, which is interesting because blouses are not typically saved. There are two loose fitting white, short sleeve button up blouses. One has a pointed notch collar, and the other has a rounded notched collar, with a "Judy Bond" label.³⁹ The third blouse is more fitted made of navy colored fabric with long sleeves, a convertible pointed collar, and center front button closures.

The DHE collection also contained two navy colored full-length coats. One coat has a cream eyelet lace peter pan collar and turn-back cuffs with sixteen medium-size fabric covered buttons down the center front. The coat is 37 inches long with a 81 inch sweep. The other coat has a rounded shawl collar with ten medium-size plastic buttons down the center front. The coat is 43 inches long with a 85 inch sweep. Both coats exceed the sweep limitations for fitted coats.⁴⁰

³⁹ No information could be located about this designer or manufacturer.

⁴⁰ Fitted coats were allowed to be 40.5 to 43 inches long for sizes 10 through 20, with a 66 and 73 inch sweep for fitted coats. *Women's Wear Daily*, 8 April 1942.