

Youth, Law, and Discipline at the US Naval Academy, 1845-1861'

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In 1845 a new Naval School was founded at Annapolis, Maryland. A consolidation of existing officer training efforts, it was intended to prepare older midshipmen for their promotion examination.² Between 1849 and 1851 the School was reorganized to cater to younger students without prior sea experience, although for a time some older students remained.³ Annapolis was also part of a larger phenomena of how the middle class believed young people should be raised and disciplined. By the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries there was increased choice for youths, yet there was still a level of dependency on adults. Because of the nature of industrialization, fathers worked away from home, separated from their sons, and could no longer teach them career skills. In response, there arose an intermediate stage in life, particularly for the middle class, in which adolescents were often schooled at colleges for a career that was different than their father's.⁴

Annapolis was part of this pattern in which the school became a transitional place where youths could move from childhood to adulthood in a supervised environment. This was particularly the case with discipline. Adherents of this new philosophy believed that punishment ought to be tempered depending on the age of the offender.⁵ At Annapolis, despite the policies of particular superintendents or Secretaries of the Navy, discipline was graduated and punishments could be mitigated by youth. Authorities used conduct rolls, and later demerit points, for lesser daily offences; suspensions for more serious cases; and finally courts-martial and dismissals for the most outrageous behaviour. Meanwhile, older students were expected to be on better behaviour and to be role models for younger men. Discipline thus operated along a continuum governed by a nexus between the age of the offender, his offence, and the values of the navy.

Adolescence has always been a tumultuous time, especially for Western youths, but what has changed is the societal response. John Demos has concluded that by the mid-nineteenth century, families wanted their children educated in structured environments to circumvent the "pitfalls" of youth. Harvey J. Graff found that this philosophy was particularly common in the American middle class, which preferred education in an institutionalized setting, like a school or college, for a career acceptable to both parents and offspring. Graff believed that in this period formal institutions, like the Quaker boarding school William Northey attended in 1843, increasingly set "boundaries for growing up."⁶

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The ideal American naval officer was supposed to be merciful, empathic, and humble, much along the lines of heroes like Oliver Hazard Perry. They were to be free from personal scandal - unlike Horatio Nelson with his alleged infidelity - and their behaviour, according to Secretary Robert Smith, had to be free of self-destructiveness and other vices.⁷ The officer had to be clean, neat and able to get along well with his fellows, a philosophy echoed at Annapolis. Secretary of the Navy George Bancroft, who was instrumental in the School's creation, believed that putting midshipmen in a naval school would lead them to see "that a warrant in the navy, far from being an excuse for licentious freedom, is to be held a pledge for subordination, industry, and regularity - for sobriety, and assiduous attention to duty." He felt that the School should have a higher moral standard than civilian schools and believed that "the President expects such supervision and management as shall make of them [the midshipmen] an exemplary body, of which the country may be proud." Bancroft gave the first superintendent, Franklin Buchanan, "all the powers for discipline conferred by the laws of the United States, and the certainty that the Department will recommend no one for promotion who is proved unworthy of it from idleness or ill conduct, or continuing ignorance, and who cannot bear the test of a rigid examination."⁸

The students at the new Naval School, which opened in 1845, were until its reorganization into the Naval Academy in 1849 a mixed lot of older and younger students. Some, like William H. Smith, Felix Grundy, John Adams, Ralph Chandler, and John Hamilton, were appointed midshipmen and sent right to the School, while others were sent but quickly detached, only to return in the 1850s. For instance, Philip Carrigan Johnson was appointed on 31 August 1846 and sent to the Naval School, but by 3 December was detached to *Ohio* and warranted on 26 October 1847. In 1849 he served on *Dale* until he was sent to the School again on 13 October, but by the following May he was detached to *Congress*. It was only on 12 July 1851 that he was released from *St. Louis* and ordered back to the Academy by 1 October; he was warranted as a Passed Midshipman on 9 June 1852 and sent to *Princeton*? This unsettled state explains why so many Naval School students were in their twenties. While students appointed midshipmen in 1840 attended the new Naval School after spending time at sea, I have only been able to find age data for the "Dates" - the year of joining the navy, not necessarily the Naval School - 1845, 1846, and 1847, but on average they were in their twenties by the time they entered the School because many were older (see table 1). The minimum age was slowly falling in this period, as one might expect, as more younger students were going to the School prior to going to sea.

Table 1
Ages of Students during Naval School Era,
by Date of Original Appointment, 1845-1847

	1845	1846	1847
Average age	21.6	20.9	21.0
Minimum age	20.3	17.6	16.3
Maximum age	23.3	22.6	23.3
Standard deviation	1.25	1.56	1.47
Missing cases	0	8	33

Note: Ages when started school of those students still attending after about 1849.

Source: Calculated from National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 405, Records of the United States Naval Academy, Registers of Candidates for Admission to the Academy, October 1849-October 1860.

On 10 October 1845 Buchanan expressed his expectations to the students, telling them that naval regulations required that they undergo a thorough examination of their professional abilities and moral character before they were promoted to lieutenant. Therefore, they must take every opportunity to learn about their profession and to remember that "a good moral character is essential to your promotion and high standing in the navy." Meanwhile, he told the officers and instructors to enforce the law, "however painful" it might be. Buchanan believed they had no discretionary powers at the School, even though commanders were by law given some leeway. He felt that any officer who failed to enforce the law because it was unpleasant was guilty of dereliction of duty.¹⁰

Buchanan took Bancroft's instructions to heart and became a strong proponent of the inflexibility of naval law. There is little clear evidence on why he took such a stance, but there are several reasonable possibilities. Buchanan may have felt he could apply the full force of naval discipline because the majority of the students were "older" officers with prior naval experience and ought to know how to behave accordingly. He also may have meant to set an example of proper behaviour for the younger students out of fear of the influence of their seniors. Moreover, the Naval School was a new institution, and as its first superintendent, it may be that Buchanan wished to impress his superiors, as well as the nation, and have as few scandals as possible. As time wore on, it became easier for superintendents to be lenient on an offender because of his youth. This is not surprising, given that the average age of the students fell dramatically after 1849.

Buchanan's style of discipline is evident in one early example dealing with intoxication. On 4 December 1846 he discovered a drunken midshipman and judged that such behaviour required a court martial; in his view, naval law left him no choice:

[t]he laws of the navy do not grant to a commander discretionary power to overlook such an offence as drunkenness or any offence against those laws: they point out the punishment for certain offences. And my experience as Superintendent of this School since its organization convinces me of the propriety and necessity of adhering strictly to them.

Buchanan believed it was a "dangerous precedent" to be lenient toward midshipmen. If the law were enforced leniently, everyone would expect forgiveness, especially with drunkenness. Buchanan believed that drinking led to the largest number of cases of insubordination in the Navy and hence was "an offence I never overlook."

The original *Plan and Regulations of the Naval School*, approved by the Department of the Navy in 1846, bound everyone at the School to the regulations, and any others that the superintendent decided to issue. It reminded readers that all officers were "required to observe towards each other a courteous deportment, and to conduct themselves, on all occasions, with propriety and decorum," and anyone having a complaint against another was to make it known to the superintendent, rather than handling the matter individually. The professors had little true power of their own. The regulations stated that "[t]he Professors are not permitted to exercise any discretionary power in excusing the students for absence from recitation, or for tardiness, but must report all such cases to the Superintendent." But they were responsible for order and discipline in their classrooms when class was in session.¹²

Meanwhile, the activities of midshipmen were strictly regulated. During study hours before their recitations they were to stay in their rooms and were "not permitted to lounge or promenade about the grounds of the institution." To further regulate their lives there was a conduct roll on which infractions of the regulations, or other misbehaviours, were noted. These included "neglect of duty, disobedience of orders, inattention to studies, tardiness at recitations, breaking liberty, incorrect deportment at recitation, indecorous conduct at the mess-table, or elsewhere, irregularity at meal hours." The most serious infractions were sent to the Secretary of the Navy to decide upon the necessary action. The regulations stated that one of the goals of the School was "to ascertain whether their qualifications and deportment are calculated to reflect credit upon the Navy if retained in it."¹³

Midshipmen also had a variety of other regulations to keep them in line. The importation of liquor into the School was banned, and no midshipman was allowed to cook food in his room (he could only eat there if he was sick). Tobacco took up almost five lines of the regulations: "Smoking cigars is prohibited in any of the Midshipmen's rooms, recitation halls, or mess-room. Chewing tobacco in the mess and recitation rooms is positively prohibited; and no Acting Midshipman will be permitted to chew or smoke tobacco." Finally, reminiscent of instructions to teenagers today, the regulations added that "[f]he students are cautioned and enjoined not to mark, cut, or in any manner deface or injure the public buildings or property of any kind."¹⁴

During their stay at the School, midshipmen were required to spend almost all their time within its grounds. They were allowed to go into Annapolis, but they had to record their names in a "liberty-book" by 4pm. The officer-of-the-day then took it to the superintendent, or his substitute, for approval. The amount of time midshipmen were allowed off the grounds was limited: "[p]ermission to be absent will be granted only after the regular hours appropriated to recitations and study during the day, and extend only until 10 o'clock P. M., unless [given] special permission to exceed that hour." Upon returning, midshipmen were required to report to the officer-of-the-day, who recorded their arrival in the liberty-book, which was then inspected by the superintendent the next morning.¹⁵

These rules, which Buchanan submitted to Bancroft in August 1845, and officially approved by 28 August 1846, governed the School until its reorganization began in 1849. It was only thereafter that more specific punishments and demerits were prescribed for infractions. For the School era (1845-1850), disciplinary records exist. While not all midshipmen committed offences serious enough to be recorded, the records illuminate the types of activities deemed improper by the authorities. It also allows us to generalize on the character of midshipmen during the pre-Civil War era. For the period 1846 to 1850, a twenty-percent random sample was taken of the records of 202 midshipmen who committed recordable offences. A sample was used because, since offences were recorded daily the total rapidly reached unmanageable numbers. Unfortunately, the punishments inflicted, and the individual who reported the infraction, were not recorded for this period. The forty records extracted produced 111 infractions.¹⁶

The most common infraction was breaking liberty, comprising fifty of the 111 violations (forty-five percent). Of those who broke liberty, seven were one hour or less late, while forty-three were late by an unspecified time between twelve minutes and twenty-four hours. The next most common transgression was tardiness for a recitation or class, with twenty-six offences (fourteen percent). A subsequent breakdown of these numbers is telling if one assumes lateness to be a function of how much one enjoyed the subject or felt it was

useful to a naval career. There was a tendency among the first lot of midshipmen to be late for French: fifteen of the twenty-six tardy citations involved that subject, while seven were for English. Meanwhile, three infractions were for being late for mathematics, while only one was for mechanics. The practical side of naval education still won supporters, at least among the students.

The traditional historiography of the Naval School era has led people to believe that the midshipmen, particularly the older ones, were harder to control than those who came later, and that the seniors incited all the students to misbehave. These officers had prior sea experience, often in command, and were thought to dislike being ordered around like children.¹⁷ Even though superintendents like Buchanan feared this would be the case, the 1846-1850 disciplinary records suggest order rather than chaos. Twenty-four of the 111 infractions were for neglect of duty, but twenty-three of these were in connection with rules involving liberty: eleven for remaining outside the grounds beyond the time set by the superintendent; three for neglecting to report after returning from leave; and nine for both the above reasons. In addition, one midshipman was found in bed at noon when the superintendent went to inspect his room; he, too, was charged with neglect of duty.

Infractions for "disobedience of orders" also showed that the older midshipmen tended to be orderly. Three of the seven disobedience infractions were for leaving the yard without permission; another midshipman lost his temper and slammed a shutter; one failed to carry out orders properly in a small boat; and a final man incurred debts in Annapolis contrary to orders.¹⁸ Only two infractions were for behaviour unbecoming of an officer: one for breaking a barn door and chasing a horse and the other, awarded to Midshipman F. A. Boardman, was for attacking Midshipman Cheever and using reproachful language. Only one violation was for inattention to studies, and one was for drunkenness in Annapolis.¹⁹

Of course, the conduct rolls by themselves cannot prove how well midshipmen responded to regulations and school life during this period. The Naval School regulations were not as numerous as those that would follow. Moreover, midshipmen spent less time at Annapolis than they would later and thus did not have time to commit the same number of offences as their successors. But those they did commit were far from open rebellion against their instructors or the institution.²⁰ The School responded in kind and handled the matters internally, rather than subjecting them to the full force of naval law. But sometimes stronger measures were necessary and discipline was handled at the court martial or court of inquiry level.

While statistics alone cannot reveal the dynamics between the authorities and the midshipmen, numerous vignettes suggest what these interactions were like. Franklin Buchanan was replaced on 15 March 1847 by George P. Upshur, who was more lenient with the midshipmen. One example of Upshur's compassion occurred on the night of 1 May 1847, when the watchman reported that some midshipmen returned to the School after 2am by jumping over the walls. Lt. James H. Ward, Commandant of Midshipmen, investigated and found that Midshipman J. T. Walker and another man were recorded in the liberty book as having returned at 9:40pm, but in reality had returned much later by jumping over the wall near the lower gate. Ward reported this to Upshur, who decided to handle it himself rather than bother the Secretary of the Navy. Upshur concluded that only two officers were involved and that the offence was forgivable.²¹

The next step up in punishment was suspension. But here the age of the offender sometimes played a mitigating role in meting out punishment. During the night of 28 May

1847 Midshipman H.C. Hunter broke into the kitchen and stole some food. Hunter was suspended from duty and told to remain on School grounds but was allowed to attend recitations. Lt. Ward, then acting superintendent, reported the matter to the Secretary of the Navy. Further investigation revealed that it was common practice - "as old nearly as the School" - for midshipmen to enter the kitchen without permission and take food. But Ward believed that because of Hunter's "extreme youth" and "frankness in making the acknowledgment" of his crime, suspension from duties and privileges would be sufficient punishment while also serving as a warning to others.²²

On 19 June 1847 Upshur wrote Secretary J.Y. Mason to remind him of the case. Hunter had been under suspension for twenty days, and Upshur thought that because Mason had been absent when Ward originally reported the affair, it may have slipped the Secretary's mind. The superintendent found that Hunter was truly sorry for his actions and "has evidently experienced considerable mental suffering in consequence of his present position." Upshur recommended that the department restore Hunter to duty but that the Secretary send him a letter of admonishment which, with his punishment, would be sufficient "in the case of one so young and so sensitive as Mid[shipman] Hunter."²³

A willingness to cooperate also played a part in convincing the superintendent to show clemency. If offending midshipmen accepted the restrictions placed on them, they generally were given lesser punishments. On 23 July 1849 Midshipmen Alexander Simmons and William Van Wyck got into a fight. Several punches were thrown before the two were separated. Upshur called both into his office separately and asked them to pledge not to fight in future. Both were given time to consider their fates: Simmons declined to make the pledge, while Van Wyck accepted it on the condition that he be allowed to defend himself if attacked. Van Wyck was not suspended, while Upshur suspended Simmons mainly, it would seem, for his refusal to take the pledge.²⁴

If students failed to respond to moderate forms of discipline, however, the authorities became more forceful. In 1848 Midshipman James B. Yates failed to respond to the subtle pressures of lenient discipline. Upshur found that he neglected his studies and for three weeks prior to his suspension failed to turn up for half a dozen recitations. When Upshur asked why, the young man replied that he had been unprepared. The superintendent failed to accept this excuse and concluded that "counsel, advice, argument, lectures, rebuke, orders, are of no avail - all are utterly wasted on him." On 24 January, for example, Yates left the yard without permission and no one could find him when Upshur summoned him to his office. Upshur ordered the officer-of-the-day to keep an eye out for him and at 10:30pm a light appeared in Yates' room; he had returned clandestinely. The superintendent called the midshipman to his office and asked when he had left and returned to the yard. Yates declined to respond, but did not deny his absence. Upshur decided to suspend him from everything but academic pursuits and to forward his case to the Secretary. The superintendent was sad that he had to report Yates for a second time, but felt he was "learning nothing, literally nothing valuable at this School" and expected the Board of Examiners to reject him at his next examinations. In short, Upshur considered Yates "altogether unfit for the navy."²⁵

A similar incident involved Midshipman Henry Key, who also left the grounds without permission. When Upshur could not find him, he sent a sergeant into Annapolis to search. The latter found Key in a hotel playing billiards. Upshur concluded that Yates and Key were alike, always breaking rules, and that "they are also uselessly occupying quarters to the exclusion of men greatly their superiors in every respect." By February 1848 he was

exasperated over the number of midshipmen leaving the yard without permission. He reported Midshipman J. M. Ford to the Secretary for this offence and suspended him from all but his academic duties. In Upshur's mind the situation was out of control: Ford was the third midshipman under suspension at the time for the same behaviour. The superintendent believed that prompt dismissal from the navy was the only cure for the epidemic of leaving the yard without permission.²⁶

Despite Upshur's style of discipline, the Navy Department reminded him that if leniency failed he had to resort to greater force. Secretary Mason wrote that he believed the midshipmen's actions were those of misguided young officers. The offenders were ordered to confine themselves to the limits of the School and the entire class was to be informed of the Department's decision regarding the midshipmen. Mason concluded that if anyone committed such an offence again, he would be tried for disobedience of orders.²⁷

Another case occurred on 24 February involving Midshipman Edward Pasteur. At 10pm Surgeon Lockwood found Pasteur drunk and trying to enter a house in Annapolis where he knew some ladies; he finally was convinced to return to his room. Upshur believed that Pasteur was a bad seed, frequently leaving the grounds and getting drunk, but until then was unable to prove it. Upshur thought that Pasteur possessed "none of the acquirements essential to an officer and makes no perceptible progress in his studies." When Upshur questioned him, Pasteur refused to answer, so the superintendent suspended his privileges and forwarded his case to the Secretary.²⁸

Yet another incident occurred on 28 February. Midshipman John H. Tillotson left the yard without permission and, when questioned, admitted his guilt. Upshur believed there were others who went with him, but he did not know who they were. Tillotson was a good student, had made good progress with his studies and was successfully refraining from drinking as much as previously. He only recently had been reappointed to the navy after resigning earlier. Upshur thought he was doing well, but that he should be sent to sea as punishment; in the meantime he was suspended from all non-academic pursuits and privileges. In the end Tillotson only lasted another year at the School and resigned again in February 1849.²⁹

When all else failed the Annapolis authorities finally threatened or actually resorted to courts-martial or courts of inquiry. Courts martial were reserved for extremely serious offences like gross misconduct. Superintendent Buchanan believed that a court martial could make an example of a misbehaving midshipman. In late January 1846, he learned that Midshipman Norris had been beyond the School bounds without permission after the superintendent had specifically told him to stay within the limits because he had neglected his studies. Buchanan wished to make an example of him and suspended him. Buchanan also wanted a court martial because he believed Norris had committed a "flagrant" violation of the School's regulations in a disrespectful manner. Buchanan thought it was "necessary that a serious example should be made [of Norris] to preserve the discipline of the institution."³⁰

Drinking, combined with any other offence, often led to an immediate escalation to the court-martial level. On 17 February 1846 Midshipman Augustus McLaughlin requested permission to go to Baltimore to visit his sick mother. Buchanan acquiesced and was under the impression McLaughlin had gone there until he ran into him in Annapolis. Buchanan had gone to town to meet a visiting friend at a local hotel, where he spotted McLaughlin in the billiards room; he also appeared to have been drinking. McLaughlin explained that the servants had somehow delayed his departure for Baltimore and he had therefore missed his

"car." Buchanan was upset that the midshipman had been drinking after he had pledged abstinence. The young man exclaimed that this was the first time he had broken his pledge, but Buchanan was dissatisfied and ordered him to return to the School.³¹

The two walked back to the School. When Buchanan ordered McLaughlin to his room, the young man refused and, in front of Buchanan, Professor Henry Lockwood and the officer-of-the-day, left the grounds. Buchanan ordered him to stop, but he still refused. Buchanan then ordered the officer-of-the-day to order him to return, with similar results. That was the last Buchanan saw of McLaughlin and rumour had it that he had left Annapolis by "car." The superintendent requested a court-martial to deal with him.³²

In May 1846 Buchanan requested another court-martial. Midshipmen Blake and Wiley had argued and used disrespectful language when the former refused to give the latter the sugar dish. Because he believed the midshipmen were disrespectful, he adopted this harsh course.³³ Other courts-martial in this period were in April 1848, when several midshipmen hung Professor Lockwood in effigy, and in May and June 1848 due to duels.³⁴

A period of reform began at the School in 1849 and concluded in 1851. These changes altered the academic program, extended training to a four-year course with summer cruises, and renamed the School the Naval Academy. But they brought little change in how authorities handled discipline, which were still sifted by the seriousness of the offence. Similarly, punishments were often mitigated due to the youth of the offender. Indeed, age probably became a greater factor because students were now admitted to the Academy before going to sea. They were no longer officers with prior sea experience but middle-class youths entering the navy directly from civilian schools. Punishments therefore operated along a continuum of severity ranging from formal demerit points for minor offences to privilege restrictions, courts-martial, and finally dismissal.³⁵

Table 2
Ages by Date of Appointment (1849-1859)

	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859
Average	16.2	15.4	15.1	15.3	15.3	15.2	15.5	16.0	16.4	16.7	16.5
Minimum	14.8	13.8	13.2	13.8	14.3	14.0	13.8	14.2	14.1	14.2	14.2
Maximum	16.9	17.0	17.3	16.5	16.1	16.2	17.6	17.0	18.0	18.0	18.1
Std Dev	0.74	0.98	0.89	0.78	0.52	0.66	1.08	0.73	1.06	1.10	1.01
Cases	34	46	47	47	27	57	47	62	73	62	83
Missing	23	2	4	0	5	5	19	9	8	16	8

Source: See table 1.

The ages of the students for whom data are available varied with the admissions regulations, but they were generally between thirteen and eighteen years old. The mean age dipped in the first several years of the Academy era, then began to rise again as the navy decided to admit slightly older candidates. But the average remained between fifteen and

sixteen, with a low standard deviation, indicating that the students' ages clustered around this age (see table 2). The new students at the Academy started at a younger age than their Naval School counterparts.

One of the clearest examples of George Upshur's style of discipline at the beginning of this period of reform occurred on 27 October 1849, when he permitted seven midshipmen to visit Annapolis. Before they left, the superintendent reminded them that they were forbidden to visit a tavern, hotel, or "other house of public entertainment." But when they returned, Acting Midshipman Chapman was drunk. He admitted that he had visited an apartment in a local hotel and consumed champagne. Although Upshur was disappointed, he told the Secretary that Chapman was intelligent and would eventually prove to be a "valuable officer." He hoped the Department would grant clemency because "these young gentlemen have been only a few days at the School and have had very little time to make themselves acquainted with its rules and have as yet no knowledge of the naval laws."³⁶

While the authorities could be lenient with the younger midshipmen, they were more harsh if the offender was older. In late April 1850 Midshipmen Morrison, Boardman and Adams committed acts of insubordination. The matter was serious enough to be reported to the Secretary of the Navy, who concluded that while the insubordination impaired the standing of the "young officers themselves," as well as the School, the acts were due to the midshipmen's "youth and indiscretion." He told Upshur to express the Department's "unqualified disapprobation" of the midshipmen's "violation of discipline and morals." But he decided they deserved leniency because they promised to behave in the future. The Secretary ordered that Morrison and Boardman, whom he believed to be the "principal offenders," be denied all privileges outside the School and remain on the grounds for one month. As for the others, he hoped the example would be "properly appreciated by all their associates and brother officers belonging to the Naval School." As a final message, he ordered that the punishments be read publicly to the professors and students.³⁷

For lesser offences the Academy sometimes used money as leverage.³⁸ A "Report of Conduct of the Acting Midshipmen for the month of July 1852" revealed that sixteen of the forty-four midshipmen listed were punished by having their pocket money withdrawn. Four were punished in this manner for smoking, while the others were sanctioned for unspecified infractions.³⁹ Meanwhile, the age factor mitigated an offence that might otherwise have been dealt with harshly: disobedience of orders. An incident with the boats in October 1852 involved seven midshipmen. Although ordered to remain away from land or other boats, they landed at a wharf in Annapolis and loaded liquor, an offence that was grounds for dismissal. But Superintendent C. K. Stribling concluded that "they are to be sure mere boys, and allowance must be made accordingly."⁴⁰

Age also played a factor in another incident. On 21 May 1853 the new Secretary of the Navy, J. C. Dobbin, ruled on the fate of Midshipmen Bigelow, McDougal, Ingraham, Cushman, Vultee, McCrall, and Ashe, who were charged with violating Academy regulations. But "[i]n pursuance of your [Stribling's] recommendation of the delinquents on account of their youth, the Department is inclined to extend forbearance, and permit them to remain at the Academy," although the Secretary informed Stribling that he was to reprimand them and "warn them of the consequences of a similar offence hereafter."⁴¹

Midshipmen who had enrolled at the Academy before the 1849-1851 reforms often were treated differently. Superintendent L. M. Goldsborough believed, despite his advocacy of some degree of leniency, that these men had to take greater responsibility for their actions.

He wrote that "nearly every one of the Midshipmen now here has attained the age of manhood, & been several years at sea, & therefore cannot plead either ignorance of Naval customs, laws, or regulations, or *extreme youth* [emphasis added], in extenuation of any really bad conduct." Instead, they were to be role models for the younger acting midshipmen: "they [the midshipmen] are all old enough to know & feel the full force of their example, good or bad, upon the minds of all the Acting Midshipmen who are so much younger, & possess so much less experience, than themselves." Sending offenders to sea, or dismissing them from the navy after their second offence, would "at once produce a wholesome moral influence" and help stop, for example, the problem of excess drinking.⁴²

Older students were dealt with more harshly because the authorities feared their influence on the younger pupils. One example involved Acting Midshipman John Adams Howell, who was appointed in 1854 and was approximately seventeen years old by 1857. Lt. J. Taylor Wood reported Howell for leaving the mess hall without permission and concluded that in "thus allowing in himself a disregard & contempt of the Regulations" set "a bad example to the junior class."⁴³ The authorities seemed concerned that disciplinary problems with one student would spread to others like a malignant disease. Lt. R. H. Wyman wrote on 31 October 1859 that Midshipman Samuel Hiatt was on "every report of delinquency and generally for two or three different offences against the regulations of the 'Academy.'" Wyman concluded that "I consider his whole bearing and conduct as tending to contaminate the young gentleman with whom he is associated." In the end, Hiatt never graduated from the Academy.⁴⁴

When the pupil's behaviour warranted it, the Academy meted out punishment. While the authorities frequently gave students second chances, they were concerned with instilling an appreciation of discipline and preventing them from getting out of control. When all hope was lost a court of inquiry or court martial was held, or midshipmen were dismissed from the navy. One such case concerned Midshipmen Hammond and Haralson, who were caught drinking in their rooms in December 1852. Stribling noted that "I have reason to fear that they have been in the habit of thus violating the regulations." He knew of only one way to handle their case: dismissal.⁴⁵ On 4 December 1852 Stribling reported another midshipman - Clarence Barrett, then almost fifteen years old - for smuggling alcohol into the Academy. The superintendent was concerned about the influence of alcohol and told Secretary John Kennedy that "[u]nless a speedy example is made of those detected in committing this demoralizing offence, I fear very serious injury will be done to the Youth at the Academy, and to the usefulness of the Institution."⁴⁶

On 8 December 1852, Stribling, Lt. Thomas T. Craven, and Acting Master L. R. Carter convened a Board of Inquiry to investigate charges against Acting Midshipmen Law, Erwin and Joy. On 9 November, Law had been found drunk in one of the round houses and later passed out under a student's bed. He was called before the Board and "had nothing to say." The Board told him that revealing the source of the liquor would not influence his case, but Law "declined to say where he got it." He was then permitted to leave and the Board turned to Erwin's case.

Erwin was charged with the same offence, as well as using improper language to the superintendent and to Lt. Marcy. Stribling, Marcy, and Erwin were in the latter's room assembling a trunk and Erwin was "much excited." On several occasions he made uncalled for remarks, including stating that if the trunk were his, "no Negro should search it." Marcy believed that Erwin was drunk, and Stribling concurred. Erwin denied the charge and stated

that he was simply excited that day. He also declined to say where he had obtained liquor, and whether he was drinking in the previous twenty-four hours, but claimed that he never went "over the walls" for alcohol.

Finished with Erwin, the Board then moved on to his roommate, Acting Midshipman Joy, who was charged with disgraceful and insubordinate conduct, smoking, and using insubordinate language toward his superiors. He was also charged with bringing liquor into the Academy. After church on Sunday, Marcy went to Erwin and Joy's room and asked who owned a trunk. When he was told it was Joy's, he sent for the midshipman because he suspected him of hiding liquor in the trunk. When the midshipman entered the room, Marsh detected a suspicious odour and testified that there were some "peculiarities about the room" which made him wonder anew what was in the trunk. Marcy rocked the trunk back and forth and heard some solid body moving around inside; he "inferred from this [that] there was a bottle either full or empty, inside." When he returned to the room again, he did the same thing, but the sound had disappeared.

Moreover, when Joy arrived in his room, Marcy found him to be excited. The young man told Marcy that the trunk was his private property and no one had the right to search it. Marcy replied that he wanted to know who owned the trunk and he had said nothing about wanting to search it. Joy refused to answer any more questions, since he thought Marcy's inquiries were improper. Joy and Marcy then met with Stribling to discuss the matter. The superintendent went with them back to Joy's room and asked the young man for the key to the trunk; Joy replied that he did not have it. Stribling told the Board that when Marcy told him about his suspicions, he concluded that Joy "doubted his [Stribling's] authority to have his trunk opened" and asked if the Secretary of the Navy had given him such authority. Stribling replied that he "should not answer any such question" but, believing Joy might give Marcy some difficulty, he followed the two to Joy's room. Stribling broke open the trunk, which contained no illegal articles except for a piece of tobacco. But Marcy, who had noticed alcohol on Joy's breath while returning from Stribling's office, concluded he had been drinking that day.

Stribling corroborated Marcy's account and concluded that he "had no doubt that he [Joy] was under the influence of liquor." The Board asked Joy if he had been drinking on Saturday or Sunday, but he refused to answer. It then asked Midshipmen Broadhead, Fyffe and Ragland if they saw, or knew, how Erwin, Joy, and Law obtained the liquor they used on Saturday or Sunday. Like a good band of brothers, all three midshipmen answered that they knew nothing of the matter.⁴⁷

The Secretary concluded that Law's conduct was "altogether inadmissable [sic] in a pupil of the Academy." He went on to write that:

He [Law] has forgotten the high character of the duty and responsibility that belong to an officer of the US Navy. He must henceforth learn to distinguish between the conduct expected from that position and that of a mere schoolboy. A repetition of such an offence will incur a more severe comment from the Department.

But despite the Secretary's views, the Board recommended dismissal, a recommendation approved by Kennedy on 17 January 1853. Erwin and Joy had their yard privileges suspended for three months, although Kennedy told Stribling that if he could think of

anything else, he would consider approving it. Kennedy concluded that Erwin's case was more one of insubordination and "some foolish notion of his rights;" it was unclear whether he was actually intoxicated.⁴⁸

On 9 December 1852 Kennedy ordered a Board of Inquiry to investigate the activities of Hammond, Haralson, William H. Smith, and Barrett, although there does not appear to be any detailed record of the charge - probably drunkenness - or of the inquiry. The Secretary told Stribling that four other midshipmen investigated by the Board should be given the "right to resign" over the incidents. Hammond's father wrote Kennedy that he was disturbed about his son's condition; in response, the Secretary ordered Stribling to let those charged in the four recent cases investigated by the Board of Inquiry resign their positions.⁴⁹ As with other midshipmen who had been caught committing serious offences, the Secretary was mortified with Smith, Hammond, Haralson, and Barrett. He concluded that their offence went "against the moral propriety which should characterise the conduct of gentlemen in every relation of life." He hoped that their actions were the result of the "thoughtlessness of youth rather than to any fixed habit of delinquency" and that they would take their punishments as a warning against the vices that "invariably destroy the character of all who allow it to obtain the master of habit." Midshipmen Smith and Barrett were allowed to resign while Hammond and Haralson were set back one year and sent to sea until school resumed on 1 October 1853.⁵⁰

Meanwhile, after inquiries were completed involving Midshipman Cornwell, and another on Midshipmen Smith and Fyffe, Stribling forwarded the findings to the Secretary. The superintendent concluded that for the sake of the younger midshipmen these offenders had to be disciplined because "the younger Students unfortunately look up to the Midshipmen, & are easily led by them; their influence has already had an injurious effect, and nothing will in my opinion, stop the evil habits exhibited in these cases & others heretofore reported, but a rigid enforcement of the Laws & regulations." In the end the midshipmen pledged never to use alcohol again while at the Academy. Because Stribling believed their pledge would be good for both the students and the Academy, he recommended that they be judged in a favourable light. The pledge saved the navy from "the necessity of dismissing from the Navy, many who might otherwise become ornaments to the Service." The Academy resorted to courts martial or courts of inquiries on several other occasions before the outbreak of the Civil War. For example, in March 1857 one was created to investigate why Acting Midshipmen Norman H. Farquhar and William Welch entered the superintendent's office without permission on a Sunday.⁵¹ But in general the students of the 1850-1861 period were well behaved.

In the Academy era the midshipmen's infractions were still recorded, but demerit points were also issued as mild punishments for minor transgressions. A memorandum from the Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography enclosed with a letter to the superintendent dated 19 January 1855 outlined the importance of the conduct rolls. The Bureau believed that "as at West Point, the object of a separate roll being to give prominence to conduct." In other words, they were to demonstrate to the students the type of behaviour the navy wanted.⁵² But even if midshipmen exceeded the allowed number of demerits, the authorities provided some leeway. In May 1851 Midshipmen Offley and Dodge went over their demerit limit and were "liable to the penalty of dismissal [sic]," but on the Stribling's recommendation they were saved. Instead, Secretary William Graham told the superintendent to warn them that while they would be permitted to be examined in June, they had to show improvement in the

interim because "the Department will forbear no longer." An analysis of the demerit points issued for this period reveals that a small number of midshipmen - between twenty-five and thirty percent - committed close to half the offences, with the point average hovering around four out of ten (see table 3).

As I did for the Naval School era, I took a twenty percent random sample of the conduct rolls. Over the period as a whole, violations that could be characterized as riotous, mutinous, or otherwise challenging to military authority were almost non-existent. Offences that warranted demerit points generally dealt with absence without permission, room order and cleanliness, visiting during forbidden periods, tardiness, general noise, and skylarking. For example, absenteeism topped the list for the academic years 1853 and 1854, comprising 22.7% of infractions, followed by messy room (9.7%), military exercise offences (poor marching, out of order, etc., 9.1%), and classroom offences (8.6%). By contrast, disobedience of orders made up only 1.5% of the crimes, while disrespect to a superior and insubordination comprised 0.4% of the violations. Absenteeism was generally confined to missing various military (76.0%) and academic (16.4%) functions. Similar patterns were found for lateness: military (54.0%), academic (31.1%) and mess (13.1%). This pattern seems consistent with a student body that was just out of school, lacked naval experience, and was more in tune with school than with military routine and discipline.⁵⁴

Virtually the same pattern of misbehaviour ashore was found for each of the academic years analysed.⁵⁵ In general, the Academy-era students were well behaved. But even the guilty often received reprieves. On 17 May 1854, for example, the superintendent forwarded a request from the midshipmen that their demerit points for forgivable offences be reduced; Secretary J. C. Dobbin approved under certain circumstances.⁵⁶ The conduct rolls contain numerous instances where the superintendent reduced a midshipman's demerit points, usually for good behaviour.

Despite the scale of justice used at the Academy, the authorities sometimes had to resort to dismissal to get their point across. But even when this was considered, the youth factor still played a role in the final decision. It was a consideration, for instance, in the discipline of Acting Midshipmen Stockton and Whitten. On 27 July 1850 the two left the Academy grounds without permission. Stribling admitted that under normal circumstances such a violation would not be tolerated and they would be dismissed from the navy. But he believed there were mitigating circumstances in this case which warranted leniency. That day a group of students from Baltimore visited Annapolis and paraded in front of the government house. Stockton and Whitten were curious and wanted to see the visitors, so "with the usual thoughtlessness of boys [they] left the premises to see them." Stribling decided to report the incident to the Secretary, but told him that Stockton and Whitten were "both very young, and were not at the moment perhaps, aware of the very grave offence they committed." The superintendent surmised that he would be able to fashion some other punishment which would impress upon them and the other students "the necessity of strict obedience of orders, at all times and under all circumstances."⁵⁷

The institution's disciplinary tactics show not only that it tried to instill the naval ideal in the minds of the students but also that Annapolis was part of the larger society. In his study of Academy life in the 1970s, David Edwin Leiby has shown that in American military society people led instead of ruled. This philosophy of consensual management was much more in step with the democratic American ideal.⁵⁸ The influence of American democracy on managing people probably accounts for Linda Pollock's finding that severe

discipline in American and British schools peaked in the early nineteenth century and declined as the century progressed. She concluded that "American children had a better chance of escaping cruel punishments, particularly in the late 19th century, than British children. This corresponds with the evidence on home discipline - that British parents were more concerned with discipline than American." Meanwhile, parents were more likely to use stricter discipline with younger children and to try and "reason with adolescents."¹⁹ Such was the case at Annapolis.

Table 3
General Summary Statistics from Academic Years, 1853-1860

Years	20% Sample (Students)	"Population" Size	Missing cases (students)	Offences	Missing Cases (offences)	Percentage of students committing 50% offences	Average Demerit Points	Maximum Demerits	Minimum Demerits	Standard Deviation	No. of offences with demerits
1853-54/ 1854-55	41	196	1	1099	2	25.6% did 52.2%	4.0	18	0	2.44	1093
1855-56	25	126	0	552	0	28.0% did 50.4%	3.7	10	0	2.04	546
1856-57	29	147	0	882	1	24.1% did 50.6%	4.0	24	0	2.29	872
1857-58	36	179	0	784	0	27.8% did 49.9%	4.1	10	0	2.54	777
1858-59	39	193	0	587	0	23.1% did 51.8%	4.6	10	0	2.48	583
1859-60	27	137	1	332	0	29.6% did 53.6%	4.6	10	1	2.29	330
1860-61	34	168	2	821	0	31.1% did 50.3%	3.6	10	1	2.30	813

Notes: Offences committed on school or training ships from 1859 to 1861 omitted. Some violations did not receive demerits. The analysis also does not account for demerits later removed by the superintendent. Population size is the number of students in the name index for a given year. Twelve men in 1853/1855 were unclassifiable.

Source: Calculated from NA, RG 405, Registers of Delinquencies, 1846-1850 and 1853-1882.

Despite the practices of individual superintendents, discipline at the School and Academy operated along a continuum from lenient to severe as the authorities tried to reason with the young people while also upholding the ideals of the American naval officer. Lenient punishments used conduct rolls and demerit points, while students were punished more severely with suspension, confinement, courts martial, and dismissal. But the authorities also punished according to the age of the student and their length of time in the navy. Older students were expected to be on better behaviour and to be role models for the younger ones. By the time they had reached a certain age, older students were expected to be fully aware of what the navy expected of them.

NOTES

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1. An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Seventh Annual New Researchers in Maritime History Conference at the University of Hull on 13 March 1999. The author would like to thank all those present for their input.
2. Henry L. Burr, "Education in the Early Navy" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Temple University, 1939), 206-211.
3. Charles Todorich, *The Spirited Years: A History of the Antebellum Naval Academy* (Annapolis, 1984), 65-74.
4. See Edward Shorter, *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York, 1975); Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present* (New York, 1977); Harvey J. Graff, "Remaking Growing Up: Nineteenth-Century America," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, XXIV (1991), 48-59; and Graff, *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America* (Cambridge, MA, 1995).
5. Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children. Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1983), 198-199.
6. John Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal* (New York, 1986), 97-107; Graff, *Conflicting Paths*, 69-70 and 94-97; and Graff, "Remaking Growing Up," 40-43.
7. Christopher McKee, *Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U.S. Naval Officer Corps, 1794-1815* (Annapolis, 1991), 169.
8. *Plan and Regulations of the Naval School at Annapolis* (Washington, 1847), 4. After Bancroft finished his PhD at the University of Göttingen and returned to the United States, he and some colleges founded a school for nine to twelve-year old boys at Round Hill, Connecticut, in 1823. Their plan was to enrol wealthy lads to prepare them to enter Harvard or Yale. The school was a limited success but Bancroft grew tired of looking after the young boys and moved on to marry Sarah Dwight, help with her family's businesses, and began his multi-volume *History of the United States*. Undoubtedly his experience at Round Hill helped guide later his views about the Naval School. See Lilian Handlin, *George Bancroft: The Intellectual as Democrat* (New York, 1984), 92-112.
9. United States, National Archives (NA), Record Group (RG) 45, Records of the Bureau of Naval Personnel, Abstracts of Service Records of Naval Officers ("Records of Officers"), 1798-1893.
10. NA, RG 405, Records of the United States Naval Academy, Letters Sent by the Superintendent of the US Naval Academy, 1845-1865 (Letters Sent), Franklin Buchanan to Naval School, 10 October 1845.
11. *Ibid.*, Buchanan to J. Y. Mason, 5 December 1846.
12. *Plan and Regulations of the Naval School*, articles 3-5 and 7-9.
13. *Ibid.*, articles 10-12.
14. *Ibid.*, articles 14-17 and 19-20.
15. *Ibid.*, article 23.
16. NA, RG 405, Registers of Delinquencies ("Conduct Roll"), 1846-1850 and 1853-1882, vols. 346-355 (Registers of Delinquencies).
17. Todorich, *Spirited Years*, 36-37.

18. The third "disobedience of orders" infraction was unclear and was simply reported by Lt. J.H. Ward.
19. For a detailed statistical analysis of offences committed in this period, see Mark C. Hunter, "'With the Propriety and Decorum which Characterize the Society of Gentlemen.' The United States Naval Academy and its Youth, 1845-1861" (Unpublished MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1999), 305.
20. It seems likely that their general behaviour was much akin to that which N.A.M. Rodger described in the eighteenth-century Royal Navy. Rodger concluded, for example, that mutinies were a safety-valve which "provided an effective working compromise between the demands of necessity and humanity, a means of reconciling the Navy's need of obedience and efficiency with the individual's grievances. It was a means of safeguarding the essential stability of shipboard society, not of destroying it." See Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986), 243-244.
21. NA, RG 405, Letters Received by the Superintendent of the U.S. Naval Academy, 1845-1887 (Letters Received), Lt. James Ward to George P. Upshur 2 May 1847; and Upshur to Ward, 4 May 1847.
22. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Ward to H.C. Hunter, 29 May and 1 June 1847; and Ward to Mason, 1 June 1847.
23. *Ibid.*, Upshur to Mason, 19 June 1847.
24. *Ibid.*, Upshur to William Ballard Preston, 24 July 1849.
25. *Ibid.*, Upshur to Mason, 25 January 1848. Yates' fate is unclear, but he failed to graduate from the School. See US Naval Academy Alumni Association, *Register of Alumni, Graduates and Former Naval Cadets and Midshipmen* (91st ed., Annapolis, 1976).
26. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Upshur to Mason, 27 January and 9 February 1848.
27. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, Mason to Upshur, 23 February 1848.
28. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Upshur to Mason, 1 March 1848.
29. *Ibid.*, Upshur to Mason, 29 February 1848 and 13 February 1849.
30. *Ibid.*, Franklin Buchanan to George Bancroft, 1 February 1846; and James E. Valle, *Rocks & Shoals: Order and Discipline in the Old Navy, 1800-1861* (Annapolis, 1980), 91.
31. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Buchanan to Bancroft, 17 February 1846.
32. *Ibid.*
33. *Ibid.*, Buchanan to Bancroft, 21 May 1846.
34. NA, RG 125, Records of the Office of the Judge Advocate General (Navy), Records of General Courts-Martial and Courts of Inquiry of the Navy Department, 1799-1867, cases 1081 and 1091 (hereafter cited as JAG, roll number, case number). See also Gardner W. Allen (ed.), *The Papers of Francis Gregory Dallas. United States Navy. Correspondence and Journal, 1837-1859* (reprint, New York, 1917), 31-57.
35. During this period Academy regulations were modified on several occasions for clarity, but their substance and implementation remained the same up to the outbreak of the Civil War. See *Regulations of the United States Naval Academy* (Washington, 1849); *Revised Regulations of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland* (Washington, 1853); and *Regulations of the US Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland* (Washington, 1855).
36. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Upshur to Preston, 30 October 1849.
37. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, Preston to Upshur, 27 May 1850.
38. In the conclusion to *Coming of Age in Samoa: A Psychological Study of Primitive Youth for Western Civilisation* (New York, 1928; reprint, New York, 1961), 238-240, Margaret Mead commented that revoking allowance was a common form of punishment used by parents in the 1920s to enforce their will on their children. If young Sally was wearing skirts that were too short, cut off the money she used to buy them. But this means of parental control evaporated if the adolescent obtained a job while still living under the parents' roof.

39. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, Henry H. Lockwood to C.K. Stribling, July 1852.
40. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Stribling to John P. Kennedy, 12 October 1852.
41. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, J.C. Dobbin to C.K. Stribling, 21 May 1853.
42. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, L.M. Goldsborough to Dobbin, 5 December 1853.
43. *Register of Alumni*; and NA, RG 405, Letters Received, J. Taylor Wood to Captain G.S. Blake, 12 October 1857. Ironically, Howell graduated from the Academy and went on to spend forty-eight years in the navy, rising to the rank of Rear Admiral before retiring in 1902.
44. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, Lt. R.H. Wyman to T.T. Craven, 31 October 1859; and *Register of Alumni*.
45. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Stribling to Kennedy, 2 December 1852; and *Register of Alumni*. The exact identity of these midshipmen is unclear, but the only Hammond and Haralson I was able to find failed to graduate from the Academy.
46. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Stribling to Kennedy, 4 December 1852; and *Register of Alumni*.
47. The preceding account was based upon NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, "Proceedings of a Board of Inquiry," 8 December 1852.
48. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, Kennedy to Stribling, 16 December 1852 and 17 January 1853. While it seems odd that Kennedy thought it was Erwin rather than Joy who had a "foolish notion" of his rights, perhaps the Secretary simply confused the two.
49. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Stribling to Hammond, Haralson, W.H. Smith, and Barrett, 9 December 1852; and Stribling to T.T. Craven and Samuel P. Carter, 9 December 1852; and Letters Received, Kennedy to Stribling, 9 December 1852.
50. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, Kennedy to Stribling, 16 December 1852.
51. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Stribling to Kennedy, 17 January 1853; and JAG, roll 85, case 2015.
52. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, Chief of Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography to Goldsborough, 19 January 1855.
53. *Ibid.*, Graham to Stribling, 6 May 1851.
54. Calculated from Registers of Delinquencies.
55. For a detailed statistical analysis of offences, see Hunter, "Propriety and Decorum," 306-311.
56. NA, RG 405, Letters Received, Dobbin to Goldsborough, 17 May 1854.
57. NA, RG 405, Letters Sent, Stribling to Secretary of the Navy, 27 July 1850.
58. David Edwin Lebby, "Professional Socialization of the Naval Officer: The Effect of Plebe Year at the U.S. Naval Academy" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Columbia University, 1968), 54-58.
59. Pollock, *Forgotten Children*, 199. Pollock even found one child, Stephen King-Hall, who attended a naval college (probably in the UK) and described in his diary instances of rare floggings.