"YOUR MESSAGE HERE": AN ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. NAVY IN PHOTO POSTCARDS

by

Stephanie Croatt

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Director of Thesis: John Tilley

Major Department: Maritime Studies

The purpose of this project is to analyze photographic postcards with images of the U.S. Navy between 1913 and 1945. This analysis will explore how the postcard images portray the Navy as powerful, competent, and happy. This portrayal became more pronounced over time, thanks to increasing photography training and censorship practices in the Navy. As a widely popular medium for the dissemination of "soft news" that would have recruited the public and enlisted population's consent and support of the U.S. Navy's activities, the photo postcards analyzed here demonstrate what kinds of messages the postcards would have conveyed. Photo postcards acted as evidence of the sailor's activities abroad and of the Navy's power in the form of ships and capable, numerous crews. While they offered proof of a powerful, capable Navy, the images would have also elicited pride and patriotism from the viewer. This, in turn, might have facilitated the civilian's furthered support of war efforts or of retaining funding for the Navy during peacetime, and enticing more men to join the Navy. For men in the Navy, the pride invoked by postcard images may have helped define their identity as a member of the Navy.

"YOUR MESSAGE HERE": AN ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. NAVY IN PHOTO POSTCARDS

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by

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Stephanie Croatt

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF
DISSERTATION/THESIS: _____

John Tilley, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____

Todd Bennett, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____

Bradley Rodgers, PhD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____

Robert Browning, PhD

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF HISTORY: _____

Gerald Prokopowicz, PhD

DEAN OF THE
GRADUATE SCHOOL: _____

Paul J. Gemperline, PhD

To Justin

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INTRODUCTION

In dusty attics, old photo albums, moldering boxes in closets, antique shops, and museum collections, reside 3½-inch by 5½-inch traces of times past. These traces, made of cardstock with photographic images either printed or developed onto the fronts, exist in various conditions; some in excellent condition, some woefully neglected over time or exhibiting traces of a much-handled life. Whatever their condition, photographic postcards, these traces of past people, places, and events, offer up evidence of life in the past. Far from mute witnesses to history, photo postcards speak. They talk about how they were used, what their life was like after inception, and what kind of culture they were created in. During their discourse, photo postcards also imply who made them and for what purpose. For historians who will listen, photo postcards can be wonderfully informative historical documents.

Unfortunately, photographic postcards remain an underutilized source of information for historians. It may be difficult for historians to interact effectively with images because image analysis is not a skill regularly taught to students of history. In a 1998 study of American history textbooks, Louis P. Masur found that few, if any, of the textbooks encouraged students to view historic images critically. In the vast majority of the textbooks studied in Masur's project, images were presented as "just gift wrapping, not the gift."[1] For these textbooks, images are illustrations, nothing more. Perhaps this attitude about images stems from our propensity to value words over images. Psychoanalyst and iconographer Laurie Schneider Adams explains that in a child's development, the child understands pictures before words. Furthermore, dreams, fantasies, and

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[1] Louis P. Masur, "'Pictures Have Now Become a Necessity': The Use of Images in American History Textbooks," *The Journal of American History* 84, no.4 (1998): 1410.

memories are all image based. Thus, there is a scholarly tendency to "attribute greater intellectual complexity to words than to pictures."[2]

Whatever may be the case, there remains a gap in current scholarship that this thesis will attempt to address. The purpose of this project is to conduct an image analysis of photographic postcards with images of the U.S. Navy between 1913 and 1945. This image analysis will not only try to utilize and demonstrate image analysis methodologies put forth by scholars over time; it will also offer an interpretation of a particular group of photographic postcards. This interpretation will explore how the photographic images on the front of photographic postcards put forth a portrayal of the U.S. Navy and life in the Navy that would have projected an image of a mighty, capable, and happy navy. This portrayal became more pronounced over time, thanks to increasing photographer training and censorship practices in the Navy.

Methodology

Photographic postcards provide an excellent medium for this examination because, unlike official Navy photographs taken for documentation purposes, postcards were mobile photographs meant to be shared and seen by the general public. These cards' intended purpose was first and foremost a way to communicate with others. For the purposes of this study, "photographic postcards" include printed photographic postcards and postcards with photographic images developed directly onto the cardstock (known as "real photo postcards"). Postcards with hand-drawn or other non-photographic images were not included in the study.

In order to conduct the image analysis around which this thesis is centered, the researcher accessed postcard collections in the Battleship *North Carolina* Museum, the Battleship *Wisconsin* and Hampton Roads Naval Museums, the Battleship *Alabama*/USS *Drum* Museum, and the Battleship *Texas* Museum. The San Diego Navy Historical Association website also

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[2] Laurie Schneider Adams, *Art and Psychoanalysis* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 41.

offered virtual access to postcard images. Each museum offered up groups of postcards with images related to the training stations or ship(s) they are presently in charge of curating for the public. For this reason, the museums contained different images with very little overlap. Visits to the National Archives in College Park, Maryland and the Naval History and Heritage Command in the Washington Naval Yard, Washington, D.C. provided historical documents related to photography and censorship in the Navy. The combined total of postcards in the six museum collections was 1,954. Cards with non-photographic images and postcards that did not date between 1913 and 1945 were omitted from the study, leaving 919 cards for analysis. The cards were split into three time periods - World War I (1913-1918), the interwar period (1919-1937), and World War II (1938-1945). The cards in each category were then quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. This analysis appears in Chapter 4, after a presentation of the theoretical and historical background of photography and photo postcards.

Historiography of Image Analysis

Scholarly discourse about how to discern meaning in images has been rich since the beginning of the twentieth century. A theoretical background of image analysis will outline the framework within which I intend to work while conducting the qualitative analysis. Four main lines of investigation have emerged in scholarship. Three of these approaches, iconography, structuralism, and the cultural history of art are the most relevant to photographic image analysis, and will be discussed below. The fourth approach, psychoanalysis, is not applicable to this study and will not be discussed or demonstrated in the following pages. The psychoanalytical approach relies heavily on determining the artist's state of mind through artist biography and analysis of particular aspects of the artist's work. Because most of the photographers of images in this study are anonymous and so have no accompanying biographical information, using the

psychoanalytical approach is untenable. Furthermore, psychoanalysis tends to deal with the individual, while this study seeks to draw conclusions about the Navy and how it was portrayed in postcard images.

Iconography

Iconography has traditionally been used to analyze painted and sculpted works of art, and has only limited applicability to photographic image analysis. Nonetheless, the iconographical approach to layered meanings in images has offered much fodder for melding the approach with the structuralist strain of thought. The identification of symbol and allusion that is central to iconography has also provided a framework for later scholars to build on.

The iconographical approach was first outlined by Cesare Ripa (1593) in a handbook of images entitled *Iconologia*.[3] This early publication presented traces of what was to become the art historical discipline of iconography that launched in the 1920s and 1930s. This latter movement formed in reaction to the scholarly convention of judging and analyzing works of art "in terms of composition or colour at the expense of subject matter."[4] The first scholars to "emphasize the intellectual content of works of art, their implicit philosophy or theology" were a group of German scholars, dubbed "The Hamburg Group."[5] Aby Warburg (1866-1929), Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968), Fritz Saxl (1890-1948) Edgar Wind (1900-1971), and Ernst Cassirer (1874-1975) were among the most prominent scholars in this group, and were responsible for the subsequent evolution and dissemination of iconography's founding principles. All five of these scholars had strong classical educations and were widely read in philosophy and literature. Thus, their work primarily focused on art with classical imagery and symbolism. In 1933, as the whiffs

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[3] Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 34.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] *Ibid.*, 35.

of another world war swept across Europe, the Hamburg Group disbursed, Panofsky leaving for the United States and the other four heading to England. While iconography incubated in a nurturing environment in Germany, the discipline benefitted from their escape from intellectual stagnation in Germany during wartime.

In 1939, Panofsky published his seminal work, *Studies in Iconology.* This work incorporates the Hamburg Group's ideas and laid the foundation for later scholars. In *Studies in Iconology*, Panofsky identifies three levels of meaning that inhere in images. The first level is composed of primary, or natural, subject matter.[6] Knowledge of primary subject matter does not have to be learned through formal education. Instead, the viewer uses his or her everyday experiences to understand the imagery, which is not symbolic of other things or ideas. That is, a picture of a ship can be understood as a picture of a ship.

The secondary meaning is encapsulated in "figures and events [that] do not disclose their meanings directly."[7] In order to understand the secondary meaning, one must refer to formal education, or to books or catalogs. From this formal education, the viewer learns what certain images symbolize. If one looks again at that image of a ship, one may be able to identify what kind of ship it is from formal education or research. The viewer might be able to identify the ship as a battleship, and might also be able to connect knowledge of the ship's firepower or sailing capabilities to the image. This knowledge would ultimately lead to a richer understanding and interpretation of this hypothetical image.

Panofsky's third, and final, level of meaning is the intrinsic level. At this level, the viewer seeks to synthesize his or her knowledge of the primary and secondary meanings in an

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[6] Eriwn Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance* (New York: Harper & Row, 1939), 14-15.

[7] Un-Chol Shin, "Panofsky, Polanyi, and Intrinsic Meaning," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 24, no.4 (1990): 18.

image to "[ascertain] those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion."[8] That is, the viewer tries to discern which themes and concepts are expressed by objects and events portrayed in an artist's work by seeing that work in a larger historical context. From these themes and concepts, the viewer can try to understand "cultural symptoms," which are markers of attitudes and beliefs held by a certain group.[9] But one would not be able to make this kind of assessment without knowledge of the culture under study. Panofsky believed that "images are a part of a whole culture and cannot be understood without a knowledge of that culture" and its cultural codes.[10] Panofsky offers the following illustration of this point, "[An] Australian bushman would be unable to recognize the subject of a Last Supper; to him, it would only convey the idea of an excited dinner party. To understand the iconographical meaning of the picture he would have to familiarize himself with the content of the Gospels."[11] Likewise, a modern viewer of a postcard with an image of a battleship might not be able to identify what kind of a ship it is. Furthermore, the modern viewer probably would not attach any of the social, emotional, or cultural meanings to the battleship that a viewer from 1918 would. For the World War I-era viewer, the battleship was the epitome of the Navy's power and prowess, and was one of the technological marvels that would help defeat nefarious forces "over there."

In spite of the gap in time between when the modern scholar looks at the image and when the image was produced, it is possible for scholars to tease out the image's meaning. As Panofsky argued, scholars must become familiar with the societal context in which the image was produced through primary and secondary source research. This research will offer up some

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[8] Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology,* 7.
[9] *Ibid.*, 16.
[10] Burke, *Eyewitnessing,* 36.
[11] Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology,* 11.

information about societal norms, trends, and popular culture that may assist the modern scholar in identifying the ship in the picture and understanding the significance it held for its contemporary viewers.

After the Hamburg Group's ideas, as embodied in Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology*, were released to academia, scholars took time to utilize and mull over this idea of three levels of meaning in images. In the 1960s and 1970s, Michael Polanyi built on Panofsky's ideas. In his *The Tacit Dimenson* (1967), Polanyi discusses the concept of "tacit knowledge." Polanyi seeks to describe what Panofsky called, the "something else of symbolic values."[12] According to Polanyi, this "something else" is comprised of the actions the "self" progresses through to read and understand an image. That is, the viewer endows the content of images with "intrinsic interest" by integrating and using his or her knowledge of symbols and signs, which are all culturally created, to glean meaning from an image.[13] Thus, meaning is not something that is imbued by the creator, it is something that is created and discerned by the viewer.

The 1960s and 70s saw a number of critics of Panofsky's approach as well. One of the main critiques of the iconographical approach was put forth by Ernst Gombrich in *Symbolic Images* (1972). In this work, Gombrich argues that iconographers are guilty of assuming the homogeneity of the cultures they study.[14] In interpreting symbols that might be indicative of certain cultural norms or values, the iconographer constructs a picture of "the spirit of the age" that ignores the wide variety within certain cultures. In some scholars' thinking, this generalization is dangerous because it may lead to potentially incorrect assumptions about the nature of past cultures. Scholars since Gombrich have continually reaffirmed this point of view. Peter Burke, who published his book, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images of Historical Evidence*

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[12] Shin, "Panofsky, Polanyi, and Intrinsic Meaning," 32.
[13] Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), 16.
[14] Ernst Gombrich, *Symbolic Images* (London: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1972), 6.

in 2001, offers the most cogent explanation of this objection to the iconographical approach. He demonstrates that it might be incorrect "to assume that the classical allusions which Panofsky, a humanist himself, so much enjoyed recognizing, were appreciated by the majority of viewers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries."[15] Burke points out that textual evidence has demonstrated that viewers in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries sometimes misread images, mistaking one god or goddess for another or completely misreading symbolism encapsulated within an image. Burke also points up the propensity of converted viewers to "view Christian images in terms of their own traditions" as further evidence that contemporary viewers of art were not as homogenous as Panofsky's iconographical analysis would suggest.[16]

Another aspect of iconology that came under fire by scholars in the 1990s and 2000s was the approach's limited applicability to photography and its neglect of the image's social context. While the images most iconographers through the 1970s were interested in analyzing were mostly fifteenth and sixteenth century paintings chock full of allegories, not all images are allegorical. Amateur photography found on many of the postcards under scrutiny in this thesis is one example of images that do not lend themselves well to traditional iconological analysis. Amateur photography was rarely posed, and rarely included references to any classical symbolism. For this reason, the iconographical approach had to be supplemented. While scholars have held onto some of the basic tenets of iconology, they have begun to supplement the approach with ideas from psychoanalysis, structuralism, and the cultural history of art. Iconography has especially adopted approaches similar to the structuralist approach, which will be discussed later. With these new approaches, scholars have been able to focus on the various

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[15] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 40-41.
[16] *Ibid.*, 41.

layers of meaning in images, and take into account the social context of the images in question.[17]

This new social dimension to iconographic analysis has led to the scholarly acknowledgment that images may have more than one meaning. Thus, there can be more than one valid interpretation of such images. This has been a major departure from the Hamburg Group's original intention, which was to discover "the" meaning of an image.

Structuralism

Like iconography, structuralism deals with visual signs. Ferdinand de Saussure, a French linguist, pioneered this approach in 1966, claiming that while words (linguistic signifiers) are arbitrarily assigned to the object or idea they "signify," the linguistic symbol relates to its signified idea in a direct way that is structured like a language.[18] Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes took hold of Saussure's work and crafted a structuralist approach to image analysis that seeks to root out the "system of signs" that compose the image's internal organization. The system of signs structuralists seek to identify is a part of a whole "language" from which artists make their selection. This particular approach is less concerned with "the relation of the work in question to the external reality it may appear to represent and … its social context."[19] Instead, some structuralists focus on the internal organization of a particular image and the patterns or oppositions found within. Within this framework, Claude Levi-Strauss attempted to identify structures within American Indian art that were found in other "primitive" societies, such as New Zealand's Maori tribes.[20]

Scholars after Levi-Strauss, however, found it difficult to work with images without relating them to their cultural or social context. For some, the structuralist approach "appears to

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[17] *Ibid.*, 40.
[18] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (New York: Open Court Publishing, 1966).
[19] Burke, *Eyewitnessing,* 172.
[20] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 245-68.

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be intolerably reductionist, with no place for ambiguities or for human agency."[21] In his 1983 *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, Clifford Geertz, an anthropologist in favor of "thick description," voices this popular criticism of structuralism. For Geertz, "[structuralism] is but an attempt to generalize this approach into a comprehensive one, to create a technical language capable of representing internal relations of myths, poems, dances, or melodies in abstract, transposable terms."[22] Geertz eschews structuralism's attempts at generalizing art analysis in order to remove artistic elements from their cultural context so that they can be used to compare aspects of disparate cultures. Geertz argues that, in order to become an effective approach to the analysis of images, "[structuralism] must move beyond the consideration of signs as means of communication, code to be deciphered, to a consideration of them as modes of thought, idiom to be interpreted."[23]

Although Roland Barthes is considered a structuralist, his scholarship on the topic of image analysis departs from traditional structuralist thought because his work seeks to fulfill Geertz's recommendation by trying to access the "modes of thought" the signs represent. Barthes's works elaborate various levels of meaning within images, especially photographs. In his essay "Rhetoric of the image" (1980), Barthes explains that two levels of linguistic message are contained in images. The first level is the denotative message, which answers the question, "What is it?" The second level is composed of the connotative message, which is the intangible message of the image that depends on individual perception and cultural meaning.[24] That is, the symbols in the image refer to cultural elements that are external to the picture. Viewers use their

[21] Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 175.
[22] Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (United States: Basic Books, Inc., 1983), 95-96.
[23] *Ibid.*, 120.
[24] Roland Barthes, "Rhetoric of the Image" in *Classic Essays on Photography,* ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 269-86.

unconscious and conscious knowledge of the cultural codes in the image to glean meaning from the image. While some meanings viewers pick up on are overt and knowingly received by the viewer, others are hidden. These hidden symbolic meanings are naturalized by the denotative message of the image.[25] So structuralism would further the analysis of the battleship image discussed above by discussing how the social and cultural events of the World War I era shaped the contemporary viewer's reading of the image.

In 1997, Caroline Brothers offered one of the most explicit discussions of Barthes's approach. In *War and Photography: A Cultural History*, Brothers affirms the usefulness of Barthes's layered reading of photographs, and expands on his work. Brothers uses the notion that "cultural and ideological assumptions of some significance are inscribed within all photographs" to gain access to meaning in them.[26] These cultural and ideological clues that inhere in photographs may also reveal "the interplay of historically rooted power relations which generate … images and make use of them."[27] Brothers argues that this is significant because photographs can "clearly produce knowledge" that can reify cultural mores or ideologies that may benefit the "agencies which produce and deploy [the images]."[28] Since Brothers's discussion of how photographs may be used as historical documents, scholars have refrained from further developing this approach. This may be because Barthes's and Brothers's strain of structuralism overlaps so much with the iconographical approach. Overlap between the two approaches lies in the way they investigate the symbolic meaning that inheres in certain elements of images. Both approaches seek to determine what cultural meaning may be in the symbolic meanings they root out. The primary difference between the two is that structuralists (mostly) seek to analyze the

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[25] *Ibid.*, 279.
[26] Caroline Brothers, *War and Photography: A Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 21.
[27] *Ibid.*, 17.
[28] *Ibid.*, 17-21.

relation between the symbolic aspects of images, while iconographers are more concerned with "decoding specific elements" of an image.[29] At times, the line between the two approaches is indistinct. Levi-Strauss recognized the similarities between the two fields early on when he referred to Panofsky as "a great structuralist."[30] The lack of development of structuralist analysis of images may also be a result of structuralism's annexation by the cultural history of images discussed in the next section.

The Cultural History of Images

The cultural history of images attempts to rectify some of the perceived shortcomings of the approaches discussed above. This approach seeks to relate the image to its social and cultural context, and, like Brothers's work, seeks to explore how images act as vehicles for ideologies and hegemony. Because the approach attempts to look beyond allusion, symbolism, and individual artistic elements, it proves to be the most viable option for examining meaning in photographs.

The cultural history of images is linked to the "New Left" approach to history. Many scholars point to Arnold Hauser's *The Social History of Art* (1957) as the foundation of the cultural history of images approach. In this work, Hauser sought to examine the "changing material conditions under which art was commissioned and created."[31] In doing so, Hauser utilized Marxist interpretations to connect the trends in aesthetics and meaning in art to the economic structure of the societies in question. While Hauser's work was a great start to new interpretations of meaning in art, the work was too ambitious. Hauser's sweeping account of the

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[29] Burke, *Eyewitnessing,* 176.
[30] Claude Levi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology II* (London: Basic Books, 1977), 276.
[31] Michael R. Orwicz, "Critical Discourse in the Formation of a Social History of Art: Anglo-American Response to Arnold Hauser," *Oxford Art Journal* 8, no.2 (1985): 52.

evolution of art from cave paintings to photography and film created a panoramic view of art lacking the detail that might have unpacked some of the nuances of the approach.

Scholars such as Ernst Gombrich picked up on this shortcoming of Hauser's work, but the main problem with it was his Marxist approach. Because of its association with communism, Gombrich dismissed Hauser's approach as "narrow and unscientific, producing 'specious interpretations, [and] an inadequate view of art history."[32] For many, "Hauser had neglected the importance of the art work and artist, [and] had reduced them to mere 'reflections' of much broader social processes."[33] Additionally, scholars deemed his "vocabulary of the class struggle" inappropriate for discussing the evolution of art because it denied the autonomy of the individual and the mystery of creativity.[34] While Hauser's work was pummeled by scholars whose outlooks were anti-communist, others took up Hauser's approach and ran with it. Clement Greenburg was one such scholar who championed Hauser's approach. To Greenburg, "what matter[ed]… [was] not so much that art illuminates society as that social factors help explain aesthetic aims" that interacted to produce art.[35]

In 1973, T.J. Clark echoed this notion in two works, *Image of the People* and *The Absolute Bourgeois*, which at once furthered Hauser's approach and turned it on its head. In these two works, Clark seeks to explain "the connecting links between artistic form, the available systems of visual representation, the current theories of art, other ideologies, social classes, and more general historical structures and processes."[36] Within this framework, Clark demonstrates that social classes "seek meaning in the forms of visual expression available to them, [and] those

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[32] *Ibid.*, 53.
[33] *Ibid.*, 54.
[34] *Ibid.*
[35] *Ibid.*, 57.
[36] John Hutton, "Left of Center, Against the Grain: T.J. Clark and the Social History of Art," *Radical History Review* 38 (1987): 62.

forms in turn are transmuted by the uses to which they are put."[37] Furthermore, art "interacts continually with social realities, sometimes responding to trends and struggles, at others anticipating and even influencing those developments."[38] Thus, art is a product of social realities, but it also shapes them. In order to study images and their meanings in this way, historians had to begin conducting studies of particular works of art or particular groups. This particularistic approach made it easier to provide detailed analysis of the social mechanisms at work in the creation of a specific work of art.

Into the 1980s and 1990s, John Tagg modified Clark's approach so that it was not a strictly Marxist approach. Tagg's approach was also specifically designed to analyze photography. For Tagg, photography and painted art are not analogous, and the same analysis used for paintings cannot be used for photographs. Photographs differ from painted art in that people may perceive some photographs as a true representation. This "true" representation reflects "ideological power that … [has] become attached to these ubiquitous representations and the way they operate in society."[39] While Tagg looks primarily through a Marxist lens at how photographs convey meaning, he also adopts many aspects of structuralism in his approach. In *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies* (1988)*, Tagg theorizes that photography is "a complex system of discourses and significations."[40] This tangle of discourses and significations is rooted in material processes and products that inhere in different societies. Thus, photography's "function as a mode of cultural production is tied to definite conditions of existence, and its products are meaningful and legible only within the particular currencies they

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[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Ibid.*
[39] Jonathan Harris, *The New Art History: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2001), 85.
[40] John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), 101.

have."[41] Because the meanings found in photographs are inextricably tied to their function as tools for institutions, Tagg believes that photographs and photography should be viewed within the context of "a modern photographic economy" that uses photographs as conveyors of truths that are "institutionally sanctioned."[42] Tagg's approach is, in fact, similar to Caroline Brothers's approach outlined above, and is one example of how scholars managed to annex structuralist approaches to create a Marxist/Structuralist hybrid approach. The main difference between Tagg's and Brothers's analytical approaches is that Tagg ultimately argues that as institutions use photography to reify and assert their power, photographs are commoditized as items that can be bought and sold, as objects of art, or as evidence that can be used to "structure belief and recruit consent."[43]

Image Reception

While institutions enlist the help of photographs to convey messages, the viewer's interpretation of the photograph's meaning ultimately remains difficult to control. Photographs "have a life of their own which often resists the efforts of photographers and viewers (or readers) to hold them down as fixed meanings."[44] For this reason, there is a sector of image analysis, known as Response Theory, that seeks to investigate what meanings people glean from images, and how they respond to the images. Response Theorists mine historical documents and images for "symptoms of the relationship between image and beholder."[45] This relationship between the image and the beholder is necessarily influenced by the variety of experiences and cultural

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[41] *Ibid.*, 63.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] John Tagg, "The Discontinuous City: Picturing and the Discursive Field" In *Visual Culture: Images and Interpretations,* eds. Norman Bryson, Michael Anny Holly, and Keith Moxey (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 91.

[44] Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History, Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1989), xv.

[45] David Freedburg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), xxii.

influences the beholder has been subject to throughout his or her life. Thus, the meanings viewers get from images are as varied as the viewers themselves. While this consideration of what meaning viewers actually get from images is intriguing and has great implications for the present study, it is outside of the scope of this thesis. This work will seek to determine the *intended* messages that were to be conveyed through the postcards, rather than the messages that were actually received by the viewer.

Image Captions

Image captions are a useful tool that can be used to clarify the photographer's intended message. As was mentioned earlier, words are often given primacy over images, so a clarifying caption tends to go a long way in focusing the viewer's attention on the appropriate message of the photograph. Furthermore, images that may not be easily read by the viewer (i.e. a civilian viewing a postcard with an image of a shipboard event sent by a sailor) may require a caption to imbue the image with meaning for the viewer. Thus, the caption helps "determine a specific reading" of the postcard's image that the viewer might not have arrived at without the help of the caption.[46] This consideration of the effects of captions and how photographs convey meanings will be important aspects to keep in mind while trying to discern the nature of the portrayal of the Navy in the postcards' images. In the following pages, the intent is to use elements of the cultural history of art and structuralist approaches to image analysis to demonstrate how photo postcards from 1913 to 1945 acted as tools used to "structure belief and recruit consent." As mobile images, photo postcards acted as evidence of the beloved sailor's activities abroad and of the Navy's power in the form of ships and competent, numerous crew. While the postcards offered positive proof of a powerful, competent Navy, the images would have elicited pride and patriotism from the viewer. This, in turn, might have facilitated the civilian's furthered support

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[46] Brothers, *War and Photography,* 28.

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of war efforts or of retaining funding for the Navy during peacetime, and enticing more men to join the Navy. For men in the Navy, the pride invoked by postcard images may have helped the men define their identity as a member of the Navy. Before delving into an analysis of the postcards, it is important to understand the social and cultural context of both photography and postcards between 1913 and 1945. This context provides information about what photographs and postcards, as relatively new media, meant to Americans and what kind of an effect the media might have had on enlisting the public's consent for the Navy's activities.

CHAPTER 2

The Civilian History of Photography and Photo Postcards

Photographic postcards have two different histories. The first is the history of the postcards themselves, and the second is the history of photography. It is instructive to understand the history of photography because photo postcards are essentially photographs placed on card stock. Photography's history allows one to contextualize real photo postcards and to understand the sociological importance of the medium at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Photography, as modern society knows it, began with the independent innovations of Joseph Niépce and Louis Daguerre.[1] In 1837, Daguerre discovered how to create images relatively quickly (after about an hour of exposure) by developing silver iodide-coated plates with mercury vapor.[2] Eventually, Daguerre discovered that images could be fixed using thiosulfate of soda to remove the excess silver iodide from the plates.[3] In 1840, Fox Talbot improved on Daguerre's design by mixing the silver iodide coating with weak reducing agents that made it much more sensitive to light.[4] Additionally, Talbot discovered that "it was not necessary to expose the paper in the camera until a clear image was obtained; an image that was barely visible could be developed further by the application of an additional quantity of the [reducing agents]."[5] This meant that an image could be captured in half a minute, and the images could be developed later.

Frederick Scott Archer developed the wet plate process in 1851. This process involved coating a piece of glass with wet collodion and then bathing the plate in nitrate of silver. Plates

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[1] Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1982), 14-18.

[2] C.E. Kenneth Mees, *From Dry Plates to Ektachrome Film: A Story of Photographic Research* (New York: Ziff-Davis Publishing, 1961), 6.

[3] *Ibid.,* 6-7.

[4] *Ibid.,* 8.

[5] *Ibid.*

had to be exposed while wet and then immediately coated with developer. The plate was then fixed and dried. Because the wet plates had to be developed immediately after exposure, the photographer had to carry along a portable darkroom tent in which he could safely develop the plates.[6] Despite being a high-maintenance process, wet plate collodion photography remained the dominant process for about twenty-five years after its inception. In 1877, F.C.L. Wratten developed a gelatin dry plate that allowed photographers to capture an image and then develop it later. The gelatin dry plates were pre-made with a silver bromide emulsion.[7] Although Wratten's innovation made photography less complicated, it was still an expensive, cumbersome, and technically involved endeavor. After Wratten's death, George Eastman started manufacturing gelatin dry plates in the 1880s. While he sold these pre-made plates, Eastman pondered ways to make photography a less complicated and more popular process. In order to do this, he sought to manufacture the gelatin plates out of less fragile material, and to make cameras more portable and affordable.

As cameras became smaller, lighter, more portable, and more affordable, photography became more accessible to the casual user. Thanks to the vision, ambition, and marketing savvy of George Eastman during the first decade of the 1900s, the transfer of photography from the knowledgeable elite to the amateur was complete. The Kodak Brownie, a simplified cardboard camera that sold for one dollar, was the brainchild of Eastman Kodak Company that drove the popularity of photography among laypeople.[8] Even the more sophisticated models sold by Kodak were far simpler than their predecessors. The Kodak "autographic camera" had a small door in its back that allowed the photographer to sign or inscribe some sort of explanatory caption on the

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[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.,*14.

[8] Rosamond Vaule, *As We Were: American Photographic Postcards, 1905-1930* (Jaffrey, NH: David R. Godine, 2004), 41-44.

image.[9] Kodak offered another kind of camera, the model 3A folding camera, which used negatives that were the size of postcards.[10] The ability to caption photographs easily and develop them onto postcard stock made the adaptation of photographs into postcards an easy one.[11]

The photography craze ignited in the first half of the twentieth century became so extensive that amateur photographers who caught the photography bug were dubbed "Kodakers."[12] Thanks to the Eastman Kodak Company, Kodakers became the ubiquitous unofficial documenters of people, places, and events large and small. Accidents, tragedies, sex, natural disasters, deaths, lynchings, executions, illness, and destruction were all acceptable, if not popular, subjects for documentation.[13] It seems that no event or person was spared the focus of the camera lens.

For some, this new means of documenting people, places, and things was disconcerting. In the years following the rise of the Kodaker, people were apt to believe that everything they saw in photographs was real. Scholars and laypeople alike were uncertain how to categorize photography. Was it art? Was it mere documentation of reality? Many believed that, unlike artists, photographers had no choice but to capture reality just as it was. Thus, photography was considered "an absolute unqualified objectivity."[14] Wrapped up in this debate over whether photography was art or documentation was the notion that photographers captured reality just as it was. In many minds, photography left no room for artistic expression or manipulation. Because of this mindset, most were reluctant to categorize photography as art. Art was often equated with

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[9] *Ibid.* 57.

[10] Robert Bogdan and Todd Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide: The People's Photography* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 18.

[11] Vaule, *As We Were*, 53.

[12] Robert E. Mensel, "'Kodakers Lying in Wait': Amateur Photography and the Right of Privacy in New York, 1885-1915," *American Quarterly* 43 (1991): 24-45.

[13] *Ibid.,* 28-31.

[14] Robert Demachy, "Science and Art," In *Photographers on Photography: A Critical Anthology,* ed. Nathan Lyons (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966), 136.

the subjective creation of a representation of reality, and that remained within the realm of sculpture, painting, and drawing. For some, photography was objective documentation, so it was not art. Over time, however, perceptions of photography changed, and people learned that the photographer could lie just as easily as the artist. After all, photography was not a strictly mechanical process. In the field, the photographer had the option to get creative with angles, lighting, and framing. In the darkroom, photographers could crop, retouch, remove, and develop photographs in order to manipulate "reality" in any way they wanted. People in the early twentieth century were faced with a number of instances in which the veracity of photographs was called into question as examples of conscious manipulation came to light.

Some examples of photographer manipulation of photographs in the early 1900s demonstrate how photographers might have made photographs lie. Early-twentieth-century photographs of Native Americans exhibit the conscious filtering of visual messages to put forth a stereotyped representation. In these photographs, it is evident that "the photographer knew what a noble savage should look like, and did not hesitate to impose his vision on his subjects."[15] Famed American anthropologist Franz Boas has been accused by scholars of propagating Native American tropes through his documentation of the appearance and way of life of Kwakwaka' wakw communities in the North West. To accompany his textual analysis of the Kwakwaka' wakw way of life, Boas used photography to document the people. In these photographs, he effectively erased any modern elements of the subjects' way of life by "filtering out elements of the colonial context as much as possible (through posing and reconstruction) in order to create

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[15] Brian W. Dippie, "Representing the Other: The North American Indian," In *Anthropology & Photography*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 132.

visual images that would invoke the traditional culture he sought."[16] Boas portrayed the

Kwakwaka' wakw as a still-primitive tribe that was untouched by modernity, by manipulating

the backdrops of the photographs to block out evidence of automobiles or other western

technology (Figure 1.). Franz Boas' ethnographic photography illustrates the manipulation of

seemingly earnest documentary photographs.
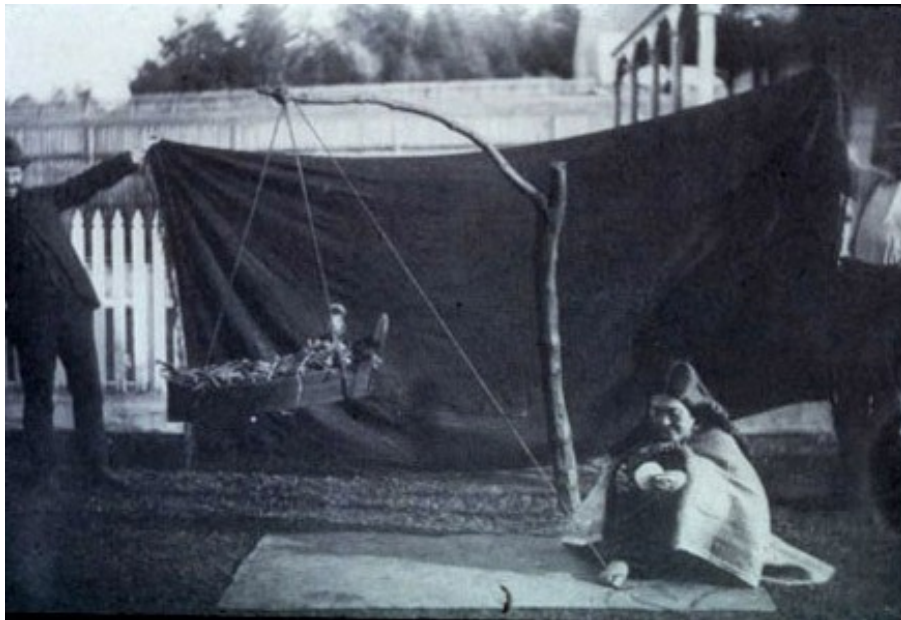
Figure 2.1. Franz Boas, with research assistant George Hunt, holding up a blanket behind an Indian woman in preparation for the photograph. *Source*: Clifford James, *Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 186.

Another more benign example of the skewing of photographic "evidence" is the

notorious case of the Cottingly Fairy Photographs. In 1917, two teenage girls from Cottingly,

England claimed to have photographed the fairies they had encountered in the woods behind

their house. The series of photographs showed the girls surrounded by dancing fairies (Figure

2.).

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[16] Charles Briggs and Richard Bauman, "'The Foundation of All Future Researches': Franz Boas, George Hunt, Native American Texts, and the Construction of Modernity," *American Quarterly* 51 no.3 (1999): 516; Jay Ruby, *Picturing Culture: Explorations of Film & Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 58.

Figure 2.2. One of the photographs of the infamous Cottingly Fairies captured by two teenage girls in England in the early 1900s. *Source*: Peter Narváez, ed., *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays* (Lexington, KY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1991), 377.

The photographs were met with equal amounts of incredulity and amazement.[17] Even though the photographs and their negatives were subject to several examinations by experts, who sought to find traces of doctoring, the experts reluctantly determined that the negative plates were genuine.[18] After this determination, the public was in a tumult of excitement over the documentation of these mythical beings once thought to be real only in fairy-tales. Prominent figures such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle were swept up in the excitement over the existence of fairies. Doyle even wrote several journal articles and a book offering evidence for the existence of fairies.[19] Nobody was able to prove the photographs were frauds until the two girls confessed in 1986.[20] They confessed to creating cardboard figures of fairies and using hat pins to secure the

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[17] S.F. Sanderson, "The Cottingly Fairy Photographs: A Re-Appraisal of the Evidence," *Folklore* 84, no.2 (1973): 89.

[18] *Ibid.,* 92.

[19] Paul Smith, "The Cottingly Fairies: The End of a Legend" In *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays,* ed. Peter Narvaez (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 388-390.

[20] *Ibid.,* 398.

cutouts in the trees.[21] Today, it seems impossible that such a harmless hoax created by two teenage girls could have sparked such a commotion, leading a portion of the general public to believe that fairies existed. This example illustrates the authority photographs held for people living in the early twentieth century.

Sometimes, photographic manipulation was not intentional. As photography matured, so did scholarship on the medium. Scholars began to examine how "photographers … impos[ed] standards on their subjects."[22] Photographers did this by preferring one exposure to another or by retouching photos as they were being developed. During this process, the photographer's taste, and subsequently which images he produced, was informed by a number of things, including the photographer's background, training, and notions of how the subject should be portrayed. In this way the photographer was able to construct a narrative in order to "make sense of [his] society."[23]

Thus, photography proved to be a useful aid to a society swept up in a whirlwind of social and technological advances. Urbanization, secularization, industrialization, and scientific discovery were all evolving at an astonishing rate and the American people sat in the center of the convergence of those social aspects.[24] Americans noticed this convergence of technology and social evolution, and this observation produced an ever-increasing "sense that authentic or 'real' experience, feeling, and selfhood were increasingly elusive and perhaps even illusory."[25] In this era of seeming unreality, "amateur photographs help[ed] people order their memories and

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[21] *Ibid.,* 397-400.
[22] *Ibid.*, 6.
[23] Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, xiv.
[24] Mensel, "Kodakers Lying in Wait," 25.
[25] *Ibid.*

demonstrate cultural membership."[26] This was possible because "photography enhanced reality by fixing it in time and place and giving it substance."[27]

Into the 1930s and 1940s, cameras and film became easier to work with and more reliable. The public, much more used to being photographed at this point in time, turned to photographs in popular media, such as photo postcards, for information about what was happening on the battlefront. The Graflex 4x5 Speed Graphic was easy to use and was forgiving for the beginner. This ease of use made it a popular pick for the armed forces. In the 1930s, the 35mm camera also emerged as a popular type. This format allowed photographers "greater speed and flexibility" to capture newsworthy events.[28] Although Kodak did not produce its first 35mm camera until 1935, the company once again revolutionized the technology to make it easier and cheaper to use. Kodak was able to produce disposable, pre-loaded cartridges that freed photographers from having to load their own cartridges in the dark room. Kodak's pre-loaded cartridges were also the first cartridges that would fit in almost any brand of 35mm camera.[29] In addition to its 35mm film, Kodak's 35mm cameras became favorites among the American public because of the cameras' "precision of manufacture and optical quality."[30] Kodak's 35mm camera became a favorite among professional photographers, as it "offered sturdiness, portability, and … accommodated movement."[31] For these reasons, the 35mm camera went to war.

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[26] Barbie Zelizer, "Finding Aids to the Past: Bearing Personal Witness to Traumatic Public Events," *Media, Culture & Society* 24(2002): 700.

[27] Mensel, "Kodakers Lying in Wait," 30.

[28] Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt, eds., *Picturing the Past: Media, History, and Photography* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 24.

[29] Brian Coe, *Cameras: From Daguerreotypes to Instant Pictures* (United States: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1978), 115.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] Brennen and Hardt, *Picturing the past*, 24.

In wartime, photographs also had the ability to help the public cope with the trauma of war by freezing events surrounding the war.[32] The public was able to bear witness to both world wars by viewing photographs that "offer[ed] a vehicle by which individuals [could] see and continue to see until the shock and trauma associated with disbelieving [could] be worked through."[33] The act of bearing witness "move[d] individuals from the personal act of 'seeing' to the adoption of a public stance by which they [became] part of a collective working through trauma together."[34] Thus, photographs in the press, on the front of postcards, and in sailor photo collections gave civilians and military men alike the opportunity to freeze and internalize wartime events, and then participate in the collective healing process.

The evolution and improvement of photographic technology in the first half of the twentieth century allowed the world to document and witness distant events like never before. Photography's development during this time led to sociological change, and a revolution in the way people viewed the world. While people became more reliant on photography as a medium of communication, they had to learn to become more critical of what they saw in photographs. This development of the public's perception of photography also informed and shaped the history of photographic postcards, which were essentially mobile photographs.

Photographic Postcard History

When printed onto postcard stock to make real photo postcards, photographs became mobile and were potentially convenient ways of communicating. When sent from the battlefront, postcards were sources of "soft news" for families of sailors or soldiers. The first real photo postcards were sold in 1893, and were subject to the standard mailing rate of two cents because

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[32] Zelizer, "Finding aids to the Past," 698.
[33] *Ibid.,* 699.
[34] *Ibid.*, 698.

they were privately printed (postage for government-printed postcards was one cent). In 1898, Congress lowered the postage for privately printed postcards to one cent.[35] Shortly after the reduction of postage, postcard mailing and collecting grew to epic proportions. By 1913, Americans had mailed an astonishing 900,000,000 postcards since their inception.[36] The sheer volume of postcards mailed in the first twenty years of their existence proves that twentieth century Americans felt that "public postcards provided a convenient way to keep in touch with friends and relatives, without the burden of extensive writing."[37] Studies of postcards indicate that the postcard craze transcended race, age, and gender lines. While women tended to participate more in collecting and sending postcards, men were almost as likely to collect them.[38] This widespread participation in postcard collecting and mailing was indicative of the changes in society brought about by technological advancement discussed in the previous section. The ever-evolving society of the early 1900s began to have "enough money and leisure to travel and purchase postcards."[39] Thanks to railroads, the middle class was able to vacation frequently, and "the postcard served as a symbol of status and the ability to travel."[40] Photo postcards were also the easiest way for travelers to obtain photographic views of the places they visited.

Photographic postcards were popular with the general public for more than their symbolic and sentimental value. The power of photographic postcards came from the impact of the photographs that adorned their fronts. These "simple visual statements packed with information"

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[35] Fred Bassett, "Appendix C: Wish You Were Here!: The Story of the Golden Age of Picture Postcards," New York State Library, http://www.nysl.nysed.gov/msscfa/pr/qc16510ess.pdf (accessed February 15, 2011).
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.,* 2.
[38] Bogdan and Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide*, 4-5.
[39] Steven Dotterrer and Galen Cranz, "The Picture Postcard: Its Development and Role in American Urbanization," *The Journal of American Culture,* 5, no. 1 (1982): 45.
[40] *Ibid.*

grabbed the viewer's eye and imagination.[41] The viewer was often allowed "to imagine the meaning of much of what he saw," and this added to the appeal of the postcards.[42]

Before 1912, a large portion of printed photo postcards were printed in Germany because of the high-quality prints that were made there. After 1912, however, congress placed high tariffs on German cards, which made their importation cost-prohibitive.[43] This caused the quality of printed cards in the U.S. to decline. The tariff did not have a significant effect on postcards that were made from real photographic images, because these types of postcards were often made locally by the photographer, who took the pictures. Photographers would often print the postcards in small lots and sell them to local merchants.[44]

After German postcards were restricted, American publishers began to grow and develop out of necessity. In the 1920s, production of photo postcards moved gradually from local producers to larger regional companies, signifying a shift from postcards containing images of specific, local interest to images that were of interest to a larger clientele. Perhaps because of this shift, amateurs lost interest in selling or submitting their snapshots to printing companies. After all, images produced by "snapshot amateurs" would not have had the general interest appeal that the more commercial printers sought.[45] The larger postcard manufacturers sought to capitalize on the public's interest in postcards, but by this time competition was fierce. As competition grew, the market became flooded with cheap, and often poor-quality, postcards. This overabundance of cards, paired with the public's increasing exposure to photographic images, caused the photographic postcard to become less powerful. After about 1920, the photographic

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[41] *Ibid.*
[42] *Ibid.*
[43] *Ibid.,* 47.
[44] Bogdan and Weseloh, *Real Photo Postcard Guide*, 9.
[45]*Ibid.,* 20.

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postcard was not as fresh. In an effort to emphasize the uniqueness of postcard views, "manufacturers added texts which explained the significance of the view."[46] This development meant that photo postcard subject matter was simplified "so that it could more easily be explained and understood." This, in turn, "remove[d] [the picture's] connotations and reduce[d] the possibility of the viewer's making his own associations."[47] This, apparently, did little to rekindle the spark of the "golden years" of the postcard craze, but it did keep postcards from disappearing completely from the public's favor.

Even after the postcard fad faded after about 1920, photographic postcards were still an easy way to communicate with loved ones, and they retained their appeal as souvenirs. Postcards that portrayed images of the U.S. Navy often served as "soft news" from both World War battlefronts. A somewhat nebulous and hard to define category of news, "soft news" deals in a more personal and sensationalized manner with "human-interest themes, and emphas[izes] dramatic subject matter, such as crime and disaster."[48] In short, soft news helped "bring foreign policy issues to the attention of an otherwise inattentive public" by embedding the messages in a popular or familiar entertainment medium.[49] At this point, the Navy realized the potential usefulness of postcards and their effect on the general public. Postcards with images of "the head of state, army parades and manoeuvers, ships, leading generals and admirals" made patriotism convenient and appealing for the American public.[50] In the case of the postcards sent by sailors on board U.S. ships, the cards were a convenient way to inform loved ones of how their sailor

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[46] Dotterrrer and Cranz, "The Picture Postcard," 47.
[47] *Ibid.*
[48] Matthew A. Baum, "Sex, Lies, and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public," *The American Political Science Review* 96 no.1 (2002): 92.
[49] Jon D. Carlson, "Postcards and Propaganda: Cartographic Postcards as Soft News Images of the Russo-Japanese War," *Political Communication* 26 (2009): 213.
[50] John Fraser, "Propaganda on the Picture Postcard," *Oxford Art Journal* 3 no.2 (1980): 40.

was doing. Photo postcards were also a convenient way for the Navy to manipulate public opinion of the institution.

Additionally, photographic postcards were readily available to servicemen the world over. From training camp to the ship's store to ports of call, sailors who were in service during both World War I and World War II were able to collect cards with scenes of the activities, people, and places they saw during their time in the Navy. The tendency for sailors to collect postcards as souvenirs, rather than mail them, is evidenced by the large majority of unused postcards in museum collections today. In this way, postcards served not as a means of communication, but as a medium for remembrance - a way for the sailor to capture memories of his time in the service.

Whether they were used as collectors' items, means of communication, a symbol of the ability to travel, or as a way to remember past trips, photographic postcards served a prominent and important role for American society in the first twenty years of the 1900s. After their popularity waned, photographic postcards still remained a valuable means of communication and remembrance for civilians and service men during World War II. As conveyors of "soft news," postcards were a convenient communication medium for military men at the battlefront.

CHAPTER 3

Photography and Censorship in the Navy

Because photo postcards and photographs in general were a potentially powerful medium for reaching the general public, photography became an important tool to the United States Navy. Within navy culture, postcards and photography have their own history in which military censorship plays a large role. This history of photography's regulation on board United States ships also provides information about who was officially allowed to take pictures and what he was allowed to photograph.

Photography's history in the Navy began in the Civil War, and up until 1915, the Navy contracted with civilian agencies to produce official photographs of naval subjects.[1] In April 1917, the Navy instituted a four-week photography course so that its own trained seamen could take photographs.[2] Sailors who completed the course were evaluated on a variety of technical aspects of photography, such as chemicals, loading, copying, plate development, enlarging, view and Graflex camera work, and contact printing.[3] Men who completed the courses were rated as printers or yeomen.[4] Ninety photographers graduated from the course before it was cancelled in November 1918.[5]

Even though the Navy was working to train photographers, there remained a shortage of photographers to document wartime activities abroad. Because of this dearth of photographers, the Bureau of Navigation (BuNav) announced in an April 1918 circular letter that the Bureau "allowed to each Division of Battleships, Cruisers, and Patrol Vessels, to each Flotilla of

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[1] Mame Warren, "Focal Point of the Fleet: U.S. Navy Photographic Activities in World War II," *The Journal of Military History* 69, no.4 (2005): 1046.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] United States Navy Department, *Photographic Index to Trainees in U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps Photography, 1918-1920*, Still Picture Records Section, 72-NTP, National Archives, College Park, MD.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Warren, "Focal Point of the Fleet," 1046.

Destroyers and Submarines, to each Naval District and to certain other leading vessels, one

Kodak camera, and an outfit of developing and printing material…."[6] The circular notes that the

purpose of this equipment was to allow the Navy to collect more material that would make a

more complete record of "events, persons, or things, for future reference."[7] The circular also

made it clear that the equipment was appropriate for amateurs, and that amateurs who were able

to operate the equipment "[could] usually be found in the ship's company."[8] The contents of this

circular gives a small glimpse into the photographic activity on board ships during the World

War I era. It seems that although the Navy instituted formal photographer training during the war

years, untrained amateur photographers were also enlisted to document wartime activities.

Documentation of the Navy's newsworthy activities and personnel were considered vital to the

Navy's recruitment efforts. On July 25, 1919, BuNav released a circular letter about publicity

that directed commanding officers to "make every effort to obtain photographs bearing on the

Navy and having news value."[9] Apparently, with World War I in the rearview mirror and a

decrease in naval assets ahead, BuNav sought to increase its public appeal in order to emphasize

the Navy's usefulness (even in peacetime) and excite more public interest in seeing the Navy

retain its resources.

In order to get more photos with news value, BuNav announced on November 28, 1919

that the Navy would be instituting the photographer's mate rating by creating an official,

permanent photography school in Washington, D.C.[10] The training was slated to begin on

January 1, 1920, and included instruction on "theory, aerial and ground photography, and

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[6] Bureau of Navigation, *Cameras*, Circular Letter No. 78-18 (Washington, D.C., 1918), microfilm, N17.20-2.78.

[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Ibid.*

[9] Bureau of Navigation, *Publicity*, Circular Letter No. 101-19 (Washington, D.C., 1919), microfilm, N17.20-3.101.

[10] Warren*,* "Focal Point of the Fleet," 1046-1047.

laboratory work."[11] The number of students trained in each three-month-long session was around twenty-six.[12] Upon completion of the course, students were assigned a rating of Chief Photographer or First, Second, or Third Class Photographer, depending on their skill level.[13] After the Navy established permanent training courses for photographers in Washington, D.C., photography became increasingly important for official documentation of naval activities.

In 1923, the photography school moved to Pensacola, Florida, but the Navy still maintained facilities for training and developing film in Washington.[14] Between 1938 and 1944, the Navy's photography personnel grew from 225 to 5,000, and the photography sector's budget grew exponentially as the Navy sought to take full advantage "of the photographic art for political and military purposes."[15] These purposes encompassed not only documenting naval activities, but also maintaining positive public relations with civilians and lawmakers that ensured public and political support for the Navy's activities. During the course of training, the Navy's hopeful photographers were not only taught the science of developing film and composing photographs, but also what they should be documenting with photographs. The trainees were also assigned to photojournalism training in Washington, D.C., where they covered noteworthy events involving the president and navy administration.[16]

In 1941, with war looming on the horizon, navy secretary Frank Knox voiced his concern that "photographs currently on file in the Office of Public Relations were, with few exceptions, 'completely without publicity value.'"[17] In mid-1941, a board assigned to evaluate the availability of photographic material, resources, and facilities for the Navy recommended that

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[11] Bureau of Navigation, *School for training in Photography*, Circular Letter No. 153-19 (Washington, D.C., 1919), microfilm, N17.20-3.153.
[12] *Ibid.*
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Warren, "Focal Point of the Fleet," 1047.
[15] *Ibid.,* 1049.
[16] *Ibid.,* 1047.
[17] *Ibid.,* 1051.

"the Navy's photographic needs be centralized in the Bureau of Aeronautics (BuAer) because it had the longest history of obtaining funds for photographic enterprises."[18] After the board's report was approved, the Navy's photography sector integrated into BuAer, where the Navy was better able to provide its photographers the equipment, facilities, and training they needed to produce more photographs with greater "publicity value." Following the integration, the Navy teamed up with the staff at *Life* magazine to offer a nine-week course for Navy photographers. The course trained Navy photographers "technically and … journalistically so that they [could] use photographs to tell stories of both present and historical interest."[19] Once trained, the photographers were assigned to ships, shore stations, or Washington, D.C., to document the goings-on in each place. Some new photographers were recruited to join specialized Combat Photographic Units, which were "dispatched to photograph combat or events associated with prominent commanders."[20] After the United States entered the war following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navy had to continue to court the public's favor with images that put forth a positive portrayal of the Navy's activities.

The ever-increasing organization of Navy photography schools between World War I and World War II speaks to the growing need for images that were marketable and made for good public relations. The growth of Navy photographer schools also meant that more and more trained photographers took pictures for the Navy, as opposed to amateur photographers who were plucked from a ship's crew on an *ad hoc* basis. Through their training, Navy photographers learned which items and events were of a confidential nature, and which photographs could be used for publicity. Presumably, this led to more and more "voluntary censorship" at the

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[18] *Ibid.,* 1052.
[19] *Ibid.,* 1053.
[20] *Ibid.,* 1056.

photographer level, and a greater sanitization of images seen on the fronts of real photo postcards over time.

This "voluntary censorship" mindset is well illustrated in a set of guidelines distributed by BuAer in the early 1940s, titled "General Information for all Navy Photographers."[21] The guidelines remind Navy photographers that they are "writing history in pictures," and that the "photographic record [created by Navy photographers] will become an exceedingly valuable contribution to the story of the great conflict."[22] The purpose of the guidelines was to instruct Navy photographers on how to take photographs that had more human interest and were more suitable for publicity uses than documentary photographs. In the interest of creating more exciting publicity shots, the guidelines instruct photographers to place the subject of the photo "against a suitable background of action or scenery."[23] Examples of this technique include, "an admiral on the deck or bridge of a ship against a background of ships-or a ship- under his command. A pilot against the background of his plane being turned up. A signalman against a background of other ships or action aboard his own ship and so on."[24] In addition to correctly filling the photo frame, photographers should ensure that the people in "natural" shots do not look at the camera. Furthermore, subjects must appear to be acting the part, and should not appear to be "hamming it up" for the camera, as "military men and the workings of a military machine lend themselves toward the more serious side in photography… [and] dignity is an admirable quality."[25] This convention of posing and contextualizing subjects would ensure that photographs portrayed the Navy and its personnel as appropriately capable and strong. Images of

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[21] Bonney Powell, "General Information for all Navy Photographers," c.1942, Textual Archives Services Division Record Group 313 P86, National Archives, College Park, MD.
[22] *Ibid.*
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid.*

captains and admirals posed sternly against a background of hulking, powerful ships would certainly send a powerful message to the average viewer.

Furthermore, the guidelines' instruction to keep subjects from looking at the camera in "natural" photographs suggests that perhaps the goal was to give the viewer the sense that the picture somehow "just happened" without the efforts of a photographer behind the camera. When the subject's eyes are turned toward the camera, the viewer is reminded that the subject must have been looking at the photographer, and this "frontality…implies…the subject's cooperation" with the photographer.[26] When the subject of a photograph looks at the viewer, there is also the reminder that "photographers are always imposing standards on their subjects."[27] Photographers do this by preferring one exposure to another or by retouching photos as they are being developed. During this process, the photographer's taste, and subsequently which images he produces, is informed by training and orders. On the other hand, if the photograph's subject goes about his or her business, the viewer may not think about what goes into making a photograph-- that there was someone guiding the viewfinder and selecting the perfect frame and perfect content for the photographs. This perfect content would be intended for publicity purposes, the various elements of the shot imparting an implicit message that viewers would be less apt to analyze closely if they were not reminded that photography is a very human and subjective process, rather than a mechanical and objective capturing of reality. Because photographs do not completely capture an objective reality, they are potent means of communication. For this reason, the Navy sought to harness the photograph's power for publicity purposes by training Navy photographers. Navy photographers were instructed in photography school and by periodic guidelines like the one discussed above to produce images that conformed to certain standards.

[26] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 89.
[27] *Ibid.*, 6.

In addition to training official photographers, the Navy sought to control photographic messages by limiting the amount of unauthorized photography of naval subjects that happened during wartime.

Photographic Censorship, 1913-1918

Looking at the history of official photographic censorship and regulation in the Navy can shed light on what elements of naval life the Navy sought to keep from the eyes of the public, during wartime and peacetime. Through this understanding of what was approved for photography and what was not, one can attempt to construct what kind of an image the Navy wanted to project to the general public. Furthermore, by examining instances in which sailors ignored photographer regulations, one gets not only a glimpse into how often clandestine photography happened, but also a sense of the importance of photography to sailors. This understanding, in turn, speaks to the power photographic postcards had in the sailor's construction of his identity while in the Navy and his subsequent sharing of experiences with loved ones.

Even before the official training and integration of photographers into the Navy's operations, the Navy recognized photography as a useful tool and a dangerous weapon if the enemy gained access to information-packed images. As early as 1914, the Navy issued general orders that were intended to regulate who could take pictures and what could be photographed. General Order No. 78 specified:

> [t]he commanding officer will, in a general way, inform press correspondents, upon their arrival on board, of such matters as are not appropriate for publication, either during or after the termination of their visits, without first obtaining the direct permission of the department or of such officer as the department may authorize to act. Photographers should likewise be advised as to what subjects or articles they may photograph.[28]

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[28] United States Navy Department, *Taking Photographs; Passengers on Board Ships, etc.,* General Orders of Navy Department, Series of 1913: Orders Remaining in Force up to January 29, 1918*, No. 78 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1914), microfilm, N1.13-5.78.

The Orders go on to clarify that "all information concerning gun sights, stations, methods, and appliances, fire control, and also such details as exact ranges, size of targets, methods of training for target practice, plans of gunnery exercises, etc." are not acceptable subjects for documentation.[29] Furthermore, even if a photographer got permission from an officer to take pictures, the photographer had to "furnish the Navy Department, Bureau of Navigation, with a copy of … photographs or moving-picture films so taken for censorship before they are released for publication or exhibition."[30] The procedure for regulating photographers on board U.S. ships outlined in the general orders indicates that photographs intended for publishing had to pass through two filters - the commanding officer on the ship and the Navy Department - before they could reach the eyes of the general public.

As the United States entered World War I, the Navy sought to enact stricter regulations for photographers. On September 15, 1917, the Navy issued General Order No. 323, which announced a more stringent approach to photographer regulation:

> Hereafter releases for publication of photographs or films shall be made only at Washington. Officers of the Navy to whom photographers or motion-film agencies may bring matter with request for censorship are instructed to inform persons making such requests that the photographs or films should be sent to the Division of Pictures, Committee on Public Information, Washington, D.C., for action.[31]

In addition to the issuance of the above order, the War Department formed the Committee on Public Information (CPI) in April 1917. George Creel was to be the executive head of the CPI, working alongside Secretary of State Robert Lansing, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels. The committee studied the image

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[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Ibid.*
[31] United States Navy Department, *Censorship of Photographs, Films, etc.,* General Orders of Navy Department, Series of 1913: Orders Remaining in Force up to January 29, 1918, No. 323 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1917), microfilm, N1.13-5.323.

censorship regulations instituted by other Allied countries, and recommended policies that would

help to advise photographers and publishers which kinds of photographs "were not regarded as to

the public interest to publish."[32] The regulations drafted by the CPI were not laws, but were

guidelines meant to suppress images that were not fit for the public's eye. These guidelines were

generated in reaction to concerns about photographs of naval technology and activities finding

their way into the hands of the enemy with disastrous effects. There was also a concern about

maintaining a high public opinion of the war and of the nation's armed forces. Thus, the CPI

sought to "shape and train" American citizens for the war through their efforts.[33]

The guidelines issued by the CPI specified five categories of photographs that were

expressly unacceptable for publication. The first category of taboo images included images that

disclosed information "of military import." That is, CPI was concerned that images of

"fortifications, [ammunition] magazines, manufactories or war material, ports of embarkation,

movement of troops, new technology, methods of conflict, camouflage work, and aerial views"

contained too much useful information for the enemy.[34]

The second category included pictures that were prejudicial to the morale of the soldier,

including images of sailors out of uniform, in "unseemly attitudes," or in improper environments.

Pictures of "faked" battle scenes that gave false impression of military tactics and methods were

also off limits.[35] The third category of banned image encompassed images that could affect the

morale of the public. So, images of the "horrors of war" - of the dead and dying and funerals -

were strictly prohibited because they "caused needless anxiety to those whose friends and

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[32] Kendall Banning, *The Military Censorship of Pictures: Photographs That Came Under the Ban During the World War- and Why* (Washington, D.C.: Signal Reserves Corp, 1926), 1-2.
    [33] Stephen Vaughn, *Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 4.
    [34] *Ibid.,* 15.
    [35] *Ibid.,* 16.

relatives were at the front, and tended to foster the anti-war spirit that was always so persistently cultivated by the enemy."[36] The last two categories of images that were considered unfit for publishing were pictures with anti-American or pro-enemy propaganda, and pictures that might disturb relations with friendly nations.

Like earlier General Orders, these new guidelines gave commanding officers the responsibility of making sure that photographers did not take pictures of subjects in the five categories. Unlike previous regulations, the guidelines mandated that photographers apply for permits that were issued for specific places and dates on the condition that all photographs should be submitted for approval and storage by the War Department.[37]

Although the CPI's censorship guidelines were not backed by law, laws that were tangential to the CPI's censorship effort, such as the Sedition Act and the Espionage bill, allowed flagrant violators of censorship guidelines to be prosecuted.[38] The punishments meted out under the Sedition Act and Espionage Bill were, however, reserved for the more serious cases of people breaching the censorship regulations. For clandestine photographers on board ships and for civilian photographers who took pictures of prohibited items, a much less severe punishment was used. Officers and the War Department could punish photographers who breached the censorship code by revoking their photography permits.[39] The philosophy on revoking permits was that the practice was "not so much … a punitive measure but … a means of educating the camera men as well as the newspaper editors into the habit of getting the 'Passed by the Committee on Public Information' stamp on the backs of all photographs that might be

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[36] *Ibid.,* 19.
[37] *Ibid.,* 4.
[38] James R. Mock, *Censorship 1917* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1941), 48-53.
[39] Banning, *The Military Censorship of Pictures,* 18.

questionable."[40] Despite the lack of power the government had over photographers, reports indicate that "only in rare and isolated instances did [the photographers and publishers] violate either the letter or the spirit of this 'voluntary censorship.'"[41]

Most of the people who were granted permits to take photographs were enlisted men, civilian employees, and commissioned officers "who operated under orders and whose pictures were government property and were circulated under government control."[42] This allowed the Navy to keep more control over the photographers. If, however, untrained amateur photographers were issued cameras to take pictures of newsworthy events (as mentioned in the circular letter discussed earlier), there may have been some amount of illicit photography happening, as it is unclear what kind of oversight and censorship were in place to prevent amateur photographers from taking pictures for personal use.

Not everyone who took pictures on board ships in the Navy was a certified photographer approved by the War Department or the ship's commanding officer. In memoirs and letters, sailors on board the Battleship *Texas* (BB-35) indicate that enlisted men, who were not official photographers, had cameras and used them. In his memoir of his time on board *Texas* in 1918, Mark Raymond Murnane mentions "snap[ping] some pictures" with a friend's camera while in port.[43] Meanwhile, Carl Vogler, a sailor on board *Texas* in 1921, details his experiences trying, unsuccessfully, to find film for his Kodak while on leave in Panama.[44] Both mentions of enlisted men having cameras indicate that there were probably unlicensed photographers taking pictures on shore and possibly on board the ship. The clandestine photography of sailors on board

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[40] *Ibid.*
[41] *Ibid.,* 2.
[42] *Ibid.,* 3.
[43] Mark Murnane, *Ground Swells: Of Sailors, Ships, and Shellac* (New York: Exposition Press, 1949), 298.
[44] Carl Vogler, Vogler to mother, January 21, 1921, Battleship *Texas* Museum, LaPorte, TX, accession number 1993.32.75.

American warships was almost certainly not governed by a commanding officer, nor were the pictures sent for approval by the War Department. Thus, one can imagine how difficult it was for the War Department to standardize the guidelines and police photographic activity on board the ships between 1913 and 1918.

Photographic Censorship, 1919-1937

After the war ended, The Navy Department issued General Order No. 544 (1920), which cancelled all previous orders regarding photography. Order 544 stipulates that photographers had to be accredited by the Office of Naval Intelligence, but did not necessarily have to submit negatives to be approved by the Office of Naval Intelligence before the images were published.[45] Order 544 indicates that peacetime attitudes toward photographer regulation and censorship were understandably less rigorous than before, but it is clear that the Navy was still taking precautions to control who took photographs of naval subjects.

The Navy Department released General Order No. 176 in 1928. This order cancelled earlier orders, and instituted a somewhat more stringent policy on photography on board ships. Commanding officers were to view and approve all photographs taken before they were published. Unlike earlier Orders, General Order 176 contains a clause that stipulates, "photographs made by official Navy photographers shall be used only for official purposes and will not be sold, released, or put into circulation for public purposes without specific authority of the Navy Department."[46] For the first time, there was a clause in the General Orders prohibiting personnel from taking pictures for personal use. This may indicate that there was some amount of clandestine photography happening, or that official photographers were taking photographs for personal purposes. One can imagine how difficult it was for the War Department to

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[45] United States Navy Department, *Taking Photographs of Naval Subjects*, General Orders of Navy Department, 5th Series, No. 544 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920), microfilm, N1.13-5.544.
[46] *Ibid.*

standardize censorship guidelines and police photographic activity on board ships. If officers were not diligent about their duties enforcing photographer regulation, and unregistered photographers also took pictures, it stands to reason that a fair number of postcards and photographs might have circumvented censorship or regulation in the years during and after World War I.

As the inter-war years progressed, the Navy's photographic personnel and facilities continued to grow. Cameras also became readily available to amateur photographers, and more and more sailors became the proud owners of cameras. Because of this, the Navy had to continue to develop photography regulations. The development of military technology also continued apace during peace time. This meant that there were more and more classified objects that were not to be photographed, and it was in the Navy's best interest to continue to try to regulate photography on and around ships.

In 1937, the Navy Department released General Order No. 96, which was longer and more detailed than its predecessors. No. 96 authorized and directed the officer supervising photographic activity "to suspend the taking of photographs of any type immediately if, in his opinion, any danger of compromising confidential material arises."[47] Commanding or supervising officers were also directed to take any cameras that were the personal possessions of crew members into custody. The order states that "under no circumstances will [personal cameras] be used aboard ship without official permission and competent supervision."[48] General Order No. 96 represents the result of the Navy's efforts to refine photography regulations so that the rules regarding who could take photographs of what were explicit.

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[47] United States Navy Department, *Photographs of Naval Subjects*, General Orders of Navy Department, Series of 1935, No. 96 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1937), Battleship *North Carolina* Museum, Wilmington, NC.
[48] *Ibid.*

Photographic Censorship, 1938-1945

Heading into the 1940s, with war looming large, President Roosevelt sought to establish a committee for censorship. After the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States' subsequent entrance into the war, an entity for administering censorship of mail, media, and photographs became a necessity.[49] In December 1941, President Roosevelt established the Office of Censorship, which was to be headed by Byron Price, general manager of the Associated Press.[50] Once installed as the Office of Censorship director, Price was charged with organizing the Censorship Policy and Operating Boards, which would work together to make, distribute, and enforce censorship policies. Price's Office of Censorship sought to implement censorship practices that would offer the American public as much of the "truth" about the war that was prudent. Always with an eye on the public's perception of the war, the Censorship Office not only wanted to regulate images that would damage public morale or convey information about secret military technology, but also prohibited the "publication of material that could be 'distorted' and 'used as propaganda against the war effort.'"[51] For these purposes, the censorship effort during World War II was more organized and stringent than it was during World War I. Furthermore, Price's Office of Censorship was backed by law, and this helped to ensure that strict penalties could be brought against those who broke the censorship rules.

The United States Congress ratified Public Law 627 to make violation of censorship rules a punishable offence. The law prevented "the making of photographs and sketches of military or

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[49] Michael S. Sweeny, *Secrets of Victory: The Office of Censorship and the American Press and Radio in World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 31.
[50] *Ibid.*, 36.
[51] George H. Roeder, Jr. *The Censored War: American Visual Experience During World War Two* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 8.

naval reservations, naval vessels, and other naval military properties."[52] Violators were subject to

a $1,000 fine and up to a year in prison.[53] After the censorship law was implemented, the Navy

Department issued General Order No. 179. This order was created to streamline the Navy's

photographic policy as all photographic activities became merged under the command of

BuAer.[54] General Order No. 179 addressed "issues of responsibility; supervision; disposal of old

photograph files; Navy and civilian photographers; censorship; commercial motion pictures...;

and the potential strategic and historical value of photographs."[55] According to General Order

No. 179, photographers were required to "[submit] exposed film to field censors, who after

classifying photographs in accordance with policies… would send them back to the United

States for further review [by the Secretary of the Navy's Office of Public Relations] and for

distribution."[56] Order No. 179 repealed the directive given in General Order No. 96 that required

officers to stop any photographic activity that might compromise classified information, as there

had been instances in which officers prohibited photography at picture-worthy events, which

were of interest to the Navy Bureaus.[57]

Additionally, the Navy distributed regulations with instructions for mailing and censoring

photographs or photo postcards. These regulations were created and distributed in 1942 and

1943. The first iteration of these regulations was released in March 1942. Private photographic

prints were considered OK to mail, but censors had the option to "refer the prints… to the Office

of Naval Intelligence for safe keeping and release at a later date when their possible censorship

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[52] Warren, "Focal Point of the Fleet," 1058.
[53] *Ibid.*
[54] General Orders and Correspondence Regarding Photography in the Navy, 1941-1945, E. John Long Papers, COLL/675 Box# 3, Naval History and Heritage Command Operational Archives Section, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, DC.
[55] Warren, "Focal Point of the Fleet," 1059.
[56] Roeder, *The Censored War*, 9.
[57] United States Navy Department, *Photographs of Naval Subjects*, General Orders of Navy Department, Series of 1935, No. 179 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1942), Battleship *North Carolina* Museum, Wilmington, NC.

violations [were] of no further consequence."[58] The regulations advised that censors should be cognizant of the photographic prints' "values as keepsakes to personnel."[59] Picture postcards were also approved for mailing, provided that they were closely scrutinized by censors before being mailed. Picture postcards that "had a general sale in the locality where purchased and ones which depict old or scenic views" were the only kind of picture postcard approved for mailing.[60]

In October 1943, the Navy distributed a revised version of the earlier censorship regulations. In this version of the regulations, Navy personnel were instructed to post mail only from the ship on board which they were stationed to avoid revealing the ship's location through land-based post office postmarks.[61] These regulations state that picture postcards were still approved for mailing, provided that they did not reveal the location of the sender, and that the cards were produced in the area they were purchased.[62] Toward the end of the regulations, the Navy offers explicit instructions for the censorship of photographs and postcards. Photographs are to be scrutinized for concealed messages in dark portions of the image and in the composition of the image, and the edges of the photographs are to be checked for evidence of a message glued between the photograph's constituent sheets of paper.[63] The same is recommended for postcards, as the cards could be split and a message could be concealed. The regulations also decree that censors will "from time to time….collect several hundred outgoing cards and frank them to the Office of Naval Intelligence. O.N.I. … [examined] these lots for evidence of secret writing and [released] those found to be in good order."[64]

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[58] Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, "Censorship Regulations, U.S. Navy, 1942," March 1942, Textual Archives Services Division Record Group 165 NM84 209, National Archives, College Park, MD.
[59] *Ibid.*
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, "Censorship Regulations, U.S. Navy," October 1943, Textual Archives Services Division Record Group 165 NM84 209, National Archives, College Park, MD.
[62] *Ibid.*
[63] *Ibid.*
[64] *Ibid.*

Unlike World War I censorship, the World War II censorship procedure was backed by law and had significantly more oversight by the Navy's administration. As a result, World War II censorship was more prevalent and standardized than before. Because of this, it is far more likely that photographs passed through a handful of filters before being cleared for publishing, and that there would be a far smaller chance of clandestine photography happening on board ships.

That said, however, there is evidence that illicit photography on board ships in the World War II era did happen. A memo released by the secretary of the Navy to all ships and stations in 1942 indicates that the Navy saw some illicit photography and that some photographers were using navy resources to take and develop personal prints. The memo sternly states the purpose of the correspondence:

> personnel are taking an excessive volume of photographs, within naval jurisdiction, which are of no value to the U.S. Navy nor to the prosecutions of the war. It is apparent that the taking of these photographs persists only to serve the personnal [sic] interests of the individuals who take the pictures.[65]

The memo goes on to stress that personnel on board navy vessels are permitted to take pictures, just so long as they are on leave or liberty, and that personal cameras could be brought on board ships, but had to be turned over to a commanding officer for safe keeping.[66]

The memo above was echoed to the crew of the battleship *North Carolina* in a ship-wide memo about photography. The memo states that all "privately owned cameras" were supposed to be turned in to the ship's photo lab for safekeeping, and all "photography aboard ship [was to] be limited to ship's photographers.[67] Nonetheless, an anonymous shipman referred to illicit photography on board *North Carolina* near the end of World War II. He writes,

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[65] Memorandum by Frank Knox, "Possession of Cameras and Taking of Photographs by Naval Personnel," c.1942, Textual Archives Services Division Record Group 313 P 20, National Archives, College Park, MD.
[66] *Ibid.*
[67] Memorandum by H.S. Harnly, "Photography," July 8, 1945, Battleship *North Carolina* Museum, Wilmington, NC.

I was sneaking pictures of 16" shells coming on board. Went out at breakfast chow and snapped one. Got greedy and went back at supper chow for another one of the transporter. Just as I clicked the shutter a voice from behind me sent my heart nearly off the catipult [sic]. Luckily it was a buddy MAA Coxswain who nicely reminded me of the no-no. He could have been a cell mate for not turning me in.[68]

This incident illustrates that the censorship and regulation of photographers that were in place at this time, while much more effective than their World War I-era counterparts, still allowed some room for illicit photography. But the question begs to be asked: Why would sailors risk taking photographs they were not allowed to take? While one may never know the individual's motivation for breaking these rules, one can try to arrive at an answer by understanding what these photographs might have meant to the sailors.

In her cornerstone work, *On Photography*, Susan Sontag puts forth the argument that photographs "help people take possession of space in which they are insecure."[69] The very action of photography is soothing, as it was an activity most people were familiar with by the time World War II rolled around. The act of taking pictures was soothing for sailors; it "[assuaged] general feelings of disorientation…" that were brought about by their new surroundings and frequent travel.[70] When the sailors had the photographs they took in their hands, they had the sense that they contained and controlled their world by capturing it with the camera. Capturing their surroundings allowed sailors the luxury of returning to the past to revisit and internalized their experiences. Through the camera, sailors gave reason to the world around them.[71] Photography also allowed sailors to "document sequences of consumption [or activity] carried on outside the view of family, friends, [and] neighbors."[72] This allowed sailors to share their

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[68] Gordon Knapp to Battleship *North Carolina* curatorial staff, March 15, 2001, Battleship *North Carolina* Museum, Wilmington, NC.

[69] Sontag, *On Photography,* 9.

[70] *Ibid.,* 9-10.

[71] *Ibid.,* 207.

[72] *Ibid.,* 9.

experiences with their loved ones, and, in Sontag's cynical estimation, give "an appearance of participation" in the war effort.[73]

Photography was also democratic. By "using procedures based on chance, or mechanical techniques which anyone can learn…," photography weakened the grip specialized producers or artists had on creating images of the world around them.[74] Photography broke the monopoly the highly trained painter or sculptor had on creating images, and the hold wealthy patrons had on owning such images. Thus, sailors had the means to create and own images of what they saw around them; all that was required was the knowledge to snap a picture and have the film developed. This ability, for some, may have been appealing and may have functioned as a means of rebellion against the "system" that forbade anyone but trained and certified Navy photographers from taking pictures of the Navy's world.

No doubt photography, or more precisely documenting experiences, was important for sailors. While a small group of them demonstrated their autonomy by ignoring photographic regulations, the majority seems to have followed the rules and so had to be content with documenting their experiences by collecting photo postcards, or photographs made by others. Although these sailors did not take the pictures they coveted, they were able to select postcards with images they liked from all of the cards available in the ship's store, the naval station's store, or shops on shore. This selection of images would serve to construct the sailor's view of his life in the Navy and his role within that life. As the sailor built his identity, he associated himself as a working part of the Navy and invested himself in the Navy's cause. Thus, photographs were a means of recruiting the consent of not only American civilians, but also the men who joined the Navy's ranks.

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[73] *Ibid.,* 10.
[74] *Ibid.,* 149.

The Navy's prohibition of unauthorized photographs and regulation of Navy photographers through training and censorship were functions of the photograph's power to communicate and shape identities. While photo postcards were seemingly harmless means of communicating, they were still essentially mobile photographs that had the ability to communicate volumes to the people who viewed them. The U.S. Navy sought to harness this power to convey certain messages about the Navy to both the civilian and enlisted viewer. As will be discussed later, photo postcards between 1913 and 1945 reflect the history of censorship and photographer training in the Navy. From censorship stamps to the increasingly generic images on the fronts of the cards, extant photo postcards with images of the U.S. Navy are testaments to the Navy's increasingly organized and regulated photographic activities the shaped the Navy's portrayal during and around both world wars.

CHAPTER 4.

Analysis of the Findings

Censorship Marks

As detailed above, the censorship demands placed on photographers by the Navy may have exerted a significant amount of pressure on which images were placed on the fronts of photo postcards. Despite this pressure, only a small number of postcards in the surveyed collections show evidence of censorship in the form of censor stamps. This indicates that perhaps there was a disjunction between the ideal effects of censorship guidelines and the reality of the way those guidelines were enforced. This difference between the way censorship guidelines were supposed to be enforced and the way it was actually enforced meant that images of things prohibited by photograph censorship guidelines may have been mailed to or otherwise seen by the general public. The breaches in protocol that allowed prohibited images to reach the eyes of the public might have occurred simply because officers in charge of censoring images were lax in their duties, or perhaps confused by the General Orders that specified what images could and could not be seen by the public.

Censorship stamps from World War I are far more prevalent than World War II censorship stamps and reveal some information about the censorship process. Forty-three of the 335 First World War-era postcards have censorship stamps. Three of the forty-three cards have censorship stamps that were put on the cards after they were placed in the mail. These stamps indicate that the censor approved the cards for mailing and feature a stamp with the censor's signature (Figure 4.1).
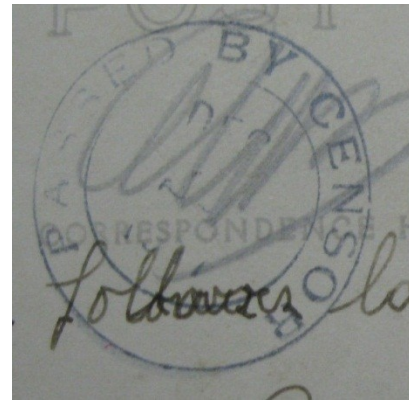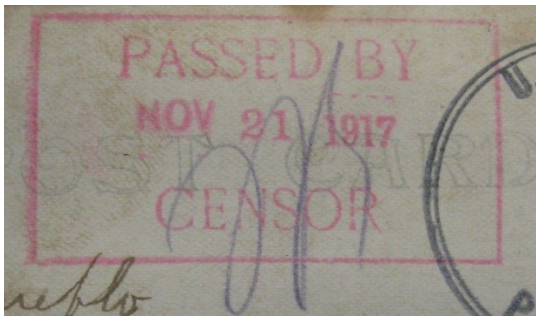
Figure 4.1. *Left,* HR95-2510-008E. Censor stamp dated November 21, 1917. *Source*: Hampton Roads Naval Museum, Norfolk, VA; *Right*, 2012.1001.2. Censor stamp dated to December 27, 1917. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

Forty cards from the Battleship *Texas* Museum collection have what appear to be preemptive censorship stamps that read, "DO.NOT.MAIL.WILL.NOT.PASS.CENSOR." Some have an abbreviated stamp that reads, "DO.NOT.MAIL." All of these censored cards are blank on the back, except for the rubber stamp marks. All of the images on the fronts of these stamped cards fall into two categories detailed by the War Department guidelines on photograph censorship: images of military import and images that would affect the morale of the general public. The subject matter of the images on these cards include sailors at general quarters (image of military import), a funeral service on board the ship (image that could affect the morale of the public), a flying dirigible (image of military import), sailors on watch (image of military import), images of sailors on leave in Scotland and Ireland (image of military import), and English warships (image of military import). For the purposes of this project, the most significant cards in this censored collection are seven that contain the same image of a funeral service, in which a casket draped with an American flag is lowered over the side with one of the ship's cranes (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. 1983.83.454. Image of a funeral service on board *Texas* that was prohibited to be mailed by censors. *Source*: U.S.S. *Texas* Museum.

Two captions correspond with this one image. One reads, "Sending shipmate/ home from Scotland," while the other reads, "Funerel Servess [sic]." Five of the seven postcards have DO.NOT.MAIL. stamps on the back. Those five are AZO postcards that date between 1918 and 1930, while the cards without the stamp are AZO cards dating between 1907 and 1918.

The division in this small collection seems to represent the period in which the War Department's photograph censorship guidelines were instituted. The fact that the cards are printed on 07-18 AZO and 18-30 AZO paper either indicates they were all printed at once during the transition period from one kind of paper to the next, or that they were printed in small amounts over a period of time. The absence of the stamp on the 07-18 AZO cards that date to 1918, and the presence of the DO.NOT.MAIL. stamp on the cards printed on 18-30 AZO paper, dating to 1918, would support the hypothesis that they were printed in small amounts over a period of time. Furthermore, the postcards were donated to the *Texas* Museum by a handful of

different donors, which indicates they were probably not made for a single sailor - they were somehow obtained by a part of the ship's crew.

The collection of images on the surveyed postcards dating from World War I may reflect a lightly censored body of images, in spite of the regulation and censorship at the time. The fact that untrained and unauthorized photographers took photos, and possibly created postcards, before the Navy started offering formal training courses for naval photographers, may indicate that some of the photographer regulations were bypassed or ignored. It is obvious that some censorship and regulation of images were exerted on the postcards in the form of the DO.NOT.MAIL. stamp. The stamps, however, were probably administered by officers in charge of photo censorship, or the photo shop on board *Texas*, not by the War Department.[1] Having officers determine what images were fit for publication, as demonstrated by the ineffectiveness of earlier General Orders, was an inexact, non-standardized process. This may mean that there were postcards with images that may have been determined "illicit" by the War Department that actually got published by photographers in the form of photo postcards. This may mean that the censorship pressure enacted by General Orders was, in fact, not as strong as it was supposed to be.

Evidence of censorship on postcards dating to War World II is even less than on postcards from World War I. The only censorship mark from World War II is on a postcard from the Battleship *North Carolina* Museum. The card was mailed and dates to March 4, 1942.

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[1] Banning, *Military Censorship of Pictures,* 6.

Figure 4.3. 1996.88.2. Censor stamp dating to March 4, 1942. *Source*: Battleship *North Carolina* Museum.

Although this body of cards with censorship marks may suggest that censorship was light or unevenly enforced, the fact only twenty-two of the cards dating from World War I and World War II appear to have been mailed may have skewed the censorship data for this body of postcards. Because so few cards were mailed, it stands to reason that the censorship marks would be light. There is also the problem of postcards being mailed in envelopes with letters. It is possible that some of the postcards were not sent through the mail as intended, and although they may have been viewed or approved by a censor, they may not bear any markings of the check.

Postcard Photographers and Publishers

Before delving into the analysis of postcard images, it would be instructive to discuss findings of who took the pictures and who published the ones that are the focus of this study. An understanding of who produced the postcards might reveal information about what kinds of stakes postcard producers and photographers held in making the postcards. That is to say, it is important to understand whether these postcards were produced by the Navy, photographers/publishers associated with the Navy, or commercial publishers who would have been less influenced by navy censorship oversight.

About 10 percent of the postcards in the surveyed collections have discernible information about publishers, while 50 percent indicate who took the photographs. This information is usually presented in the form of photographer signatures on the images and copyright or publication marks by the publisher. Occasionally, publishers used a certain kind of cardstock with a unique heading or stamp box on the back that reveals the identity of the publisher. But commercially produced postcard stock that was widely available to photographers or postcard publishers, such as Kodak's AZO cardstock, was popular among postcard producers. Unfortunately, this kind of cardstock provides no information about the publisher.

AZO postcards represent about 52 percent of the cards that were analyzed for this project. Eastman Kodak Company produced AZO postcard stock that was widely available for both individual and commercial use between 1907 and 1950.[2] The other kinds of cardstock present in the remaining 48 percent of the surveyed cards are from various commercial postcard printers, or are other kinds of do-it-yourself cardstock, including Defender and EKC. Some of the postcards

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[2] Hal Morgan and Andreas Brown, *Prairie Fires and Paper Moons: The American Photographic Postcard: 1900-1920* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1981), 187.

in this group are obviously souvenir cards bought ashore, as they bear stamps or printing that indicate a professional novelty postcard publisher created them.

The group of cards with publication information includes twenty-seven different publishers. They include both commercial firms and publishers who are associated with the Navy. The three publishers associated with the Navy include the U.S. Navy itself, the ships' service studio on the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, and the printer on board U.S.S. *Kearsarge*. That the *Kearsarge* print shop produced postcards suggests that postcards may have been produced on board other ships. Even if cards do not indicate they were published on board a ship, it is possible that the ship's photographer took photos that were turned into postcards by the ship's print shop or photo lab. It is certain that large ships and shore stations had photo labs and the capability to produce photographs and photo postcards.[3] In the case of cards that had preemptive censorship marks (discussed above), it is possible that these cards were produced on board the ship and then distributed to the crew, perhaps sold through the ship's store. Cards with images of the ship and crew's activities would have held quite a bit of interest for sailors on board the ships. Also, if sailors were prohibited from taking pictures of their own, these postcards would have served as a way to obtain photographs of the sailors' surroundings and experiences.

Commercially produced cards comprise the lion's share of those with publisher information. While some of the publishers in the years around World War I took their own photographs, publishers in later years mostly used official Navy photographs. This trend can be attributed to the fact that civilian photographers with proper certification were allowed to take photographs of Navy subjects in the years around World War I, but closer to World War II,

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[3] Paul J. Vanderwood and Frank N. Samponaro, *Border Fury: A Picture Postcard Record of Mexico's Revolution and U.S. War Presparedness, 1910-1917* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press), 10.

civilian photography was severely decreased. O.W. and C.E. Waterman comprised one such team of publishers who took their own photographs. These two publisher/photographers operated out of separate studios, and it is uncertain whether they were related. Archival records indicate that both O.W. and C.E. applied for Navy photographer permits throughout 1918.[4] In the cards surveyed for this project, one was published by O.W. and four by C.E. All of the shots on the fronts of the Waterman cards are of ship exteriors.

One commercial publisher who had to resort to using official Navy photographs was the Frank G. Ennis Paper Company. The cards published by the Ennis Paper Company date to the World War II era. The Ennis Paper Co. was a wholesale firm based in Norfolk, Virginia. The company produced many different paper products in addition to postcards. It produced navy postcards as well as others with a wide variety of images, especially of scenes of Norfolk. Twenty-two cards in the surveyed collections were published by the Frank G. Ennis Paper Company. They carry images primarily of the Naval Training Station in Norfolk.

Another prominent publisher of World War II-era postcards was W.R. Thompson. Thompson created about 3,000 postcards with official Navy photographs over the course of his career.[5] There were four such cards in the group surveyed for this project. Two carry official Navy photographs of ship exteriors, one of men at work, and one of a naval training station bowling alley.

Thirty-eight different photographer signatures were on the images. For the majority of the photographers, there was little to no information. That means it was impossible to determine whether the photographers were Navy or commercial photographers. That said, however, some

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[4] United States Navy Department, "Navy Department Photographer's Permit, O.W. Waterman," September 26, 1918, Textual Archives Services Division Record Group 313 P89, National Archives, College Park, MD.; United States Navy Department, "Navy Department Photographer's Permit, C.E. Waterman," 1918, Textual Archives Services Division Record Group 313 P89, National Archives, College Park, MD.

[5] Jack Smith, *Military Postcards, 1870-1945* (Greensboro, NC: Wallace-Homestead Book Co., 1988), 182.

photographers were identifiable and, like the group of card publishers discussed above, they included both Navy photographers and commercial civilian photographers.

The most prolific photographers were two Navy photographers who worked together to document a wide variety of scenes on board *Texas* between 1920 and 1925. These two photographers, H.W. Long and Reginal M. Greer, produced photographs for 157 cards in the surveyed group. These two men signed their photographs with a variety of signatures, including "Long & Greer," "L&G," and a cryptic intertwined L and G (Figure 4.4).
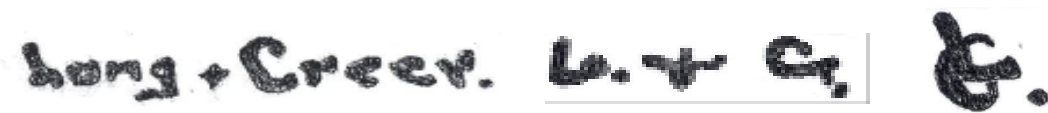

Figure 4.4. Line drawings of signatures from photographers H.W. Long and Reginal M. Greer.

Both men were sailors on board the ship during the time they took the pictures. The ship's census from 1920 indicates that Long was rated as a construction electrician and Greer as a commissaryman. It is clear from the records that neither were officially rated photographers, and this makes sense because the first official, permanent Navy photography school did not begin until 1920. It is possible that Long and Greer were not able to attend the photography school until late 1920. There is no indication in any records extant in the *Texas* museum that either of the men went to the photography school to become officially rated photographers. Nonetheless, Long and Greer took a large number of photos of events and activities on board the ship, no doubt in between the regular duties of their day jobs.

The third most prolific photographer is Charland. There are fifty-nine postcards with images attributed to him, and he was probably a sailor on board *Texas* while he took the pictures. Unfortunately, no records confirm that Charland was a sailor on the ship, although the Naval History and Heritage Command indicates that a crew member with that last name may have been

the ship's unofficial photographer around 1916.[6] Postcards in this study that carry images signed by Charland date to between 1913 and 1914. So Charland may have been on board *Texas* from around 1913 to around 1916. The wide variety of subjects in Charland's photos also suggest that he was a member of the ship's crew and was on board the ship for an extended period.

It appears that Navy photographers were responsible for creating a large number of the images on the fronts of cards dating to the World War I and interwar periods. This is significant because navy-associated photographers were subject to regulations imposed by the Navy that dictated which images were deemed fit for general distribution to the public. This may indicate that the images analyzed reflect some amount of manipulation of the messages conveyed in the postcards. This image manipulation would have worked to create a positive image of the Navy that was designed to enlist the support of civilians by engendering pride in the nation's Navy.

Civilian photographers captured images on the fronts of a smaller, but significant, number of postcards in the surveyed collection. Some commercial studios produced photos on the fronts of more than a few cards. Brown Brothers was one such commercial civilian photography studio based in New York City. The firm took photographs on sixteen postcards that date to around World War I, including images of ship exteriors, training station activities, and a few shipboard scenes. Like O.W. and C.E. Waterman, Brown Brothers submitted applications to the Navy for photographer permits.[7]

Another pair of prolific civilian photographers were Enrique Muller and his son, Enrique Muller, Jr. This father and son team specialized in photographs of naval subjects, and operated between the late 1890s and 1919. During this time, the team's photo shop was located in New

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[6] Naval History and Heritage Command, "Online Library of Selected Images- Picture Data, Charland," Department of the Navy, http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/OnlineLibrary/photos/images/i03000/i03092c.htm (accessed December 1, 2012).

[7] United States Navy Department, "Navy Department Photographer's Permit, Brown Brothers," December 21, 1917, Textual Archives Services Division Record Group 313 P89, National Archives, College Park, MD.

York City, and they photographed many of the naval happenings in New York waters.[8] Cards

from the Mullers include images primarily of ship exteriors, but a few have shots of ships' guns.

Cards from the World War II era with images taken by Navy photographers do not

identify individual photographers. Instead, the images are labeled as "Official Navy

Photographs" or are identified as being taken by the ship's service studio at the Great Lakes

Naval Training Station. There are forty-eight of these cards that do not identify an individual

photographer. This trend further illustrates the increasing regulation of photographic activities in

the Navy.

While civilian photographers and publishers represent a large percentage of the cards

studied for this project, it appears that many of the identifiable publishers and photographers

produced cards with images of naval activities that were not detrimental to the Navy's image.

Indeed, the photographer regulations in the Navy between 1913 and 1945 may have discouraged

photographers and publishers from even applying for photographer permits. This meant that the

civilian postcard producers would have had to settle for shots of ship exteriors, or they may have

had to use official Navy photographs.

A Note about Dating Photo Postcards

For the purpose of this project, it is important to determine what date ranges the postcards

come from, because it is imperative to know which images were from the target date range

(1913-1945), and what trends of production were over time. Some postcards are easily dated by

the postmarks they bear. Unfortunately, though, most of the postcards in the surveyed collection

have never been mailed. Only twenty-two cards out of the 919 surveyed cards were mailed.

Thus, the reasearcher must look for other hints that indicate the year in which the postcards were

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[8] Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York, "M- Publishers, Enrique Muller," Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York, http://www.metropostcard.com/publishersm2.html (accessed July 10, 2012).

produced or acquired. Determining the date of postcards involves searching out clues in the image and in the printing on the back of the cards. A good deal of the cards include captions or handwritten messages that sometimes indicate when the action captured in the image took place. When images are not annotated, they are by no means left mute. Events, clothing, the appearance of the ship's exterior, and the ship's presence in certain locations all offer hints as to the time period from which the image comes.

While the date of the image does not always indicate the date of the postcard, the printing on the back of the card can be used to approximate the date of the card. At this point, the challenge becomes identifying the postcard publisher or the brand of postcard stock the photo was printed on. A large variety of postcard publishers and postcard paperstock producers existed in the first three decades of the twentieth century, each with its own unique card headings and stampbox configurations. These unique configurations were typically altered periodically, providing some frame of reference for dates.[9]

Quantitative Analysis

Of the 919 card surveyed, 335 date between 1913 and 1918, 402 date to the interwar period, and 123 date between 1938 and 1945. A quantitative look at the images on the front of these cards reveals trends over time that may speak to the ways the Navy was portrayed between 1913 and 1945. In order to do this, the cards from each time period were separated into twelve different categories according to the denotative (literal) meaning of the cards. The categories were bag layouts, fleet, funeral, leisure and other, liberty, men at work, guns and ammunition, portraits, ship and plane exterior shots, souvenir cards, training station shots, and major wartime events. Because the three groups have different numbers of cards in them, it is necessary to look

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[9] Morgan and Brown, *Prairie Fires and Paper Moons,* 187-190; Walter E. Corson, *Publishers' Trademarkes Identified* (Jacksonville, FL: High-Pitched Hum Publishing, 1979).

at the percentage of cards that fall into each category in order to make a valid comparison between the three time periods.

This analysis of the cards' denotative message found that certain categories of images composed a greater percentage of cards produced during the interwar period, and a smaller percentage of cards produced during wartime. Other categories of images composed a greater percentage of the cards produced during years of war than during peacetime. Cards that feature fleet maneuvers, ship and plane exteriors, and scenes from training station compose a smaller percentage of cards from the interwar period than from wartime. Cards with images of training station and ship and plane exteriors exhibited a marked decrease after World War I, and drastic increase after peacetime. As is illustrated in the graph in Figure 4.5, exterior shots compose 22.7 percent of World War I cards, 13.2 percent of interwar cards, and 39 percent of World War II cards. Likewise, cards with training station shots comprise 22.1 percent of World War I, 5.7 percent of interwar, and 18.7 percent of World War II cards.
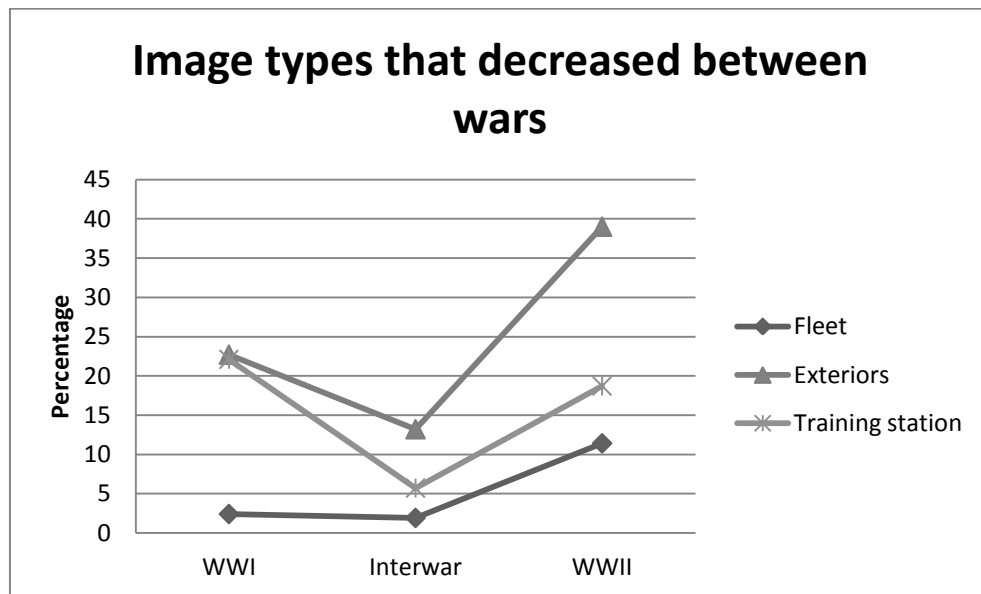

Figure 4.5. Graph showing which categories of images exhibited a decrease in production between World War I and World War II.

The dip in production of cards with shots of training station and exterior shots between the wars may indicate a tendency of card producers to place more emphasis on images of the kinds of equipment in use and images of the building of the Navy during wartime. Considering photo postcards as sources of "soft news" for civilians, this trend indicates that images of ships and planes served as a way of showing the strength of the naval fleet. Images of sailors being trained at naval training station may have been a way of not only showing folks back home what the sailors were up to during training, but also emphasizing the competence and discipline of sailors soon to be on the battlefront. For this reason, images of the Navy would have been of great interest during wartime, but during peacetime, images of this sort would have been less important than shots of other aspects of the Navy.

Interestingly, cards with shots of fleet maneuvers exhibit only a small decrease in prevalence after World War I, but increase quite a bit after peacetime. Fleet maneuver cards make up 2.4 percent of cards from World War I, 1.9 percent of cards produced during peacetime, and 11.4 percent of World War II-era cards. Following the reasoning above, it seems strange that cards with this kind of image did not compose a larger percentage of the cards from World War I, as shots of groups of ships or planes together would have emphasized the depth of the Navy's fleet. One reason for this may be that groups of ships would have been difficult to capture from sea level, or from the shore. After the popularization of aerial photography, however, shots of the fleet could be made easily. The Navy did not fully adopt aerial photography until after World War I, so this may explain the relatively small number of fleet shots on postcards from World War I. The large increase in fleet shots going into World War II indicates that images of the Navy's size were indeed important to developing the Navy's powerful image.

Three image categories that increased in the interwar period include images that emphasize mundane activities and leisure time for sailors both on ships and ashore. These categories include shots of leisure time on board ships, sailors on liberty, and men at work on board ships. The percentage each of these three categories increase appreciably during the interwar period. Cards with images of leisure time on board ships increase from 9.2 percent during World War I to 17.9 percent during peace time, and then decrease to 4.1 percent in the World War II years. Images of men coaling ship, exercising, cleaning, and working on ships in dry dock comprise 6.9 percent of World War I cards, 22 percent of interwar cards, and 2.4 percent of World War II cards. Likewise, cards with images of sailors on liberty or of scenes in port over the three time periods are 10.7 percent, 25.1 percent, and 4.1 percent (Figure 4.6).
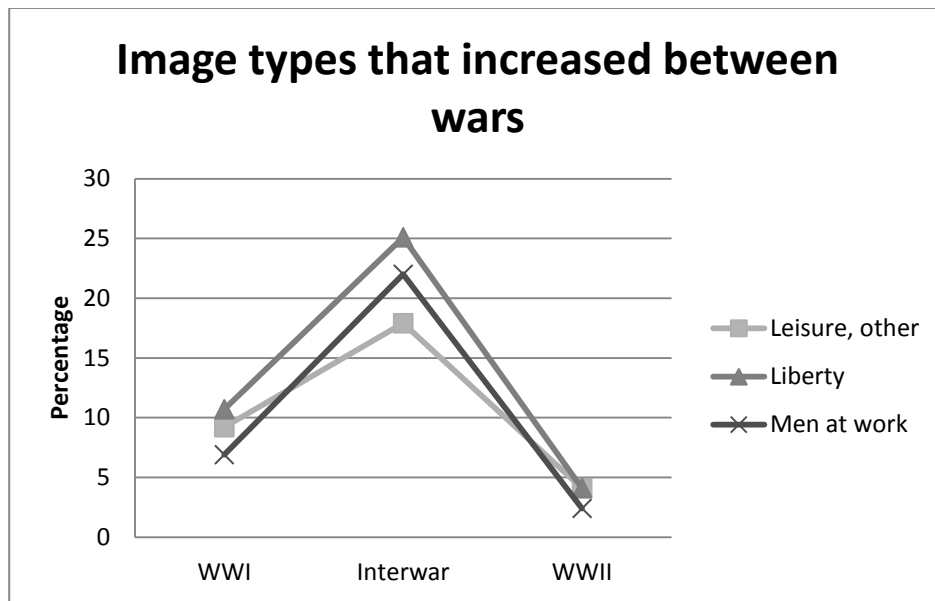
Figure 4.6. Graph that shows which categories of images exhibited an increase in production between World War I and World War II.

In all three of the categories, the proportion of cards increases during peacetime because the Navy did not have to enlist support or national pride by projecting power in images. So images of sailors at ease or working on menial tasks that could portray a laid back or silly image of the Navy would not be a threat to its image. It is also interesting to note that there is a decrease

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in these kinds of images from World War I to World War II. This downward trend from one war to the next might be a result of increased restrictions on photography. As was outlined above, photographer training, censorship, and restricted access to photography during World War II meant that there was less opportunity to capture shots of day-to-day activities on board the ship. There were also some activities, such as coaling ship, that were obsolete by World War II. This meant that these activities would not have been seen in the postcard images from the later years simply because the navy was no longer doing the activities.

Cards with images of ship guns, torpedoes, and target practice compose one group that does not follow the hypothesis that images of military might decreased during the interwar period. In fact, cards of this type increase slightly over time, from 6 percent to 9.5 percent to 9.8 percent, rather than exhibit a decrease during peacetime and a slight increase into World War II. It is unclear why this is the case, but one possible explanation of this trend is that even in peacetime, the Navy still conducted gunnery drills. The Navy focused on honing the efficiency and efficacy of gun crews on board ships during peacetime. So the portrayal of ships' guns and gunnery drills on the front of postcards suggests that although the U.S. was in a time of peace, the Navy was still vigilant and ready to protect the nation at a moment's notice. Furthermore, these images of honing wartime skills served to remind the viewer that the Navy was an important part of the nation's defense, and in a time of peace with some political unrest, it would be wise to continue to support the Navy.

Qualitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis put forth above offers some information about how the Navy was portrayed in postcards. A qualitative analysis of the images allows access to the "connotative" meaning in the images that goes beyond a literal reading and begins to look at

implied and symbolic meanings within the images. This section will attend to a qualitative

reading of the cards' images, focusing on groupings of related cards that deal with similar

themes.

Training Station

After men enlisted in the Navy, their first stop was the training station. While in training,

the hopeful sailors were introduced to the ways of the Navy, and given instruction in the various

behaviors and technologies they were going to need. There are many cards with images from

naval training stations from the World War I, interwar, and World War II time periods. In all

three, the images tend to emphasize large numbers of men. Over time, however, there appears to

be a trend of greater discipline and organization among men portrayed in the card images.

Most of the naval training station cards in the surveyed collections were parts of

collections or booklets of cards produced and sold at the training stations. These card booklets or

packages contain a number of postcards that could be mailed separately, or the whole packet

could be mailed with more postage. The training station collections include cards with images of

facilities and buildings, various training and non-training activities, and equipment used for

training.

Probably the most popular shots in the training station cards are shots of the men

marching, doing drills, and exercising. All of these images emphasize the sheer number of bodies

being trained at the station. One such card from a packet made at the Hampton Roads Training

station around 1918 exemplifies the way these cards were able to visually quantify the number of

men being trained to fight for the U.S. Navy (Figure 4.7). In this image, rows of men in their

blue uniforms stand with their arms outstretched. The men in the foreground are spaced evenly in

straight rows, but as the eye looks further into the background, there appears to be a sea of men.

It is uncertain whether the men in the background are doing the same "setting-up exercises," or if they are engaged in another activity that does not require the same straight lines of the men in the foreground. At any rate, the image makes it apparent that there are quite a few men there at the training station.

Figure 4.7. 2009.487D.003. Card with image of men at the Hampton Roads Training Station exercising. *Source*: Hampton Roads Naval Museum, Norfolk, VA.

A deeper connotative message that lurks in this image is that of command and discipline. With this many men at the training station, a great deal of organization and clear command must be present in order to get the men trained in an effective manner. This image also raises the question of who is commanding the men at this moment. It appears at first glance that the men are conducting these exercises of their own volition, without someone directing them. It also appears that men are all doing the same thing, but a closer look dispels some of the mystery. When one looks closely at the men in the image, one sees some men with their arms down. Perhaps they were tired of the exercise and were hoping not to get caught stealing a rest. A closer look also reveals some officers walking between the rows of men, presumably offering critiques and reprimanding men who are not doing what they should be doing. Thus, upon closer

inspection, this image reveals how the men were commanded, and how some of them may not have valued their time at the training station.

Images of training station activities like the one in Figure 4.7 were integral to the Navy's effort to boost recruitment and influence public opinion about the Navy. Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Navy began targeting men from landlocked areas of the nation. In order to make the Navy more marketable to people outside of areas typically associated with a strong maritime heritage, the Navy had to make itself accessible to people with little to no experience with seafaring.[10] The Navy also had to appeal to parents who were sometimes dubious about their beloved sons abandoning educational or professional opportunities in the civilian world for service in the Navy. Postcards with images of training station facilities and activities were an ideal medium for publicity. The images of drills and exercises were embedded in a popular medium, which was sure to be utilized by sailors going through training or visitors to the training station. The images themselves were meant to make the discipline and work required in training appealing to the young men, and the images of the facilities were meant to make anxious parents feel that their sons were being well treated and trained in top-notch facilities.[11]

A later image from the Great Lakes Training Station dates from 1943, and shows men using their bodies to spell out a message that reads, "USN Anchored to Democracy" (Figure 4.8). The message spelled out by the mens' bodies holds a clear and concise denotative message that is packed with meanings attached to abstract ideas, objects, and events that are not pictured. In fact, without some knowledge of what democracy is, the denotative message would make no sense whatsoever. It is also interesting to note that according to the message, the U.S. Navy is

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[10] Frederick S. Harrod, *Manning the New Navy: The Development of a Modern Naval Enlisted Force, 1899-1940* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 44.
[11] *Ibid., 45.*

"anchored" to an abstract idea, indicating that this idea of democracy is what the Navy is fighting for. Thus, the message implies that the Navy is an important tool for protecting the people of the United States and other countries who are dedicated to the idea of democracy, which is linked to freedom and set in opposition to dictatorship or fascism. In this way, the written message in the image positions the Navy as a tool of the good guys to be used against the bad guys.

That the message is spelled out with human bodies is a powerful and significant aspect of the image. Although some men are lying down to create letters, and others are sitting, it is clear that it took quite a few bodies to make this intricate message. It also must have taken a great deal of organization and planning to form the letters and the Navy anchor. There is also the implication that the men who made this image agree with the image's message. In a way, the men included in the picture are using their bodies as a signature of agreement with the message. So, the connotative meaning of the image itself seems to say, "We are all committed to fighting for this idea we hold, and we have the man power and skill to do so."
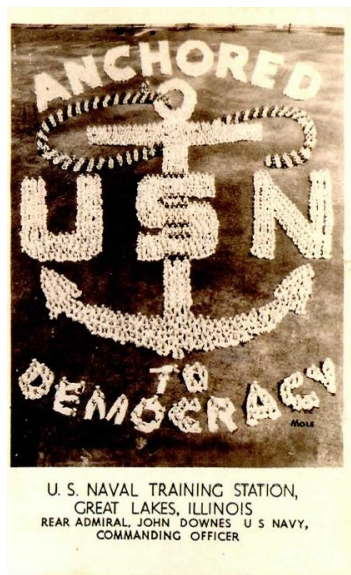

Figure 4.8. Card with image of sailors at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station spelling out a message. *Source*: Robynn Clairday and Matt Clairday, *Postcards from World War II: Sights and Sentiments from the Last Century* (Garden City Park, NY: Square One Publishing, 2001), 103.

While the training station cards from all three time periods place emphasis on the sheer number of men being trained to go into the Navy, postcards from later years show greater organization and discipline than cards from the earlier years. The postcard front in Figure 4.9 shows men at the Hampton Roads Training Station and Operating Base around 1918. The men in the picture are lined up for chow, and it is apparent that although they are in a line, they are at ease. Most of the men are looking at the camera, and some stand with legs crossed. It is also apparent that not all of the men are dressed the same way – some are wearing puttees while others are not.

Figure 4.9. 2009.487D.001. Card with image of men at the Hampton Roads Training Station and Operating Base lining up for chow. *Source*: Hampton Roads Naval Museum.

Conversely, a shot from the Great Lakes Training Station dating between 1940 and 1945 shows men in neat lines waiting for chow (Figure 4.10). Officers also stand neatly next to the men under their command. The difference between the two images is startling. In the first, it is as if the men are left to their own devices at chow time. They are allowed some personal time to relax while they wait for their meal, and one can imagine meal time as an unstructured and leisurely event. In the second image, however, men are expected to wait for their food in uniform

lines, looking straight ahead. They are also obviously being ordered about by their officers. Unlike the men in the first picture, the men in this later image exhibit great discipline. One might expect the men in the second image to eat with urgency and to be back to work learning how to be the best sailors they can be in no time.

Figure 4.10. 1988.022.0010. Sailors in training lining up for chow. *Source*: Battleship *North Carolina* Museum.

These two pictures project two different images of how sailors were trained at the naval training stations. In the first image, dating from World War I, the men seem rather undisciplined and there seems to be no purpose to their time spent waiting for food. Indeed, this trend is continued throughout earlier training station postcards, which tend to show men loitering outside of barracks and include far more shots of the station's facilities than of men participating in training activities. On the other hand, later training station postcards emphasize discipline and training with shots of men doing training activities, and others that show the men in neat lines or in a structured, organized environment. The message the later images impart is one of discipline and competence. This particular message might have had a reassuring effect on loved ones, who received these postcards in the mail from their sailor in training. These training station postcards

not only showed loved ones that their sailors are being cared for, but also showed images of discipline and what appears to be solid training would make it seem as if the soon-to-be-sailors were capable of stepping into their spots on the front line.

Officers and Enlisted Men

Shots of officers and enlisted men interacting outside relations required for work are rare. In most images that picture officers and enlisted men together, the enlisted men are working while the officers supervise or stand in the background, obviously apart. There is no doubt that this separation reflects the realities of the hierarchical structure of shipboard life. But the absence of interaction in postcard images also avoids any kind of portrayal of the sometimes acrimonious feelings that arose among enlisted men who felt that the structure on board ships and in the Navy in general represented a "monstrous caste system that created … an unbridgeable gap between naval officers and enlisted personnel."[12]

This caste system, especially in the years around World War I, was structured by privilege and wealth, and maintained and reified social structures in the civilian sphere. Furthermore, both formal and informal structures implanted within the Navy's training and operational procedures made sure that this hierarchy was not breached. In fact, the hierarchy was made to seem a natural order.

In his book about his experiences as an enlisted sailor on board *Texas* during World War I, Mark Murnane offers a vivid picture of an enlisted man's life on a U.S. battleship. Throughout the account, Murnane writes of his experiences with and impressions of the ship's administration, which is composed of a hierarchy of officers and enlisted men. In the most colorful expression of his feelings, Murnane speaks against the "caste system" enforced by the

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[12] Mark Murnane, *Ground Swells,* 249.

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Navy and the sometimes acrimonious relationship between officers and enlisted men on board

the ship:

> Verily, I mused, if some of our damp-eared gold-stripers would only pattern their careers after a model like Captain Victor Blue, the navy would be a great outfit to stick to. A taste of authority appeared to be too strong for the digestions of many of the young squirts, and very few of them showed any more restraint or judgment in exercising their power than would a sweet-starved youngster given carte blanche in a candy store. We often argued anent the type of knowledge they fed the future admirals at Annapolis to make them so uniformly uppity. The curriculum must include a plethora of the old class tripe, we concluded, judging from the ensigns' tendency to picture themselves as gilded gods and look upon the enlisted men as so much offal. Presumably the caste theory looks nice on the shiny classroom blackboards and proves invaluable in putting junior classmen in their proper niche, but alas, it doesn't work out according to formula on the salt-sprayed decks of a battleship.[13]

It appears that Murnane identifies the Navy's immutable hierarchy as the crux of the

difficulties between enlisted men and officers on board the ship. The strict enforcement of the

Navy's hierarchy, despite the sometimes odious experience it made for some enlisted men, had

its roots in naval tradition that dictated the strict hierarchy. Into the twentieth century, however,

this notion was echoed in a somewhat modified form by "democratic pragmatists" such as John

Dewey. The pragmatist philosophy dictated that practical results (in politics, the social realm, or

on the battlefield) were favored over efforts to make everybody happy.[14] With this goal in mind,

early twentieth century pragmatists busied themselves with advocating a form of democracy in

which the enlightened elite made decisions for the masses. This was seen as the best way for the

government to run because the average American was deemed irrational and uneducated.[15] The

formula the pragmatists advocated was a way for the government to run efficiently. In this light,

the strict hierarchy of the Navy took on a very practical air. The Navy needed to operate

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[13] *Ibid.,* 433-434.
[14] Robert B. Westbrook, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), ix-x.
[15] Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 281-285.

efficiently in order to be a force to be reckoned with in war. In order to operate efficiently, the

Navy had to have designated leaders and followers. Not everybody could be a leader. In fact, it

was best that the educated elite be leaders because they were better equipped to make important

decisions and to direct the efforts of the uneducated masses. So, the navy tradition of strict

hierarchy nestled comfortably within the pragmatist's idea of democratic leadership. In order to

maintain the boundaries between officers and enlisted men, the navy socialized the two groups

into their respective places.

Formal structures consisted of "rules, groupings, and sanctioned systems of procedure,"

as detailed in written instruction manuals, navy rules and regulations, and the educational

system.[16] Formal structures were set in place by institutional publications and education, and

worked to socialize both enlisted men and officers into their appropriate place in the naval

bureaucracy. All of this socialization reified the separation between enlisted men and officers,

situating the officers as authority figures.

The first formal structure that explicitly enforced segregation of the two classes of men

was the regulation forbidding fraternization between officers and enlisted men, or of superiors

with people under their command. The U.S. Navy defines fraternization as "personal

relationships which contravene the customary bounds of acceptable senior-subordinate

relationships."[17] While formal fraternization policy grew out of naval custom, its purpose to

define appropriate personal relationships between officers and enlisted men remained the same.

Inappropriate relationships were prohibited "because they undermine the respect for authority

that is essential to the Navy's ability to accomplish its military mission."[18]

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[16] Charles Hunt Page, "Bureaucracy's Other Face," *Social Forces* 25 (October 1946): 89.
[17] Department of the Navy, *OPNAV Instruction 5370.20C: Navy Fraternization Policy*, 2007.
[18] *Ibid.*

The spatial separation of officers and enlisted men on board ships also served as a physical manifestation of formal structures at work. Enlisted men were prohibited from entering certain parts of the ship, often called "officers' country."[19] Officers' country was designated by signage and/or by mint green bulkheads, and contained the living quarters and some of the officers' offices. Enlisted men were prohibited from entering officers' country without an officer's permission. This physical segregation further enforced differentiation between officers and enlisted men.

Men new to the Navy were taught about rules and regulations, such as fraternization regulation. This socialization took place in the formal training officers and enlisted men were required to undergo before they were assigned to a ship. The training and education, along with books and manuals, taught new recruits what was expected of them during their service. After they were recruited, enlisted men were assigned to a training station where they would undergo boot camp. In boot camp, enlisted men were introduced to the ways of the Navy, and were supplied with their uniforms, other provisions, and copies of the *Bluejacket's Manual*. The *Manual* provided the sailor with information about maritime vocabulary, rates and pay structure, aspects of the ship, first aid, and chores on board the ship. A portion of the *Manual* was also dedicated to instructing the enlisted man on saluting, identifying officers, and how the enlisted man was expected to treat his superiors. The part of the *Manual* dedicated to the recognition of rank in the Navy was no doubt intended to educate the enlisted man about the importance of recognizing the authority of officers.

The Navy's training for officers was more involved. Men wishing to become officers of the U.S. Navy were required to attend the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. During their four years of education at the academy, midshipmen learned about technology, strategy,

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[19] U.S. Navy Department, *Bluejacket's Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), 656.

leadership, and the history of the Navy.[20] In order to be able to attend the academy, the hopeful

midshipmen had to be appointed by a member of the U.S. Congress or by the President of the

United States.[21] The young officer's education no doubt served to accentuate the difference

between officers and enlisted men. Furthermore, while officer advice handbooks emphasized that

enlisted men were to be treated respectfully, they were by no means the equals of officers.

Officers were advised to not become overly familiar with their subjects because it served to

lessen the officer's authority.[22] So, officer training and education served to inform officer

attitudes about enlisted men and shipboard segregation. That is, officers were taught that they

were superior to enlisted men, and that it was in their best interest to maintain separation

between the two "classes."

Enlisted men and officers were educated separately about their respective places in the

naval hierarchy, and there was little opportunity for enlisted men to close the gap in education

and privilege. The highest position most enlisted men were able to obtain was that of Chief Petty

Officer (CPO). CPOs served as an intermediary between commissioned officers and enlisted

men, and were instrumental in bridging the gap between the two groups. While CPOs were

critical for the efficient and effective operation of the ship, they were not considered flag

officers, nor were they able to consort as equals with commissioned officers on board ships.

Formal structures were not the only factors reifying naval hierarchy. There existed

informal structures that helped to socialize officers and enlisted men into their places. Informal

structures were also sets of rules, groupings, and systems of procedure, but they were neither

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[20] Jack Sweetman, *The U.S. Naval Academy: An Illustrated History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 52.

[21] Kevin Romer, "Josephus Daniels and Democracy in the Navy," Master's Thesis, East Carolina University, 1998, i.

[22] U.S. Naval Institute, *Naval Leadership with Some Hints to Junior Officers and Others* (Washington, DC: Naval Institute Press, 1923), 55-56.

published nor addressed in official education. Informal structures "[served] the very significant role of providing a channel of circumvention of the formally prescribed rules and methods of procedure," usually benefitting the reification of norms regarding officer-enlisted man segregation.[23]

The first of these informal structures was tradition. Compliance with the various traditions that abounded on board ships in the Navy helped the sailor blend into the shipboard society.[24] While these traditions were not formally prescribed by the Navy, they still helped to enforce and promote the hierarchy in which officers retained primacy over enlisted men.[25] Retention of the shape of this hierarchy helped the Navy operate more efficiently.

Initiation ceremonies are an excellent example of traditions that helped to enhance cohesion and further define groupings on ships. Officer initiation ceremonies, in which newly promoted officers were pummeled in a good-natured way by senior officers, not only asserted the newbie's acceptance into the group, but also helped promote bonding and cohesion of the group of officers.[26]

The Crossing the Line Ceremony was another traditional initiation ceremony that was practically universal on board ships in the U.S. Navy. The Crossing the Line Ceremony involved the initiation of "pollywogs" (sailors who had never sailed across the equator) into King Neptune's kingdom by the "shellbacks" (sailors who had sailed across the equator, and had the certificates to prove it). The ceremony began the night before the ship was to cross the equator when Davey Jones came on board and declared that all the pollywogs on board the ship must appear before King Neptune (played by one of the chief petty officers) the following day. The

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[23] Page, "Bureaucracy's Other Face," 90.
[24] Louis Zurcher, "Sailor Aboard Ship: A Study of Role Behavior in a Total Institution," *Social Forces* 43(March 1965): 394.
[25] *Ibid.,* 393.
[26] *Ibid.,* 396.

morning of the next day, King Neptune would appear on board with his lady, Calypso (usually an enlisted man dressed in drag), and the pollywogs were subject to a variety of experiences, including getting a haircut from the Royal Barber, kissing the belly of the Royal Baby (usually the fattest shellback), and dunking in a vat of water and trash.[27] Because this ceremony did not exclude officers, there was a mixing, and sometimes a reversal, of roles while the ceremony played out. In this mixing of roles, subordinates were able "to play an imitative superior role" that instead of weakening the authority of officers on the ship served to "help… clarify mutual expectations" of the roles of officers and enlisted men on board ships.[28]

Finally, one of the informal structures that served to make hierarchy on board ships seem more harmless was the normalizing of the "griping sailor." The saying, "a sailor isn't happy unless he is complaining" helped to make discontent among enlisted men a natural thing.[29] Because the role of "unhappy sailor" was thought to be normal, sailors who complained about the immutable hierarchy and the institutional inequality that enforced it were easy to ignore. Furthermore, the sources of the enlisted man's discontent were also easier to ignore. Officers, naval administration, and even enlisted men were all complicit in establishing that the discontent of enlisted men was just a matter of course.

However insidious the segregation of enlisted men and officers was, strict hierarchy was a necessary evil in the Navy. Enforcement of hierarchy was necessary for retaining the power structure that was responsible for making the Navy an efficient tool for the U.S. government. Enlisted men and officers were both socialized into their respective spots in the hierarchy through formal structures such as fraternization regulations, training and education, and shipboard segregation. When looked at as a tool of bureaucracy, this strictly enforced hierarchy

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[27] *Ibid.*, 396-397.
[28] *Ibid.,* 397.
[29] *Ibid.,* 398.

seems innocuous, if not useful, but when one looks at the impact of the caste snobbery on individuals such as Mark Murnane, one gets a sense of the frustration and disgust some enlisted men held for the shipboard hierarchy. Thus, the omission of officer-enlisted man interaction in the postcards under question here seems to speak to this sometimes ugly reality of the Navy. But because none of the cards address officer and enlisted man segregation by directly referring to the segregation, the reality of the separation is not apparent from the contents of the cards' images. This makes sense because any allusion to segregation of officers and enlisted men and the sometimes hard feelings enlisted men had toward the hierarchy would indicate dissent within the Navy. As mentioned above, the Navy had to have all hands working toward the same goal in order to be effective. If there was a group of people within the Navy resentful of the system and not working toward the overall goal, the institution would not work as effectively as it would if everybody were happy.

Out of all the cards analyzed for this project, one card pictures enlisted men and an officer (probably a Chief Petty Officer) posing together and appearing to have some sort of friendly relationship in which the officer relates to the enlisted men as equals. In Figure 4.11, a group of sailors on board U.S.S. *Texas* poses in front of one of the ship's turrets. The cardstock indicates that the card dates to the interwar period.

Figure 4.11. 1997.22.210. Sailors posing with a chief petty officer. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

The group is wearing work clothes, and appears to be in the process of doing some type of work on main deck. Mess tables are set up on deck, and this indicates that perhaps the ship is taking on coal. While coaling, men typically ate on the main deck in order to avoid tracking coal dust all over the ship. If the men are indeed coaling the ship, this image dates to before 1925, the year when the ship underwent a major overhaul and was refitted to run on fuel-oil.

The first person in the second row, a jovial man with a white mustache poses comfortably with the other men. Some of the men, including the officer, smile and appear happy while the others appear to be merely cooperating with the photographer. The caption reads, "Kelley and his gang U.S.S. *Texas*," and identifies the officer as "Kelley" and the rest of the men as sailors under his command. The familiarity portrayed in the picture is a strong indicator that the officer is a Chief Petty Officer. As mentioned before, CPOs acted as intermediaries between commissioned officers and enlisted men, and would have had a friendly and strong relationship with the men they commanded.

It is easy to forget about the segregation when looking at any of the pictures in the group of cards under study here. In all of them, social status is not depicted. Instead, command and subordination are indicated, and enlisted men are just following orders. Thus, institutional roadblocks that prevented the "average Joe" from being in a position of command, or even of having the option to be promoted to a command position, are glossed over.

Race

Another aspect of the navy that is completely neglected by postcards is race. None of the postcards in the surveyed collection picture nonwhites serving in the Navy, although Filipino, Japanese, and blacks all worked on board ships as cooks, waiters, and stewards, and when necessary, fought alongside their white colleagues. After the United States acquired the Philippines from Spain in 1898, the U.S. Navy began recruiting the Filipino nationals as mess attendants.[30] Until 1919, the vast majority of mess attendants were from the Philippines. Shortly after World War I, Captain Abram Claude began calling for the U.S. Navy to begin using enlistments who were "men of negro blood," and were U.S. citizens, rather than U.S. nationals. Change was slow to take form, but in 1932, the president of the Philippine colonial senate declared "that the indigenous government would prohibit all recruitment in the Philippines if the navy could not guarantee equal treatment for Filipino enlistees."[31] The U.S. Navy, however, could not fulfill the promise that nonwhites would be treated as equals with equal opportunity for getting jobs outside of mess service. Thus, the Navy had to begin recruiting blacks to serve as mess attendants. While the Navy administrators felt they were offering young blacks the opportunity to better themselves through service in the Navy, the reality for enlisted black men was less idyllic. Although they had to form a close working relationship with the white officers

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[30] Richard E. Miller, *The Messman Chronicles: African Americans in the U.S. Navy, 1932-1943* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), 6.
[31] *Ibid.*, 5.

on board ships, black mess men were for the most part segregated. Even in training, the mess attendants were separated from their white counterparts at the Norfolk Training Station, which was where the mess attendant training took place.[32] When on liberty, blacks were not allowed to frequent the same brothels, bars, or restaurants as their white counterparts. For the most part, the races did not mix outside their professional interactions, and Blacks were treated as second class citizens.

In the years immediately preceding World War II, political pressures within the U.S. started pressing for more opportunities for blacks in the armed forces. President Roosevelt began pushing the Navy to provide opportunities for black outside of the mess attendant occupation. In June 1942, the Navy started accepting blacks for general service.[33] The black enlisted under this new policy, however, were still segregated from their white counterparts, and were assigned to "base companies" that were in charge of doing manual labor on shore.[34] Black men who were already enlisted as mess men were prohibited from transferring to the base companies because the Navy feared there would be a shortage of servants if transfer was allowed.[35]

In response to the need for more officers during wartime and the increasingly popular argument that segregation and racism in the United States smacked of a Nazi-esque attempt at banning certain races from mainstream society, the Navy sought to institute the V-12 training program that provided college education while training officers.[36] The program began in July 1943, and some outstanding black enlisted men were selected to complete the V-12 training. In March 1944, the first class of sixteen black men successfully completed their training, and

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[32] *Ibid.*, 79.
[33] Paul Stillwell, ed., *The Golden Thirteen: Recollections of the First Black Naval Officers* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993), xx.
[34] *Ibid.,* xxi.
[35] *Ibid.*
[36] Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 101.

thirteen were commissioned as line officers.[37] Despite the success of the Golden Thirteen, the path for equality for blacks in the Navy did not come easily, and the Navy's progression to equal opportunity for all came in fits and starts over the years.

From the history of blacks and nonwhites in the Navy, it is apparent that the Navy was not a wholly white institution. But the complete absence of nonwhite people pictured in the surveyed postcards does not make clear that nonwhites were present in the Navy. The exclusion of nonwhites from photographs on the fronts of postcards seems to be a reflection of how the minorities were treated in the Navy. It also speaks to the mindset of the photographers who may have felt that the lives and activities of the nonwhites on board ships were not worth documenting with photographs or putting on the fronts of postcards.

Victory!: The Surrender of the German Navy

Another set of cards that speaks to changing portrayal of the Navy is composed of cards with images that document the surrender of the German Navy at the end of World War I. These cards are striking in their ability to communicate certain portrayals of the U.S. Navy's enemy and celebrate the victory of U.S. forces abroad. Some U.S. ships, including *Texas,* spent time in the North Sea, escorting British ships and conducting mine-sweeping trips. U.S. ships also helped the British Navy in trying to lure the German Navy out of hiding, although the German Navy never took the bait. In late November, 1918, the German Navy surrendered.[38]

All of the cards in this group document the average sailor's experience of the surrender. That is, instead of images of military or political leaders meeting to agree on peace or surrender, the images on the fronts of these cards show the German ships as they were escorted to the Firth of Forth, England, for their surrender. This group of cards is evidently a part of a larger series

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[37] *Ibid.,* xxiv.
[38] Steve Wiper and Tom Flowers, *Warship Pictorial #4: USS TEXAS BB-35* (Tucson, AZ: Classic Warships Publishing, 2006), 3.

produced by "Denson." There are thirty-five of these surrender cards in the Battleship *Texas*

Museum collection. The number of these postcards in the collection seems to indicate the

popularity of German surrender as a subject of postcard images. Each postcard in this series

features shots of a German ship with a caption about German surrender or about the high quality

of the German ships. As is demonstrated in Figure 4.12, the images with their accompanying

captions seem to portray the German Navy as a powerful adversary who, for various reasons,

was reluctant to fight. These postcards may have been produced by a photographer on board

Texas, but because there is no information about Denson, the photographer who signed the

images, there is no way to rule out the possibility that the postcards were produced by a civilian

photographer and acquired by sailors ashore. The card image in Figure 4.12 contains a caption

that reads, "With ships like this - still Germany wouldn't fight."

Figure 4.12. 1983.83.350. A surrendered German ship. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

This caption seems to summarize the general attitude of the sailors on board *Texas* who

thought that the German Navy's surrender without a fight, despite the obvious strength of its

fleet, was shameful. In his diary, Joseph P. Kunesh, a sailor on board *Texas* during the German

surrender, called it "[t]he most ignominious day in Naval history" and "the worst single Naval victory in the history of the world."[39] It seems that this disgust at the Germans' lack of defiance was also mixed with a sense of pride once hostilities ceased in Europe.

In addition to casting the German Navy in a disparaging light, these postcards emphasize victory and naval prowess. Captions of other cards in the group read, "Unconditional Surrender," "A German Prize Ship," "A German Sacrifice," and "One reason we staid 10 months in the North Sea," indicating in no uncertain terms that the Germans were defeated and the U.S. Navy played a role in the defeat. Furthermore, the images of the German ships serve to emphasize the power of the German Navy. After all, a German battleship resembles a U.S. battleship and looks equally well equipped. Thus, it is apparent that Germany's ships, at least outwardly, were a fair match for U.S. ships. In spite of this, the cards serve as evidence that although the German Navy was powerful, it was defeated by the good guys.

This group of postcards also illustrates the powerful effect captions can have on images. Most importantly, the captions used in this group of cards help to identify the ships as the enemy's ships. For any layperson viewing the cards, this would have been an important message to get across. Without the caption, the card images would just be pictures of ships. Furthermore, the captions help to tell the viewer the significance of the ship pictured. The captions specify that the ship pictured is a part of a historic event—the surrender of the German Navy and the return of U.S. forces to home.

This group of postcards is unique to the collection of cards dating to World War I. No cards from World War II picture victory in such a concrete and specific way. In fact, none of the cards from World War II picture surrendered or defeated enemy forces. With one exception,

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[39] Joseph P. Kunesh, *Diary of Joseph P. Kunesh*, *1917-1918,* Battleship *Texas* Museum, entry for November 21, 1918.

most cards in the surveyed group from World War II deal with the pursuit of victory. The only card that pictures victorious U.S. forces is a portrait of three sailors heading home. The image itself, however, is not captioned. The only indication of the significance of the image comes from a handwritten note in the image's border that reads, "Homeward Bound- Panama- 1945" (Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13. 1991.57.04. Sailors headed home from the Pacific, 1945. *Source:* Battleship *Texas* Museum.

Although Japanese surrender at the end of World War II was definitely a well-photographed event, there are no postcards in the surveyed collection that depict this event. Perhaps the dearth of postcards with images of Japanese surrender was a result of military efforts to streamline the dissemination of images of the event by sending images off for newspapers to publish and foregoing postcard printing. Sailors on board USS *Missouri*, where the surrender ceremony took place, were provided with cards that certified they were present at the ceremony. These cards may have decreased demand for images that would have proved that the men were present at the ceremony.

The disparity in the way victory was portrayed between World War I and World War II may have been influenced by increasing photographic regulation. As demonstrated in Chapter 3, the Navy sought to decrease unregulated photography through censorship and photographer training over time. This decrease in unregulated photography meant that the Navy had greater control over what was being photographed and distributed. The collection of historic photographs in the museum collections demonstrate that all of the Navy's victories were photographically documented during World War II, but apparently not many of those images were included on the fronts of postcards.

Men at Work: The Effect of "Frontality"

Images of men at work on board ships offer an approximation of what men did while at work in their areas of expertise. The nature of these types of images changes over time from photographs where some of the subjects look at the camera to photographs in which none of the men look at the camera. The shift toward images where no one looks at the camera makes the images of men at work seem more authentic.

Two images of men posed at work from the interwar period show men doing a gun drill on one of *Texas'*s 5-inch guns and working with the rangefinder. In the first image of the gun drill, five men pose with the 5-inch gun (Figure 4.14). Three of the men look through the gun's sights while one of the men smiles at the camera. The fifth man leans against the gun's barrel, clearly indicating that the gun drill is not real. One of the men looking through the gun sight located at the back of the gun makes an exaggerated face as he peers through the sight.

Figure 4.14. 1983.83.394. Sailors conducting a "gun drill." *Source:* Battleship *Texas* Museum.

The second image, that of men working with a rangefinder, shows three men, one looking into the rangefinder, one looking at the camera, and one looking at the other two (Figure 4.15). Both of these images show some approximation of what men would do while they worked on drills or at their specialized jobs.

Figure 4.15. 2003.1012.91. Sailors working with the rangefinder. *Source:* Battleship *Texas* Museum.

Both of these images also illustrate the "frontality" discussed in Chapter 3. This frontality, the act of the men looking at the camera, suggests that the men are cooperating with the photographer. Especially in the first image of the gun drill, the men play at conducting a gunnery drill and therefore depict an inaccurate scene. In the second image, there is no indication that the men are faking a scene in which they work with the rangefinder, but the man looking at the camera breaks the potential concentration and intensity of the scene. The man is wearing headphones and is apparently an integral part of the rangefinder team, but is obviously not paying attention to what he is supposed to be doing. This implies that the work the men are doing with the rangefinder is not critically important.

Unlike the two images above, the only image of men at work on board a ship from the World War II years demonstrates what the photographer guidelines discussed in Chapter 3 call a "natural shot" (Figure 4.16). In this photograph, five men work on the ship's signal bridge. None of them looks at the camera, and all seem to be engaged in the task at hand. The petty officer in the center of the image looks through the ship's telescope, presumably at the ship they are communicating with. As the focus of the image, the officer looks sharp in his uniform and in command of the situation. One can only assume that he is comfortable using the complicated piece of equipment in front of him. Likewise, the men around him are engaged in their various tasks, and seem competent and at ease with the procedure on the signal bridge.
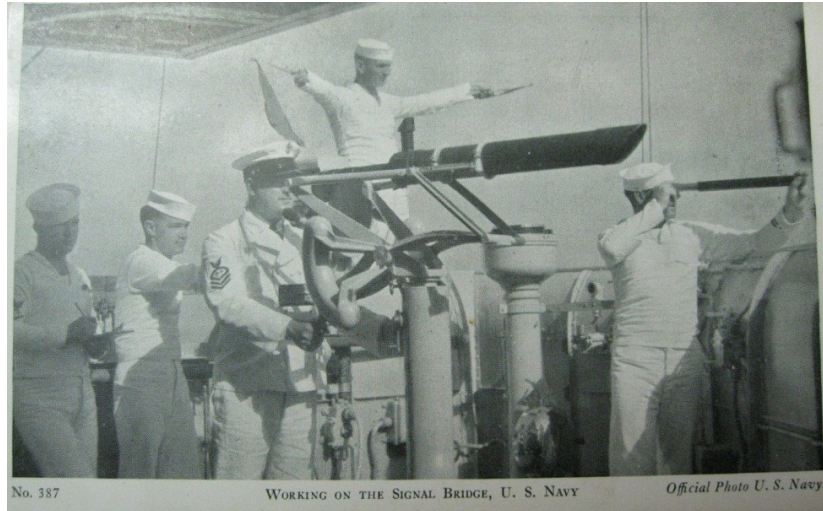
No. 387   WORKING ON THE SIGNAL BRIDGE, U. S. NAVY   *Official Photo U. S. Navy.*

Figure 4.16. 1993.026.0035. Sailors working on the signal bridge. *Source:* Battleship *North Carolina* Museum.

While it is uncertain whether this is a posed scene, the image makes the viewer feel as if

he or she is witnessing actual activity on board the ship. It is as if the viewer is standing in the

corner as the sailors go about their business, leaving the viewer unnoticed. More importantly,

what the viewer notices is that the men are competent-looking and intense at their work. This

serves to boost the viewer's confidence in the Navy's ability. The contemporary civilian viewer

of this postcard would have no doubt been mystified by the technology and the complicated

nature of semaphore communication. For the contemporary sailor, this image might have been a

source of pride because of its positive portrayal of capable men at work. If the sailor was a part

of the signal bridge team on board his ship, he would be able to show this postcard, and others

like it, to his family. He could say, "this is what I did while I was in the Navy. I was a

signalman." Thus, he could create an image of himself, an identity, that the postcard helps his

family and friends to envision. They perhaps imagine him as the sailor with the semaphore flags,

a master of visual communication, dutifully serving the Navy and his country. In this way, photo

postcards such as the one in Figure 4.16 serve to engender laypeople with pride and admiration

for the men of the Navy, and for the Navy itself. For men in the Navy, these postcards would have helped to create their identities.

The Main Battery and Gunnery Drills

Guns are perhaps one of the most arresting sights on board U.S. Navy ships. Particularly on board battleships, the 14- and 16-inch main battery guns were a source of pride for the Navy. While the Navy employed a variety of different kinds of ships that served important purposes, the battleship became an icon for the Navy's power because of its firepower. The battleship's might, specifically the ship's guns and the damage they wrought, are popular subjects for photo postcard images. In both the World War I and World War II eras, shots of battleships flexing their muscles easily communicated to the public the powerful potential of the U.S. Navy. That said, however, the nature of images of battleship main battery and gunnery drills became more restrained over time. Generally, shots of the big guns in postcard images on World War I-era postcards focus less on the guns themselves and more on the results of firing the guns. Shots of the aftermath of firing the guns give the viewer visual proof of the guns' power and accuracy. Postcards dating to the World War II years focus primarily on the guns themselves, including a variety of static shots of the guns at rest or pointing over the side of the ship.

The shells and powder for the main battery guns were stored in the bowels of the ship and were hoisted up through a network of pulleys and chutes to the turrets, where they were loaded into the guns. The shells for the 14-inch guns weighed 1,500 pounds and required 420 pounds of powder to propel the shells out of the guns.[40] Shells for the 16-inch guns were even larger and heavier, weighing between 1,900 and 2,700 pounds, depending on the type of shell.[41] Because of the sheer size of the loads that were being fired, the noise and concussion were tremendous.

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[40] Wiper and Flowers, *Warship Pictorial #4*, 10.
[41] Ben W. Blee, *Battleship North Carolina* (Wilmington, NC: USS *North Carolina* Battleship Commission, 2005), 12.

Charles McCall Newton reported in his journal that a shot a 14-inch gun caused a searchlight to break and jarred down everything stored overhead.[42] Likewise, Mark Murnane describes in great detail the effect 14-inch gun blasts have on the ship:

> A violent tremor surges fore and aft as each turret fires its guns, and when all ten guns are fired simultaneously it seems hardly possible that even a superdreadnought can withstand such abuse. The ship lunges in the air as the salvo is fired, shuddering and shaking spasmodically, and there is a crunching, wrenching sound of iron-and-steel framework creaking and groaning from the strain of holding together. The air fills with tiny dust particles shaken loose from hidden recesses, irritating the eyes and choking the breath. Decks become littered with dirt and rubble, and the entire ship is covered with a sooty film.[43]

This illustrates the power of the main battery guns, and no doubt the experience of firing them was a memorable experience for men on board battleships. So, it stands to reason that images of these guns were popular for adorning the fronts of postcards.

Earlier postcards focusing on the damage caused by main battery guns include images of target practice and of damage to the ship after firing some of its guns. The target practice images tend to serve primarily as documentation of how well the gunners did. Shots of men poking their heads through a canvas target riddled with huge holes from the shells brag about the number of hits the gunnery teams made and the time in which they made those hits. Indeed, a battleship's efficiency and accuracy were perhaps the most important measures of the ship's worth during battle, and postcards that document a ship's triumph during gunnery drills emphasize how important firepower and the skill to use that firepower were.

Unlike later postcards, postcards from the World War I era carry a much wider variety of images of the ships' firepower. Shots of shattered portholes on board a ship that had just fired its main battery guns reveal a rather surprising reality of the power of the battleship's big guns.

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[42] Paul A. Riley, *United States Naval Academy Midshipman Cruise Aboard U.S.S. TEXAS (BB-35), June-August 1924: A Long Lost Diary* (Submitted to the United States Navy Alumni Association for possible publication, 1998), [14].
[43] Murnane, *Ground Swells,* 63.

While the image in Figure 4.17 may seem to be an innocent documentation of the result of firing the ship's guns, it may also convey the idea that the Navy's battleships were equipped with firepower that was only barely harnessed by the Navy. This notion of a barely contained firepower that sometimes inflicts damage on its user as well as on the user's enemy is a stark reminder of how dangerous life was for sailors.
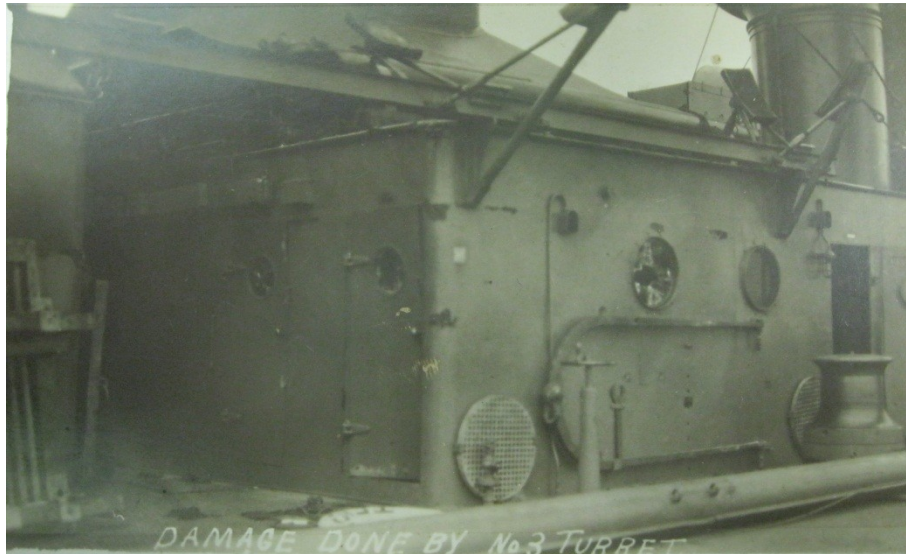

Figure 4.17. 1983.83.381. Portholes broken by the force of a 14-inch gun blast. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

Although target practice shots and images like Figure 4.17 effectively demonstrate the main battery's power, they show the power in a rather indirect way. That is, there are no images of what kind of damage the main battery guns inflict upon real ships in the sample of postcards studied here. Holes ripped in canvas targets do not demonstrate what a direct hit on a ship looks like. Images of ships hit by main battery shells do not exist on the fronts of any of the cards surveyed for this study. The dearth of images of ships damaged by main battery fire could be attributed to the fact that battleships rarely had the chance to fire at other ships during wartime.

Shots of guns being fired are more numerous in postcards from the World War I and interwar periods than from the World War II era. While there are only two cards from the World

War II era that show guns being fired, there are four such cards dating to the years during and immediately after World War I with gun firing images. These shots depict the flame, smoke, and jarring of the guns as they fire. Capturing the moment of the guns' firing would have been difficult, not only because the photographer would not have known exactly when the guns would fire, but also because of the guns' concussive force. In Figure 4.18, the card's image shows the moment when at least two 14-inch guns were fired simultaneously. The concussion of the blast is apparent in the slight fuzziness of the picture.

Figure 4.18. 2007.1029.15. The shock of a 14-inch gun blast. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

In the image from one of two cards dating to the World War II era that depict main battery guns firing (Figure 4.18), the photographer attempted to get a shot of the guns firing, but it seems the shutter clicked a moment too late. The only evidence of the guns having been fired is the small cloud of fire and gas in the upper left hand corner. Otherwise, the shot appears to be simply of the main battery guns aimed over the side of the ship.
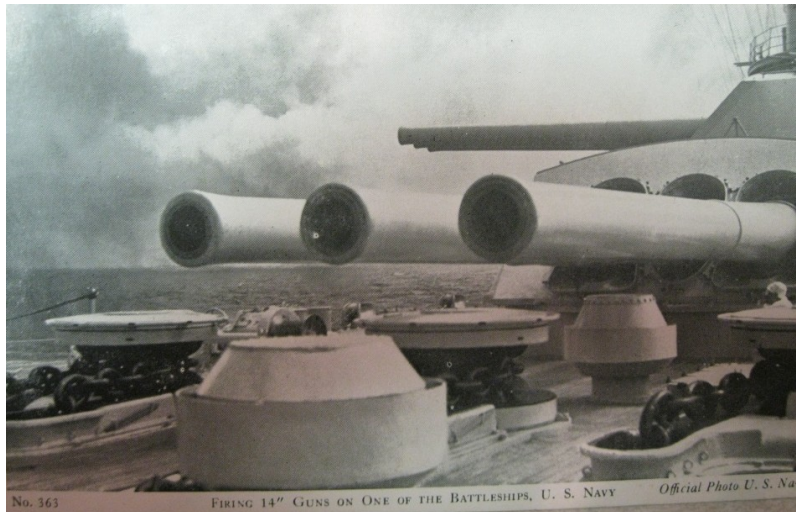
Figure 4.19. 2003 390D 002A. Main battery guns firing on a battleship. *Source*: Hampton Roads Naval Museum.

The caption underneath the image is the only other clue to what is happening in the image. The poor depiction in the image robs the moment of its power and makes the guns static objects. Other shots of main battery guns from World War II also make the guns inactive objects. All of the postcards from World War II with images of the Navy's firepower, save the two like Figure 4.19, show main battery guns at rest. In fact, in most of the images that show the guns' muzzles, the guns have tampions in them (Figure 4.20). The muzzle covers for the guns indicate that the guns are not being fired, nor are they expected to be fired in the immediate future.
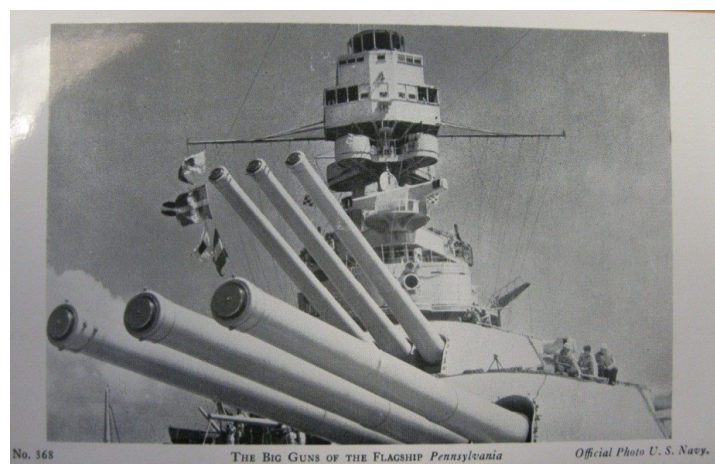

Figure 4.20. 2003 390D 002D. Shot of main battery guns with tampions in them. *Source*: Hampton Roads Naval Museum.

Images of the battleships' main battery guns become more static and restrained over time. This is a result of the shifting focus from the effects of firing the guns to the guns themselves. Shots typical of the World War I and interwar periods demonstrate the power of the battleship's main battery by showing off hole-riddled targets, damage to ships after firing their guns, and the fiery concussion of the guns' discharge. The more restrained World War II images focus primarily on the guns themselves as static objects, leaving the viewer with little notion of how powerful the guns are. This trend may be attributed to the changing emphasis in naval warfare between World War I and World War II. While battleships were the most powerful weapon on the sea during World War I, and were iconic of the U.S. Navy's firepower, they were no longer the most valuable weapon by World War II. Although the U.S. continued to build and develop battleship technology into World War II, the attack on Pearl Harbor wrought immense damage on a good portion of the Navy's battleship fleet. Aircraft carriers and airplanes added a new and lethal dimension to naval warfare. As technology changed, warfare changed, and the Navy's emphasis shifted away from battleships. This shift in emphasis may explain why the battleships portrayed in the postcard fronts dating to World War II are far less dynamic and effectively neutralize the ships' firepower. Into the World War II years, battleships were less important, so it was less important to portray battleships as a powerful tool in warfare.

Another factor that may have contributed to the increasingly static representation of the Navy's firepower was the shift in the way technology in warfare was depicted during World War II. In the years leading up to and during World War II, American society became increasingly consumed by the war effort. For many Americans, however, the war was a murky concept. While the bad guys were easily identifiable, the effect of violence was difficult for Americans to

quantify because it lurked in the shadows across the oceans. [44] The portrayal of military technology followed this path by never really helping the American public imagine the damage wrought during the war. One popular example of this is images that showed atomic bomb mushroom clouds, but neglected to show the audience what kind of damage went on underneath the clouds.[45] Likewise, shots of the main battery guns on the postcards in the surveyed collections offer the viewer a look at the technology being used against the enemy, but do not offer any views of the damage those guns wrought.

Rough Seas

Images of ships sailing through rough seas are popular on cards dating to World War I and the interwar period. Images of rough seas from these time periods seem to be a testament to the hardiness and skill of sailors while they deal with a unique and constant condition of life in the Navy. No cards from the World War II era carry images of ships sailing in rough seas. Based on the depictions of ships at sea on these later cards, it was literally smooth sailing for the Navy.

The postcard images of rough seas illustrate how large the waves were, and how much the ship rolled in the waves. The images in Figures 4.21 and 4.22 depict sailors going about their business on main deck, while the ship sails through large waves.

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[44] Sherry, *In the Shadow of War,* ix.
[45] *Ibid.,* ix, 116.

Figure 4.21. 1998.107.91. Rough seas. Note the sailor climbing the ladder to the boat davit. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

Figure 4.22. 1983.83.309. Life goes on in rough seas. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

In both images, one certainly gets a sense of what it was like to have the ship's decks

tossing and rolling under foot constantly. Until one got one's "sea legs," it must have been

difficult to get around and complete tasks, especially on the main deck. In addition to giving the

viewer as sense of the movement experienced on board a ship at sea, the images above make one

think about seasickness, which was a fact of life for many sailors. While seasickness was a

nuisance for some, other inconveniences brought about by rough seas were a nuisance for everybody.

According to Charlie Nielosa, a sailor on board *Texas* in 1938, seasickness was only part of the problem when the seas were rough. He reports that "the gun ports leaked so bad… [there would be] water washing back and forth on second deck… If I had my clothes or part of my blanket hanging on the deck [or if shoes were on the deck], they would either get washed away or soaking wet." [46] Jackson Parker, a sailor on board a *Gleaves*-class destroyer during the Second World War, mentions the ship taking on water in rough seas. The water was also often mixed with oil, which would slosh through the sailors' footlockers in the berthing spaces. [47] Needless to say, rough seas were frequent events, and made for miserable conditions on board ships, but the rough seas that are portrayed in the postcards from World War I and the interwar period focus only on the conditions outside. The images show sailors taking the rough seas in stride, continuing business as usual. This paints a picture of sailors being masters of their environment, and being hardy creatures, impervious to ugly conditions at sea. This portrayal also translates to the Navy in general. These images are testaments to the Navy's mastery of nature, as its hulking pieces of steel were able to float on the sea and withstand the constant battering of the wind and water.

Postcards dating to the World War II-era in the surveyed collection do not carry images of the ships in rough seas. Although the Navy's ships certainly encountered rough seas during their campaigns in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, images of the ships sailing in rough seas are not extant in the cards studied here. In all of the images that show ships at sea, it appears the sea

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[46] Charlie Nielosa, Oral History by the U.S.S. *Texas* Museum, LaPorte, TX, 2006.
[47] Jackson Parker, "A Tin Can's 'Habitability,'" *Naval History* 20, no. 1 (February 2006): 30-31.

is flat and calm and the weather is fair. This is yet another example of how images of the U.S. Navy became more static and sanitized into the years during and around World War II.

Inspections and Bag Layouts

A group of cards that shows images of discipline in the Navy are cards with images of inspections, parades, and bag layouts. Bag layouts, like the one pictured in Figure 4.23, seem to be particularly odd subjects for postcards. These images, however, send a concise and strong message about how sailors lived and about discipline in the Navy. Bag layouts consist of all of the sailor's clothing and toiletry items laid out neatly for inspection by officers. A few pairs of shoes, a few changes of clothes, a shaving kit, a ditty bag, and other equipment, along with the various and sundry personal mementos the sailor might keep, comprised the entirety of the sailor's possessions on board the ship. Because space was limited on ships, the need to keep sailors' personal effects at a minimum was very real. While this served a practical purpose, the bag layouts pictured on the fronts of photo postcards speak to the minimalist lifestyle and the sacrifice sailors made. That the materials of the sailor's life, all marked with either his last name or service ID number, could fit onto a rectangle of canvas creates a powerful image of the Navy's control over its personnel and what kind of lifestyle enlisted men lived.

Figure 4.23. 2008.1011.52. A bag layout ready for inspection. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

Similarly, images of inspections, complete with the ship's captain prowling up and down neat rows of sailors, provide images of discipline and control (Figure 4.24). The men observe rigorous standards of discipline by cleaning themselves up and lining up for inspection. Meanwhile, the Navy, or perhaps more accurately the ship's officers, are portrayed as in control. The men are expected to meet with the officers' approval, or be reprimanded and ordered to fix the problems next time. Furthermore, command and control are emphasized in the inspection environment because the sailors are able to lay eyes on the captain, and are reminded of who is in charge.

Figure 4.24. 2000.53.41. Inspection of sailors. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

These images of discipline and control are present in nearly the same amount throughout the period of time between 1913 and 1945. Postcards with photographs of inspections and bag layouts seem to be ideal depictions of the Navy's disciplinary standards. As an institution that relied on organizing a large number of people, the Navy's personnel had to be disciplined and willing to follow directions. This kind of behavior was expected of sailors by both the Navy and civilians. The inspection and bag layout postcards provided visual proof of desirable behavior.

Leisure and Sports

From time to time, sailors were offered reprieves from the monotony of life on board the ship with periodic sporting events, theater productions, and movies. Postcards from World War I and peacetime show a variety of activities sailors on larger ships engaged in. Sailors on smaller ships, such as destroyers, had little room below decks and on main deck to do anything other than play cards.[48] Postcards with images of recreational activities and leisure time comprise a greater part of the cards from the interwar period than from the World War I period. These cards show how sailors who had the luxury of space on board their ships spent their time when they were not working. Some of the images of sporting events help to emphasize the athletic and masculine nature of the sailors, while other images of games highlight the sometimes silly ways the sailors relaxed and blew off steam.

Often times, sporting events such as baseball, basketball, boxing, and boat races were organized between the crews of different ships in the fleet. Sports were seen as a wholesome way of passing time by the Navy. Concerns over bored, idle sailors getting hooked on loose women and alcohol prompted efforts within the Navy and Army in the years before World War I to create commissions in charge of organizing sporting and gaming events in both sectors of the armed forces.[49] The Navy's administration felt that sports would be a good way of keeping men from getting consumed with hedonistic pastimes and subsequently becoming less efficient in warfare due to illness. Sports were also thought to help men "develop a quality of courage and aggressiveness," and taught men "how to get bumped and not mind it."[50] In essence, sports in the armed forces taught sailors and soldiers how to be tough and persistent; both qualities helped

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[48] *Ibid.*

[49] Wanda Ellen Wakefield, *Playing to Win: Sports and the American Military, 1898-1945* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), 12.

[50] *Ibid.,* 13.

men on the battlefield. Men in the armed forces also cultivated a metaphor between sport and

war that conflated the two, making war seem more like a game.[51] Such headlines as "Uncle Sam

Pinch Hitting on Western Front," "Kaiser Calls Bench Warmers Into Play," and "Huns Hit .000

Against Lorraine Hurlers" described the war using sports language and served to reduce "the

terror [of war] by making combat seem more familiar, more like a game."[52]

In addition to making war more palatable for the men, sporting events gave men the

opportunity to showcase their athleticism. Since athletics were often measure of masculinity,

athletic events were also a proving ground for masculinity among the contestants. Furthermore,

winning events allowed the ship's crew bragging rights until the next time a sports competition

was arranged between ships. The winners of such sporting events were sometimes immortalized

on the fronts of postcards. The card front in Figure 4.25 announces *Texas'* basketball team as the

Champion Basketball Team of the Pacific Fleet.

Figure 4.25. 2009.1006.10. *Texas'* basketball team. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

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[51] *Ibid.,* 18.
[52] *Ibid.,* 17-18.

Shots of sporting events and victors of the sporting events not only provide photographic documentation of the events, the turnout of spectators, and who won the events; they offer an image of the athleticism and masculinity of the Navy's men. Shots of athletic events show the men competing, and show the spectators that came to watch the event. Photographs of this kind show that men of the Navy were interested in watching and participating in the events. Likewise, images of the victorious teams posed in their athletic uniforms, rather than their Navy uniforms, identify these men as special, and allow them to showcase themselves as superior athletes.

Other antics portrayed mostly in postcards from the interwar period include shipboard games, such as potato races and centipede races (Figure 4.26). Images of these kinds tend to emphasize the silly nature of the games, and the need for the men to sometimes relax and take a step back from their work.

Figure 4.26. 1983.83.207. Shot of a centipede race on board *Texas*. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

The only cards from the World War II era with images of sailors taking some time to themselves comprise a set of cards in which several sailors pose for the camera, and act out various antics on the main deck of a battleship. All of the postcard images appear to be from the

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same moment, and it looks like the ship is at sea. In Figure 4.27, men with various tools surround

another man as if they are about to beat him with the tools. In other images from this group of

cards, the men are doing similar things.

Figure 4.27. 1996.16.155. Leisure time for sailors. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

The image in Figure 4.27, and the others like it, show a rare glimpse of World War II-era

sailors acting goofy. No other images on postcards dating to World War II show sailors in such

an informal way. It is possible that this set of postcards was produced by clandestine

photography. It is apparent from the backgrounds of the photographs that the men were alone on

the forward part of main deck, and might have had some free time alone to capture images of

themselves in an informal environment. As discussed before, unauthorized photography was

prohibited on board ships in the years during and around World War II, and official

photographers were expected to produce images of pertinent naval activities and subjects, or as

otherwise ordered. Images such as these would almost certainly have been in violation of naval

regulations.

Coaling Ship

Before the Navy converted all its ships to run on fuel-oil, ships had to stop periodically to refill coal reserves, and the whole crew was expected to turn to for coaling. The coal was typically dropped on deck by a collier, and sailors shoveled the coal into the depths of the ship. The work was dirty and labor intensive, and was well photographed. Cards that date to World War I and peacetime document the activity with commentary that suggests that although the task was onerous for many men, it was perhaps a source of team building and a bonding experience. By 1925, the Navy had converted all ships to run on oil, so later cards do not show the activity.

Captions on many of the images not only identify the activity in the photographs, but also tend to elicit a positive message about the camaraderie of the men at work. The image in Figure 4.28 shows men taking a break from coaling by riding on a cart on the ship's main deck. The caption reads, "A Jolly Crew Coaling Ship- U.S.S. Texas 'Over there.'"

Figure 4.28. 2000.53.31. Sailors coaling ship. *Source*: Battleship *Texas* Museum.

It appears, however, that the only men participating in the jolly hijinks are the two men riding on the cart. Many of the men surrounding the cart look at the camera with a neutral expression, and some of them have their arms crossed. The men looking at the two sailors on the

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cart are not smiling, or even looking amused about the goings-on. So, it would seem that the caption attempts to lend a certain spin to the reader's interpretation of the image. Without the caption, one could view the sailors' actions in the photo as rather indifferent to the actions of the men on the cart. The caption, however, directs the viewer's attention to the antics of the men on the cart, and imbues the image with a "jolly" air.

Furthermore, the caption's mention of the "crew coaling ship" intimates that the men are a team, and that they are all working hard toward the same goals. The image in Figure 4.29 also implies that the men are working as a team. In the image, men shovel coal from a huge coal pile. The caption reads, "Coal Pile Athletes," invoking the same kind of sports/warfare language discussed above. In this athletic language there is also the suggestion that coaling is a labor-intensive and cooperative effort.

Figure 4.29. *2009.1006.18. Sailors shoveling coal. Source:* Battleship *Texas* Museum.

That coaling is dirty and hard work is apparent from the image. The huge coal pile is large enough for the men to stand on, and the men all appear to be putting their backs into the work of shoveling the coal. The men at the top of the coal pile look grimy and sooty. While the

viewer can clearly see that the men are working hard, and that they must be fit and strong like athletes to engage in such work, the caption adds a cooperative dimension to the image. The caption identifies the men as athletes, who often must not only be strong but also work as a team to win at the sport they are playing. This implies that, like athletes, the men on the coal pile must work together with each other and with men who are not pictured to ferry the coal to its final destination within the bowels of the ship. By cultivating a positive attitude and teamwork in sailors, the Navy was able to instill a sense of loyalty to the group and its goals. This spirit of cooperation also helped increase the Navy's efficiency by avoiding friction that may have been caused by the strict hierarchy on board ships, or by political or cultural difference between the men. Team building in the armed forces also prepared men to make personal sacrifices for the well being of the whole group.

Yet another image that seeks to depict the coaling crew members as willing and happy participants appears in Figure 4.30. In this image, a group of men pose for the camera while coaling ship. The caption states directly that the sailors in the image are happy and hardworking, and most of the men's facial expressions and body language seem to communicate a relaxed and happy group of men posing for the camera. What may be the case, however, is that the men are done coaling ship and are happy to be through with the onerous task.

Figure 4.30. 1996.16.15. Sailors posing for a picture while coaling ship. *Source:* Battleship *Texas* Museum.

Unlike the two images above, this image depicts some of the camaraderie between men that may have been built up through shared experiences of shipboard work. While the two images above hint at teamwork and cooperation, the image in Figure 4.30 shows men seeming to relate to one another in a friendly and cooperative way. One can especially see friendly body language among the men at the back of the group, standing to the left of the sailor holding the broom like a guitar. These men have their arms thrown around each other's shoulders and are smiling broadly. This kind of friendly body language communicates how the men relate to one another in a positive way. In this particular image, the men seem to appear to be as happy as the caption suggests (or at least they are looking happy for the camera), and one can certainly imagine these men working well together in the completion of other tasks as well.

It is almost certain that coaling ship did not make some sailors feel jolly at all. Charles McCall Newton, a sailor on board *Texas* in 1924, recalls in his diary getting "sunburned and covered with coal" while the ship took on 2,600 tons of coal. Newton writes that the process took sixteen hours (from 5:30am to 9:30pm), and after the coaling was done, the ship was covered

with coal dust.[53] To keep coal dust somewhat contained on main deck, sailors would take their meals on the main deck, as opposed to eating below decks, while coaling. These meals, however, were often spoiled by the coal dust that settled everywhere. Mark Murnane, a sailor on board *Texas* in 1917, writes that "one need[ed] a cast-iron digestive tract and a ravenous appetite to stomach the sooty food."[54]

Thus, the entire day was consumed with coaling, and even after the chore was done, the men still had to cope with the dust that filtered throughout the ship. Yet, despite the realities of coaling ship, some postcards with images of the chore seek to portray the men as happy with their lot in life. The card captions also add an extra dimension of team building and camaraderie, so the viewer can imagine the men bonding over the unpleasant and strenuous activity.

Propaganda Cards

Cards with the most explicit and targeted messages are propaganda cards. These cards are extant in only the group dating to World War II. The World War I-era and interwar card groups contain a variety of souvenir cards, but none of the cards puts forth political messages. There are only two propaganda cards in the World War II-era card group, and both focus on the Navy's power. The first card front, pictured in Figure 4.31, shows a sailor leaping in the air and stabbing down with his rifle's bayonet. Along the left edge of the photo are the arm and leg of another sailor, who is presumably doing the same action.

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[53] Riley, *United States Naval Academy Midshipman Cruise*, [11].
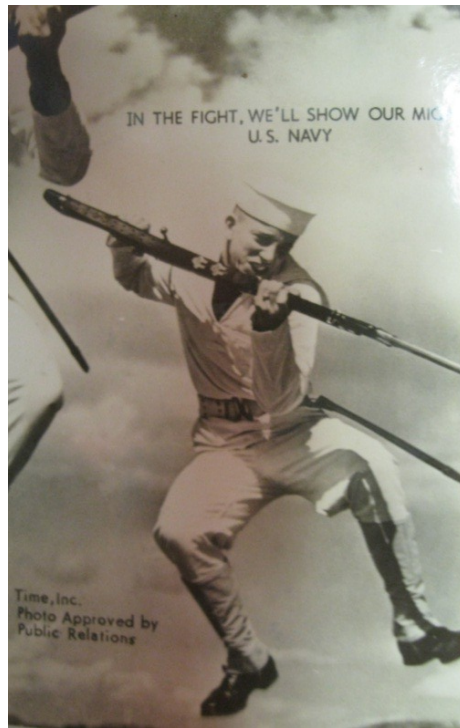[54] Murnane, *Ground Swells,* 150.

Figure 4.31. 2004.116.0010. Propaganda card. *Source:* Battleship *North Carolina* Museum.

The sailor pictured is probably in training and is doing some sort of combat drill. The

caption at the top of the image reads, "In the fight, we'll show our might. U.S. Navy." The

caption, paired with the intense image of the attacking sailor, puts forth a clear message about the

Navy's ability to contribute to the war effort. What is interesting in this card's case is that the

image of choice to illustrate the caption's claims is not a ship, or a group of sailors on board a

ship. The image is of a single sailor without a ship in sight. Perhaps the person who created the

image for the front of this card was interested in focusing less on the might of the Navy's

machinery or technology and more on the might of the men on board the ships. This

humanization of the Navy could be a double-edged sword. On one side, picturing a human as the

source of the Navy's might may interest more people, and showcases the human talent that

makes ships perform. On the other side, it emphasizes the humanness of the Navy. Humans die,

humans make mistakes, and, most importantly, the humans that make up the Navy are

somebody's loved ones. Putting a human face on the Navy in this way certainly makes one think about the toll war takes on human lives, no matter how tough the sailor in the image looks. But it is probable that this card's publisher relied on the civilian viewer's investment in and support of the war. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. was no longer on the outside of the war. After Pearl Harbor, the war was personal. Thus, patriotism in the form of supporting the military's effort at the battlefront was the most convenient and appropriate thing for civilians and enlisted men to feel at that point in time. It is in this patriotic environment that the card in Figure 4.31 was most likely produced, and viewers would most likely have taken the message at face value, rather than envisioning the loss of human life associated with the war.

Another propaganda card, pictured in Figure 4.32, not only personalizes the Navy with a human face, but also emphasizes the Japanese Navy as the enemy. The card shows a battleship and a smaller ship at sea. In the top left corner is a portrait of a sailor, and at the bottom, a caption reads, "Have we got a navy! Ask Hirohito. Has Japan got a navy? Ask Davey Jones." The first part of the first line is constructed like a question, but is punctuated with an exclamation point, indicating that it is instead an emphatic statement. The second line of the caption indicates that a portion of Japan's Navy has been deposited in Davey Jones's locker (sunk to the bottom of the sea). The image that accompanies the caption uses both ships and a sailor to illustrate what the U.S. Navy looks like. It is uncertain whether the sailor portrait is of a random sailor, or if the photograph was personalized for the sailor who bought the card. Thanks to the sailor's portrait, there is once again the visual message that the Navy is not only ships, it is also men.

Figure 4.32. 2011.007.1. Propaganda card. *Source:* Battleship *Alabama* Museum, Mobile, AL.

Humor

In a small portion of card images, captions add humor to the images. While the images themselves are not particularly humorous, the captions work to put a funny spin on the images. Two images on cards from the interwar period, and one from World War II, have humorous spins. The card front in Figure 4.33 shows men doing exercises on main deck while the ship is at sea. The caption reads, "Physical 'Torture.'" Once a day all sailors would turn to for their calisthenics. This part of the day was not always a favorite for the men. Mark Murnane describes the exercise as "fifteen minutes of torturous calisthenics to the rhythmic blare of the ship's band."[55]

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[55] Murnane, *Ground Swells,* 54.

Figure 4.33. 2006.1111.73. Daily exercise on main deck. *Source:* Battleship *Texas* Museum.

While the image shows nothing more than the men doing exercises, the caption

elaborates on what the men were feeling while completing the task. This postcard makes light of

sailors who are reluctant to complete required tasks. Because exercise is such a minor aspect of

shipboard life, it is okay for sailors to be reluctant to participate. Such a postcard would probably

not have been produced showing more important activities during wartime, no matter how much

the men hated the activity. There is no doubt that some men disliked doing certain activities, but

during wartime their dislike probably would not have been expressed on the front of a postcard

because it would mean that there were men in the Navy who were not working to their full

potential for the war effort.

Another image from the interwar period is humorous, but it is uncertain whether the

photographer meant for his caption to be funny. The humor of the caption comes from the

apparent contradiction of the caption's sentiment and what is actually happening in the image.

The card in Figure 4.34 presumably shows the ship's 14-inch guns aimed off the port side. The

image is titled, "Ready for Anything," but the five sailors loitering against the gun turrets in the

foreground suggest that nothing much was happening at the moment the photo was taken. The

photographer's signature indicates that this image dates to 1921, well into the interwar period. It is possible that the caption is a commentary about how monotonous life was on board ships during peacetime.
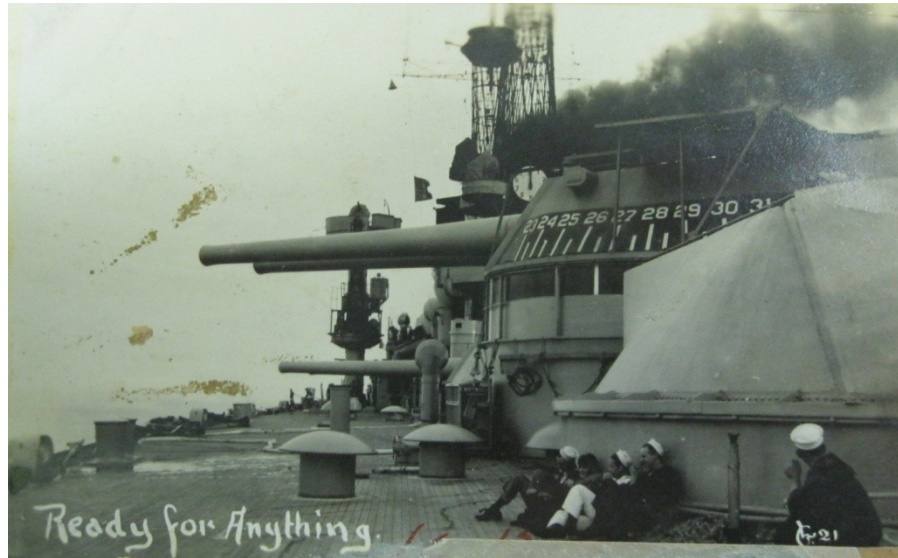
Figure 4.34. 1983.83.407. Sailors lounging on main deck. *Source:* Battleship *Texas* Museum.

Indeed, sailors found that life settled into a monotonous grind, especially when the ship was at sea, or when there was no opportunity to go ashore on liberty. In his diary, Charles McCall Newton, a sailor on board *Texas* in 1924, complains about the unvarying routine while at sea:

> Same routine. It actually is beginning to grow monotonous… Have finally realized how hard it is to wrote [sic] an interesting diary. If this was for Naval terms and customs I could very well fill it up… I want to remember something besides the actual routine.[56]

The only image from the World War II-era cards that puts a humorous spin on life in the Navy is a card with the sailor's prayer. The card front in Figure 4.35 shows a sailor sleeping soundly in his hammock while the sailor's prayer is lined out below. The first part of the prayer laments, in a poetic and good-natured way, the hardships new recruits to the navy experience. Some of the lamentations are related to fire drills in the middle of the night, uncomfortable beds,

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[56] Riley, *Naval Academy Midshipman Cruise*, [3].

bad food, sea sickness, and limited water for showers or personal hygiene. The second part of the poem consists of the prayer sailors say after their four-year stint is over. This part of the prayer shows the sailor, who apparently has become accustomed to the hardships of life at sea, wanting to stay in the Navy for thirty years.

Figure 4.35. 2004.116.0011. The Sailor's Prayer. *Source*: Battleship *North Carolina* Museum.

The poem is meant to make light of what was no doubt a difficult experience and life transition for enlisted men. As the poem indicates, the Navy was not a resort and life in the Navy was at times quite rough, but the men adapted. Even if they did not want to continue service in the Navy after their time was up, sailors still tried their best to make the situation bearable. John Haines, a sailor on board the destroyer *Knapp* during World War II, writes in his brief memoir that the men were in the Navy to do a job, "to perform in a necessary situation as best [they] could- not one [they] had chosen, but which had been imposed on [them] by circumstances or simply by fate."[57] Although many men had been tossed into war, their participation was required, and according to some, their participation was important. The sailor's prayer card works at

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[57] John Haines, "Wartime: A Late Memoir," *The Sewanee Review* 112, No. 1 (2004), 125.

expressing that sentiment in a humorous manner, no doubt to help put the minds of loved ones back home at ease.

The analysis of the denotative and connotative of postcard images above suggests that the portrayal of the U.S. Navy between 1913 and 1945 in photo postcards may have been influenced by the changing naval photography regulations and censorship that developed in response to the two world wars. The postcards offer different views of the Navy that focus on naval might during wartime, but this portrayal relaxes during peacetime. The portrayal of the Navy also changed between the two wars. Images of the Navy became more focused on discipline and competence in the later years, and images of the ships' firepower become more static.

CONCLUSION

As a popular medium for the dissemination of "soft news" that would have recruited the public and the enlisted population's consent and support of the U.S. Navy's activities, the photo postcards analyzed here demonstrate what kinds of messages the postcards conveyed. The history of censorship and photography training in the Navy between 1913 and 1945 illustrates how the Navy sought to harness the visual power of photography by enacting stricter censorship regulations in the World War II years than in the World War I years, and by creating comprehensive photographer training over time.

Images of leisure, liberty, and men at work increased during peacetime, but decreased in World War II. Conversely, images of the fleet, ship and plane exteriors, and training station were more numerous during wartime than in peacetime. The increase in images of ships and men in training indicates that images of technology, naval might, and training were important for conveying messages about the Navy's capabilities and strength. When not in war time, it was less important to portray the Navy as a serious power, so images of leisure, liberty, and menial work were more popular. Some specifics of these trends are borne out by connotative analysis of individual cards.

The increasingly restrained images on postcards reflect the Navy's censorship and photography training trends over time. In earlier images, there are far more shots of men engaging in leisure activities such as sporting events, games, and other free time events. Victory is portrayed in World War I-era cards as a concrete event in the form of the surrender of the German Navy. Teambuilding and camaraderie among the ships' crews are portrayed in images of coaling ship, and images from naval training stations emphasize the sheer number of recruits in training. Into the years during and around World War II, postcard images of free time and

sporting events are virtually eliminated, images of main battery guns become static, and victory is mentioned but not portrayed in a concrete way. Furthermore, images of men at work on board ships exhibit less frontality, which offers the viewer the feeling of witnessing a candid shot of men at work. Images from the naval training stations show more discipline than earlier shots, but still emphasize the number and depth of the sailors in training. World War II cards also include a few propaganda cards that explicitly communicate messages about the Navy's might and their ability to contribute to the war effort.

In the surveyed collection of cards, there are almost no images of officers and enlisted men interacting outside their professional capacity. This dearth of cards that document how officers and enlisted men might have interacted with one another does not depict what some sailors felt was an immutable hierarchy that extended and reified class hierarchies and separations found within civilian society. The way the Navy socialized men into their respective positions on board ships shows how class segregation was a reality that was nested in the very structure of the Navy. This hierarchy was at times a sore subject for enlisted men, and created some friction between the men and their officers. This friction could have been a detrimental element for crews on board U.S. ships, and so would have not been a desirable subject for postcard images.

Race in the Navy is another aspect that is neglected by the surveyed postcards. While the Navy did allow nonwhites to enlist, primarily Filipinos in the years before 1932 and blacks after 1932, the postcards examined here did not picture nonwhite enlisted men in the Navy. Even when the Navy put in place measures to allow blacks to become commissioned officers and work outside of mess service in World War II, the postcards still show a Navy dominated by white men.

The analysis of the photographers and publishers who created the cards under study here reveals some information about who was behind the creation of the cards. Photographers and publishers alike had to make decisions about what to photograph and which images to include on the cards. Whether conscious or unconscious, the decisions to put particular images on postcards worked to shape the portrayal of the Navy that civilians and enlisted men alike saw. Only about 10 percent of the cards had information about publishers, the majority of which were commercial publishers. Although these commercial publishers were not associated with the Navy, it appears that they were forced to depend increasingly on official Navy photographs to adorn their cards in the later years. Cards with information about who the photographer was comprise about 50 percent of the group under study. While there were a variety of Navy-associated photographers and civilian photographers, the Navy photographers took the most photographs included on the fronts of the postcards.

It is significant that Navy photographers took the photos on the majority of postcards, because Navy-associated photographers were subject to naval regulations that dictated which images were fit for general distribution to the public. This may indicate that the images analyzed reflect some manipulation of the messages conveyed in the postcards. This image manipulation would have worked to create a positive image of the Navy that was designed to enlist the support of civilians by engendering pride in the nation's Navy. Card images also worked to gain the support and consent of its enlisted members by creating the enlisted man's identity through images. When sailors purchased or otherwise acquired images of the Navy or life in the Navy, the sailors were able to literally take possession of their experiences or of certain aspects of life in the Navy. For sailors these photographs were not only photographic documentation of their time in the Navy; they were images that, once selected by the sailor, served to construct the

sailor's view of himself and his contribution to the Navy. This allowed the sailor to create an identity he was proud of, and would have served to further invest the sailor in the Navy's overall goals.

Project Limitations

While this project has attempted to utilize current approaches to image analysis to produce a new "reading" of photo postcards, the shortcomings and limitations of the analysis must be acknowledged. Acknowledgment of holes in project design or weak spots in analysis allow for a full disclosure that may help scholars who are interested in continuing or altering the approach put forth here to design and plan their own approaches. The first aspect of this project that must be acknowledged is that the analysis presented here is not meant to be a presentation of *the* interpretation of these postcards. Instead, this thesis is meant to present *an* interpretation of the photo postcards, and demonstrate how image analysis might allow historians to use an underutilized resource to enrich current dialog about the U.S. Navy between 1913 and 1945.

Furthermore, the element of interpretation involved in creating the analysis put forth here necessarily makes this work political and subjective. While these words are often used by scholars pejoratively, it is certain that no scholarly work is completely divested of political impact or of individual opinion. Such is the nature of historic research. In *Reading American Photographs*, Alan Trachtenberg presents the idea that while viewing and trying to make sense of historic photographs, historians are tasked with ordering fragmentary facts found in them (or other historic documents) into meaning. The act of turning "data into history" is not "an idle exercise but a political act, a matter of judgment and choice about the emerging shape of the

present and future."[1] Thus, the reader must recognize that the image analysis presented here cannot be completely devoid of this author's particular world view.

A final, more concrete, concern about the design of the project deals with the sampling of postcards used. The postcards used in this study came primarily from museums, and represent a fairly small sample. It cannot be said that museum collections contain the entire body of photo postcards in existence today. Furthermore, it must be noted that the individual museum collection policies and population of donors may skew the body of postcards available for study. This difference in collection priorities and policies means that the number and subject matter of postcards in the museum collections differ widely. The only remedy for this shortcoming would be further research that made a comprehensive survey of museums, particularly museums associated with ships other than battleships, and private collections of photo postcards with images of the Navy.

Areas for Future Research

In addition to a wider mining of postcard collections, future research might improve and expand this project by examining postcards with images of navies from other countries. This might allow for comparison with the trends mentioned here. Another future area for expansion might come from comparing the kinds of images seen on postcards with images found in historic photograph collections. Comparing postcards with other collections of photographs from the same time period might reveal some duplicate images, and would also show some of the images that were not included on the fronts of postcards. Analysis of photograph collections could possibly reveal a different picture of the Navy than that seen on the fronts of photo postcards, especially since some photographs were captured and archived for only for the Navy's documentation purposes.

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[1] Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs,* xiv.

This project would also benefit from an analysis of the general public's reception of the postcards. This analysis would help to determine how effective the postcards actually were in conveying their intended messages.

So What?

The goal of the analysis offered above is not to discredit the contributions of the men and women who fought for the U.S. during the first half of the twentieth century. The goal is to penetrate beyond convenient interpretations of what is portrayed in photo postcards between 1913 and 1945 to get at what these postcards say about the Navy and how they may convey that message. What we see when we view the communicative devices that lay beneath the image's surface may not be pretty. Like looking at the engine of a sleek sports car, analysis of the way photographs communicate may offer up a seemingly gritty, dirty, greasy, view of the subject at hand. Like the sports car's engine, meaning is what gives the images power. It is not until historians get beyond the literal message of images that new and meaningful interpretations can be made, and historians can start to understand how photographs "work" - how they convey meanings that inform the viewer's (re)actions within his or her world.

Although photo postcards continue to be underutilized historic documents, scholarship that continues to develop methodologies and theories about how images convey meaning may well entice historians to utilize more historic images in their studies. After all, scholars and anyone else who turns a critical eye on photo postcards or historic photographs may find themselves viewing modern images with an equally critical eye. When scholars, students, and laypeople recognize that images are influenced by social structures, that they may be employed to reify certain ideologies, to shape identities, and to codify messages in sometimes insidious ways, society can start moving toward an understanding of how identities are shaped and how

inequality breeds and prospers. This understanding will not come until we recognize the power

and primacy of images in our world.

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