



## Meta-Analysis of U.S. Wartime Dress Research

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Meta-analysis is a research method that can reveal relationships or patterns across several research studies. There has been some research on studying trends of historic clothing and textile research,<sup>1</sup> but there has not been a meta-analysis of a single historic style period. The purpose of this study was to analyze scholarship focused on U.S. apparel and textiles in WW II in order to identify what topics have been explored; what research methods, concepts and theories have been used and to identify patterns or trends in the data.

Eight research articles focusing on some aspect of U.S. clothing and textiles during WW II were analyzed.<sup>2</sup> Three articles (37.5%) focused on general Wartime dress or textiles; a specific area of the country, city/town or factory was the focus for three articles (37.5%); a specific item of dress was examined in two articles (25%) and the U.S. fashion industry was the theme of one article (12.5%). Research methods included historic analysis, oral history and object analysis. Six articles (75%) included a discussion of patriotism and dress. Additional themes were the influence of the War on the U.S. home front, socio-cultural attitudes and values, aspects of gender, race relations, families, government and legislation, mass media and popular culture, fashion advertising and promotion, consumption and product availability, retailers and retail strategies, clothing and textile design and manufacture and dress and adornment.

The War years were a time of transition and change at home and abroad, which led to contradictory attitudes, behaviors and feelings among individuals. Ambivalence was a concept explicitly discussed in one article and implied in five others;<sup>3</sup> the term refers to “being pulled in conflicting directions.”<sup>4</sup> Ambivalence is an attribute associated with multiple social-psychological and consumer behavior theories including Symbolic Interactionist Theory, Goffman’s *Stigma*,<sup>5</sup> Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovations,<sup>6</sup> and theories on approach-avoidance and cognitive dissonance. While most interpretive dress research lacks named theory, it is clear that U.S. WWII clothing and textile research, directly or indirectly, refer to selected theoretical concepts such as ambivalence.<sup>7</sup> The concept ambivalence is important to the understanding of U.S. home front consumption and culture. For example, Atkins explains that even with material shortages, textile manufacturers made patriotic textiles, and consumers bought them in order to communicate their patriotism.<sup>8</sup> Mower and Pedersen interviewed women about their wartime consumer behaviors and noted a discrepancy between what respondents stated about their interest in fashion and themes found in retail advertisements.<sup>9</sup> These conflicting perceptions and messages likely led to ambivalence among Wartime consumers.

In addition to ambivalence other references to theoretical works include Patnode's reference to Goffman's *Stigma*,<sup>10</sup> Buckland's references to McCracken's theories of culture and consumption and Davis's theories of dress and identity.<sup>11</sup> Aspects of Wartime dress-related research that still need to be explored include children, men's and teenage dress, dress worn by different religious sects, socio-economic classes, clothing worn by non-whites and ethnic-inspired dress. Regional differences in dress and/or availability of clothing and textiles and retail-focused research still need to be explored.

Identifying key concepts assist in our understanding of Wartime consumer behavior. The presence, implied or explicit, of the concept ambivalence in U.S. Wartime dress research indicates that it is useful to our understanding of wartime consumer behavior and dress. Consideration of potential theoretical concepts can help explain and interpret Wartime consumer behavior and dress. Historic dress scholars should continue to think about concepts and theories in other disciplines to aid our understanding of historic dress and consumer behavior.

<sup>1</sup> G. Reeves-DeArmond, J. Paff Ogle and K. R. Tremblay, Jr., "Research and Theory Trends in Historic Dress and Textiles Research: An Analysis of *CTRJ* and *Dress*," *CTRJ* 29, no. 3 (2011): 216-231.

<sup>2</sup> H. Alford, "The Zoot Suit: Its History and Influence," *Fashion Theory* 8, no. 2 (2004): 225-236; J. M. Atkins, "Wearing Propaganda: Textiles on the Home Front in Japan, Great Britain, and America during the Greater East Asian War, 1931-45," *Textile* 2, no. 1 (2004): 24-45; M. Boardman, "Shoulder to shoulder" Women's patriotic scarves of World War II," *Dress*, 25(1998): 3-16; S. S. Buckland, "Fashion as a tool of World War II: A case study supporting the SI Theory," *CTRJ* 18, no. 3(2000): 140-151; S. S. Buckland and G. S. O'Neal, "'We Publish Fashions Because They are News': *The New York Times* 1940 through 1945," *Dress* 25(1998): 33-41; J. M. Mower & E. L. Pedersen, "Pretty and Patriotic": Women's consumption of apparel during World War II," *Dress* 39, no. 1(2013): 37-54; S. R. Patnode, "'Keep it Under Your Hat': Safety campaigns and fashion in the World War II factory," *The Journal of American Culture* 35, no. 3(2012): 231-243; N. Turner, "Deprivation Fashion," *DUCK Journal for Research in Textiles and Textile Design*, 2 (2011): 1-21.

<sup>3</sup> Ambivalence is discussed in Buckland and implied by Alford, Atkins, Boardman, Mower & Pedersen and Patnode.

<sup>4</sup> S. B. Kaiser, R. H. Nagasawa & S. S. Hutton, "Construction of an SI Theory of Fashion: Part 1. Ambivalence and Change," *CTRJ* 13, no. 3 (1995): 175.

<sup>5</sup> The concept ambivalence is explicitly discussed in Goffman's *Stigma*. E. Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), 106.

<sup>6</sup> The concept ambivalence is not explicitly discussed in Rogers' Theory of Diffusion of Innovations; however "consequences" of adopting new innovations will depend upon "conflicting" feelings or perceptions. E. M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Free Press, 2003), 31.

<sup>7</sup> E. L. Pedersen, "Defining and Developing Theory in the Study of Dress," *Dress* 35 (2008-2009): 73.

<sup>8</sup> Atkins, "Wearing Propaganda," 31.

<sup>9</sup> Mower & Pedersen, "Pretty and Patriotic," 42.

<sup>10</sup> Patnode, "'Keep it Under Your Hat,'" 235.

<sup>11</sup> Buckland, "Fashion as a tool of World War II," p. 142; G. McCracken, *Culture & Consumption*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988); F. Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).