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Honor, Courage, Commitment: Navy Recruitment Posters in World War II

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Honor, Courage, Commitment: Navy Recruitment Posters in World War II

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in History

By Shelby Georges

Under the mentorship of Dr. Craig Roell

ABSTRACT

Navy recruitment posters from World War II are an important piece of American culture. The iconic signage can be seen in antique stores and textbooks alike. However, these posters provide more than just bold imagery and vintage decor. By analyzing recruitment posters as if they were advertisements and placing them in the context of the time period, many facets of American identity can be understood, especially regarding race, gender, and patriotism. These posters, while they almost never stated the specific outlined duties of Naval careers or requirements for enlisting, advertised to readers under the premise that they understood the guidelines of who was allowed to enter the armed forces and a basic understanding of the war effort. Most posters featured white men in uniform (with a few notable exceptions) and explosive active imagery, along with striking symbols of patriotism and power in the United States, making it a country worth defending and fighting for. These aspects of Naval identity have persevered into today and similar themes can be seen in modern recruitment, albeit with more diversity in sailors featured in each piece. Overall, recruitment material provides a glimpse into standing military culture and the Navy that they hoped to build through those that they recruit.

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You are advertised to almost every hour of every day. Companies want to influence who you are, persuade you on what clothes to wear, what drinks to drink, what cars to drive, what music to listen to, where to live— essentially every aspect of consumption is influenced by an advertisement. However, this influence does not stop just at what you buy, but what you do and where you work. Employers use the same tactics in order to persuade you on where to work, and few do this better than the United States Military— they just call it recruitment.

Military recruitment in the United States is no new phenomenon. The military has had recruiters since the genesis of the country in the 1700s. Of course, early recruitment was done by word of mouth and some print materials. As the military grew and larger conflicts began emerging, more comprehensive techniques were implemented, such as posters and print ads released by the United States government themselves. Today, recruitment can be found everywhere, from commercials to ads in newspapers and magazines to websites and social media and beyond. The United States military now has thousands of recruitments offices staffed by current military members.¹

Thinking of recruitment material as advertising and treating as such in analysis provides the best understanding of the material as it is intended. Recruitment material is essentially selling the viewer the idea of the military and encouraging them to give themselves (time, energy, and risked life, in some cases) for the idea of a greater good. Viewing the material and thinking about what they are selling and what the motivation to buy, much like one would think of an

¹ United States Navy Department, “America’s Navy Recruiting”, <https://www.navy.com/navy.html>, accessed February 3, 2018.

advertisement, is the best way to understand the basic motivators behind a piece of recruitment material.

It is also important to consider the line between patriotism and propaganda. Propaganda, according to Merriam-Webster, is “the spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.” This is essentially what military recruitment material is— spreading the idea of patriotism and the evil or wrongdoing of others warrants military intervention by the United States. American society believes that this is okay when Americans do it, but when other countries participate, it is a different story. Imagine North Korea or China expressing the same views that these materials express, but with their brand of patriotism rather than our own. We would find it violent, dangerous, and worthy of ridicule. However, we don’t associate the negative definition of propaganda to material when it’s the United States doing it, just others. It’s important to keep this attitude in mind as well when viewing recruitment materials in the context of American society.

During my research, I first looked at the recruitment materials in question and noted how patriotism was noted in these materials, what sort of language was used, how it targeted individuals or encouraged individuals to join the United States Navy (hereafter simply referred to as the Navy), and who was (and was not) portrayed (gender, race, age). I also placed them in the context in which they would be viewed. Where would the materials have been found and who were they aiming to recruit? Additionally, the larger social context is vitally important to having a full understanding of the material. What are the motivations of those who enlist in the Navy, what are they looking to accomplish, and how do they believe they will benefit? What do the materials indicate about the social climate of the time? Answering these questions lends itself to

answering the last and arguably most important question for my research—how do World War II recruitment materials reflect the larger culture in the Navy in the period and how have those attitudes carried into the modern day?

Recruitment during World War II was also quite different than recruitment in the modern day because there was a draft in place. Often times, recruitment was a race of “pick us before you do not have the option to pick”—this message was often conveyed in the recruitment material itself. Recruitment just provided a choice rather than an obligation in the event that you were drafted. Today, recruitment is enticing you to choose the Navy over a plethora of other career options. 12% of Americans served in the armed forces during World War II compared to only 0.5% of Americans today.²

My decision to focus on the Navy exclusively has three reasons. First, the Navy is the second oldest branch of the United States military, so along with it comes a rich history and culture that affects the way that they produce recruitment materials. Second, with five branches of the military all with varying goals and purposes, it was critical to narrow the scope from a topic that could span multiple books to one that would fill a hearty undergraduate thesis. Third, and most importantly, my father was a member of the Navy for over twenty years, so I have a personal connection to the history of this branch and the culture behind it, as well as the ability to draw from personal experience and create oral history with a family member and his fellow servicemen.

² Karl Eikenberry and David M. Kennedy, “Americans and Their Military, Drifting Apart”, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/27/opinion/americans-and-their-military-drifting-apart.html>, accessed February 15, 2018.

Knowing the background of the poster artists also lends a dimension of understanding. Art cannot be separated from the artist— the lived experiences and background of those who produce art are reflected in the work that they do and the messages that they are attempting to convey. One of the most notable artists of all was McClelland Barclay. Barclay was born in 1891 in St. Louis, Missouri and studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Art Students League in New York City.³ He was a prolific illustrator as well as a member of the Naval Reserves and died in combat in 1943 after the ship he was on was torpedoed near the Solomon Islands by a Japanese vessel. His experience in the military likely influenced his art and patriotism, giving him the opportunity to draw what he really saw and found important.

Analysis of these posters is most logically broken up into two parts— the images on the posters and the words and phrases on the posters. Images portray people, places, and things, while the words give the images their intended context and meaning. Understanding both aspects separately and together reveals the deeper meaning and culture at large around the posters.

Previous study of WWII recruitment posters is rather vast and comprehensive. *The Posters that Won the War: The Production, Recruitment and War Bond Posters of WWII* by Derek Nelson is a comprehensive overview of many type of military recruitment and propaganda posters of the era, especially pertaining to the home front efforts in rationing, manufacturing, and war bonds.⁴ "Visions of New Men: The Heroic Soldier in American Advertisements during

³ National American Illustration Museum, "McClelland Barclay", <https://americanillustration.org/project/barclay-mcclelland/>, accessed March 2, 2018.

⁴ Derek Nelson, *The Posters that Won the War: The Production, Recruitment and War Bond Posters of WWII* (New York: Crestline Books, 2015).

World War II.” by Mark R. Grandstaff explores the image of the American soldier in advertising and how nationalism and love of valor influences the consumer.⁵ Peter Karsten,⁶ Garth Jowett, Victoria O’Donnell,⁷ and David Welch⁸ have all explored the art of persuasion in recruitment posters in their respective writings. However, little work has been done in the way of understanding Navy recruitment specifically. The Navy’s influence was widespread during WWII, beginning with the United States’ entry to the war after the attack on Pearl Harbor, a Naval base, in 1941. The Navy had influence over both air and sea and understanding their reach and tactics provides a glimpse into the culture of recruitment at large while understanding a specific branch more closely.

Visual Analysis and Text Analysis Context

Image and visual analysis involves examining the pictures, colors and fonts used in the posters and understanding to whom the artist was advertising. As previously mentioned, analyzing these posters as you would any other advertisement is critical to understanding them as a tool of persuasion. The Navy was using these posters as a way to advertise their branch to young men and entice them to choose the Navy over other branches of the military or alternate career paths.

⁵ Mark R. Grandstaff, "Visions of New Men: The Heroic Soldier in American Advertisements during World War II." *Advertising & Society Review* 5, no. 2 (2004). *Italicize journal title*

⁶ Peter Karsten, ed. *Encyclopedia of War and American Society*, S.V. "Propaganda Posters: World War II." (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2005).

⁷ Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell. *Propaganda and Persuasion*. 6th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014).

⁸ David Welch, *World War II Propaganda: Analyzing the Art of Persuasion during Wartime*. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017).

Historian Craig Roell at Georgia Southern University has created a checklist of questions to ask when analyzing an advertisement.⁹ This blueprint will be utilized when analyzing all posters. Questions include what is literally being said in the advertisement, what is not being said, what is really being said, where are “you” in the ad, the intended audience and use of the ad, the storyline of the ad, the setting of the ad (including the tone of the setting, the reality of the setting, and the relation of the setting to the message), and the logical, authoritative, and emotional appeals used in the ads.¹⁰ These questions provide a comprehensive understanding of each individual poster as well as an understanding of recruitment posters as a concept in and of themselves. Additional ad analysis techniques can be found in Arthur Asa Berger’s *Ads, Fads, and Consumer Culture*.¹¹

For image and visual analysis, focusing on gender portrayals, race, and images of patriotism are the three main visual cues when understanding recruitment advertising. Gender as a concept is complicated in and of itself. For the purpose of clarity, a distinction between gender and sex is necessary for this section to make sense. According to Merriam-Webster, sex is either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and that are distinguished respectively as female or male especially on the basis of their reproductive organs and structures, whereas gender is the behavioral, cultural, or psychological traits typically associated with one

⁹ Craig H. Roell, "Analyzing Ads." HIST 4635 Senior Seminar in History: The American Consumer Culture, course handout. Georgia Southern University, 2015.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Arthur Asa Berger, “Analyzing Print Advertisements,” in *Ads, Fads, and Consumer Culture: Advertising’s Impact on American Character and Society*. Fifth edition. (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield, 2015).

sex, but is not biologically assigned. To simplify, think of sex as male or female and gender as man or woman. This work will specifically be referring to gender, as the cultural and social implications of sex are what is of most importance to the understanding of recruitment material and the social implications surrounding it. However, it would be negligent to imply that sex does not have an important role in the military dynamic given the difference in physical capability between the two sexes. If such a distinction did not matter, there would not be differing requirements for weight and physical capability for males and females in the military.¹² However, for the purpose of this analysis, gender will be the main factor at play when discussing roles and attitudes, whereas sex will be the main factor at play with giving context to males versus females in the Navy and each sexes' changing role in the service, since the Navy and military at large are more concerned with ones physical capability for combat and other duties rather than their gender identity. What is most important to remember is that gender and sex are not the same thing and are not interchangeable. Though this may complicate semantics to a degree, making the distinction is critical to understanding what is dictated by our biology and what is created by our culture— which raises the question of how much our biology effects our culture and revealing the complex nature of our relationship with ourselves and those around us, but for now, we will work with these two definitions.

When discussing the developing role of gender roles in the Navy, it is important to focus on the changing role of women. By default, men have had the ability to take on whatever role in the military from the beginning, whereas women's role had to grow and change over time.

¹² United States Navy Department, "Physical Fitness (Navy PFA) in the Navy", <https://www.navy.com/navy-life/life-as-a-sailor/fitness.html#physical-training>, accessed February 4, 2018.

Women have played a role in the United States Navy since the Civil War. However, their role was limited exclusively to medical support and nursing. The United States Navy Nurse Corps was established in 1908 and allowed twenty women to move to Washington, D.C. and train at the Navy Medical School Hospital. These women came to be known as the Sacred Twenty.¹³

However, they did not receive much in the way of monetary support from the Navy—they had to pay for their own housing and meals, whereas other members of the military had the provided to them as part of their compensation.¹⁴ Starting in World War II, an expanded Navy and war effort called for more women in the service. This brought the inception of Women Appointed for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES), with women serving in the continental United States and Hawaii. After World War II through the Korean War and Vietnam War, however, the role of women dwindled. Very few women were enlisted in the Navy and none served abroad. The most change for women has come from the 1970s to the present day. Therefore, exploring gender in these recruitment materials relies largely on studying portrayals of masculinity and the use of women in the materials as a prop or incentive. Women were not meant to be persuaded by these materials as the Navy was not looking to recruit them.

Race is also a socially constructed concept. While there is of course differences between people that we can see (most obviously in skin color but in other ways such as bone structure and facial features), the division of people into the racial categories that we understand today is completely arbitrary and has little basis in biological fact. The scope of who counted as white during World War II is much different than our concept of whiteness today. Southern and Eastern

¹³ Navy Medical Live, “The Sacred Twenty: The Navy’s First Nurses”, <http://navymedicine.navylive.dodlive.mil/archives/2834>, accessed March 1, 2018.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Europeans, French/French Canadian, and Irish people were referred to as “white ethnics”¹⁵ and were considered in a different racial category than those with Old Stock or Anglo-Saxon heritage. It is of course important to note that the distinction between white and white ethnic was not nearly as stark and divided as the difference between white and black. When people referred to World War II as a “white-mans war”, this included the umbrella definition of white to include the offshoot of white ethnics.

Black Americans felt incredibly disconnected from the war effort. They felt that since they were not considered to be on the same level as white Americans, their efforts in the war were all for naught and would not reap the same benefits for them as it would a white counterpart. One black sharecropper remarked to his white landlord “those Japs done declared war on you white folks” following Pearl Harbor.¹⁶ A black newspaper noted that the war that black people in America are fighting is not “against Hitler in Europe but Hitlers in America,”¹⁷ finding that many of Hitler’s ideologies were not too different than what they had faced in America for centuries. With the passage of the Selective Training and Service Act in August of 1940, all men between the ages of 18 and 45 became eligible to be drafted.¹⁸ This led to many black men using racial stereotypes to their advantage. Musician Dizzy Gillespie appeared in front

¹⁵ Sewell Chan, “White Ethnic Politics: Irish and Italian Catholics and Jews, Oh, My!”, <https://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/25/white-ethnic-politics-irish-and-italian-catholics-and-jews-oh-my>, accessed March 30, 2018.

¹⁶ Black sharecropper quoted in Leon F. Litwack and Winthrop D. Jordan, *The United States: Becoming a World Power*, Vol. II (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1991), 708.

¹⁷ Black press quoted in *ibid*, 708.

¹⁸ U.S. Congress, Selective Training and Service Act of 1940. 76th Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2009-title50/pdf/USCODE-2009-title50-app-selective-dup1.pdf> accessed February 4, 2018. ,

of the draft board and declared his desire to shoot any white man that he encountered on account of the fact that “the white man’s foot has been buried up in my [expletive] up to his knee.”¹⁹ This led to his dismissal from the draft. The sentiment that World War II was a white man’s war was echoed by many, which is reflected in the fact that only 1.4 percent of Navy recruits during World War II were black, despite comprising 11 percent of the total United States population.²⁰ It is also worth noting that Jim Crow policies were in full effect during the war, which may have also led to a disproportionately small number of black recruits during World War II. When any black man was successfully enlisted, he was placed in a segregated division and often relegated to less glamorous tasks such as cook or grave digger. Their treatment during the war provided extra fuel to the fire that ignited the Civil Rights Movement that began in the 1950s and continued through the 1960s (and some might say continues to this day).

Understanding patriotic symbolism is also crucial in understanding the visual cues of these recruitment posters. These symbols are so engrained to us as Americans that it is often difficult to recognize them— it is just an instant visual cue that Americans understand without prompting. The American flag is perhaps the most ubiquitous and obvious patriotic symbol. However, parts of the American flag must also be noted, especially the colors red, white, and blue, stripes, and stars. Naval uniforms and Naval ships and aircrafts should also be considered patriotic symbols and tools of persuasion. Though it seems obvious that they would be included,

¹⁹ Dizzy Gillespie quoted in Robin D. G. Kelley, "The Riddle of the Zoot: Malcolm Little and Black Cultural Politics during World War II," in Joe Austin and Michael Nevin Willard, eds., *Generations of Youth: Youth Cultures and History in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), 144.

²⁰ Army History, “Minority Groups in World War II,” <https://history.army.mil/documents/WWII/minst.htm>, accessed February 4, 2018.

they still portray the nation's identity and the identity of the Navy, which begin to become one in the same during the war.

Understanding the text of these recruitment posters is of course important in understanding the message of the poster. This is a bit more obvious than the visual cues because we explicitly read the words on the posters and actively draw meaning from what it says. However, understanding the text in relation to the visual cues is important to giving the text deeper meaning and understanding the true message of each poster. Font and text placement also gives text deeper meaning to what words are most important and the tone/inflection given to these words while reading.

Remembering all of these visual and textual cues when analyzing recruitment posters is important to understanding the overall message of the poster. Though on the face it does not seem that visual cues carry that much of a deeper meaning, they comprise a great deal of our understanding of the messages conveyed. Of course, the text on the posters is also important in bringing the context of the imagery together. Bearing this context in mind will bring the most keen understanding of each poster both individually and together as a collection.





McClelland Barclay, "Naval Aviation Has a Place for You," from Posters of World Wars I and II, Dover Publications, Inc (Mineola, New York).

This poster includes an image of a man in uniform that is performing some kind of work on a Naval aircraft. This man is white and seemingly toned and in shape. In the background, you see other jets flying, some in a structured formation. "Naval Aviation" is the largest text, emphasizing that this poster is seeking recruits for Naval Aviation specifically. "[A] place for You" implying speaking directly to the reader, assuming that they are qualified for this position. A list of jobs with enticing names follows, followed by "learning the right way," implying that they Navy way is the right way and that other ways are incorrect. The text is bold and

bright, utilizing red white and blue to convey patriotic meaning. This poster is set on the job in the midst of some action, where a sailor must perform work on an aircraft in order to get the job done. The poster both implicitly and explicitly implies that the Navy way is the best way. This poster also operates on the assumption that the reader is qualified for the position that is seeking to fill. Though we know that you must be within a certain age range and a man in order to qualify for service in the Navy, this poster does not state those requirements in the text.



McClelland Barclay, “Let’s Hit ‘Em With Everything We’ve Got!” from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>

This poster shows two sailors in the midst of action in combat. The two sailors are white men with striking masculine features and are in uniform. The scene includes a fiery background with movement portrayed by flowing clouds and exhaust from machinery. The battle scene is quite nondescript, which gives room for the viewer to create their own story of what is happening in the image. The men are focused and serious regarding the task at hand. The text delivers a powerful message in both what it says explicitly and the way that it is stylized. “Let’s hit ‘em” is in

bold text, representing power and dominance in their actions. “[W]ith everything we’ve got” implies a group effort, and that the reader is a part

of that group. “Don’t wait— choose the Navy” delivers a sense of urgency and to act while you still can act or before you are drafted and are left without a choice, and “Navy” in all caps and bold red font makes it clear what branch of service this poster is for. The text along the bottom is red, white, and blue— a clear symbol of American identity.



Matt Murphey, “Take the Wheel,” from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>

This poster packs a great deal of content into the frame with both images and words. The main image features surface ships with visible American flags. These ships are in the middle of the ocean with no sign of land. It can be assumed that the ocean tide is rough due to the white tops of the waves, which provides movement in the image and makes for an active scene. Another small image of two white sailors in uniform is next to the text, with one steering and another keeping watch. “Take the wheel...steer a course for future success” is a double entendre for both literally taking the wheel and steering a course on a ship and steering a course for your life and a career path for the future. “[W]hile

serving your country” gives a sense of personal responsibility and being a member of a nation—something bigger than yourself. The poster also utilizes red, white, and blue design.



David Stone Martin, "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty," from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>

This poster is unique as it is one of very few posters of feature a black man. Dorie Miller is mentioned by name. He was assigned to help carry wounded sailors on deck to safer locations before taking control of an unattended anti-aircraft gun, which he loaded and fired at enemy planes until he ran out of ammunition and was the first African American to be awarded the Navy Cross.²¹ This poster was based on a photograph and was recreated for recruitment material.²² Miller is seen looking directly forward, which would be directly in the

eye of the viewer of this image. A burning Pearl Harbor can be seen in the background. "Above and beyond the call of duty" notes heroism and rising above the challenges that the Navy

presents. An important note is that while this is a recruitment poster, there is no direct call to action as is seen in most other posters.

²¹ National Portrait Gallery, "Dorie Miller: Above and Beyond the Call of Duty," September 9th, 2008, <http://npg.si.edu/blog/dorie-miller-above-and-beyond-call-duty>, accessed March 5, 2018.

²² Ibid.



Jon Whitcomb, "He Volunteered for Submarine Service," from *Posters of World Wars I and II*, Dover Publications, Inc (Mineola, New York).

This poster is unique because it is one of few posters to feature a woman alongside a sailor. A white woman who is dressed nicely in a red headband and subtle makeup is seen embracing a sailor in uniform, admiring his ribbons and warfare device. She is dressed nicely and conventionally attractive, fitting a "girl next door" trope. He is embracing her and looking down on her with admiration.

The text implies that she is the one speaking. However, this poster is of course aimed at men, and is using the motivation of a woman

being proud of him as a draw to enlisting in the Navy, specifically the submarine service. There

is no direct call to action, but there is persuasion in the draw to being with a woman. This is also a portrayal of masculinity in protection and possession, with the sailor embracing her back and holding her close. Their embrace is interesting as it portrays both intimate love and sexual tension. The text is red white and blue with stars framing either side of the first line, paying homage to the American flag.



Jon Whitcomb, “See Action Now,” from *Posters of World Wars I and II*, Dover Publications, Inc (Mineola, New York).

This poster shows men in uniform shooting a submarine deck gun at a Japanese ship (marked by the Japanese flag). One of the men appears to be shirtless, and all appear to be white. There is large explosions and movement in both the flames and the water, showing action and excitement in the scene. The American Navy men seem to be out of harm’s way and not receiving fire. The text also implies excitement— “See Action Now” with the now underlined conveys both excitement in action as well as urgency in enlisting soon. The text is in red, white, and blue and flanked on each side by a star, paying homage to the American flag.



“During this Emergency, Serve your Country,”
 from The University of North Texas World War II
 Poster Archive, [https://digital.library.unt.edu/
 explore/collections/WWPC/](https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/)

This poster features a man in a white uniform and goggles welding. The image is black and grey so it is difficult to draw meaning regarding his race. However, since almost all posters have featured white men and there is no clear distinction in shading to note that he is anything other than white. If he was not, it would likely be noted. A surface ship is also added along the bottom. Though the sailor is not obviously shown on the ship, his uniform and the boat along the bottom make it more obvious that is Naval recruiting. Much of the meaning in this poster is derived from the text. “During this emergency” implies danger and urgency regarding the war effort. “[Y]our country” makes the reader a part of the nation and something greater as well as

take personal responsibility for the war effort. “Serve” is the largest word in this poster and in bold red lettering, drawing the eye and portraying the message that service is the main objective. The posters design is entirely in red, white, and blue, for yet another American flag homage.



MCClelland Barclay, "Fight, Let's Go!" from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>

This poster shows a fit white man in uniform carrying a sea bag, which is carrying all of his belongings for deployment. Although he is the only visible sailor, it is implied that he is walking in a line of other sailors as you can see pieces of the same package he is carrying on either side of him. He is reaching out towards the viewer in a gesture to join him. A surface ship and airplanes, some flying in formation, can be seen in the background. "Fight" is the largest word in the poster in red bold font, highlighting its importance and implying being on the offensive in the war effort. "Let's go!" brings the reader into the equation and makes them a part of the action. The text and background are red, white, and blue.



McClelland Barclay, "Dish it Out With the Navy!" from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>

This poster shows several men in the midst of a battle. All of them are white and wearing white t-shirts and blue pants, with the exception of one who is shirtless and carrying a large artillery shell. Some are wearing helmets while others are in white sailor caps. The only imagery in appearance that is distinctly Navy about them is their caps. Explosions can be seen in the air with movement portrayed in the clouds. There is an intense look on the face of the sailor we can see, and every sailor is in a strong, dynamic position. The text of this poster conveys urgency and power, inviting the viewer to "dish it out," implying punishment to enemies and getting to be a part of delivering that punishment. "Choose now while you can" conveys a sense of urgency of enlisting before

either the draft chooses you or, worst case, the United States no longer has the power to form a military. The same urgency is emphasized in the tag phrase, "Go to your nearest Navy recruiting station *today*." The design and text is entirely red, white, and blue.



McClelland Barclay, "Arise Americans," from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>

This poster shows a man in dress whites performing labor in a ship. He is white and toned with a strong jaw and masculine features. His uniform is very distinctly Navy and the image makes it clear that this is a Navy recruitment poster. A direct call to action is found in "Arise Americans" and "protect them now," implying that action must be taken immediately. "Your country and your liberty are in grave danger" appeals to emotion about the reader's safety and security in life, and the Navy provides a direct solution to actively work to maintain that security themselves. The design is entirely red, white, and blue, and the top includes a star border, which is a distinctly American motif.



McClelland Barclay, "Cadets for Naval Aviation Take That Something Extra," from Posters of World Wars I and II, Dover Publications, Inc (Mineola, New York).

This poster shows two men in two different Naval uniforms boarding an aircraft. They are both white with strong jaws and masculine features. A Naval surface ship can also be seen in the background and aircrafts flying in formation above. The text conveys messages of power and exclusivity. Cadets "*take that something extra*" and entices the viewer to apply at their nearest recruiting station to see if they are special enough to be a part of the elite few. "Have you got it?" implies many do not, so while the invitation is open to all, yet it is exclusionary. The text is in a bold, powerful font in red, white, and blue.



Navy Dept. Bureau of Navigation, "A National Emergency is Upon Us," from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>.

This poster is one of very few to not include servicemen or distinctly Navy imagery. Instead, an American flag is pictured and the entirety of the message of the poster is conveyed through text. There is an extreme amount of urgency and fear in the text. "A National *Emergency*" is in bold red font as the top of the poster, setting the tone for the rest of the text as urgent and dire. The reader is encouraged to "arise" to protect their "country and loved ones" "before it is too late!"—too late meaning either they are drafted or the war is lost. There is a great deal of urgency and need to act immediately. Patriotic American symbolism comprises the entirety of this poster with both the American flag imagery and the red, white, and blue text.



This poster is aimed at college students specifically. Four men in uniform, one keeping watch and three operating anti-aircraft guns, are pictured in a collage alongside Naval aircrafts flying in formation. The image is in black and white, but the shading would imply that the men are white with strong masculine features. This poster entices students by allowing them to both get their education and join the war effort, though details about what that entails are missing from the poster. The text does not convey urgency in the way that other posters have,

but it does in a much more subtle way. “Now” is in all caps and bold red text, implying urgency

McClelland Barclay, “Freshmen! Sophomores! Now You Can Stay In College and Become a Naval Officer,” from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>.

without explicitly saying so. The font and designs are in red, white, and blue.



John Philip Falter, "Remember Last December!" from The University of North Texas World War II Poster Archive, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/explore/collections/WWPC/>.

This poster features a man in uniform in front of an American flag. He is white with distinct masculine features with a serious and strong facial expression. "Remember last December!" refers to the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. "That free peoples may not perish from this Earth" refers to the Gettysburg Address delivered by Abraham Lincoln in 1863. The original quote reads, "that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."²³ It also implores the reader to enlist today, implying urgency. The text is red, white, and blue, and the background of the American flag is prominently featured.

²³ Abraham Lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address," 19 November 1863, <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>, accessed March 5, 2018.

All of these posters have consistent themes of masculinity. All men pictured are trim and muscular with angular jaws and serious, strong facial expressions. There is of course a need to be of a specific weight and fitness level in order to be in the military, but none of the men that are pictured are lanky or thin, nor do they have round or soft faces. They are also often pictured performing manual labor or engaged in battle. The normal day-to-day of the Navy is never shown, but rather, the exciting, “manly man” tasks that take strength and motivation. These are images of what men reading the posters want to be rather than who they actually are in the moment. Rather than seeing themselves, they see an image of who they could be if they joined the Navy.

Whiteness is also a large factor in these posters. Nearly everyone portrayed in these posters is white (aside from the notable exception of Dorie Miller). This is likely due in part to several factors. The first is the existing racial makeup of the Navy, which was predominantly white men pre-World War II. Additionally, it must be considered who the Navy wanted to recruit. The Navy wanted to recruit white men because Jim Crow was in full swing during the war, and men of color were typically relegated to less glamorous tasks and separate divisions, costing the Navy extra money that could be spent on other wartime efforts. Men of color’s lack of interest in joining the Navy and the military in general was also a factor. As was previously noted, many black men considered World War II to be a white-man’s war, so persuading them to join was often a lost cause and portrayals would be better used to reflect white men, as they were the ones who were more likely to join.

Portrayals of patriotism dominate every poster. Nearly every poster had American flag motifs, especially in the use of bold red, white, and blue text and stars. Action filled scenes

involving men in uniform portrayed the United States as a powerful country with fiery weaponry and large ships and aircrafts. Men reading these posters were instructed to act now before it is too late to defend the nation that they are a part of. Through all of their recruitment techniques, the United States was building itself up as a country worth fighting for and even dying for. If the U.S. was not a powerful nation that considered each man who read these posters a vital part of their nation's well-being, why would they risk changing their world forever?

Art Imitates Life: The Larger Culture and The Modern Navy

The United States' place on the world's stage is much different today than it was during World War II. Post war, the United States was considered a much greater power and gained a greater level of respect internationally. While a main motivating theme of World War II recruitment was patriotism, personal glory and achievement, defeating the enemy, and protecting the homeland, modern recruitment material relies much more on images of power and being a part of something greater. Rather than images of servicemen and general portrayals of patriotism, one would be more likely to see images of submarines, aircraft carriers, and weapons. This can be found consistently in recruitment throughout all branches of the armed forces. This reflects a great change in the way that the Navy and military at large are viewed by the general population. Rather than being viewed as a coalition of every-day strong men from any town in the United States, today's Navy is a grand super power of the sea with a wide array of powerful utilities that are in place to hold their supremacy. There is much less focus on the individual's success and much more focus on being a part of something that transcends yourself, your family, or your hometown. While there is some mention of personal achievement and benefits from enlisting, most of the motivation for joining lies in defending the honor of the United States. This attitude

is consistent in the modern day military. Currently, enlisted members have noted that they seem to be cogs in a machine to fulfill a specific task in a larger scheme rather than a valued employee who is encouraged to grow and develop in their position. There are some training exercises provided for areas of improvement, such as stress management and reducing destructive behaviors.^{24 25} While lots of time and resources are poured into these exercises, finding a way to effectively instill these ideals into sailors is a challenge. One active sailor notes that “[The Navy] pours a [expletive]-ton of resources into studies and meetings on how to best build the trainings for actual effectiveness. They are legitimately trying to address the problems, but they only know how through videos and PowerPoints. They can’t really do much else. It’s a valiant effort, but at the end of the day a lot of it just feels like common sense.”²⁶ Another claims that these training exercises are just bureaucratic nonsense. “They only give us this training so that when someone messes up, they can say, ‘Well, we tried.’ We are all replaceable at the end of the day.”²⁷

Overall, one might see the masculinity, power, and fear in portrayed in World War II Posters and think “the more things change, the more they stay the same.” However, the Navy as it was in the 1940s is much different than the Navy that we know today. Rather than working to build its reputation, the reputation today is already built, and is focused on sustaining that power

²⁴ United States Navy Department, Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs, “Navy Launches Full Speed Ahead Training for 2017”, http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=98622, accessed March 5, 2018.

²⁵ United States Navy Department, Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs, “New Chart the Course Training for 2016”, http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=92364, accessed March 5, 2018.

²⁶ Shelby Georges. Interview with two anonymous active-duty sailors. Kings Bay, GA. February 3, 2018.

²⁷ Ibid.

rather than gaining it. Examining recruitment from this era lends itself to a deeper understanding of the culture at large in the Navy during World War II and how the United States was growing from an up-and-coming relatively young country to a dominant power with the largest military in the world.²⁸

Further study might include a more detailed comparative analysis between Navy World War II recruitment materials and modern day recruitment materials. Study of other branches and comparison of their respective recruitment to the Navy may also prove fruitful in understanding the distinct culture that each branch has created for itself. Other mediums aside from print advertising may also provide a different insight. However, the iconic prints from the World War II era provide terrific insight into the culture of the Navy and the United States at large and provide an excellent foundation for further research and understanding of the complex military recruitment process and its relation to the culture and motivations of those it is recruiting.

²⁸ Peter G. Peterson Foundation, “U.S. Defense Spending Compared to Other Countries,” https://www.pgpf.org/chart-archive/0053_defense-comparison, accessed March 1, 2018.

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