

LOVE WILL NEVER BE RATIONED:
WORLD WAR II BRIDAL APPAREL

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by
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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

LOVE WILL NEVER BE RATIONED:

WORLD WAR II BRIDAL APPAREL

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INTRODUCTION

Wedding gowns have elicited unequalled excitement through costume history. Little girls dream of their wedding days while recreating the fairytale marriage of Cinderella and Prince Charming using Barbie and Ken dolls. Wedding gowns are often the most treasured garments in a woman's wardrobe and are rarely given or thrown away. Even in times of economic disparity, the wedding dress was often a woman's "best dress."

AIMS

This study investigates factors influencing choice of bridal apparel during World War II. Little systematic research has been done in this area. A description of these factors is postured through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Complimenting the aforementioned analysis will be a review of published material. In this subsection a detailed description of intentions are provided, addressing objectives, relevant experience of the author, testability, significance, and area of contribution.

OBJECTIVES

Factors influencing brides' selection of wedding attire during the Second World War are addressed through exploration of social, logistical, rational, and sentimental factors effecting war brides. The aforementioned factors constitute the four key objectives of this study, and they are addressed individually.

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

According to Lincoln and Guba, prolonged engagement is necessary to establish validity or credibility.¹ Prolonged engagement may also be referred to as the researcher's immersion in the information and data.² As the only collector of data, my immersion in and familiarity with the data is extensive. In addition to my eight years of employment in the bridal industry, I also wrote a senior thesis about the feelings women associated with their wedding attire. I interviewed ten women across four generations and asked them about what they wore to their weddings and how they felt when wearing it. The comparison between brides married once and those married multiple times was just as enlightening as the comparison between generations. Finally, I completed a Master's thesis on wedding apparel for second weddings. I interviewed ten women who were remarried in the 1970s or 1980s in addition to conducting a content analysis of *Bride Magazine* and etiquette books published in those same decades.

TESTABILITY

The objectives of this study are empirically testable. Through surveys, war brides were questioned about what they wore to their wedding ceremonies, the value they placed on the apparel they wore to their wedding ceremonies, and the feelings they associate with the apparel worn to their wedding ceremonies. The surveys were open-ended so the answers could range from any number of feelings, levels of value, and descriptions of what was worn. Through examination of the answers to these questions we determine

¹ Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

² Neuman, W. L. (1994). *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Vol. 2d ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Geertz, C. (1973). *Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture*. New York: Basic Books.

much about the various dynamics surrounding a bride's choice of attire. The study is measurable through content analysis and rich descriptive narrative. Such description leaves generalizations up to the discretion of the reader.³

Electronic methods are appropriate to this study because war brides are scattered across the United States. An online forum brings these brides together to one central location. This forum facilitates distribution of a survey to many individuals who would otherwise not be accessible. In addition, it ensures the survey was completed to a degree of satisfaction for purposes of quality control.

The quantitative element of this study involves empirical analysis of terms found in wedding announcements during the subject time period. Trends in the use of these terms provide ample evidence for empirical analysis in the findings portion of this paper.

SIGNIFICANCE & AREA OF CONTRIBUTION

As this is an investigative study there are not specific hypotheses to be proved or disproved. Instead, the objective is to describe the factors influencing selection of bridal apparel (primarily of white Americans) during the Second World War. Very little academic research has been done in this area. Many books and articles relating to the subject have been published, but they focus primarily on the courtship and relationships of the brides and grooms. More information on these articles will be discussed in the literature review. This study's contribution to the field of textile and apparel studies consists of both subject content and methods used. War brides are not necessarily a unique subgroup to study in the realm of textiles and apparel, but they are a unique

³ Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

subgroup in the study of wedding apparel. This study expands the scope of the collective research on war brides, contributing a new and direct study of the factors describing bridal apparel choices during the Second World War.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Data were collected through qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative methods employed include surveys of war brides or those closely associated with them, and content analysis of pertinent historical records. The survey asked a variety of questions intended to determine how the motivating factors identified in this study affected a bride's choice of attire and the value she associated with it. Since this was an exploratory study, the survey also included open-ended questions in order to discover information I may not have originally considered.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis is a qualitative research approach to subjectively analyze text through the identification of themes.⁴ The four themes identified in this study are: Social, Logistical, Rational, and Sentimental. The "social" theme consists of advice given to brides by etiquette books and magazines. This theme represents the socially ideal wedding during the Second World War. The "logistical" theme consists of the challenges of military deployment and workforce engagement, reaching fruition through the 'furlough wedding.' The "rational" theme consists of the nationalistic symbolism of non-traditional wedding attire and considerations of reasonable dress choice. This theme represents an exception to the rule that brides preferred traditional white wedding dresses. The final theme, "sentimental," consists of the importance of a traditional wedding during the Second World War. This theme represents the overwhelming majority of women who opted for the traditional white wedding dress.

⁴ Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, Three approaches to qualitative content analysis, Vol. 15 (Qualitative Health Research, 2005) 9 vols.

Once the data were divided into these four themes, I determined codes or subcategories to organize the data. Using a narrative approach with rich descriptions, this data organization further facilitated analysis. In the “social,” “logistical,” and “sentimental” themes I used an evidentiary organizational approach. In the “rational” section the data were organized into two subcategories: “traditional” and “rational-traditional.” These are explained in further detail in the “rational” chapter.

Each of the four sources (wedding announcements, etiquette books, *Bride Magazine*, and surveys and interviews) was addressed differently. The wedding announcements I referenced can be divided into three types. The first type is the longest and most detailed. It typically contains information about the parents of the bride and groom and where the parents reside. Information about the wedding ceremony such as where it took place, including the town and venue, date, and what time of the day is also usually included. The first type of wedding announcement is rich in description especially regarding decorations, musical arrangements, wedding apparel (particularly the bride and her attendants), and details about the reception. Most wedding announcements of this type provided information about the couple’s post wedding honeymoon plans and permanent residence. Some wedding announcements included the names of the people who attended the wedding. Announcements of this type sometimes include pictures, but certainly not all. The second type of wedding announcement is the exact opposite of the first; it provides very little detail other than who was married and where and when the ceremony took place. This type of announcement was usually found in groups of similar announcements in a designed section of the newspaper. In the *Chicago Daily News*, for example, wedding announcements of this type were in a section titled “Weddings and

Engagements.” The third type of wedding announcement focuses on an image of the bride or couple with a description of the wedding as a caption to the photo. The information provided in this type of wedding announcement varies widely. Most wedding announcements of this type included basic information such as the couple’s names and residence, the parents’ names and residence, and where and when the ceremony took place. Sometimes the wedding announcements gave more detail about the wedding including a description of the wedding apparel.

A chronological approach was used in the analysis of etiquette books. The key advantage of a chronological approach is that it allows the analyst to evaluate changes that occur during the subject time period. The findings were compiled and described using a narrative method. *Bride Magazine* data were divided into two categories: advertisements and articles. There were approximately 80 pages of advertisements and 25 pages of articles. The pages of advertisements and articles selected were chosen for their particularly relevant references to the war and wartime bridal attire. These items were reviewed in a non-chronological qualitative assessment. Content of the surveys and interviews conducted was reviewed and divided into three categories: dress, challenges, and feelings. Statements directly referencing wedding attire were placed in the “dress” category. Statements referencing the challenges and difficulties of acquiring and/or making a wedding dress and ceremony fell under the “challenges” category. Statements referencing the feelings and emotional connotations associated with wedding attire were placed in the “feelings” category. These categories were not necessarily mutually exclusive. A statement could belong to only one or all three of the categories.

To further the description of data and bolster my findings I employed a quantitative analysis of newspaper wedding announcements. This analysis consisted of recording the occurrence frequency of specific characteristics of 1,741 wedding announcements in *The New York Times* during the summer months of 1940-1945. The newspaper wedding announcement characteristics were coded using the following codes or subcategories: long white wedding gown, short white wedding gown, colored day dress, blue day dress, veil, cap or hat, and no detail. This analysis supports the narratives and rich descriptions of the newspapers within three of the aforementioned themes.

DATA COLLECTION

Content analysis of historical records investigated wedding announcements of five newspapers published between 1940 and 1945: *The New York Times*; *Chicago Daily News*; *Jackson Daily News* from Jackson, Mississippi; *The Columbia Tribune* from Columbia, Missouri; and the *LA Times*. These newspapers were chosen because they offer a unique look at four major areas of the United States: the East coast, West coast, South, and Midwest. In addition, the newspapers vary in distribution. *The Columbia Tribune* is the smallest and the *New York Times* the largest. June, July, and August issues of each newspaper between 1940 and 1945 were used for analysis because they are traditionally popular wedding months. I also looked at all the issues of *Jackson Daily News*. Some of the newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, were available online through ProQuest, while others were viewed on digitally scanned records or microfilm available in the University of Missouri Ellis Library. Regardless of data collection

method, the final data has been stored and analyzed on my personal computer. More about the measurement and analysis plan is described later.

Etiquette books published between 1940 and 1945 were also reviewed. Etiquette books are important additions to this study since they offer a conservative look at customs and traditions of American culture at a specific time. While etiquette books are only published yearly, at the most, they may offer a somewhat delayed reflection of society. Magazines, on the other hand, were published seasonally during this time thus offering a contemporary view of society. In addition, magazines are typically more forward-thinking than etiquette books. They reflect trends more quickly, describing changing views and norms of a society. *Bride Magazine* published between 1940 and 1945 was reviewed for this study.

The archives of the Veterans History Project on the Library of Congress website offer veteran and civilian interviews about experiences during World War II. Information relevant to our study can be found by sorting and filtering the data by war (World War II) and gender (female interviewees), then including a filter for words associated with weddings and wedding apparel. The resultant interviews were reviewed for information about wedding apparel and the struggles of planning a wedding during World War II.

The above methods of data collection were chosen because of their differing strengths. Since little research has been done on war brides and their wedding apparel, the surveys allowed me to gather data from across the United States, polling a sample of war brides and those closely associated with war brides. Information provided in the surveys were from those most closely associated with the subject, but decades removed from the

subject time period. The content analysis of historic publications provides analysis of information created during the subject time period. The confluence of this qualitative research offers a unique perspective to this study.

The quantitative portion of this study is an analysis of the frequency of usage of specific terms and qualities in wedding announcements in *The New York Times* during the summer months of 1940-1945. The terms queried were selected to identify trends in wedding apparel relevant to the areas of interest in this study. Identification of these trends allows inference of factors influencing wedding attire during the period.

MEASUREMENT STRATEGIES

I used open coding to analyze the data collected from surveys. Open coding is the best measurement strategy for this part of the study because it allows inclusion of themes that emerge during analysis.⁵ Surveys were hosted by Survey Monkey and distributed to war brides through an online e-mail network, warbrides@rootsweb.com. I obtained permission from the website administrator to use the network for research purposes. The wedding announcements are stored on my personal computer.

In order to ensure quality data, I used standard procedures to check the data for obvious errors. Missing data should not be an issue for the surveys since surveymonkey.com can be programmed to ensure all questions are answered before proceeding to the subsequent questions – only complete surveys are included in this study. In addition, this study provides a representative sample rather than a generalizable sample. Thus, outliers (extreme answers or examples) will be included in the data. These

⁵ Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design* (Vol. 2). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

methods of data collection and surveys, as well as the use of history books, wedding announcements, etiquette books and scholarly articles for background information, triangulation provides a variety of perspectives on the subject.

ETHICS AND MANAGEMENT

This study meets all the standards for treatment of human subjects as outlined by the University of Missouri campus IRB. May 2011 is the schedule completion date for this study. A complete copy of the proposed schedule is located in Appendix B. A budget and budget justification for this study is located in Appendix A. The personnel involved in this study include Dr. Laurel Wilson as my advisor and myself as the primary investigator. I was responsible for the work including conducting the research, coding and analyzing the data, and writing the findings. Dr. Wilson has an extensive background in the study of dress and served as a consultant during the research process. The facility used during this study will be my home office. My personal computer will be used for the study.

QUALITY

Many of the studies cited in this literature review are timely as they were published in the last decade. Recently written articles and timely research are important because new concepts and ideas are continually developed. As the subject event becomes more chronologically removed from the publication date, its findings become less recent and must be treated accordingly. For this reason, I've attempted to include a variety of publication dates, both historic and recent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

At the time of this writing there is a dearth of directly related academic works on weddings during the Second World War. Although directly related information is lacking, a significant amount of indirect but applicable work has been published. This review identifies these works and discusses their significance. I address these works thematically while establishing how they are material to this study. The themes that follow directly correspond to the four objectives of this study, painting a picture of the environment in which our study unfolds. The first theme addressed is that of economic difficulty and the importance of frugality during World War II.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FRUGALITY DURING WORLD WAR II

During World War II, the economic dynamics of the American family changed drastically, since all were asked to conserve and reuse in the interest of the war effort. Litoff discusses this dynamic as it relates to our study. “Learning how to ‘make do’ on limited wartime budgets also heightened women’s sense of their own capabilities.”⁶ Certainly concerns for their capabilities extended to considerations for wedding ceremonies, including purchasing garments, using clothing they already had, or making their own dresses.

Conservation of goods during wartime imposed restrictions and limited the consumption of individuals. Other goods, such as cosmetics and home appliances, were scarce due to the changeover from peacetime manufacturing to wartime manufacturing.⁷

⁶ Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies* .

⁷ *The Big Changeover*, directed by Robert Jahns, 1942.

Americans were encouraged to conserve gas through car-sharing or car-pooling. Gas stamps were issued to enforce rations, and those who used counterfeit gas coupons were subject to stiff penalties. Americans were asked to conserve steel and rubber, two materials in high demand for the war effort. Fats from cooking were also conserved to make nitroglycerine.⁸

Women during World War II were said to play a similar role as that of women who melted pewter dishes during the American Revolution.⁹ In 1942, the War Production Board established the *General Limitation Order L-85* which stated, “The fulfillment of requirements for the defense of the United States has created a shortage in the supply of wool, silk, rayon, cotton and linen for defense, for private account and for export; and the following order is deemed necessary and appropriate in the public interest and to promote the national defense.”¹⁰ Limitations on textiles and apparel were implemented, “General Limitation Order L-85 dictated that non-essential details were not to be used. Narrow skirts were mandated. Jackets could not be longer than 25 inches, hems could not exceed two inches in depth, cutting on the bias and use of certain sleeve styles which required the use of excessive amounts of fabric were banned.”¹¹ However, The Bridal and Bridesmaids Apparel Association successfully lobbied against the War Production Board who wanted to establish rations for material to make wedding apparel, brides were allowed their lavish white weddings, if they desired.¹² The *General Limitation Order L-85* included this clause: “The prohibitions and restrictions of this section shall not apply

⁸ *Gas Racket*, The National Archives, 1943.

⁹ Donald M Nelson, *Salvage*, 1942.

¹⁰ 7 Fed. Reg. 2722 1942

¹¹ 7 Fed. Reg. 2722 1942

¹² Carol Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of The American Wedding* (New York, New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

to feminine apparel manufactured or sold for use as...Bridal gowns (among other garments such as maternity dresses, burial gowns, and toddler clothing in sizes ranging from 1 to 4).”¹³

World War II brought about many changes in the fashion industry. European fashions were no longer affordable and were increasingly scarce so consumers turned to American designers. The tumultuous government and military situation in France resulted in a decline from fashion prominence and product availability, leaving a void in the market. “The United States similarly [to England] took advantage of the fall of Paris to strengthen its couture industry.”¹⁴

Conservation efforts extended directly to consumer goods associated with wedding ceremonies. Vicki Howard’s *A Real Man’s Ring: Gender and the Invention of Tradition* discusses the dynamics of the wedding ring and the marketing program that brought to prominence the double ring ceremony we are familiar with today. Her analysis provides much useful information on the norms of wedding ceremonies and engagement in our subject time period. Howard provides an excellent example when discussing wedding bands. “In 1943 the War Production Board (WPB), which regulated production of civilian goods and oversaw the conversion of industries, limited jewelers to 50 percent of the gold they used in 1941.”¹⁵ Howard also discusses how “emotionally susceptible” consumers increased sales of wedding bands in spite of restrictions such as those discussed above.

¹³ 7 Fed. Reg. 2722 1942

¹⁴ McNeil, P. (1993). 'Put Your Best Face Forward': The Impact of the Second World War on British Dress. *Journal of Design History* .

¹⁵ Howard, V. (2003). A "Real Man's Ring": Gender and the Invention of Tradition. *Journal of Social History* .

Weddings during World War II were marked with compromises and sacrifices, but also immense determination to provide a beautiful wedding as a “necessary escape mechanism from the hardships and worries and losses of war.”¹⁶ Sacrifices were evidenced in all aspects of the wedding ceremony; the location and timing of the wedding, as well as the wedding apparel of the bride and groom. In more extreme circumstances, wedding couples used military half-tracks as their getaway car¹⁷ and rice paper instead of white icing for the wedding cake.¹⁸

Although the lavish white wedding was considered the pinnacle to achieve if possible,¹⁹ some women had to make compromises regarding wedding apparel. Some women chose to wear a suit or traveling dress accessorized with hats and gloves.²⁰ Such choices were practical since a suit or traveling dress could be worn for multiple purposes other than a wedding. Other brides chose to wear wedding gowns made from rayon satin because silk was needed for parachutes.²¹ Some dresses were actually made out of parachute silk.²² Cotton was also used in lieu of silk because of the wartime restrictions.²³ Those brides who were determined to have a traditional white wedding gown but were

¹⁶ Christina Probert, *Brides in Vogue Since 1910* (New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1984).

¹⁷ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

¹⁸ Felicity Goodall, *Voices from the Home Front* (Cincinnati: David & Charles, 2004).

¹⁹ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

²⁰ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

²¹ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

²² Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

²³ Wedding Dress and Photography of Leroy and Betty Cook Rottman. (2001). *The Art and Dress of World War II*, p. 15.

unable to afford or find new wedding gowns opted to wear their mother or grandmother's wedding dress.²⁴

Thanks in large part to the Bridal and Bridesmaids Apparel Association that successfully lobbied against the War Production Board who wanted to establish rations for material to make wedding apparel, brides were allowed their lavish white weddings, if they desired. The Bridal and Bridesmaids Apparel Association was famously quoted while arguing, "American boys are going off to war and what are they fighting for except the privilege of getting married in a traditional way?"²⁵ Despite the absence of L-85 restrictions, brides who were able to have a custom gown often opted for narrow princess lines instead of wide skirts; they kept their train less than two yards long, and often went without a veil. Sometimes multiple brides would wear the same wedding gown.²⁶ Certainly the market for traditional wedding attire was substantial; Eleanor Roosevelt established a wedding gown collection in order to provide gowns to those brides who couldn't find any.²⁷

In some areas wedding gowns just weren't available.²⁸ With the outbreak of war, shipments of bridal gowns from European designers were stopped and brides no longer had easy access to traditional European fashions.²⁹ Closing of the Mediterranean due to

²⁴ Christina Probert, *Brides in Vogue Since 1910* (New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1984).

²⁵ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

²⁶ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

²⁷ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

²⁸ Probert, Christina. *Brides in Vogue since 1910*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984. Print.

²⁹ Zimmerman, Catherine. *The bride's book : pictorial history of American bridal*

German aggression directly influenced the availability of consumer goods in the United States of which clothes were a part.³⁰ Rising to fill this void, some manufacturers were able to make dresses in a mere thirty-six hours.³¹ American designers used national treasures on display at museums for inspiration and brides began purchasing American made gowns.³² Also, many brides opted for their “best dress” or a practical suit that could be worn again,³³ regardless of the fact that textile restrictions did not apply to wedding apparel.³⁴ Practicality was subject to the availability of the raw materials, however, and many basic commodities were simply unavailable. An example is provided by women’s hosiery, which was traditionally made of silk and was nearly impossible to acquire during wartime. In this case, women simply had to live without.³⁵ Brides learned the value of practicality but balanced it with something adequately adorned for wedding apparel. Zimmerman described one example of a bride who wore a “white rayon marquisette over taffeta, high-necked and long-sleeved. It had no train, but it did have a short jacket...this formal style easily adapted to a cocktail or dinner dress.”³⁶ Brides with their hearts set on white sometimes chose to wear their mother or grandmother’s gowns.³⁷ Other brides

dress. New York: Arbor House, 1985. Print.

³⁰ McNeil, P. (1993). 'Put Your Best Face Forward': The Impact of the Second World War on British Dress. *Journal of Design History* .

³¹ Probert, Christina. *Brides in Vogue since 1910*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984. Print.

³² Zimmerman, Catherine. *The bride's book : pictorial history of American bridal dress*. New York: Arbor House, 1985. Print.

³³ Probert, Christina. *Brides in Vogue since 1910*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984. Print.

³⁴ Zimmerman, Catherine. *The bride's book : pictorial history of American bridal dress*. New York: Arbor House, 1985. Print.

³⁵ Parillo, M. P. World War II.

³⁶ Zimmerman, Catherine. *The bride's book : pictorial history of American bridal dress*. New York: Arbor House, 1985. Print.

³⁷ Probert, Christina. *Brides in Vogue since 1910*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984.

made their own gowns from remnants of used clothing³⁸ or substituted fabric types to replace silk that was being used for parachutes.³⁹

What we find in reviewing the available works present during this period is that frugality and conservation were key influences affecting weddings. Wartime mobilization appears to be the impetus for these considerations. Household economics influencing weddings were in a state of constant fluctuation. Citizens, but women especially, were motivated to conserve in support of the war effort. Turmoil in Europe interrupted the exchange of related consumer goods. Domestic restrictions were not, however, applied to wedding dresses. This cocktail of circumstances sets a stage for subsequent discussion.

IMPACT OF MILITARY AND HOME-FRONT SERVICE

The transition from a depression economy to a wartime economy exacted many changes on family life in the United States, marriages included. Howard associates the Great Depression with deferred plans to wed among many couples. Howard asserts that the improved economy associated with wartime mobilization facilitated previously deferred ceremonies resulting in a drastic increase in marriage rates during the Second World War. Howard calls this a “marriage fever.”⁴⁰ Sales of wedding rings quadrupled in 1942, and the government moved to support the spouses of servicemen through

Print.

³⁸ Zimmerman, Catherine. *The bride's book : pictorial history of American bridal dress*. New York: Arbor House, 1985. Print.

³⁹ Wedding Dress and Photography of Leroy and Betty Cook Rottman. (2001). *The Art and Dress of World War II*, p. 15.

⁴⁰ Howard, V. (2003). A "Real Man's Ring": Gender and the Invention of Tradition. *Journal of Social History* .

allotments for dependents.⁴¹ The Bureau of the Census and Department of Commerce published detailed statistics on marital status of the population pre and post war. Analysis of this data can provide us with concrete evidence of the significant increase in marriage rates during the Second World War.

The data provided by the two government bureaus divides the population into six age groups over the age of fourteen. For our purposes, the two age groups most significant are 20-24 years of age and 25-34 years of age because these are the age groups most likely to have been directly affected by wartime military mobilization. Table 1 evidences the drastic increase in marriage rates through demographic changes in these age groups. In the case of both males and females, comparing the percentage of the population reporting status married in 1940 to 1946 reveals an increase of approximately five to seven percent. Increases in other age groups were also present but less significant. Table 2 evidences a corresponding decrease in the percentage of the population reporting status single. In age groups 20 to 34 the decrease is between four and seven percent for men and four and eight percent for women. Corresponding decreases in reported single people are evidenced in other age groups but are not as significant as the age groups 20 to 34. Certainly the changes in demographics evidenced by the statistics published by the government are closely associated with the societal changes that occurred during the

⁴¹ Parillo, M. P. World War II. 955.

Table 1:
 Marital Status of United States Population: Married
 1940 v. 1946

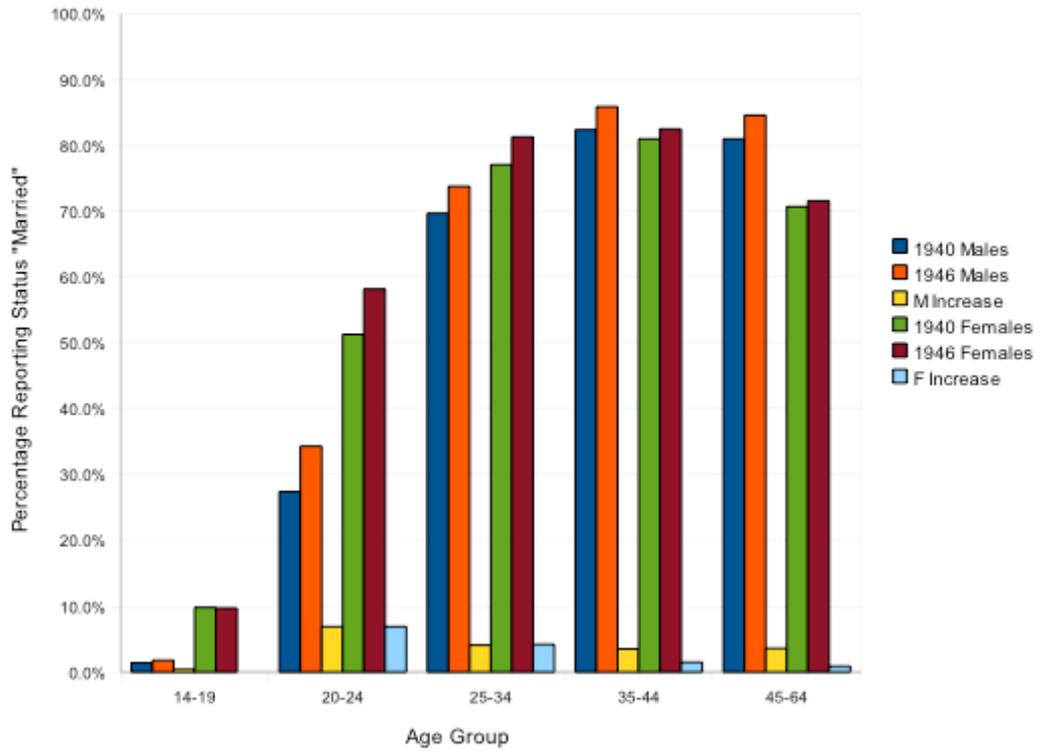
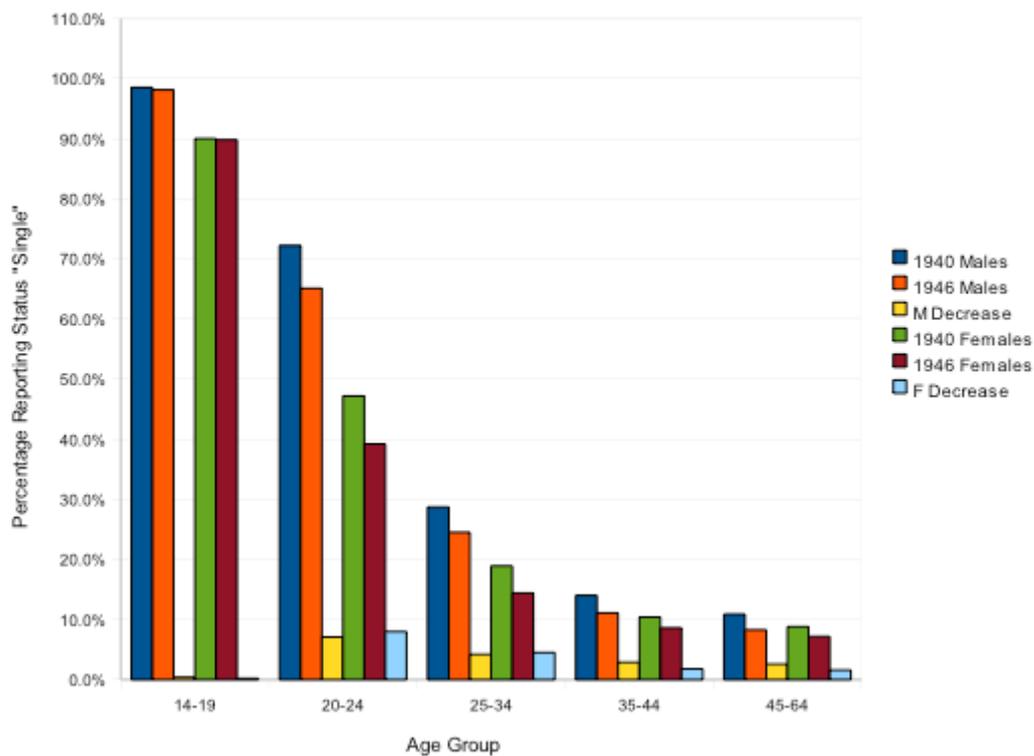


Table 2:
 Marital Status of United States Population: Single
 1940 v. 1946



Second World War. The increased number of weddings during this period of challenging circumstances is the basis of this study.

Also contributing to the increase in marriage rates were the increasing desires for normalcy and a longing for traditional life. Cooper evidences this desire in a particularly interesting way. Through his discussion of the importance of music, his communication of the aforementioned sentiments supports this position. Cooper stated that, “military themes constituted the musical backdrop for romantically reinforcing songs that translated thoughts and feelings over airwaves more quickly and more efficiently than the postal service.”⁴² The popularity of romantically themed songs compliments the corresponding increase in marriage rates and points to the sentiments shared by the World War II generation at that time.

Between 1940 and 1943, one million more weddings occurred than the prewar rates would have predicted. Approximately 80% of those grooms were serving in the armed forces.⁴³ Due to pressing military schedules and limited availability, weddings were planned on a moment’s notice⁴⁴ and “squeezed around military agenda[s].”⁴⁵ Civil weddings became popular and some weddings even took place at the barracks.⁴⁶ *The*

⁴² Cooper, B. L. (n.d.). From "Love Letters" to "Miss You": Popular Recordings, Epistolary, Imagery, and Romance During War-Time, 1941-1945. *Journal of American Culture* .

⁴³ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

⁴⁴ Christina Probert, *Brides in Vogue Since 1910* (New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1984).

⁴⁵ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

⁴⁶ Carol McD. Wallace, *All Dressed in White: The Irresistible Rise of the American Wedding* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004).

Saturday Evening Post provides direct evidence of the impact of military and home front obligations during World War II. Vernon Pope reviewed short-notice weddings and formal ceremonies for the reader in a lengthy article. It was not uncommon for the planning period to be three days or less. In spite of this short window, both bride and groom had a strong desire for a formal ceremony, albeit fewer in attendance and on a smaller scale.⁴⁷ Although the majority of people wanted a formal wedding, it was not always a possibility. This phenomenon is well illustrated in the story of Robert and Birdie Gelfer who met and were married in a period of 22 days. Their wedding took place in a living room and typified a short-term budget engagement and wedding.⁴⁸ Living rooms were not the only venues for these events. We have an especially well-painted picture of a courthouse wedding in another segment of *The Saturday Evening Post*,

In a smoke-filled courthouse room in Miami, Florida, a young private of about 20 and a frightened-looking girl of not more than 17 stood before a justice of the peace. To the accompaniment of clattering type-writers and noisy conversation, they went through a perfunctory marriage ceremony for an occasion traditionally supposed to be a high spot of every young couple's life it was bleak in the extreme. Such cheerless rites have been a familiar part of the wartime scene in Miami...⁴⁹

Howard asserts that marriage transcended its previous social connotations during the Second World War, becoming a "patriotic act."⁵⁰ That wedding ceremonies became identified with patriotism, and therefore nationalism, contributes to our understanding of the influence of military and home front service. The total war mobilization experience

⁴⁷ Pope, V. (1943, June 12). War Brides. *Saturday Evening Post* .

⁴⁸ 09, A. G. (2001, March 12). 'Growing Old is a Privilege Denied to Many,' World War II Vet Says. *FDCH Regulatory Intelligence Database* , pp. 1-4.

⁴⁹ Nicholas, H. C. (1943, August 7). Miami's House of Service Wedding. *The Saturday Evening Post* .

⁵⁰ Howard, V. (2003). A "Real Man's Ring": Gender and the Invention of Tradition. *Journal of Social History* .

permeated every facet of society in the United States. The aforementioned situation seems unpleasant, but even more discouraging situations could be recounted. In yet another *Saturday Evening Post* article, we learn of a couple comprised of a Navy lieutenant and nurse. Before getting married, they were required to obtain permission from their respective commanding officers. This requirement postponed their wedding for months though they were deployed in the same location.⁵¹

Men's military obligations included both serving in the military and working war jobs on the home front. The nature of these obligations is well illustrated through a publication called *The War Worker*, which contained requests for labor for both men and women.⁵² One obligation of men who remained on the home front was that of a civilian observer. The civilian observer was referred to as the "minute man of civilian defense." Their primary responsibility was to watch for air raids. Men took turns watching for air raids for a couple of hours each shift.⁵³

Some men fought the war on the front line in the armed forces. In an American World War II propaganda film, a scene shows a teenage boy and girl discussing the war. The boy announces that he's decided to enlist in the military the very next day. The teenage girl, clearly the young boy's girlfriend, immediately proposes a courthouse wedding indicating that she wanted to marry him right at that very moment in whatever clothes they were wearing.⁵⁴ The scene illustrates an implication of men's military obligations on nuptial arrangements. The brief amount of time afforded the young couple motivated them to pursue a courthouse wedding instead of a traditional ceremony.

⁵¹ Carson, J. R. (n.d.). G.I. Romance. *The Saturday Evening Post* .

⁵² *A Community at War*, 1942.

⁵³ *Civilian Defense*, 1942.

⁵⁴ Maxwell Shane, *Letter from Bataan*, directed by William H Pine, 1942.

Uncertainty was a constant in the lives of the citizens of the United States, especially those planning a wedding. Propaganda films produced during World War II depict varying degrees of exposure to life on the frontlines. In a film entitled *Report from the Front*, an illustration of how the American Red Cross takes care of the soldiers also illustrated the life of a man fighting in World War II. The American Red Cross provided restaurants, American food, living arrangements, communication with home, and entertainment. Although the film was uplifting and meant to inspire Americans, it also points to, and likely fostered, a sense of loneliness among the soldiers and a desire for support from home. The film entitled *A Letter from Bataan* depicts life on the front line more dramatically. A soldier wrote from his station in Bataan describing how conserving steel and rubber would save lives and how conserving food would keep soldiers from having excruciating stomach pain and night blindness. The film elicits guilt from Americans by blatantly blaming their excesses for lives lost overseas. One woman in the film says, "Sometimes I think these boys can survive anything." Eerily, the soldier writing the letter never makes it home. Uncertainty of this nature was commonplace during the Second World War and contributed to the logistical difficulties associated with planning a wedding.

During World War II, brides hastily planned their weddings upon hearing from their men that they'll be home on leave but only for a few days.⁵⁵ Due to the lack of time to prepare, brides were often married in City Hall, a minister's home, or a rectory.⁵⁶ Zimmerman tells the story of one Polish-American couple that regretted having to host a

⁵⁵ Probert, Christina. *Brides in Vogue since 1910*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1984. Print.

⁵⁶ Zimmerman, Catherine. *The bride's book : pictorial history of American bridal dress*. New York: Arbor House, 1985. Print.

small affair compared to the elaborate celebrations complete with four days of feasting of their parents. Due to food rationing and other restrictions, a large celebration just wasn't practical (1985). This real-life narrative, and others like it, offer us a glance into the lives of war couples. Litoff offers us the slightly different whirlwind wedding experience of Audrey Savell who resigned from a job in New Jersey and "traveled across the continent to marry a career navy man stationed at Coronado, California."⁵⁷ Impetuous marriages and life altering relocations were a common theme during World War II.

Impetuous marriages were followed by frequent relocations and lifestyle changes. Many war brides followed their husbands to military bases across the country in an attempt to establish a degree of marital normalcy. Litoff and Smith hold that the letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor typify this situation. In her letters, Taylor discusses moving from near Fort Benning to Camp Gordon.⁵⁸ Taylor was one of over fifteen million people who moved during the Second World War, providing an element of scale to the discussion. Not all of these moves were immediately related to military deployments, as some individuals moved to take advantage of new industrial work. Many of these 15 million relocated to cities in the upper Midwest and coasts to work industrial jobs.⁵⁹

CHANGING WOMEN'S ROLES AND INCREASED AUTONOMY

Women were an essential part of war mobilization. With nearly 15 million men and women working in the armed forces, labor on the home front was scarce. Groups

⁵⁷ Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies* .

⁵⁸ Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies*. 255.

⁵⁹ Parillo, M. P. *World War II*. 952.

previously excluded from certain career opportunities, such as women, suddenly found themselves in satisfying careers with decent wages.⁶⁰ Six million women worked directly for the military effort and even more took jobs unrelated to war outside the home. Traditionalists feared this would be the end of the traditional American family and discouraged women from working. However, the demand for labor won over the most reluctant employers who eventually created unique campaigns to encourage women to join the workforce.⁶¹

Women's lifestyles changed as they made an effort to support the war. Women's support took form in two distinct ways: preparing the home for war and working outside the home. One thing women could do to prepare their homes for the war was to prepare for air raids; this included keeping the bath tub full in case running water is cut off, sealing windows to keep them from breaking, wearing comfortable clothing, teaching children to dress themselves so women can attend to other things, and sleeping with clothes ready beside the bed to be ready for raid alerts.⁶² Women also became block leaders, who encouraged the conservation of goods needed by the soldiers.⁶³

Women were needed for full-time labor. A film encouraging women to take on war jobs in a particular town to free men for more rigorous work stated that women could do 6,000 jobs held by men. Some women were recruited to walk around their neighborhoods to interview women about working. Three thousand households were interviewed. Two-thirds of the women interviewed said they would take a war job if

⁶⁰ Parillo, M. P. *World War II*. 952.

⁶¹ Parillo, M. P. *World War II*. 956.

⁶² *Civilian Defense*, 1942.

⁶³ John McDonald and Charles Cromer, *The Trimble's of Main Street*, directed by Sheldon Dick, 1942.

another woman on the block did, 10,000 women said they were available to take a job, 7,000 women said they would take a part-time job, and others said they might take a job. The film depicting this scenario was designed to encourage women to take jobs helping the war effort.⁶⁴

The film also encouraged women to use day nurseries instead of staying home with children. The addition of nurseries and extended hours for shopping and entertainment were accommodations made for female war-workers who worked days.⁶⁵ Both men and women, but especially women, were frequently motivated to hold a war job through film propaganda. The film claimed inadequate work effort on the home front resulted in lives lost on the battlefield.⁶⁶ In another American propaganda film encouraging women to work on the home front to support the war, a scene shows two girls talking while clearly typing and doing clerical work. One girl asks what the other was doing when she got off work and her boyfriend got home. The girl replied, “going to city hall,” implying that she intended to marry her boyfriend that day. The first girl was very excited for her. A little while later the girl gets a phone call from her boyfriend who was ready to marry her at that moment, essentially asking her to leave work so they could get married immediately. The girl refuses to leave her job until it is finished—not even to get married.⁶⁷ This scene illustrates one effect of women working outside the home on nuptial arrangements. The girl in the story demonstrates the social role of work as important enough to supersede her desires for marriage.

⁶⁴ *A Community at War*, 1942.

⁶⁵ *A Community at War*, 1942.

⁶⁶ Phil Reisman, *Conquer by the Clock*, directed by Slavko Vorkapich, 1943.

⁶⁷ *Soldiers Without Guns*, 1944.

Recruitment campaigns and an overall demand for workers succeeded in bringing women into the wartime workforce. The workforce experienced an influx of 6.5 million women, constituting 36 percent of the total workforce, by the end of the war.⁶⁸ The work environment women found themselves in is well described in a quote by Litoff,

I'm so terribly excited I can hardly hold the pen! This afternoon Mr. Xenophen Smith from [the Presidio in] San Francisco phoned and wants me to take a job up at headquarters, in his office—and what a job! I'm positively shattered when I think of the responsibility of it! It will consist equally in training new librarians to replace the 24 on this command who are already going overseas and more to follow, and traveling all over the Service Command giving the libraries a technical inspection. Gad, me! I'm thrilled and scared all at once, but I just can't see turning it down.⁶⁹

There are three things that are evident from this quote. First, women found the new opportunities exciting. Second, the change of position in the work force facilitated increased responsibility for women in general. Finally, these changes occurred very quickly and with little notice.

The changing role of women in society also altered women's sense of self, argues Litoff. "Whether the [woman] was a step-mother from rural South Dakota ... or a Mexican-American migrant worker from Kansas ... the exigencies of war necessitated that women develop a new sense of who they were and of their capabilities."⁷⁰ Litoff further discussed the nature of the altered sense of self experienced by women.

Frequently, women became more self-reliant and had to cope with worry, loneliness, and despair. Litoff discussed a letter authored by a wartime fiancé that evidenced a newfound

⁶⁸ Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies*. 3.

⁶⁹ Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies*. 4.

⁷⁰ Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies*.

maturity amongst women during the war. This new maturity was an almost forced reaction in response to the tragedy of the war.⁷¹

Despite tragedy and difficulty, the fast and significant changes in women's employment produced a sense of satisfaction among the female workers. This is expressly evidenced in correspondence of wartime workers.⁷² However, the changing roles of women did not come without its price. Many women were uprooted from their homes to travel with their husbands from base to base. They had to leave their family and friends, quit their jobs, and relocate in an area where they knew no one. Such lifestyle changes caused great stress, especially for women. These women made the best of their situation by forming support networks with other war brides in similar situations. They would come together for informal gatherings to talk about their experiences, and they celebrated wedding anniversaries together. Litoff and Smith quote a 1944 story by Elizabeth Valentine in *The New York Times*, which "described these young women as 'wandering members of a huge unorganized club.'"⁷³

The workplace changes experienced during the war had postwar implications. Women were no longer content keeping house; they had an increased desire to work outside the home and have equality with men. Rzeszutek tells the story of a couple who dealt with these changing ideals through 1,200 pages of letters exchanged while the husband was overseas. The letters discuss the wife's independence within her marriage and her strong beliefs against having to choose between her family and her career. The

⁷¹ Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies* .

⁷² Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies*. 4.

⁷³ Litoff, J. B., & Smith, D. C. (1990). *Since you went away: the World War II letters of Barbara Wooddall Taylor. Women's Studies* . 260.

husband's letters describe him struggling between his desire for a traditional family, his belief that women should be treated equally, and his pride in his wife's newfound career.⁷⁴

IMPORTANCE AND PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DRESS AND ATTIRE

Many theorists attempt to describe the importance of dress. The study of dress is significant because researchers are able to identify cultural and individual characteristics of the wearer. Clothing serves as an indicator of interests, roles, values and beliefs of individuals and societies. More specifically, by studying one particular garment (i.e. a wedding gown) much can be learned about a particular population (i.e. war brides) from a specific time in history (i.e. World War II). This section explores theories outlined by several authors⁷⁵ to discover the importance of the study of wedding apparel.

Wedding gowns often play multiple roles at once. One role of wedding apparel is the aesthetic role, also referred to as adornment as aesthetic experience,⁷⁶ arts and

⁷⁴ Rzeszuter, S. E. (2008). "All those rosy dreams we cherish": James Jackson and Esther Cooper's Marriage on the Front Lines of the Double Victory Campaign. *American Communist History* .

⁷⁵ Roach, Mary Ellen, and Joanne Eicher. *The visible self: perspectives on dress*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973. Print.

Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* , 7-21.

Rosenfeld, Lawrence, and Timothy Plax. "Clothing as communication." *Journal of Communication* 27.2 (1977): 24-31. Web. 18 Nov 2009.

Hamilton, J. A. (1987). *Dress as a Cultural Sub-system: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles* (Vol. 6). Clothing and Textiles Research Journal.

Robertson, I. (1981). *Sociology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

Gurel, L. M., & Gurel, L. (1979). Clothing Interest: Conceptualization and Measurement. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal* , 7, 274-282.

⁷⁶ Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment* , 7-21.

aesthetics,⁷⁷ or expression of self.⁷⁸ The aesthetic role of wedding apparel can work in multiple ways: brides seek wedding apparel that suits their body type, colors that compliment their skin tone, and decorative enhancement that pleases their eye (such as lace, embroidery, appliqués, etc.). Department store bridal assistants frequently advised brides in these matters.⁷⁹

Wedding gowns play a social role referred to as adornment. This social role is also referred to as “interest in clothing as concern for personal appearance,”⁸⁰ “family and kinship organization,”⁸¹ or a “link to others.”⁸² Brides use their connections to friends and family members to help them choose what to wear to their weddings. When shopping for wedding apparel, brides generally bring a few women friends such as their mother, aunt, grandmother, mother-in-law, and bridesmaids to help them choose which gown is best. Brides must take into account that their young girlfriends and elderly grandmothers will all be in attendance. Brides consider their social roles when choosing what to wear to their weddings. War brides especially used their connections to friends and family members when trying to find a wedding gown. They often borrowed wedding gowns from friends and family members, shared wedding gowns, or used personal connections to find material for wedding gowns. This role is expanded upon in the “Social” chapter.

⁷⁷ Hamilton, J. A. (1987). *Dress as a Cultural Sub-system: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles* (Vol. 6). Clothing and Textiles Research Journal.

⁷⁸ Rosenfeld, Lawrence, and Timothy Plax. "Clothing as communication." *Journal of Communication* 27.2 (1977): 24-31. Web. 18 Nov 2009.

⁷⁹ Pope, V. (1943, June 12). War Brides. *Saturday Evening Post*.

⁸⁰ Gurel, L. M., & Gurel, L. (1979). Clothing Interest: Conceptualization and Measurement. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 7, 274-282.

⁸¹ Hamilton, J. A. (1987). *Dress as a Cultural Sub-system: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles* (Vol. 6). Clothing and Textiles Research Journal.

⁸² Roach, Mary Ellen, and Joanne Eicher. *The visible self: perspectives on dress*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973. Print.

Not all brides could afford an expensive gown. The amount spent on a wedding gown often indicates the social position of the bride and her family. Wedding gowns serve as indicators of social worth, also referred to as adornment as statement of social worth, “adornment as indicator of economic status,”⁸³ “economic organization,”⁸⁴ and “interest in clothing as an enhancement of security.”⁸⁵ However, this role can often be deceptive. Some brides with high social worth or economic status may not see the value in spending a large amount of money on a gown only worn once. On the other hand, brides with low social worth or economic status may save for years in order to purchase an expensive gown. It is up to the bride to decide whether or not she will use her wedding gown as an indicator of social worth. Thus, what others perceive as high or low social worth may be more indicative of the value the bride associates with her wedding apparel. During World War II, this indicator of social worth was less apparent. Brides of all economic statuses felt a sense of patriotism, a sense of responsibility to use less material, a desire to help the military by spending less money on wedding apparel. However, brides may have felt their military fiancés deserved a formal, fancy, traditional wedding. Thus, economic status determined by wedding apparel was more difficult to determine during World War II.

The recreation role of a wedding gown is closely related to the role of social worth and economic status. This role is also referred to as “adornment as recreation,”⁸⁶

⁸³ Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, 7-21.

⁸⁴ Hamilton, J. A. (1987). *Dress as a Cultural Sub-system: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles* (Vol. 6). Clothing and Textiles Research Journal.

⁸⁵ Gurel, L. M., & Gurel, L. (1979). Clothing Interest: Conceptualization and Measurement. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 7, 274-282.

⁸⁶ Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics*

interest in clothing as experimenting with appearance,⁸⁷ and “expression of self.”⁸⁸

Although there was a trend toward more practical wedding apparel during World War II, many brides were still determined to have a big, traditional wedding. Advertisers in magazines also encouraged elaborate white wedding gowns.⁸⁹

Wedding gowns play political roles, also referred to as “adornments as political symbol,”⁹⁰ “social control”⁹¹ and “political organization.”⁹² The political roles of wedding gowns can be identified in two ways: political affiliation and politics as social control. Brides may consider their political inclinations when deciding how revealing they want their wedding apparel to be. A political role may also indicate social control is taking place. Brides sometimes feel pressure from their friends and family to choose a certain type of wedding gown. Perhaps the bride’s mother really wants her daughter to wear her wedding gown, or perhaps her bridesmaids indicated they didn’t like her gown choice, or her grandmother may disapprove of the cut of the dress. Thus, the wedding gown becomes indicative of peer influence and social control. Social control may also occur when the bride must choose what color she wants to wear to her wedding.

Although, in recent history, white is meant to symbolize a state of sexual purity, many brides choose white because it is socially expected they portray themselves as

of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment, 7-21.

⁸⁷ Gurel, L. M., & Gurel, L. (1979). Clothing Interest: Conceptualization and Measurement. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 7, 274-282.

⁸⁸ Rosenfeld, Lawrence, and Timothy Plax. "Clothing as communication." *Journal of Communication* 27.2 (1977): 24-31. Web. 18 Nov 2009.

⁸⁹ Pope, V. (1943, June 12). War Brides. *Saturday Evening Post*.

⁹⁰ Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, 7-21.

⁹¹ Robertson, I. (1981). *Sociology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

⁹² Hamilton, J. A. (1987). *Dress as a Cultural Sub-system: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles* (Vol. 6). *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*.

virginal at the wedding. Such a situation reflects a form of social control over gender and identity. War brides were especially perceptible to political pressure regarding their wedding apparel. Even though the L85 restrictions did not apply to wedding apparel, there was a sense of duty to use less material, wear something more practical, or demonstrate patriotism through the decisions they made regarding their weddings. Other brides felt that presenting a traditional white flowing gown was the highest form of patriotism that could be embodied in a wedding ceremony.

Wedding apparel plays a significant role regarding social rituals, also referred to as adornment as a facility in social rituals,⁹³ norms, folkways, mores⁹⁴ and socialization.⁹⁵ Certain social rituals call for particular costumes. Upon seeing a picture of a woman in white, perhaps holding flowers, with some sort of head piece, a viewer immediately knows the woman was dressed as a bride. Humans are not born with this knowledge; they are socialized to understand what wedding apparel looks like. Robertson defines norms as “shared rules or guidelines that prescribe the behavior that is appropriate in a given situation.”⁹⁶ Wearing a white wedding gown is a guideline to which most American brides adhere. However, during World War II, the traditional silk gown became more difficult to acquire due to lack of resources. Folkways and mores provide even stronger pressure to conform to these social guidelines. During World War II these folkways loosened and they continue to loosen today as more brides opt for various pastels and

⁹³ Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, 7-21.

⁹⁴ Robertson, I. (1981). *Sociology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

⁹⁵ Hamilton, J. A. (1987). *Dress as a Cultural Sub-system: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles* (Vol. 6). *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*.

⁹⁶ Robertson, I. (1981). *Sociology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

shades of white. Wartime circumstances exerted pressures on social norms, but we find that social expectations and desires were amplified in spite of these difficulties.

In an article in *The Saturday Evening Post* we find a clear description of the amplification of social expectations and desires as they pertain to wedding ceremonies and garments,

...unlike their mothers, who married in practical suits without trimmings, and who now feel they missed something of the glamour of weddings, World War II's brides have gone in heavily for formal weddings complete, with flowing veil, full skirt and white satin. And that is the way the men have wanted it too ... of 500 army, navy, and air forces men queried by Mrs. Alexandra Potts, expert bridal consultant, 90 per cent wanted their brides in flowing train and veil.⁹⁷

The above quote from Pope clearly establishes that the majority of people married during the Second World War wanted a traditional wedding for social sentimental reasons.

Unfortunately, this was not always an easy prospect. An example of how this was made difficult is provided through examination of the wedding dress of Betty Cook Rottman. Rottman had always desired a "white lace dress with flowing train,"⁹⁸ but silk required to make this dress was unavailable during wartime. In order to make her dress a reality she used fourteen yards of white cotton lace. Although silk was unavailable, Rottman was able to create a traditional white dress for her wedding ceremony. Rottman's unique dress also succeeded in fulfilling the attention-seeking role some brides seek to achieve.

The wedding gown plays an attention-seeking role, also referred to as adornment as sexual symbol,⁹⁹ and interest in clothing as an enhancement of individuality.¹⁰⁰ Brides

⁹⁷ Pope, V. (1943, June 12). War Brides. *Saturday Evening Post*.

⁹⁸ Wedding Dress and Photography of Leroy and Betty Cook Rottman. (2001). *The Art and Dress of World War II*, p. 15.

⁹⁹ Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, 7-21.

are the main attraction on their wedding day. It is a general rule that wedding guests should not wear white as it might distract attention away from the bride. Just because the brides marrying during World War II were obliged to consider a war does not mean they were immune to desires for individualized wedding that reflected their tastes. Advertisers in wedding magazines addressed this by offering personal wedding planners, which indicates brides have differing opinions, which may require the help of a wedding planner.

Finally, wedding apparel plays a role as an indicator of an individual's values, also referred to as adornment as reinforcement of belief, custom, and values,¹⁰¹ communication,¹⁰² expression of self,¹⁰³ and values.¹⁰⁴ As mentioned before, a bride may choose to spend a lot of money on her wedding gown even though she may not have the income to support such an expense. Rather than reflecting her economic status, the purchase reflects the value she associates with her wedding gown. Such a purchase may also reflect the value a bride associates with the wedding, the marriage, or the rite of passage she is about to undergo. Other values may influence a bride to wear her mother or grandmother's wedding gown, including value of family, consideration for her husband's desire for a traditional ceremony, and frugality. Another bride may choose to have a custom gown made for her indicating that she values individuality and uniqueness.

¹⁰⁰ Gurel, L. M., & Gurel, L. (1979). Clothing Interest: Conceptualization and Measurement. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, 7, 274-282.

¹⁰¹ Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, 7-21.

¹⁰² Hamilton, J. A. (1987). *Dress as a Cultural Sub-system: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles* (Vol. 6). Clothing and Textiles Research Journal.

¹⁰³ Rosenfeld, Lawrence, and Timothy Plax. "Clothing as communication." *Journal of Communication* 27.2 (1977): 24-31. Web. 18 Nov 2009.

¹⁰⁴ Robertson, I. (1981). *Sociology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

This is especially apparent with war brides. For example, perhaps brides who greatly valued patriotism may have opted for more practical (yet, traditional) dresses, which could be worn again and required little material. Brides who valued tradition may have opted to wear a white wedding gown.

This section focused on understanding the value associated with wedding apparel during a time in history when textiles were rationed and money was scarce. What role did the wedding apparel play in the lives of war brides during World War II? What value do war brides associate with their wedding apparel?

Some authors theorized the value people associate with their clothing, but few, if any, have collected empirical data to find out about the value brides associate with their wedding apparel. Cwerner (2001) described a wardrobe as a library of symbols an individual had to choose from to create their daily presentation to the world.¹⁰⁵ Within this wardrobe are garments no longer worn, but are still important symbols of an individual's past, present, or future. Perhaps these pieces are in disrepair, out of fashion, or no longer fit.¹⁰⁶ Such garments may hold sentimental or emotional value regardless of condition and/or the likelihood that the garment will ever be worn again.¹⁰⁷ Societal norms suggest that typically wedding gowns are worn once and never to be worn again.

Very few occasions arise, traditionally only one occasion per lifetime, when appropriate dress includes a wedding gown. Yet, through my involvement with the bridal industry I've found that many women keep their wedding gowns stored in their closet for

¹⁰⁵ Cwerner, S.B. 2001. "Clothes at Rest: Elements for a Sociology of the Wardrobe." *Fashion Theory* 5(1): 79-92.

¹⁰⁶ Beating Clutter. 2005. *U.S. News and World Report* 3 January: 39.

Dunleavy, M.P. 2005. "Conquer Clutter." *Good Housekeeping* March: 113-22

¹⁰⁷ Bye, Elizabeth, and Ellen McKinney. "Sizing up the Wardrobe--Why We Keep Clothes That Do Not Fit." *Fashion Theory* 11.4 (2007): 483-498. Web. 18 Nov 2009.

the rest of their lives. None of the aforementioned authors have addressed wedding apparel specifically. Wedding apparel seems to hold sentimental value for a great number of women based on the amount of money typically spent on a dress that will be worn only once and kept after it is no longer worn. War brides marrying during World War II, however, experienced a unique situation. Many of these brides didn't have the opportunity to purchase a formal white wedding gown. Some chose the best dress they already owned and others bought a nice suit or practical dress that could easily be worn again. While some chose practical clothing for their weddings, many brides pursued a traditional white gown.

Taken in sum, the aforementioned themes provide a foundation on which to further explore the dynamics of wedding apparel during the Second World War. This foundation is comprised of a quickly changing economic environment, powerful social dynamics, challenging military and home front obligations, and profound personal desires for traditional and normal experiences.

LOVE WILL NEVER BE RATIONED: SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS INFLUENCING BRIDAL ATTIRE

This chapter addresses social issues surrounding choice of wedding apparel during the Second World War. For the purpose of this research, social dynamics influence and advise brides selecting wedding attire. In this case, *Bride Magazine* and etiquette books describe the ideal wedding apparel during the Second World War. This description prescribed normative behavior during the subject time period. Robertson provides useful and relevant discussion of the nature of social norms and social control. Social norms are “shared rules or guidelines that prescribe the behavior that is appropriate in a given situation. Norms define how people ‘ought’ to behave under particular circumstances in a particular society.”¹⁰⁸ The etiquette books and magazines prescribed appropriate normative behavior by describing ideal weddings and wedding attire. These publications exercised a role of social control ensuring adherence to “expected and approved” normative behavior by the members of the society.¹⁰⁹ In this regard, magazines and etiquette books served to enforce normative behavior. Through enforcement of normative behavior, the idea that socialization constitutes “mechanisms that assure new members of the society are trained to carry on the system”¹¹⁰ is facilitated.

The specific social norm of concern is that of dressing up for one’s wedding. Roach and Eicher assert that “in many rituals of social life such as weddings...dressing

¹⁰⁸ Robertson, I. (1981). *Sociology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

¹⁰⁹ Robertson, I. (1981). *Sociology*. New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

¹¹⁰ Hamilton, J. A. (1987). *Dress as a Cultural Sub-system: A Unifying Metatheory for Clothing and Textiles* (Vol. 6). *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*.

up in garb in more fineness than that used in routine day-to-day existence is expected.”¹¹¹

This study addresses the nature of such expectations as defined through description by etiquette books and magazines.

I address two key sources of evidence in this section, one primarily prescriptive and one primarily descriptive. The first source of evidence is etiquette books, which fulfill the influencing portion since they seek to prescribe proper, normative and traditional behavior during the subject time period. The second source of evidence is bridal magazines, which provide descriptive perspectives on bridal attire during the Second World War. I will begin by addressing the prescriptive element – etiquette books.

ETIQUETTE BOOKS

Etiquette books offer useful perspectives to the field of textiles and apparel, providing a conservative and traditional view of what is appropriate, in this case, for brides to wear to their wedding. Emily Post’s *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* had editions published in 1937, 1942, 1944, and 1945. I address Post’s books in chronological order to track changes in advice given to brides during World War II. I compiled the advice from all the etiquette books directed specifically at the military wedding to showcase the challenges that brides may have faced while planning their weddings during the subject time period.

Emily Post published the 1937 edition of *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* with no references concerning military weddings. The same generic passage about wedding apparel appears in all publications of the book from 1937 to 1945:

¹¹¹ Roach, M., & Eicher, J. (1979). The Language of Personal Adornment. *The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment*, 7-21.

It is always proper for a bride to wear a white dress and veil, no matter in what season of the year the wedding is held. It may be of any white material, satin, brocade, velvet, chiffon, or entirely of lace. It may be embroidered with pearls, crystals or silver; or it may be as plain as a slip-cover. It may be anything in fact that the bride fancies, and may be made in whatever fashion or period she chooses.

As for her veil—in its combination of lace or tulle and orange blossoms—perhaps it is copied from a head-dress of Egypt or China, or from the severe drapery of Rebecca herself, or it may proclaim the knowing touch of the Rue de la Paix. It may have a cap, like that of a lady in a French print, or fall in clouds of tulle from under a diadem made of anything that the art of millinery can contrive.¹¹²

By 1942, a “War-Time Supplement” was added as a final chapter. This portion of the book includes such subtitles as “War-Time Courtesy has Very Special Exactions,” “Remember Thoughtless Words Endanger Lives!” “Hospitality Without Waste,” “You Can Do Your Part Without a Uniform,” “The Perfect Hostess to Men In Uniform,” “A Girl Faces a Problem When a Man Goes to War,” and, of course, “Furlough Wedding Details.”¹¹³ In this portion I discuss the wedding-specific advice, but segments of the former sections may be found elsewhere in this paper.

World War II caused some brides trouble concerning how to make a cohesive picture with men in the wedding party representing various branches of the military and having differing ranks, Post replied, “You can’t!” She went on to say that,

the rule that the men of a bridal party shall be as precisely alike as a company of soldiers, applies only to the civilian dress, since regardless of what they wear, the bridegroom chooses those of his best friends who are free to be with him at his wedding. The mixture of army and navy and

¹¹² Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1937).

¹¹³ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942).

civilian dress will certainly continue to be characteristic of many of the weddings for the duration of the war.¹¹⁴

To avoid a wedding that clashed, Post suggested that if the military men were wearing their dress blues, then the civilians also wear navy blue suits and blue ties. If the military men were wearing white uniforms, then Post suggested that the civilians follow suit and also wear white suits. Post implied that wartime weddings not have the same uniform appearance of peacetime weddings, but with a little thought they look just as beautiful and reflect the era in which the wedding occurred.¹¹⁵

The 1943 publication of *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* also includes a section following “War Time Supplements” entitled “Additions and Corrections—1943.” The section begins with a brief introduction explaining the change, “Certain new rulings by Congress, as well as the New Army’s dislike of impracticable details of etiquette, suggest the need for these brief corrections and additions...”¹¹⁶ The portion of interest in this section is entitled “Wedding Clothes of WAVES and WAACS” which explain the rules of formal apparel worn by these groups of women,

When the war supplement was printed, no WAVE was permitted to wear evening—or any other civilian clothes—if more than three persons were present. This included brides’ or bridesmaids’ dresses. The ruling now is that the WAVES may apply for permission from Washington to wear either brides’—or bridesmaids’ dresses. But since this may require a month or longer, rushed wedding preparations mean no bridal attire!

Formerly the “WAACS” were free to wear what they pleased when on leave. But now (July 2, 1943) as WAACS in the Army official permission may be required.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942).

¹¹⁵ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942).

¹¹⁶ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942).

¹¹⁷ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls

That the authorities of etiquette were conceding ground to the practicality precipitated by massive wartime mobilization evidences a changing social current that influenced wedding attire. The rules of what defined acceptable wedding etiquette were quickly changing; these quick changes were forced by military involvement. It is noteworthy that the loosening of restriction on WAVES and WAACS coincided with the wedding attire exception in the L85 restrictions further evidencing government endorsement of traditional wedding attire.

Post insisted that the beauty of a wedding stemmed from the unity of clothing and precision of movement, “At the most elaborate of weddings, perfection is always the result of similarity of appearance and of drilled precision.”¹¹⁸ Post also insisted that because of this, it was possible for a bride to have a beautiful wedding if she was able to create a bride-like appearance through white accessories such as a hat with a veil and a bouquet of flowers.

Post further explained elaborate procedural rules regarding the type of dress worn. If a bride chose a dark, simple, tailored dress she should not make a fuss over other wedding plans. It was best that this bride have a simple wedding with just a maid-of-honor and best man in attendance. However, if the bride made an effort to look particularly bridal, then more of the traditional customs may take place. These customs included walking down the aisle, some (minimal) decorations, the use of ushers, bridesmaids, and flowergirls. Post also explained in some detail what was appropriate

Company, 1942).

¹¹⁸ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1944).

apparel for each member of the wedding party dependent upon what the bride chose to wear.

By the 1945 publication of *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage*, the sections entitled “Supplementary Wedding Details—For a Bride in Everyday Clothes” and “War Time Supplements” were no longer included. Instead, a new section was included entitled “Military and Post-War Etiquette.” In this section, four short subsections discussed wedding challenges faced due to the war, these subsections include “Wedding Held Far From Bride’s Home,” “Marriage At Camp,” “Today’s Typical Wedding,” and “The Uncertain Date.” The subsection entitled “Wedding Held Far From Bride’s Home” discussed the topic of who was to pay for the wedding if the wedding took place near the groom’s hometown preventing many of the bride’s friends and family to attend. Post said that the groom’s family may pay for the wedding in this circumstance, one of the very few exceptions to the rule that the bride’s family be responsible to pay for the wedding. The subsection entitled “Marriage at Camp” differs greatly from the similarly titled section in the 1943 publication. Again, this section focused on who paid for the bride’s traveling expenses to get to the groom’s camp. Post insisted that if the bride’s family was able to pay for her expenses then they should do so, however, often the case was that both families share the expenses. The subsection “Today’s Typical Wedding” described the importance of keeping war weddings simple:

“Preparations for the typical wedding of a man in the Service are extremely simple, and invitations are often likely as not given to relatives and friends by word of mouth. That the business of war takes second place to none is a lesson learned from the earlier experiences of many brides’ families who found themselves with elaborate preparations on their hands and hundreds of invitations to cancel at the last minute.”

In summary, Post included a generic passage about wedding apparel in her pre-war editions of her etiquette book. As the war became more engrained in American culture and began to greatly influence society, she added the “War-Time Supplement” to discuss the challenges to weddings brought on by war. This section discusses issues with military dress coordinating with civilian dress, the proper etiquette for brides in everyday clothing and the rules of military dress. Etiquette books emphasize rules and offer limited exceptions for extreme circumstances. Despite the conservative and traditional nature of the etiquette books, they offered rich information about the challenges and tribulations faced by the bride planning her wedding during World War II.

MAGAZINES

Contrasting the prescriptive of etiquette books in the previous section, is a descriptive segment in which *Bride Magazine* describes ideal apparel. The descriptive element of this discussion is comprised of an analysis of issues of *Bride Magazine* from 1940 to 1945. *Bride Magazine* was published seasonally during this time, offering a more frequently updated glimpse at wedding traditions and trends during World War II as compared to etiquette books, which were typically published yearly. I collected over 100 pages with references to the war from *Bride Magazine* between the years 1940 and 1945. About 80 pages were advertisements, about 25 pages were articles, and 11 pages were images of real weddings that took place between 1940 and 1945.

A letter from the editor of *Bride Magazine* establishes the difference in the approach of etiquette books when contrasted with magazines:

Weddings, like everything else in wartime, become streamlined, changed, and tempered to fit the new and changing conditions. But one thing

remains constant in this changing picture – the Bride. By far the greatest majority of Brides are real Brides – picture Brides in traditional wedding dresses and veils. These Brides are fulfilling their own dreams of white weddings, and granting their Groom’s wishes for ‘weddings to remember.’ Brides today are sharing their trains and veils with other Brides – ordering short trains and short veils in order to leave some satin and tulle for others...80% of the Grooms are now in uniform – their ushers may be civilians, officers, and privates in any branch of the service...These changing conditions make most hard and fast rules of wedding etiquette obsolete. The highest court of etiquette now says, ‘Do whatever you do with good sense and in good taste and it will be correct.’¹¹⁹

Etiquette books were trying to keep up with changing times, but magazines could do so more easily. There were many more references to the war in *Bride Magazine* than in any of the etiquette books I reviewed. Thus, *Bride Magazine* gave us a better idea of the changing wedding trends, new challenges faced by brides, and the effect the war had on weddings. Many advertisers (and we can only assume the brides as well) felt brides deserved, even had the right, to the wedding of which they had always dreamed. A Lord and Taylor advertisement stated, “War Brides want to be beautiful, too. And though time’s short, they’re having the gown and the wedding they’ve always dreamed of.”¹²⁰

The advertisements in *Bride Magazine* give the reader an idea that times were different in the early 1940s. War was on everyone’s mind and made planning a wedding quite challenging. Advertisements referred to the war in a variety of ways including references to military wedding traditions, referring to L85 restrictions, mentioning the trend away from traditional white wedding gowns, and referring to time being an important factor in planning a furlough wedding. Many advertisements simply referred to

¹¹⁹ *Bride Magazine*, "Letter From the Editor," Autumn 1943: 59. *Bride Magazine*, "Lord and Taylor Advertisement," Autumn 1943: 3.

¹²⁰ *Bride Magazine*, "Lord and Taylor Advertisement," Autumn 1943: 3.



Image 1: An example of a traditional white wedding gown from 1940¹²¹

¹²¹ [Untitled photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Schultz]. Retrieved March 8, 2011 from:
Missouri Historic Costume & Textile Collection

the war through military wedding traditions. A Strawbridge and Clothier advertisement promotes the traditional ceremonial importance of walking under a “silvery arch of crossed swords,” which is tacit advice to engage in these traditions when able. Through tying the store’s heritage to this tradition the store has effectively promoted both traditions mentioned.¹²²

A Holmes Department Store advertisement refers to the arch of swords, while referencing the furlough wedding and a variety of nationalistic ideas. This advertisement goes further in its association of traditional weddings and patriotism; the memories and dedications of a wedding ceremony are compared to that of dedication to one’s country, all under the auspices of business with the Holmes Department Store.¹²³

Many advertisements encouraged brides to have a traditional white wedding, some even stating that it was all the grooms wanted when they returned. The bride and groom deserved a wedding worth remembering. As mentioned previously, the L85 restrictions on clothing did not apply to wedding gowns. A New York Dress Institute advertisement used this fact to their advantage to encourage brides to spend money on their wedding dress. It read:

Your right to a wedding: One day, above all others, is yours...a day so rare that it will live in vivid memory beyond the end of time. The date? Who knows, today? Perhaps a telephone call will set the time...or maybe a telegram. And, yet, that day is yours – just as though you’d planned it so...Mindful of your Right to Romance, your government has recognized the importance of preserving the traditional bridal gown. True to this trust, the ingenious Bride Makers of New York have created new wartime trains with all the illusion of that glorious sweep of white – in the spirit of the fashions of today...For you who must plan in haste, bridal shops the country over present a wide variety of traditional bridal gowns – ready to

¹²² *Bride Magazine*, "Strawbridge and Clothier Advertisement," Spring 1941: 22.

¹²³ *Bride Magazine*, "Holmes Department Store Advertisement," Autumn 1942: 12.

wear tomorrow. And, when this war and its restrictions are long forgotten, the memory of your day will shine through all the years.”¹²⁴

An advertisement from Thalhimers Centurama also refers to the L85 restrictions, offering their services to help decipher and obey the laws:

Service Marriages: Do you confront the unforeseen puzzlers of a 1942 service wedding? Ask Thalhimers! We know all the answers...from how many inches the bridesmaids' skirts may measure at the hem to where to seat the bridegroom's Colonel and how to cut a cake with a sword. Thalhimers' bridal secretaries (plural, please note!) will plan any part or all of your wedding, as you wish. They can get the true ivory satin that brides adore...they have planned colors to harmonize with army and navy uniforms where brides are marrying in street-length dresses...they have definite, immediate, buyable things for all your entertaining, gifts and trousseaux. Budgets have been worked out for everything from the short-notice ceremony and a suitcase to the base...to the grand-slam wedding complete with champagne and Brigadier-Generals. Simply place yourself in Thalhimers' capable hands and emerge a happily married woman!¹²⁵

Not all brides succumbed to the desire to fulfill their dreams of a lavish, traditional, white wedding. A few advertisements catered to these brides with offers of wedding suits, practical wedding gown selections, and wedding services for the bride working in the military. The Bon Marche' Seattle's Great Store advertisement pictures a woman in the military and the same woman in a wedding gown, it reads:

Two Lives I Live...Now...Brave with the resolve to wear my uniform with dignity and pride. Knowing that by so doing the bells of peace will ring soon. Now, too...Aglow with the dream of wedding bells. The shining glory of my wedding gown is equaled only but the radiance of our love. Through all days of peace or war The Bon Marche' Bridal Bureau awaits to guide all brides...in the service or in civilian pace...through all the wondrous maze of wedding planning.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ *Bride Magazine*, "New York Dress Institute Advertisement," Autumn 1943: 2.

¹²⁵ *Bride Magazine*, "Thalhimers Centurama Advertisement," Autumn 1942: 43.

¹²⁶ *Bride Magazine*, "Bon Marche' Advertisement," Autumn 1943.

Although the Bon Marche' advertisement still encouraged a white wedding, a Thalhimers ad offered the non-traditional bride a more practical selection: "The New Wedding Suit for the bride not being married in white. Created in Bride's blue wool by Foxbrownie for today's honeymoon. \$98.95 Bridal Salon."¹²⁷ Similarly, the Strawbridge and Clothier ad encouraged a "smart" selection: "Bridal Sweet: The wartime bride waives the romantic in favor of the practical – and looks her all-time smartest in a classic three-button suit of Palm Beach cloth (rayon-and-mohair) – cool, light, soft, cleanable, long-wearing and wrinkle-resistant. In white, Alaska blue, yellow or strawberry; sizes 12 to 20."¹²⁸ In addition to the verbal references to the war, most advertisements had images of brides and soldiers as opposed to a groom in a suit.

Some articles wrote specifically about what to wear to a wedding during a time of war. One article stated that for an informal hotel wedding a short crepe dress and matching gloves in a misty blue color, a blue jersey dress with metallic thread, or a satin suit and matching headband were ideal. For a military post wedding a sapphire blue velvet suit or any wool suit in a shade of pale blue, lavender, beige or green was best. A Cigarette slim moiré suit in a pastel shade with a poire pill-box to match would also be nice.¹²⁹

Another article entitled "What Shall I Wear?" used a well-known wedding poem to list a war bride's options for challenging wedding decisions:

Something old – a sentimental, ceremonious bridal gown, old in heritage

¹²⁷ *Bride Magazine*, "Thalhimers Advertisement," Autumn 1943: 42.

¹²⁸ *Bride Magazine*, "Strawbridge and Clothier Advertisement," Summer 1943: 31.

¹²⁹ *Bride Magazine*, "What Shall I Wear?," Winter 1943-1944: 60-61.

Something new – and something of a blessing, the long but not possessively formal wedding dress...slender, sleek – in fluid crepe or fluted sheer...

Something borrowed – Use the heirloom lace border of Aunt Fanny's handkerchief as a ruffle for a Victorian bouquet...more old lace worked into a Bride's cap without a snip of the scissors...

Something blue – Forget-me-nots, for young love's sake...put some in your bouquet...let them peep from your crowning glory¹³⁰

Bride Magazine offered a variety of glimpses inside the challenges a bride might face due to the ongoing war between the years 1940 and 1945. Through advertisements and articles, challenges such as lack of resources and where to find a dress were addressed. Advertisers were eager to help the war bride plan her “dream” wedding that she and her soldier fiancé deserved. Although magazines offered ideas as to the trends during this time, they don't offer us a detailed look at real weddings.

¹³⁰ *Bride Magazine*, "What Shall I Wear?," Summer 1944: 68-69, 106, 112.

WEDDINGS ARE WONDERFUL...EVEN IN WARTIME: LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS INFLUENCING BRIDAL ATTIRE

Logistical considerations are those concerns associated with the availability of people and consumer goods involved in the courtship and wedding. I examine the logistical considerations through four types of sources: etiquette books, magazines, newspapers, and surveys and interviews. Each of these sources provides a different perspective on the subject. The confluence of information they provide offers a full picture of logistical concerns. Etiquette books and magazines were introduced in the previous section and are still treated in those terms in this section; etiquette books are viewed as primarily prescriptive while *Bride Magazine* is viewed as primarily descriptive. I am introducing three new sources: newspaper announcements, surveys of war brides and those closely associated with them, and interviews provided by the Library of Congress of women married in the subject time period.

The new sources need to be contextualized in the same fashion as the previous sources. Newspaper announcements describe actual events. The significance of this description is easily understood by contrasting the description of actual events with magazines and etiquette books, which pursue descriptions of ideal events. Both offer valuable information but must be addressed differently. As we must filter the usage of newspaper articles, a similar approach must be applied to the use of surveys and interviews. In the case of survey and interview data, the respondent's removal from the subject time period offers a reflective perspective as opposed to an immediate perspective. Newspapers, in contrast, offered immediate, contemporary perspective while surveys and interviews are decades removed from the subject time period.

ETIQUETTE BOOKS

Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage by Emily Post defines the furlough wedding as “the simplest of ceremonies which merely concludes the regular morning service on whichever Sunday [the groom] can get home.” Straightaway, clothing plays a significant role in this new type of wedding unheard of before the war that made it necessary to plan quick-and-easy wedding ceremonies.

The logistics of The Furlough Wedding, “depend first of all, upon whether [the bride] is wearing ordinary clothes or bridal dress and veil. In the first case, she and [the groom] could perfectly well sit with her parents. At the close of the service, the clergyman makes an announcement of the immediate ceremony and invites all friends of the families to remain.”¹³¹ Post went on to explain that the ceremony should begin after the church-goers who did not remain for the ceremony exited the building. She suggested that a few measures of the wedding march be played while the bride, groom, maid of honor, and best man find their places. Unlike traditional ceremonies, after the bride and groom have taken their places the father of the bride joined the couple at the front pew to give away his daughter. A quite different ceremony occurred if the bride chose to wear a bridal dress,

neither she nor her father should appear until morning service is over. [The groom] and his best man may have sat with his parents throughout morning service. Otherwise, they arrive a few minutes before the time set for the ceremony and wait in the vestry. In either case, the beginning of the wedding march would be the signal for [the groom] (with his best man) to take his place at the head of the aisle and for [the bride] (with her

¹³¹ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942).

maid of honor) to walk up the aisle with her father, and the ceremony to proceed as usual.¹³²

In a similar fashion as challenges posed by short preparation time, challenges were posed in creating a cohesive presentation of attire amongst the wedding party. Post mentions this indicating that the bridegroom was able to choose only those of his friends that were free of military obligation when the wedding was set to occur.¹³³ Expectation that military uniform would be a constant presence in wedding ceremonies was viewed as inevitable by Post. Further complicating the wedding ceremony is the issue of multiple branches of service. Post implies that the bride and groom should be more concerned with simply gathering the necessary parties for the ceremony as opposed to what the necessary parties will be wearing at the ceremony.

The furlough wedding worked well when the groom was able to leave the military, at least for a few days, to get married. The wedding could occur at the hometown of both the bride and groom, if they were from the same town, or at the hometown of the bride. If, however, the groom was unable to get away from the military post, the couple had the option to get married at the groom's camp. In these situations, it was unlikely that family members could attend.

Referring back to the subsections in Post's *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage*, two subsections referred to the logistics of planning a wedding during the Second World War: "Wedding Held Far From Bride's Home" and "Marriage at Camp." Post discusses how the business of war is the most influential matter in everyone's lives.

¹³² Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942).

¹³³ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942).

Using an example of a family that planned an elaborate wedding only to have the plan's spoiled at the last minute because of a military obligation, Post illustrates the challenges presented by wartime mobilization. She offers ideas on how to accommodate for these difficulties, for example, minimal uses of invitations and keeping ceremonies extremely simple.

Despite the conservative and traditional nature of the etiquette books, they offered rich information about the challenges faced by the bride planning her wedding during World War II. Post was able to overcome the challenges of remaining up-to-date with only annual publications (as opposed to the monthly publications of magazines) by adding supplementary portions at the end of the book, which addressed war-specific changes in etiquette.

MAGAZINES

During the subject time period *Bride Magazine* frequently evidenced logistical difficulties imposed by wartime mobilization. This section is a review of excerpts from *Bride Magazine* that relate to this topic. Advertisements in *Bride Magazine* referred to the amount of time a bride had to plan her wedding. Again, we find references to the furlough wedding. Advertisers were determined to tailor their services to the needs of logistically challenging wartime ceremonies. Some ads offered services to help plan a quick wedding, other offered quick turnaround on wedding gown orders. In addition to describing the social dynamic mentioned earlier, the Carson Pirie Scott and Co advertisement evidences clear logistical considerations present during the subject time period. The advertisement's title "Love Will Never be Rationed" illustrates the prevailing sentiment regarding consumer goods at the time.

Love Will Never be Rationed: Through the years...each Launcelot and his Lady Fair have taken the important step – wars, conquerors, dictators notwithstanding. His call to the colors has given an added impetus, an increased desire to share that for which he is fighting...And since the early 1850s Carson's has aided these young war couples and others in making theirs a really to-be-remembered-forever wedding. Whether the ceremony is planned three days or three months in advance.¹³⁴

Surely the population perceived that nearly all commodities were rationed, creating the logistical challenges of our concern. The advertisement seeks to assure couples that a brief planning period will not impede the realization of a "really-to-be-remembered-forever wedding."¹³⁵ Carson Pirie Scott and Co clearly sought to appeal to those planning a ceremony in a brief amount of time as short as three days. This was an obvious appeal to the furlough wedding market, which was apparently significant enough to warrant direct marketing in a national magazine. Finally, this Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney advertisement continued the theme of special weddings, despite the war and despite little planning time:

Weddings are Wonderful...even in war time. Despite the omnipresent thought of war, your wedding can...and deserves to be...a blend of beauty and romance that you will always remember and cherish. Vandervoort's Bride's Shop will make it possible, even though the wedding may be conjured up in a matter of days instead of the traditional weeks or months. Entrusted to the Bride's Shop, every detail will be perfect...from the wedding invitations, through the wedding itself, and to the selection of your trousseau treasures. And of course there is no charge.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ *Bride Magazine*, "Carson Pirie Scott and Co Advertisement," Autumn 1943.

¹³⁵ *Bride Magazine*, "Carson Pirie Scott and Co Advertisement," Autumn 1943.

¹³⁶ *Bride Magazine*, "Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney Advertisement," Winter 1942-1943: 29.

A Holmes Department Store advertisement referred to how furlough weddings were announced [through telegram] and encourages that these hasty weddings be “hurried by not flurried.” It reads:

In the time of Roses...Summer’s bloom is on the rose, and under rose bowers summer brides pledge their troth to gallant warriors. Weddings hinge on furloughs. Arrangements must be hurried but not flurried. Holmes Bridal Consultant will make your wedding rose petal-smooth from telegram to start of honeymoon.¹³⁷

In another significant marketing piece, we find direct references to the typical series of events that define a furlough wedding, “from telegram to start of honeymoon.” In such a time of relocation and resituation, where change was truly the only constant, social rituals, weddings included, were likewise subject to the demands of military involvement.

Complimenting the previous two quotations, we see another advertisement evidencing the exact same circumstance. This Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney advertisement expressly states how time available to plan weddings was being affected by wartime mobilization, “Vandervoort’s Bride’s Shop will make it possible, even though the wedding may be conjured up in a matter of days instead of the traditional weeks or months.”¹³⁸

Building on the advertisements, several articles also referred to the logistical challenges of planning a wedding during war. One article, “Take Your Wedding With You,” described a package developed for the bride who must follow her fiancé to a military base where wedding supplies were not readily available. It is essentially a

¹³⁷ *Bride Magazine*, "Holmes Department Store Advertisement," Summer 1944: 53.

¹³⁸ *Bride Magazine*, "Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney Advertisement," Winter 1942-1943: 29.

“wedding in a box” for the bride to take with her when she left home.¹³⁹ This clearly evidences the nature of logistical challenges imposed by wartime mobilization. Certainly logistical challenges of this nature made determining appropriate attire more difficult. Articles in *Bride Magazine* discussed this issue at length offering brides advice on how to cope with these challenges. A variety of dresses and suits were described in detail. Some examples include a blue jersey or crepe dress or a satin, velvet, or wool suit.¹⁴⁰

The influence of wartime mobilization as evidenced through magazine content clearly indicates that planning time was frequently shortened drastically. These furlough weddings were common enough to warrant frequent discussion in a nationally circulated bridal magazine. Relevant discussion centered around two topics: first, planning a furlough wedding; second, what could or should be worn to a furlough wedding. We find an expansion of acceptable bridal attire was evidenced in these publications, although the preferred costume was undoubtedly remained the traditional white wedding dress.

NEWSPAPERS

Complimenting the aforementioned evidence from *Bride Magazine* is information provided in select wedding announcements published in newspapers between 1940 and 1945. Whereas *Bride Magazine* indirectly discusses the execution of a short-notice wedding, newspaper announcements discuss the events as they actually occurred.

The below quote is from a Chicago wedding announcement that describes a couple of the challenges faced by brides planning wartime weddings. The challenges

¹³⁹ *Bride Magazine*, "Take Your Wedding With You," Spring 1944: 72-73, 106, 108, 110.

¹⁴⁰ *Bride Magazine*, "What Shall I Wear?," Winter 1943-1944: 60-61.

evidenced in this quote are: needing to change the date because of men's wartime obligations and dealing with restrictions and regulations, in this case such regulations keep family members from attending the ceremony.

It will surprise many of their friends to learn that Jacqueline Aagaard and Michael N. Mueller were married last Saturday. They had a quiet wedding in the chapel of Holy Name Cathedral, attended by only Nancy Davis and Frederick D. Countess. Although their engagement was never formally announced, the former Miss Aagaard and Mr. Mueller had been planning to be married later in the summer but advanced the date because he expects to be called for service soon. He is a member of the Naval Reserve...Because of wartime regulations on travel no member of the bridegroom's family can be present at the ceremony. He is a brother of Mrs. Stewart Peck (Priscilla Armstrong), a bride last month, and of Mrs. Garrett Benjamin Le Van Jr. of Sharon, Pa., and Lt. Julian Armstrong Jr.¹⁴¹

The above described ceremony, clearly planned in haste, is a prime example of the implications of wartime mobilization on wedding preparations. The time afforded the individuals planning this ceremony was reduced significantly. Such a reduction could easily affect the availability of a wedding dress. Situations similar to this occurred frequently. Also, we find an example of government regulation impeding individuals who would traditionally attend the wedding.

SURVEYS & INTERVIEWS

The aforementioned challenges are further evidenced in the surveys and interviews conducted with women who married during the Second World War. Women were forced to deal with limited time restraints and extraordinary challenges when making wedding plans. Many women were married in a matter of weeks or months after

¹⁴¹ *Chicago Daily News*, "Michael Mueller Marries Jacqueline Aagaard Here," July 1, 1942: 22.

their engagement. Only a couple of women reported having an engagement for longer than a year. One such woman explained, “he was badly injured by [a] bomb in England and spent much time in plastic surgery hospital.”¹⁴² She went on to explain that due to other medical problems and military obligations the engagement was prolonged to about two years. Clare Marie Crane says her wedding was “completely unplanned. There were a lot of girls who were engaged and getting married. The time was right for them.”¹⁴³ Charlotte Louise Plummer Owen tells the story of a friend of hers who had to plan a wedding in a matter of days due to her fiancé’s military obligations, “Louise Hensinger, our vocal soloist with the dance band, was planning to be married...she had the flowers [and] the church...her boyfriend got the orders that she had to leave. They had a quick hurry-up ceremony and she had to leave...her new husband whom she had been looking forward to being with for awhile.”¹⁴⁴

Other than time restraints, women found themselves facing formidable challenges when trying to plan their wedding. Marjorie Virginia English explains the difficulty in even finding someone to marry them:

...Well, we were married in October. And we -- we had to be married on the day that the Yugoslavs married people...they married people on a certain day of the week. And we had to go to the town clerk's office, and he was just in short sleeves and so on and somebody from the consulate went with us to verify it...[the clerk] didn't know how to write anything but the Serili alphabet. She didn't know how to write the Latin, you know, alphabet, which, of course, she had to use for our wedding certificate. So we had a few misspelled names. And the counsel from the consulate said, "Don't rush her. Don't rush her." You know, "Don't make her impatient,"

¹⁴² Hasty, Ashley. “World War II Weddings.” Survey. *Survey Monkey*. 2 February 2010.

¹⁴³ Prudence Burrell Collection (AFC/2001/001/4747), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

¹⁴⁴ Charlotte Owen Collection (AFC/2001/001/24603), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

because we're dependent on her. And we had to have a -- a 20 Denar stamp. We -- all we had was two 10s. Well, they wouldn't take two 10s. It had to be a 20. So we had to run around to find a 20 Denar stamp to put on the certificate.¹⁴⁵

The unavailability of someone to officiate the proceedings constitutes a clear example of a logistical difficulty. Moreover, having to conform to unfamiliar practices in order to complete a marriage evidences the challenge of completing wartime weddings. Other brides had difficulty finding witnesses or bridesmaids for their wedding ceremonies as Anna Marie Hulick describes:

I was a bridesmaid at two weddings, people I never knew, never saw them before. ...But it's just that I had stopped in at the chapel on my way home from work and they were getting married. ...something happened and the bridesmaid didn't show up ... and I'm sitting there, would you please be a bridesmaid? What else?¹⁴⁶

Hulick provides two examples of logistical challenges in her account. In the first example, she twice entered a chapel and unexpectedly found a short-staffed wedding taking place. That there was a wedding taking place unexpectedly to a frequent parishioner like Hulick suggests that the wedding was also short-notice. In the second example, Hulick's recruitment into the wedding party further evidences a shortage of people who would otherwise have been involved, therefore constituting a logistical challenge related to the war.

Both wedding size and location were problematic during World War II. Most women described their wedding as small and modest, but took place in a variety of venues from churches to registry offices, "a place for non-church civil marriages."

¹⁴⁵ Marjorie English Collection (AFC/2001/001/11034), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

¹⁴⁶ Anna Hulick Collection (AFC/2001/001/5365), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Marjorie Virginia English was married in Europe, “We were married by the communists...that’s the only marriage that’s legal in Europe. It has to be a civil ceremony. A church ceremony doesn’t—doesn’t count.”¹⁴⁷ Clare Marie Crane, on the other hand, had a more traditional venue for her ceremony, “It was a beautiful wedding and in a brand new church. Our parish had built a brand new church and the first wedding was supposed to be in June. But I sort of sneaked in and had the wedding in the end of May (laughs.) So I was the first bride in the new church.”¹⁴⁸

As mentioned before, many women working war jobs were required to ask permission before wearing formal apparel, “The ruling now is that the WAVES may apply for permission from Washington to wear either brides’—or bridesmaids’ dresses. But since this may require a month or longer, rushed wedding preparations mean no bridal attire!”¹⁴⁹ Eileen Paine was one such woman who was unable to be married in bridal attire, “We got married in uniform, of course. And then we went over and got married by the chaplain.”¹⁵⁰ Charlotte Louise Plummer Owen, however, was able to obtain “permission from the head of the Women’s Marine Corps to wear a wedding gown.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Marjorie English Collection (AFC/2001/001/11034), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

¹⁴⁸ Clare Crane Collection (AFC/2001/001/1754), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

¹⁴⁹ Emily Post, *Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1942).

¹⁵⁰ Eileen Paine Collection (AFC/2001/001/11230), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

¹⁵¹ Charlotte Owen Collection (AFC/2001/001/24603), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Whether welcomed or not, wartime deployment and military influence was a defining element of weddings and wedding attire during the Second World War. A significant part of this influence was manifest in logistical difficulties that were simply unavoidable. In the preceding paragraphs, I reviewed etiquette books, bridal magazines, newspapers, and surveys and interviews that discussed varying logistical effects of wartime mobilization. All suggest that logistics posed a difficult challenge to those attempting to plan and execute a wedding during the Second World War. Certainly a significant part of this challenge was the acquisition of acceptable wedding attire, sometimes leading to the abandonment of traditional wedding costume. As planning times were shortened compromises became necessary.

IN PATRIOTIC MOOD: RATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS INFLUENCING BRIDAL ATTIRE

Rational considerations are those arising from the bride's perception of what constituted a reasonable choice of dress. In this subsection I explore how logistical and social considerations construct an altogether different dynamic influencing a bride to make non-traditional apparel choices. Although not obliged to make non-traditional concessions, some brides elected to incorporate non-traditional elements. Although ceremonies defined by such concessions were certainly the minority, this dynamic was present to a lesser extent in virtually all ceremonies during the subject time period.

Three sources will be discussed in this analysis. The first source consists of relevant excerpts from *Bride Magazine*, the second consists of wedding announcements published during the subject time period, and the third consists of surveys and interviews of women who married between 1940 and 1945. Each source was used in previous sections in support of other assertions, and will be employed in a different capacity in this discussion. This analysis will differ from the previous two objectives in that the subject is approached through exploration of two considerations: first, that some marriages were non-traditional; second, some marriages incorporated non-traditional elements but appeared traditional.

To this point in the study, attire other than traditional wedding regalia has not been addressed significantly. I will now make a point to address attire other than traditional attire already discussed at length. The 1943 and 1944 publication of *Bride Magazine* a section entitled "Supplementary Wedding Details—For a Bride in Everyday Clothes" which was included separately from the military section but was also a new

addition since the start of the war. The introduction suggested that brides choose to wear everyday clothes to their weddings because they could not afford an extravagant wedding, they were unwilling to spend their trousseau money on an expensive dress only worn once, or the bride simply disliked the idea of buying a dress that was utterly useless beyond the scope of her wedding. There is absolutely no direct mention of the war, but the evidence suggests these sentiments arose because of challenges the war introduced to people's lives.

NON-TRADITIONAL ATTIRE

Although brides wanted to have a traditional white wedding, not all of them chose to do so. A significant number of brides chose a distinctly non-traditional wedding gown, although they were a small percentage relative to the majority of brides married at the time. We find advertisements targeted at the non-traditional market present in *Bride Magazine* with considerable frequency during the subject time period. A Thalhimers advertisement offered the non-traditional bride a more practical selection: "The New Wedding Suit For the bride not being married in white. Created in Bride's blue wool by Foxbrownie for today's honeymoon. \$98.95 Bridal Salon."¹⁵² Similarly, the Strawbridge and Clothier advertisement encouraged a "smart" selection: "Bridal Sweet: The wartime bride waives the romantic in favor of the practical – and looks her all-time smartest in a classic three-button suit of Palm Beach cloth (rayon-and-mohair) – cool, light, soft, cleanable, long-wearing and wrinkle-resistant. In white, Alaska blue, yellow or

¹⁵² *Bride Magazine*, "Thalhimers Advertisement," Autumn 1943: 42.

strawberry; sizes 12 to 20.”¹⁵³ Strawbridge and Clothier expressly talk about the exchange of the “romantic in favor of the practical.” Clearly the prevalence of inclinations such as this was significant enough to warrant mention in corporate advertisement.

Advertisements were not the only source that directly evidences this compromise; also contributing to this position are excerpts from newspapers. . In one wedding announcement from *Chicago Daily News*, the description of the apparel said, “In patriotic mood, the bride and all of her attendants wore cotton dresses—embroidered white organdy.”¹⁵⁴ The phrase “in patriotic mood” and the fact that the bride and her attendants wore cotton refer to the shortage of silk due to the need to make parachutes for the war effort. Some newspaper announcements described non-traditional attire just as elaborately as a long white wedding gown:

The bride wore a beautiful tailored suit of sheer navy wool, which featured a white eyelet embroidered blouse and a bolero jacket. Her smart hat was of navy straw, trimmed with white flowers, and her other accessories were in matching shades.¹⁵⁵

From this elaborate description, it is clear that non-traditional attire was held in similar or equivocal regard as traditional wedding attire. The tailored suit was perceived as “beautiful” and her hat as “smart” creating an ensemble, which was a hybrid of practicality and perceived bridal beauty. A picture of the bride accompanied this description, but not of her in her wedding apparel. Pictures of non-traditional wedding apparel were not seen often. The following is an example of concise description of a non-

¹⁵³ *Bride Magazine*, "Strawbridge and Clothier Advertisement," Summer 1943: 31.

¹⁵⁴ Staff Photographer for *Chicago Daily News*, *Chicago Daily News*, August 7, 1942: 17.

¹⁵⁵ *Jackson Daily News*, "Mr. Berbette, Miss Castanera Are Married," April 7, 1940: 1.

traditional wedding dress, "The bride wore a dress of powder blue crepe with white accessories."¹⁵⁶ Its inclusion evidences that the author attached value to the garment.

Several military references were found in color descriptions of what the bride wore. Two brides were described as wearing the color *soldier* blue, "The bride wore a beautiful gown of soldier blue crepe. Her off the face blue felt hat was decorated with a brown feather and her accessories were also of brown."¹⁵⁷ "The bride chose for the wedding a smart costume suit of soldier blue wool with black accessories." Another bride wore a "costume suit of cadet blue trimmed in mink."¹⁵⁸ For a bride who chose a non-traditional garment, blue was a popular and well-received color choice. During the Second World War, which was marked by amplified nationalistic overtones, the color blue was associated with the ideas of patriotism and duty to country.

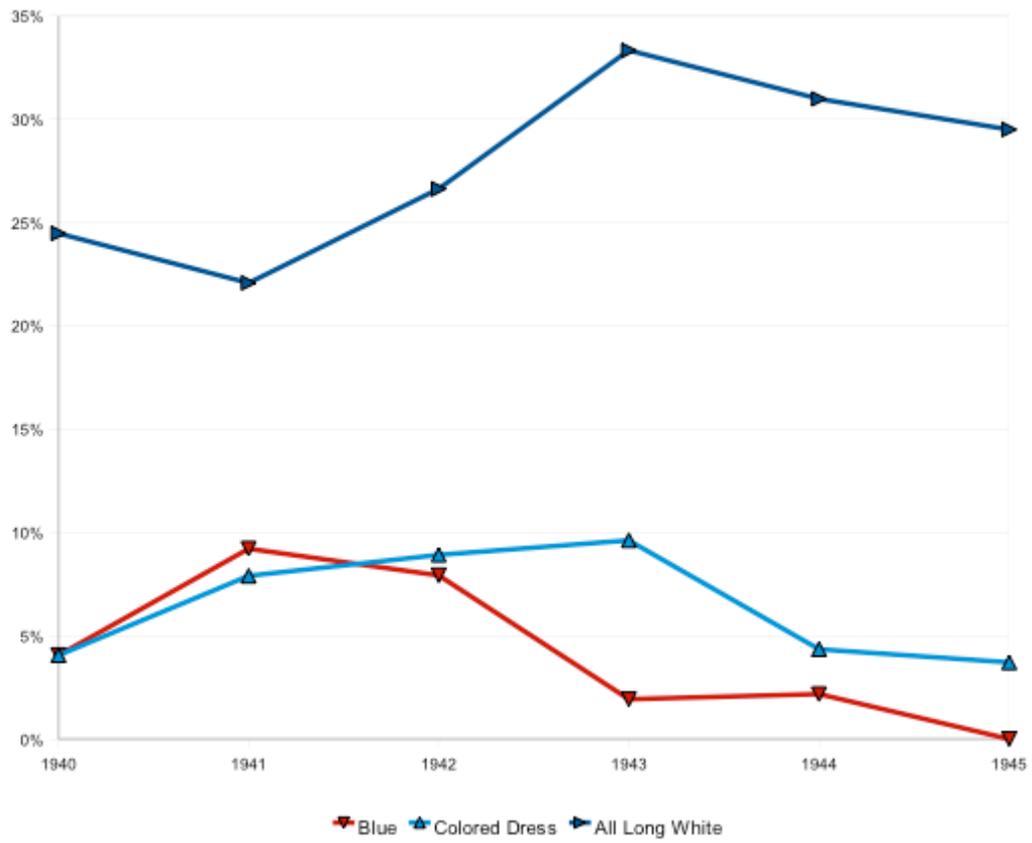
Analysis of articles in the *New York Times* yields a detailed understanding of the popularity of dress types and colors during the Second World War. First, I will address color. In 1941, Table 3 evidences a slight decrease in the popularity of white dresses versus colored dresses and specifically blue dresses. In 1942, the popularity of colored and blue dresses remains approximately the same while the popularity of white dresses rose sharply. Nineteen forty-three saw a peak in the popularity of white dresses while also seeing a bottom to the popularity of blue dresses. While

¹⁵⁶ *Chillicothe Constitution Tribune*, "Littrell-Pollard Wedding," August 1, 1940: 3.

¹⁵⁷ *Jackson Daily News*, "Charles Signey Stapleton Weds Ola Pearl Burns at Home Vows," December 14, 1941: 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Jackson Daily News*, "Smith-Mitchell Marriage Said In New Orleans November 22," December 14, 1941: 4.

Table 3:
Percentage of Announcements Featuring "Long White" v.
Percentage of Detailed Announcements Featuring "Blue" "Colored Dress"



blue dresses were at a low point in popularity, colored dresses reached their peak. Nineteen forty-three was, in fact, the peak year for all three styles with 1944 and 1945 seeing moderate decreases across the board.

From the above analysis and Table 3, we can gather a chronological understanding of the popularity of wedding dress color during the Second World War. Colored and blue dresses, while always less popular, saw peak popularity before the drastic increase in popularity of white dresses. During the war, popular opinion transitioned to strongly favor white dresses as opposed to colored dresses and in spite of their nationalistic connotations; certainly, the long white dress co-opted the nationalistic associations and its rise to prominence. Colored dresses were an alternative choice and many wore them even though the majority wore white.

Blue was popular as an alternate color choice, but it was by no means the only alternative. The following quote from *Jackson Daily News* mentions a alternative style in a color other than blue, “The bride wore a light beige chiffon military jacket dress. Her accessories were beige and British tan and her corsage pink rosebuds.”¹⁵⁹ This quote also broaches another aspect of non-traditional attire during the Second World War. Frequently there were direct influences from military dress. In this case, the jacket was styled in the fashion of a military uniform and even incorporated a military khaki color scheme.

In another type of wedding announcement very little detail is provided other than who was married and where and when the ceremony took place. This type of announcement was usually found in groups of similar announcements in a designed

¹⁵⁹ *Jackson Daily News*, "Home Rites Seal Austin-Yates Pledges Sunday," June 14, 1942: 1.

section of the newspaper. In the *Chicago Daily News*, for example, wedding announcements of this type were set off in a section titled “Weddings and Engagements.”

An example of this type of wedding announcement reads:

Mr. and Mrs. William A. Morrison of Farwell avenue are announcing the marriage of their daughter, Sylvia, to Melvin B. Nelson of Chicago. The Wedding took place Sunday.¹⁶⁰

Sometimes this type of wedding announcement includes more information about the bride and groom such as where they attended college and their plans after the ceremony. This type of wedding announcement rarely describes the wedding apparel worn by the bride or her attendants. What can be gathered from this kind of announcement is that the betrothed either did not feel a description of their wedding attire was necessary thereby implying a reduced perception of value for their wedding attire or they chose not to spend money to expand the wedding announcement including information about the wedding attire which also evidences a relatively low perception of value regarding their wedding attire. A third reason for this short wedding announcement might be it was hurriedly written as the wedding was hurriedly planned.

Evidence points to another ramification of wartime mobilization. Non-traditional wedding garments were employed significantly during the Second World War. Indeed, they were prevalent enough to justify attention in major advertising campaigns in *Bride Magazine*. Of these non-traditional garments, the most popular choice of color was blue, which likely suggests a connection to wartime nationalism and military service. The majority of brides used traditional attire, but newspaper’s wedding announcements

¹⁶⁰ *Chicago Daily News*, "Weddings and Engagements," August 2, 1941: 11.

suggest that non-traditional elements such as suits, dresses, and uniforms were present in limited proportion to the traditional majority.

RATIONAL-TRADITIONAL

Signs of the effect of wartime on nuptials were evident in other parts of the bride's wedding apparel as well. As mentioned previously, those brides determined to have a traditional white wedding gown but were unable to afford or find new wedding gowns opted to wear their mother or grandmother's wedding dress.¹⁶¹ Evidence of this was found in the wedding announcements, as well, such as this bride whose wedding was announced in the *New York Times*, "The bride...wore an ivory satin gown made on classic lines with a collar of rose point lace which had belonged to her grandmother. Her tulle veil, bordered with old family lace, was held by a coronet of orange blossoms."¹⁶² This bride whose wedding was announced in *Chicago Daily News* had a similar story, "The bride...is dressed in white net. Her gown has a bertha of rosepoint lace that belonged to her grandmother, and her 'something borrowed' is the tulle veil that Mrs. Bennett wore as a bride and its cap of lace that Mrs. Robert Sanders of Highland Park loaned..."¹⁶³ The above quotes serve to evidence two things: first, garments were in fact borrowed; second, the result of these borrowings was a traditional ceremony with traditional attire, while still facilitating the idea of wartime austerity.

¹⁶¹ Christina Probert, *Brides in Vogue Since 1910* (New York: Abbeville Press, Inc., 1984).

¹⁶² *New York Times*, "Madeleine Taylor Is Wed in Chantry," August 2, 1941: 19.

¹⁶³ *Chicago Daily News*, "Elizabeth Quinlan, And Jean Williams To Be Brides Today," August 20, 1940: 15.

Table 4 evidences a particularly interesting facet of the dynamics of borrowed dresses. From 1940 to 1943 borrowed dresses declined steadily while the popularity of colored dresses steadily increased. In 1944, both of these trends reversed sharply. Although a causal relationship cannot be established, it should be noted that victory in Europe was declared on May 7th, approximately one month before the beginning of the data collection period in 1944. As the popularity of borrowed dresses peaked in 1944 and the popularity of colored dresses bottomed in 1944, we can infer it is likely that borrowed dresses were rarely colored. In our findings, none of the announcements featuring borrowed dresses were colored. Considering other elements of this study, I suggest the increased desires for tradition and normalcy as the war was transitioning to an end resulted in a transition to white wedding dresses at the expense of other colors. This is supported by the data represented in Table 4.

This transition to tradition is further evidenced in Table 5 where a distinct decline in the popularity of borrowed dresses that is inversely correlated to the popularity of caps and hats can be seen. One explanation might be that while caps and hats were trendy during the Second World War, they became a victim of the flight to tradition beginning in 1944 when the popularity of borrowed gowns increased sharply. Caps and hats were stylish but were likely unavailable to be borrowed because of their relative recency.

Table 4:
Percent of Detailed Announcements Featuring "Colored Dress" "Borrowed"

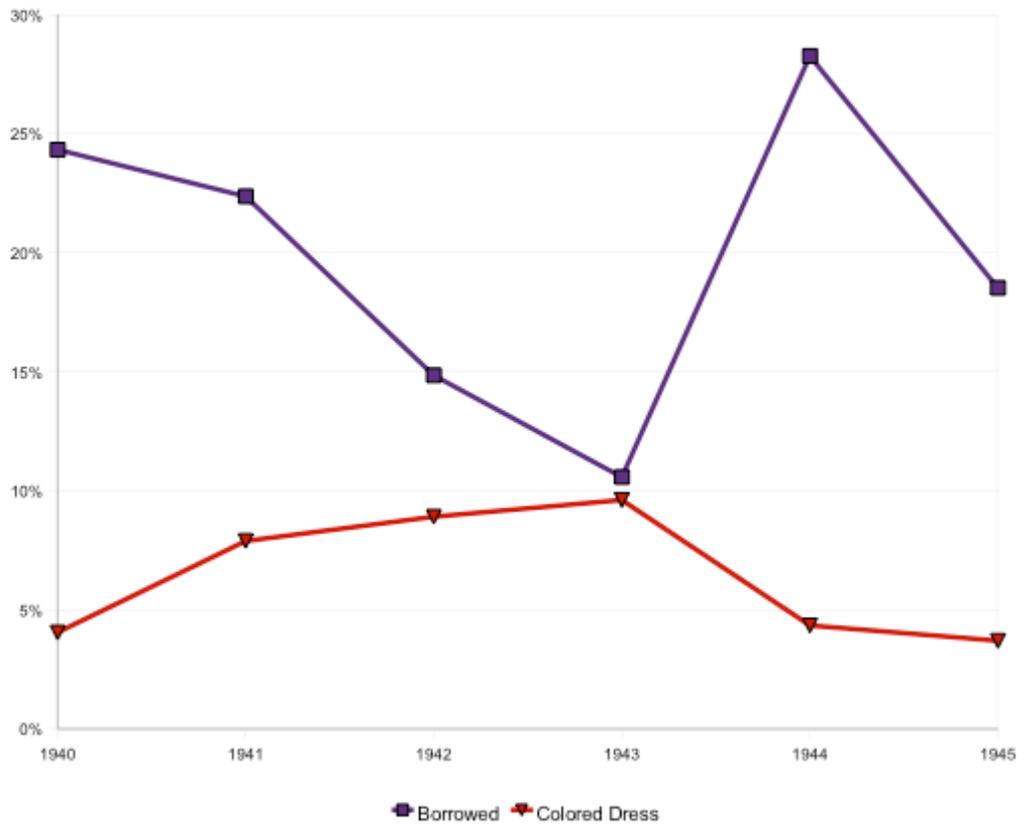
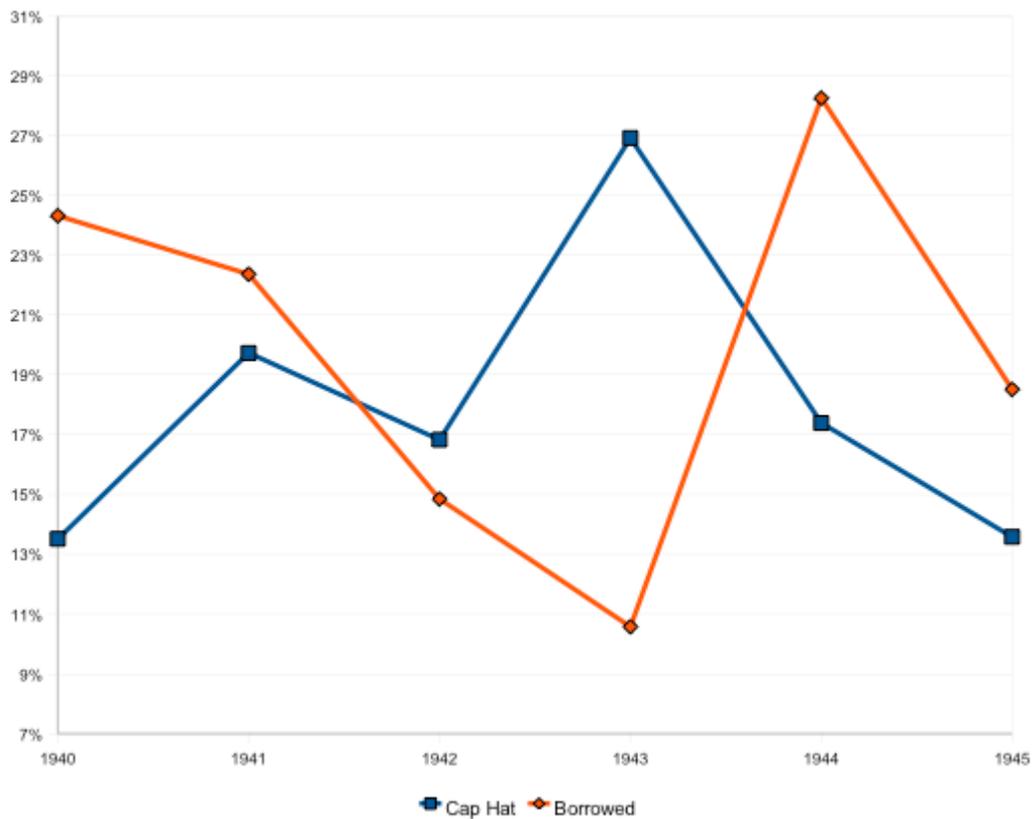


Table 5:
Percent of Detailed Articles Featuring "Cap / Hat" "Borrowed"



Women often wore the best dress they could buy, afford, find, or already owned. Many women found creative ways to make a special dress for their special day. One bride's mother-in-law purchased a dress for her through Eaton's Catalog in Canada.¹⁶⁴ Other brides had to borrow clothing to wear for their weddings. One bride's wedding apparel was almost all borrowed. Her wedding gown was blue and not a traditional wedding gown. The shoes she wore were two sizes too small and the hat was refurbished from before the war and her stockings were painted on with a seam drawn down the back of her leg with an eyebrow pencil. "All clothing was rationed," she explained, "we got a certain number of coupons, issued every six months. We had originally planned to marry in September, after the new lot of clothing coupons came out, I had bought a pattern for my gown. The war in Europe ended in May 1945 and my husband was on the Pacific draft back to Canada, so it was a crazy rush to get married before he left."¹⁶⁵ Another solution was to make a gown. One bride described her wedding apparel as a "Long, white gown which draped and then flowed into train." It was designed and made by the bride, "woven material, with raised floral pattern, bow at back waist, as well as 20 seed pearl buttons down back. [Her] head-piece [was made of] molded wax orange blossoms, with a waist length fine mesh veil with edge trimmed with 1/2 to 3/4" lace."¹⁶⁶

Due to military rules described in the "social" section and outlined by etiquette books, women serving the military often were not allowed to wear civilian clothing, including wedding dresses. This limitation varied by region and changed during the course of the war but was a significant dynamic worthy of consideration. Some women

¹⁶⁴ Hasty, Ashley. "World War II Weddings." Survey. *Survey Monkey*. 2 February 2010.

¹⁶⁵ Hasty, Ashley. "World War II Weddings." Survey. *Survey Monkey*. 2 February 2010.

¹⁶⁶ Hasty, Ashley. "World War II Weddings." Survey. *Survey Monkey*. 2 February 2010.

were obliged to be married in uniform, Eilene Paine, mentioned in an earlier chapter, providing an excellent example.¹⁶⁷ Other women were able to obtain permission from their commanding officer to wear a wedding gown.¹⁶⁸ In this case, we are presented with a ceremony in which non-traditional garment choice was mandatory. The bride had absolutely no discretion in what her attire would be. It does not seem this would have been her primary choice, but given the circumstances was her only option. Certainly rules were not always applied with such rigor. The Bon Marche' Seattle's Great Store advertisement below pictures a woman in the military and the same woman in a wedding gown, it reads:

Two Lives I Live...Now...Brave with the resolve to wear my uniform with dignity and pride. Knowing that by so doing the bells of peace will ring soon. Now, too...Aglow with the dream of wedding bells. The shining glory of my wedding gown is equaled only but the radiance of our love. Through all days of peace or war The Bon Marche' Bridal Bureau awaits to guide all brides...in the service or in civilian pace...through all the wondrous maze of wedding planning.¹⁶⁹

Although the Bon Marche' advertisement still encouraged a white wedding gown, it also conceded the necessity of military uniform while also promoting the nostalgic and traditional wedding gown.

Other couples did not embrace the military influence on weddings. Elizabeth Virginia Davis explained why her wedding did not have a military influence, "My

¹⁶⁷ Eileen Paine Collection (AFC/2001/001/11230), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

¹⁶⁸ Charlotte Owen Collection (AFC/2001/001/24603), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

¹⁶⁹ *Bride Magazine*, "Bon Marche' Advertisement," Autumn 1943.

husband did not want it to be a military wedding. He was in the Service a long time. And he said—we went to the justice of the peace with our other friends in Oakland.”¹⁷⁰

In summation, at the confluence of social and logistical influences, concerns of rationality become present in the decision-making process. These concerns are evidenced most clearly in the choice to use non-traditional attire. The nature of non-traditional attire provides insight into the values of the individuals involved in the marriage. This is the subject of the “non-traditional” segment mentioned above. While non-traditional attire is the most apparent expression of the rational dynamic, the dynamic is also evidenced with more subtlety in other ways. In the “rational-traditional” segment I discussed how borrowing a wedding garment constituted a way to realize both traditional inclinations and uphold wartime austerity, which is a key element to the rational motivation.

¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth Wayland Collection (AFC/2001/001/57521), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

A RIGHT TO ROMANCE:
SENTIMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS INFLUENCING BRIDAL ATTIRE

Sentimental considerations are influences based in thoughts and emotions of the bride regarding her wedding apparel. In this section the objective is to provide an explanation of the desires of war brides in this regard. Relevant excerpts from *Bride Magazine* will again be consulted, as will the recently conducted surveys of war brides. Qualitative analysis of newspaper wedding announcements will be employed. Quantitative analysis of wedding announcements from the *New York Times* will also be offered in the support of the positions argued in this section.

MAGAZINES

Many advertisers (and we can only assume the brides as well) felt brides deserved, even had the right, to the wedding of which they always dreamed. A Lord and Taylor advertisement stated, "War Brides want to be beautiful, too. And though time's short, they're having the gown and the wedding they've always dreamed of."¹⁷¹ It was undeniably important for brides during the Second World War to pursue and realize an ideal, and most frequently traditional, wedding dress.

Many advertisements encouraged brides to have a traditional white wedding, some even stating that it was all the grooms wanted when they returned. The bride and groom deserved a wedding worth remembering. As mentioned previously, the L85 restrictions on clothing did not apply to wedding gowns. A New York Dress Institute advertisement used this fact to their advantage to encourage brides to spend money on their wedding dress. It read:

¹⁷¹ *Bride Magazine*, "Lord and Taylor Advertisement," Autumn 1943: 3.

Your right to a wedding: One day, above all others, is yours...a day so rare that it will live in vivid memory beyond the end of time. The date? Who knows, today? Perhaps a telephone call will set the time...or maybe a telegram. And, yet, that day is yours – just as though you'd planned it so...Mindful of your Right to Romance, your government has recognized the importance of preserving the traditional bridal gown. True to this trust, the ingenious Bride Makers of New York have created new wartime trains with all the illusion of that glorious sweep of white – in the spirit of the fashions of today...For you who must plan in haste, bridal shops the country over present a wide variety of traditional bridal gowns – ready to wear tomorrow. And, when this war and its restrictions are long forgotten, the memory of your day will shine through all the years.¹⁷²

In what is truly one of the most eloquent advertisements ever published we are provided with evidence of the broad and sweeping prevalence of affinity for traditional wedding attire. Companies sought to facilitate all manner of ceremonies in a traditional fashion. This advertisement appealed to those who, regardless of the duration of their engagement, wanted the memory of their traditional gown to “shine through all the years.” So popular was this sentiment that the advertisement invoked government-recognized legitimacy through mention of the special provision afforded wedding gowns in the L85 restrictions. Advertisements such as this constitute evidence of and also served to reinforce the idea that brides had a right to a traditional wedding with a traditional wedding gown.

The appeal of traditional elements in the wedding ceremony was amplified during the Second World War. In addition to the increased appeal of traditional white wedding gown we find a corresponding affinity for other traditional practices. The cited advertisement equates the purchase of a traditional wedding gown to a military tradition. A Strawbridge and Clothier advertisement refers to the bride and groom walking beneath an arch of swords:

¹⁷² *Bride Magazine*, "New York Dress Institute Advertisement," Autumn 1943: 2.



Image 2: An example of a traditional white wedding gown from 1944¹⁷³

¹⁷³ [Untitled photograph of Mr. and Mrs. Weddell]. Retrieved March 8, 2011 from:
Missouri Historic Costume & Textile Collection

Wedding Traditions: For the girl who marries into the Navy, there's the thrilling, dramatic tradition of walking beneath a silvery arch of crossed swords. For the girl who marries in Philadelphia, there's the fine old tradition of buying her wedding gown at Strawbridge & Clothier's, where her mother and her mother before her, bought their bridal attire.¹⁷⁴

Similarly, a Holmes Department Store advertisement also refers to that arch of swords but also refers to the furlough wedding and includes a variety of patriotic references, as well:

United For Victory: Pledged in matrimony and pledged to the ideals which their forefathers defended since the birth of our republic. Serene and determined in their assurance that the Victory will be ours. Holmes, during its 100 years, has seen the brides of many generations married under crossed swords and the shadow of war. Today, Holmes is ready to make that breathless furlough wedding a cherished memory and a smoothly managed event for the young people who are dedicating their lives to each other and to their country.¹⁷⁵

The aforementioned quote incorporates the same tradition discussed in the previous quote but augments the nationalistic military tradition with further associations to sacrifice for one's country. All of these references are linked by the advertisement to sentiments for a traditional wedding. The definition of a traditional wedding has been expanded in this advertisement to incorporate the furlough wedding, even affording it a place of unique honor because of the perceived sacrifice associated with it. These advertisements reflect popular ideas concerning weddings and wedding apparel during our subject time period and afford us some insight into the sentiments of those married during the Second World War.

¹⁷⁴ *Bride Magazine*, "Strawbridge and Clothier Advertisement," Spring 1941: 22.

¹⁷⁵ *Bride Magazine*, "Holmes Department Store Advertisement," Autumn 1942: 12.

NEWSPAPERS

For an understanding of actual events that transpired I turn to wedding announcements published in newspapers. This section will address newspaper announcements in two ways. The first way involves a qualitative assessment of the contents of wedding announcements that discuss traditional white weddings. The second is a quantitative analysis of wedding announcements that will illustrate a description of trends regarding white weddings immediately preceding and during the Second World War. I will begin with the qualitative assessment.

From the wedding announcements I have reviewed in the four sections of this dissertation, it seems that brides marrying between 1940 and 1945 were likely to wear one of two costumes: the traditional white wedding dress or a tailored suit, most likely in navy or other shades of blue but also found in other colors. Regardless of the type of wedding apparel worn, descriptions ranged from long and elaborate to short and concise. The length of the descriptions did not depend on the size of the newspaper, both long and short descriptions were found in newspapers such as the *New York Times* as well as the *Chillicothe Constitution Tribune*. The following two quotes both describe a bride wearing a traditional wedding gown, but the descriptions vary significantly:

The bride's brown-haired loveliness was accentuated by her white marquisette gown. The fitted bodice was plain except for a narrow double-ruffle, which met at a point just below the center of the sweetheart neckline and rose over the shoulders to produce a decollete effect in the back. The double-ruffle was repeated on the full skirt. Her shoulder-length veil was held in place by a garland of white split-carnations.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ *The Chillicothe Constitution Tribune*, "Miss Allison and 1Lt Dye Exchange Vows at Ceremony," June 28, 1945: 5.

The second example was found in the *New York Times* and simply says, “The bride...wore a gown of ivory satin and a tulle veil.”¹⁷⁷ In another type of wedding announcement, we find rich description especially regarding decorations, musical arrangements, wedding apparel (particularly the bride and her attendants), and details about the reception. Most wedding announcements of this type provided information about the couple’s post wedding honeymoon plans and permanent residence. Some wedding announcements even included the names of the people who attended the wedding. Some announcements of this type include pictures, but certainly not all. In these announcements the bride’s wedding apparel is very accurately described:

She was exquisitely gowned in a bridal gown of white marquisette and alcenon lace fashioned with Basque waist and puffed sleeves and a bouffant skirt. The square neckline was outlined in lace and the sleeves were bound in lace. Inserted panels of lace extended to the hem of the gown and continued through the long train of the gown. Her graceful veil of illusion fell the length of the train from a lace coronet.... about her neck she wore a string of pearls, the gift of the bridegroom.¹⁷⁸

The quote above is richly described of the bride’s traditional attire. A more exemplary example of a presentation of ideal traditional white wedding attire is difficult to attain. Certainly, this quote typifies evidence of this sentiment. The prevalence of this sentiment is further evidenced and described in further detail in the following section.

World War II witnessed an increase in the popularity of traditional white wedding gowns. Table 6, drawn from data in the *New York Times*, indicates the frequency of long white wedding gowns in wedding announcements. Beginning in 1941, the percentage of

¹⁷⁷ *New York Times*, "Katherine T. Eldred Is Wed in Stamford," August 1, 1943: 36.

¹⁷⁸ *Jackson Daily News*, "Mr. O.H. Williford Weds Miss Martha Harrison At Tutwiler Ceremony," April 28, 1940: 5.

announcements mentioning a long white wedding gown increases over ten percent. This suggests that the affects of World War II served to bolster desires for traditional weddings including traditional white wedding gowns.

The importance of traditional weddings and wedding attire is further evidenced in Table 7, which displays an increase in the percentage of announcements during the Second World War featuring details about the wedding ceremony. While this does not directly indicate a wedding was traditional, including attire, it does indicate that the population was becoming increasingly enamored with wedding ceremonies and things associated with them. In a period marked by societal upheaval and unpredictability it follows that traditions such as marriage would become amplified in importance, which further suggests that the increase in detail featured in Table 7 is related to an increased desire for tradition.

Table 8 provides further evidence that people placed greater value in wedding ceremonies and all their trappings but emphasizes attire specifically. In 1940 and 1941, the percentage of articles with an accompanying image was nearly the same. In the first full year of United States involvement in the Second World War, there was a sharp increase nearly doubling the percentage of articles featuring an image. This percentage would increase again in 1943 but only slightly and would fall slightly in 1944 and again in 1945. This increase in the popularity of images of brides in their attire is clear evidence of an increased value associated with traditional wedding attire during the Second World War. Inclusion of an image cost space in the newspaper and cost money to the person placing the announcement. These announcements were placed at significant expense further speaks to their perceived importance.

Table 6:
Percent of Articles Featuring "Long White"

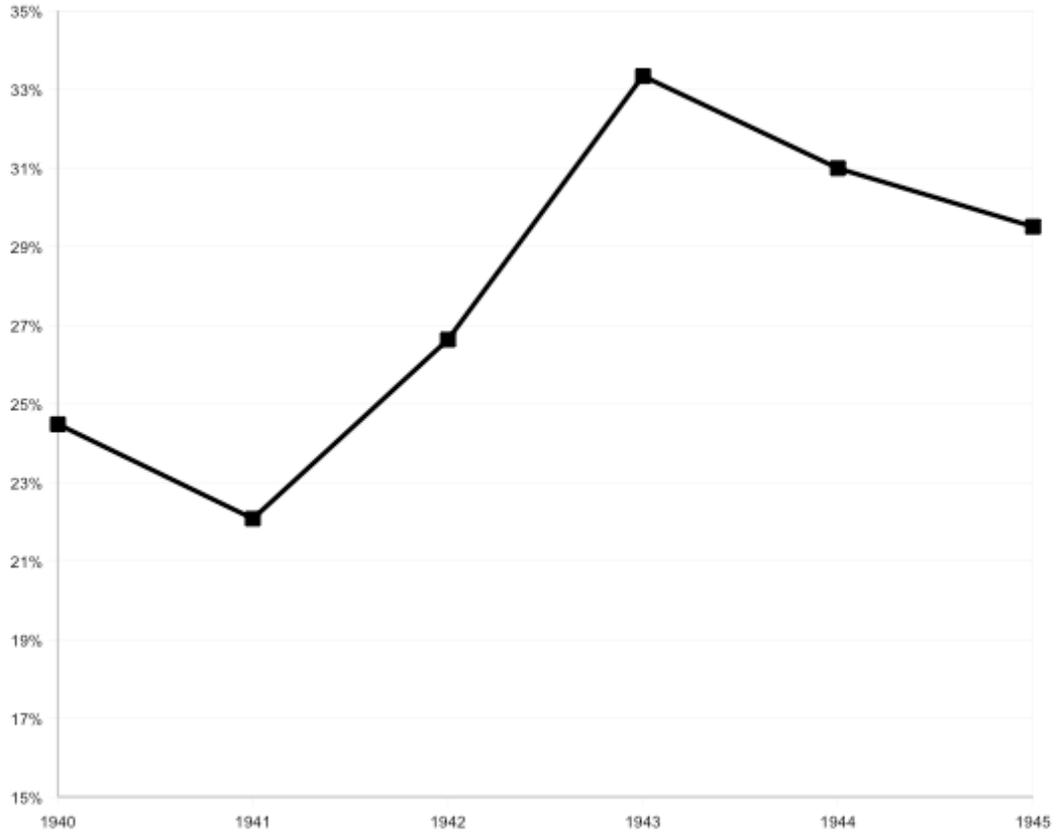


Table 7:
Percent of Articles Featuring Detail



Table 8:
Percent of Articles Featuring an Image



SURVEYS & INTERVIEWS

Clare Marie Crane had a traditional venue for her ceremony, “It was a beautiful wedding and in a brand new church. Our parish had built a brand new church and the first wedding was supposed to be in June. But I sort of sneaked in and had the wedding in the end of May (laughs.) So I was the first bride in the new church.”¹⁷⁹ Clare’s obvious concern for and pride in her wedding taking place in this particular chapel evidences an affinity for tradition that was clearly present in her wedding. It is not unreasonable to presume this affinity for tradition would also carry over to her choice of attire.

Clare was lucky to have connections and easy access to formal apparel. She describes the compromise she made when determining the wedding apparel to be worn by both her and her bridesmaids,

Well, since my mother had a dress shop, it was not a problem to get a dress- a wedding dress. Not the one that I would have probably picked (laughs) but it was there and I could use it We serviced a lot of weddings at that time. And I just called up my girlfriends and told them, and I said- we all had little semi-formal dresses- and I said "Just wear one of your pretty semi-formal dresses." And they had different colors. We had one girl in yellow, one in aqua, and one in peach and I was in white of course. And it was a beautiful wedding and in a brand new church.¹⁸⁰

The first thing to be noted from this quote is drawn from the bride’s statement, “...in white of course.” It seems Clare can think of no other attire that would possibly be acceptable for her wedding. Naturally she would wear white. The importance of matching bridesmaids’ attire was less than that of a properly adorned bride. The bridesmaids could

¹⁷⁹ Clare Crane Collection (AFC/2001/001/1754), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

¹⁸⁰ Clare Crane Collection (AFC/2001/001/1754), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

be mismatched and the ceremony remained beautiful as long as the bride wore white. Clearly the key to the ceremony, in the eyes of this bride, was the traditional white gown and the church evidencing an affinity for tradition.

Clare had unusual availability to bridal attire because of a personal connection. Most brides were not afforded this luxury. The following excerpt from “The Art of World War II: Works from Missouri Collections” tells the story of one bride who, like Clare, desired a traditional gown but was moved to realize this desire through different means. Betty Cook Rottmann was unable to use silk to create a traditional gown, in an industrious fashion she used cotton to create a beautiful white wedding gown from fourteen yards of lace.

Prudence Burrell was another bride who cared immensely about traditional wedding attire, but was in a significantly different situation than the previous bride. Unlike many, she was able to wear a white silk gown to her wedding. Prudence explains why she was married in the Philippines and how she was able to wear a dress of silk,

So, after about a year and a half, this medical administrator began kind of dating me and he said, "Well, will you marry me?" And I had said "Yes" and so he said, "OK, when we get to the States." I said, "Oh, no, like hell, you'll get to the States where they've been dressing fine and all that and we've been dressing like vagabonds, no way, we're getting married here." So, therefore, that's why I had my wedding in the Philippines and my dress was made from a parachute.¹⁸¹

Even in the Philippines where, as this bride states, servicemembers were dressing like “vagabonds,” industrious brides like Prudence were able to realize their traditional wedding and wedding gown.

¹⁸¹ Prudence Burrell Collection (AFC/2001/001/4747), Veterans History Project, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

Many times war brides were forced to go to extraordinary lengths to realize their white wedding. This contributed to and is evidenced by how much they still cherish their wedding gowns even decades after the event. Gowns that were not made of silk and were frequently improvised fulfilled desires for a traditional wedding and remain loved by the brides who wore them. We have further evidence of these assertions in the following survey excerpt. One bride had strong feelings regarding her wedding apparel as described by her daughter in an anonymous survey. When asked about how she felt about her wedding dress she responded:

[She] treasured it, but because it was so hard to come by she loaned it to others. In 1944, she had it returned from their cleaning ruined. She kept the bow, her headpiece, and the buttons from the dress - which were eventually used on a sweater she knit (and that her daughter still has).¹⁸²

Other responses to the same question included: “she liked it very much” and “she loved her dress.” Bride’s traditional gowns came in a variety of materials through a variety of channels but fulfilled the same traditional desire and hold a special place in the hearts of those who wore them.

¹⁸² Hasty, Ashley. “World War II Weddings.” Survey. *Survey Monkey*. 2 February 2010.

CONCLUSION

The results section of this study identifies four themes that articulate the dynamics influencing wedding apparel during the Second World War. The four themes identified are social, logistical, rational, and sentimental. The social dynamic consists of advice provided through perceived market authorities. These influences were evidenced through etiquette books and *Bride Magazine*. These sources suggest the traditional white wedding was the ideal to achieve but patriotic alternatives were available and not discouraged. Furthermore, the challenging situation fostered the nationalistic connotations of the traditional white wedding and promoted white wedding dresses during the conflict.

Logistical challenges consisted of difficulties arising from the physical locations and transportation of people and goods directly related to the wedding ceremony. Military schedules made planning a wedding challenging during the Second World War. Additionally, material for dresses became difficult to obtain despite exceptions from L85 material restrictions afforded wedding attire. This discussion was supported through evidence from wedding announcements, magazine excerpts, etiquette books, and surveys and interviews.

Social and logistical concerns contributed to rational considerations, which are described as personal inclinations to make concessions regarding wedding attire. These concessions were motivated by the overall nationalistic sentiments during wartime mobilization. In some cases the entire wedding ceremony was significantly altered, this situation was referred to as a non-traditional wedding. An example includes that of a woman choosing to wear a suit as opposed to a traditional white wedding gown. In other

cases, elements of the rational concern were present but to a lesser extent; these were referred to as rational-traditional weddings. An example includes that of a woman choosing to borrow a traditional white wedding gown from a friend or family member.

Sentimental considerations arise from the thoughts and emotions of a bride toward her wedding apparel. This section finds that the vast majority of women wanted to wear a traditional white wedding gown, and succeeded in that regard. During the war, the bride in white appears to have become a nationalistic symbol and as the patriotic connotations became more powerful the prevalence of white weddings increased. It is suggested that the bride in white is what the men were fighting for, embodying the American ideal.

World War II posed formidable challenges to the young generation that was tasked with participating in it. This young generation, also at the prime age to wed, found the implications of the Second World War massively influential in their decisions regarding wedding attire. The influence of World War II did not discourage traditional white wedding gowns but, in fact, solidified their place in American matrimonial ceremony.

FURTHER RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

This dissertation addresses a very specific element of textile and apparel as it relates to the Second World War. The subject of “white wedding gowns” as traditional attire could also be investigated in depth in an attempt to determine the origins of its traditional connotations. Broadening the topic from wedding gowns specifically to other areas of wedding attire constitutes the largest immediately related area in which further

research is still needed. Other areas of wedding attire under this umbrella include men's garments and attendant's apparel.

Only American attire was addressed in this study. A similar study could be extended to other nationalities during this time period, most easily, Western Europe. Similarly, studies of men's attire and attendant's apparel could be extended to these other cultural groups.

The effects of World War II on wedding attire were certainly material in the post-war consumer culture. Further research could be conducted on the results of the influence of World War II wedding dynamics on subsequent generations. As the United States exported consumerism following the war, it is likely that wedding attire was involved in the rise of consumerism worldwide.

A key limitation to this study is an absence of personal interviews targeted at the topic. Interviews that were included were not targeted directly at the subject of this study, although they contained relevant material. A more thorough empirical study of newspaper announcements could be conducted nationwide to provide a geographical analysis not present in this study. Although not present, information drawn from *The New York Times*, which is the newspaper of record in the United States, clearly serves as a snapshot of the contemporary situation.

SURVEY QUESTIONS

(Posted on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com))

General Questions:

- Where did you live during World War II?
- What year did you get married?
- How old were you when you got married?
- How old was your spouse when you got married?
- How long were you engaged?
- What city/state were you married?
- In what type of venue were you married? (I.e. church, chapel, courthouse, outdoors, home, etc.)
- How would you describe your wedding in terms of size?
- Describe your wedding apparel.

Specific Questions:

Theme: Growing Up

- What was your idea of the “perfect wedding” when you were growing up?
- What did you want to wear to your wedding when you were growing up?

Theme: Finding Love

- Did you meet your spouse before, during, or after World War II?
- How did you meet your spouse?
- What was life like while your spouse was overseas/ in the military/ away from home during World War II?
- How did your spouse propose?

Theme: The Wedding

- How much time did you have to plan your wedding?
- What was your idea of the “perfect wedding” once you were engaged?
- What were your priorities when planning your wedding?
- Did you have to make sacrifices or compromises when it came to your wedding? If so, what were they?
- Where did you get your wedding dress?
- Who helped you pick out your wedding dress? What were their opinions?
- How did you feel about your wedding dress?
- How did you feel wearing your wedding dress?
- Describe your wedding day.
- How did you feel on the day of your wedding?

Theme: Reflection

- If you could change anything about your wedding, what would it be?
- Do you still own your wedding dress?
- What do your children and/or grandchildren say about your wedding dress?
- If you could get married again, what would you wear?

NEW YORK TIMES DATA ANALYSIS TABLE

Year	Records	No Detail	Picture	Long White	Veils	Short White	Suit	Uniforms	Cap/Hat	Borrowed	Blue/Colored Dress
1940	286	212 74.13%	45 15.73%	70 24.48%	61 21.33%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	10 3.50%	18 6.29%	3 1.05%
				94.50%	82.43%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	13.51%	24.32%	4.05%
1941	299	223 74.58%	48 16.05%	66 22.07%	67 22.41%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	15 5.02%	17 5.69%	7 2.34%
				86.64%	88.16%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	19.74%	22.37%	9.21%
1942	338	237 70.12%	89 26.33%	90 26.63%	83 24.56%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	17 5.03%	15 4.44%	9 2.66%
				86.11%	82.16%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	16.83%	14.85%	7.92%
1943	273	169 61.90%	88 32.23%	91 33.33%	82 30.04%	2 0.73%	0 0.00%	1 0.37%	28 10.26%	11 4.03%	2 0.73%
				87.50%	78.85%	1.92%	0.00%	0.96%	26.92%	10.56%	1.92%
1944	284	192 67.61%	81 28.52%	88 30.99%	86 30.30%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 0.35%	16 5.63%	26 9.15%	2 0.70%
				96.65%	96.65%	0.00%	0.00%	1.09%	17.36%	28.26%	2.17%
1945	261	180 68.97%	54 20.69%	77 29.50%	72 27.59%	0 0.00%	1 0.38%	0 0.00%	11 4.21%	15 5.75%	0 0.00%
				95.06%	86.89%	0.00%	1.23%	0.00%	13.56%	18.52%	0.00%

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