

TAKING THE HERMENEUTICAL HILL: LEARNING TO HEAR OUR STUDENT
VETERANS

by

MICHAEL JAMES WEAVER JR.

(Under the Direction of Christy Desmet)

ABSTRACT

The voices of veteran students largely go unheard in composition classrooms, due both to a cultural mismatch and to the inability of scholars and teachers to hear veterans' voices. Building a broad profile of student veterans reveals a deep ideological divide between military and academic culture. Veterans are faced with an unpalatable choice—to choose between competing and contradictory identities, abandoning one for the other. Modifying Mailloux's conceptual tool of enactment history to open up the possibility of veteran students entering into academic discourse without having to abandon their own identities, we make possible the reality of a stronger veteran presence within the humanities in general, and composition in particular, without violently stripping them of their identities.

INDEX WORDS: VETERANS; HERMENEUTICS; ENACTMENT HISTORY;
GADAMER; MAILLOUX;

TAKING THE HERMENEUTICAL HILL: LEARNING TO HEAR OUR STUDENT
VETERANS

by

MICHAEL JAMES WEAVER JR.

BA, Toccoa Falls College, 2009

MA, Boston College, 2011

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2016

© 2016

MICHAEL JAMES WEAVER JR.

All Rights Reserved

TAKING THE HERMENEUTICAL HILL: LEARNING TO HEAR OUR STUDENT
VETERANS

by

MICHAEL JAMES WEAVER JR.

Major Professor:	Christy Desmet
Committee:	Deborah Miller
	Frederick Dolezal

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2016

DEDICATION

I dedicate this document to the men and women who served before me. I stand on your shoulders.

I dedicate this document to the men and women who served with me for five long and eventful years in the Army. I will remember you forever.

I dedicate this document to the men and women who served after me, and will serve. I hope that someday you find a home in academia.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THE DEFICIT MODEL	6
3 PROFILE OF A VETERAN.....	14
4 RESIENCE, IDENTITY, AND IDEOLOGY	24
5 “AT WAR” WITH ACADEMIC VOICES: READING, RESISTANCE, AND RELATIVISM	47
6 TAKING THE HERMENEUTICAL HILL: HERMENEUTIC FOREGROUDING IN WRITING PEDAGOGY	62
WORKS CITED	82

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Rank structures of enlisted personnel in order by pay grade and title	16
Figure 2: Rank structures of officers in order by pay grade and title	17
Figure 3: Shoulder patch and special unit insignia for the 10 th Mountain Division at Ft. Drum, New York.....	17

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In June 2005, I ended my enlistment in the U.S. Army, packed my travel bag, and moved to my in-laws' home. Despite how that sounds, I enjoyed two blissful months sipping margaritas on the back porch of their multi-acre property, enjoying the cool summer breeze of the mild Ohio summer, certainly as lovely and as temperate as Shakespeare's lover. What appears like retirement was in fact the feeling that I had begun, what seemed to be, an open vista of unbridled freedom to make my own way. My choice was college, and the challenge seemed easy enough. I had more than enough confidence to spare, after five years in fatigues, believing that if I could survive an enlistment in the military as a Korean linguist, working for military intelligence, the infamous oxymoronic institution ("Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the war room"), surely the strain of resting comfortably in a lecture hall and reading books in my own native language was laughably modest. Electing to attend a small liberal arts college, as the Ohio summer trees just started to change their outfit for the fall oranges and browns, I moved to Northeast Georgia, where the summer still raged, and my schooling promised to develop my character and my intellect.¹ Of course, college was certainly not as laughably modest as I had imagined, but for a veteran trying to assimilate, I was not wrong about resting in lecture halls and reading a couple of books. Those things were relatively easy to learn; even quite challenging texts, like Kant or Hegel, just required more time and effort. Rather, the culture of academia

¹ The motto of my alma mater was "Where Character is Developed with Intellect."

proved much more intractable, mysterious, infuriating, and impenetrable than I ever imagined, and the reasons are far from obvious—for me or for my peers, both students and now professors.

The impetus for this study was to try to make sense of this weird mismatch. In my own estimation, I was smart, driven, intrepid, and diligent, and at least as far as the Army was concerned, that was all that I needed for success in any endeavor. While I now write this thesis as an M.A. student at the University of Georgia, after having completed a previous M.A. in philosophy from Boston College, in so many ways, in ways that I hope to articulate here, I still feel, and in fact, still am, excluded from academic culture. Even as I now work and have worked as an instructor of first-year composition at no fewer than five institutions, I still exist as an outsider. After no little personal reflection, I realized that this feeling goes deeper than the quintessential graduate student imposter syndrome (the manifestation of the Dunning-Kruger effect that so many of my peers have to deal with), into something much more fundamental than a green academic getting his sea legs. After about the third or fourth draft of this essay, I finally realized how deeply seated my exclusion really is, and I began to hit on the reason why—I was a veteran. My suspicion was confirmed when I began to look around for other veterans within the ranks, particularly in the humanities, and I realized just how alone I really was. In all three locations in which I've taught, and in both graduate programs combined, in total I have only met one other veteran. Just one. Surely, I thought, something must be amiss.²

Fortunately, to discover the answers to my nagging question, I didn't have to begin anew. In a special 2013 issue of *Composition Forum*, Roger Thompson and Alexis Hart, winners of a CCCC research grant to study veterans in writing classrooms, inquire whether there exist any special difficulties veterans face in academic culture, asking Marilyn Valentino if there are "any

² Of course, the plural of anecdote is not data, so we will look at some surprising data later in this study.

barriers to communication based on training and culture, the academic culture and the military culture?” (Hart, Thompson, and Valentino, Marilyn). Valentino’s answer was not surprising to me, and as we progress through this thesis, will cease to be surprising to my readers—there are a prodigious number of obstacles, from miscommunication to lack of services (Hart, Thompson, and Valentino, Marilyn). Moreover, those obstacles are so often overlooked by busy faculty and administrators that the overused adage, “out of sight, out of mind” is applicable here. Veterans don’t have problems if academics don’t see them (the veterans or the problems, it turns out), and I have discovered that, indeed, academics don’t see veterans, and they don’t see veterans’ problems. Still, these are really only superficial issues, and what I discovered goes much deeper than the inability to see, though it begins with that.

From both a theoretical and a personal perspective, what awaits a veteran in college is deceptively difficult, both as a transitional period and as an *ex post facto* inquiry. A veteran encounters a world where what was once clear and unequivocal becomes, for his or her point of view, equivocating and evasive. In fact, I would argue that the culture that hypothetically exists to groom its protégés into citizenship outside its halls, into the participatory democracy that makes those halls a possibility, more often merely exclude those who do not kowtow to the cultural presuppositions of those halls,³ This in turn excludes those same people from the power embodied in the institutions of both democracy and academia. In response to all of the previous, this thesis is an attempt to answer the question posed to Valentino, and a possible solution to the answers that arise when we begin identifying the ways that veterans encounter obstacles in their desire to enter into a culture that seems to close them out.

³ And despite protestations to the contrary, academic culture as a whole does share some surprisingly similar assumptions. For the sake of brevity and focus, however, we will limit this discussion to the *Geisteswissenschaften*.

To that end, in the next chapter, I will chronicle current composition scholarship relating to veterans, highlighting the lack of notice that scholars pay to veterans' cultural assumptions entering the academic community, and providing some of the background research that highlights the gaping chasm between veterans and writing scholars.

In Chapter 3, using my own personal experience as a veteran to help build an understanding of veteran culture and identity, I build a profile of the typical student veteran we are likely to encounter in our classrooms, highlighting the dramatic differences between not only the training environment of higher education, but also the ideological differences between military culture and academic culture. This background serves as a propaedeutic to the discussion which follows, allowing me to try to bridge the gap between composition scholars and veterans.

In Chapter 4, I dissect many of the reasons why academics and composition scholars cannot hear veteran voices. One way I accomplish this is by identify some hermeneutical assumptions about what is required for a student to "enter into" academic discourse, revealing the connections between the inability to read (a solvable barrier) and the inability to appropriate (a more intractable problem). Veterans, I will argue, are faced with an unpalatable choice—to choose between competing and contradictory identities, and to abandon one for the other, and if not, live in the hell of intellectual schizophrenia.

Finally, in Chapter 5, entering the debate between Steven Mailloux and Diane Davis concerning rhetorical hermeneutics and its concern with ethical textual encounters, I highlight a modification of Mailloux's conceptual tool of enactment history to create the possibility of veteran students entering into academic discourse without having to abandon their own identities to do so. Through such, I hope we, in turn, make possible the reality of a stronger veteran

presence within the humanities in general, and composition in particular, without violently stripping them—us—of our identities.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEFICIT MODEL

Learning to identify the presence of veterans in our writing classrooms is critical. It has importance not only because “we want to care for all students before us, not expect them to conform to some presumed standard” (Jolliffe 472), but according to Thompson and Hart, entering college is a decision that is becoming increasingly important for veterans. This fact makes our pedagogical target a bit clearer. Thompson and Hart argue that veteran enrollments will undoubtedly persist at current levels and insist that levels are probably more likely to increase, in part because the time constraints imposed on the users of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which must be expended before a veteran has been out of the service for ten years (Hart and Thompson, “From the Editors”). The data also show that most of the enrollments will occur at two-year or online institutions, and from personal experience, this is likely due to the supposed “convenience” of such programs, not to mention the highly effective marketing campaigns which ostensibly cater to deployed military (Hart and Thompson, “From the Editors”). Consequently, if we value this protected class of students, we certainly need to educate ourselves about the needs that veteran students bring with them to our courses.

As early as 2002 (less than one year after 9/11), one composition scholar turned his attention to a veteran student and writer. In that year, Garrett Bauman published a piece in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in which he suggested writing as therapy for distressed vets, and he describes his own uneasy, even troubling, experience teaching writing to this troubled Vietnam veteran (Bauman). Just two years later, taking up this theme of writing as therapy, the

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)—sponsored by Boeing, tellingly—began offering writing workshops at Walter Reed Medical Center to veterans returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. The intent was to “help heal service members” and to record the “history of our wars” (Hemon). The result of the workshop was published by NEA in an anthology in 2009 (Carroll). Similar workshops have cropped up since then (Hames).

In 2006, Nancy Thompson published an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* detailing her struggle, and guilt, requiring writing assignments that asked her class to describe personal experiences, knowing that many of her students were veterans, mostly from the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and she was concerned how such assignments would force veterans to disclose their personally troubling experiences during time in battle, much of which created profound psychological damage, including PTSD. From her experience, she concluded that veterans “may look like other students, but they are very different” and that even still, she would not change her assignments to avoid the uncomfortable stories that arise from those students’ experiences, since “we need to hear those stories because by hearing them, we are all bearing witness together”—presumably, “bearing witness” to the awful price and consequences of war (Thompson).

Interest increased as institutions began to appreciate the importance of understanding this group. Hence, two major institutions began dealing with veterans’ needs at length: The American Council on Education (ACE) and the Pew Research Center. ACE published a pamphlet in 2006 identifying how to make educational institutions more “veteran-friendly,” including transparency with credit transfer policies (since as we noted before, many veterans take online courses while deployed, expecting the credits to transfer, even credits granted by less-than-reputable institutions), and listening to veterans’ needs through a student veteran association (*Serving*

Those Who Serve: Making Your Institution Veteran-Friendly). Just two years later in October 2011, The Pew Research Center published a study revealing what is called the “Military-Civilian Gap” (*The Military-Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*). This study found that significant differences in attitudes, perceptions, and expectations between civilians and members of the military persist, even despite the current uptick in patriotic rhetoric among the media and popular culture. At this point, it is probably safe to assume that this misunderstanding between veterans and civilians is consistent within academia as well, though I will argue later that it is much, much worse within academic culture.

Since these publications, there has been an explosion of publications in the field of rhetoric and composition detailing and theorizing both how transitioning to college from military service can be a challenge, and how writing can help with this transition, including helping with PTSD and other injuries related to wartime service. Again, we see an emphasis on writing as “therapy” for broken veterans. Yet, in contrast to the “broken veteran” model, in the spring of 2012, in *Writing on the Edge*, Army war veteran Travis Martin published his reflection on learning to teach in the writing classroom as a veteran, indicating that his service equipped him to persevere in what he considered an adverse environment (note: academia, not war), as well as how the use of narrative and reflective writing could be useful for veterans to learn to explore new selves, especially as they “reinvent their identities” for college life and in the civilian world generally (Martin). Martin’s essay is telling, since reading this essay closely reveals what he considers a need to reinvent himself for the culture to value his input. While not entirely unreasonable, it should make academics feel a bit uncomfortable—at least insofar as higher education values diversity, inclusivity, interdisciplinarity, liberal learning, and other ostensible academic values.

In response to Martin's essay, Alexis Hart and Roger Thompson argued that the best we can do for veterans in our classes is to "honor the type of space needed for veterans of combat and other military trauma, in particular, to negotiate their experiences" (Hart and Thompson, "War, Trauma, and the Writing Classroom"), again returning to the "broken veteran" model of writing instruction. According to Hart and Thompson, while it is too much to expect that the university as a whole should reshape itself to give veterans the needed space to heal, it is a beginning at least that instructors of writing provide this space in their classrooms (Hart and Thompson, "War, Trauma, and the Writing Classroom"). Also probably in response to the increased interest in veteran scholarship, in the fall of 2012, Marilyn Valentino spoke before the CWPA to address the need to accommodate a large influx of new veterans into higher education and into writing courses and centers, her impulse deriving from the new post-9/11 GI bill (Valentino). She argued for increased sensitivity to the needs of veterans and to the varying dynamics they bring with them to the classroom, as well as, due to military enculturation, to make academic expectations clear from the start (Valentino). Valentino, in this address, begins to address the cultural mismatch between military and academic life, though she just touches on the topic. Meanwhile, in *College English*, in a quite painful account, Liam Corley discusses his experience as an academic who was himself deployed for a term. His pain came not from his deployment, but his return to academic life. His description should give us pause. The pain induced by his sudden return to academic life was caused almost entirely by the cultural and social differences between military life and academic life, and *not* by any "wartime trauma" or PTSD symptoms (Corley). He discovered that writing poetry helped him to cope with his "logjam" of being unable to reenter academic discussions, a therapy of sorts (Corley).

Also during this time period, from 2011 to 2013, Hart and Thompson received funding from a CCCC research grant to study “military veterans in college writing classrooms” (Hart and Thompson, “Ethical Obligation”). Through a national survey, the data provided by the Pew Research Center study, and personal interviews with all levels and roles in academia, including on-campus veteran service organizations, the results of this study suggested numerous best practices for veterans in writing classes, advising that teachers of writing have very real ethical obligations to veterans in their classes (Hart and Thompson, “Ethical Obligation”). We will discuss these in more detail, but for now, it is enough to point out that Hart and Thompson finally begin to detect that the sociocultural differences between academic and military life, and not necessarily the wartime injuries, are the gravest obstacles for veterans in academia.

Lastly, in 2013, from the work of Hart and Thompson serving as guest editors for the *Composition Forum*, a special issue was compiled relating to veteran’s issues directly, specifically trying to detail the types of writing veterans can already do, the expectations that veterans have when trying to accomplish college writing, and the accommodations writing teachers can make to allow for the diversity of experiences that veterans bring into the classroom (Hart and Thompson, “From the Editors”). The issue begins with the aforementioned interview with Marilyn Valentino, where the three of them discuss her 2012 address to the CWPA, as well as what she has since learned about veterans, offering suggestions for accommodating veterans in the classroom. Also in the issue, Molly Moran discusses the pros and cons of veterans writing about their trauma, and as other authors have previously done, using James Pennebaker’s research into writing’s efficacy for the alleviation of service trauma (Moran).

Of all the articles published in this special edition, the study by Sue and William Doe was the most helpful and revealing of the drastic differences between college and service. William

Doe, a retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel and war veteran, teamed up with his wife, a college professor, to directly respond to the induction differences using the metaphor of “residence time” to discuss the differences between military training environments and the training environment of academia. They suggest ways that teachers can use military literacies to ease veterans into academic literacy environments, a discussion that will become useful when we delve into the disconnects between our two cultures, and how hermeneutics might help us to overcome those obstacles (Doe and Doe).

In addition to Doe and Doe, a rising theme in this publication is the recognition that veterans have difficulty being heard. Probably in partial response to Travis Martin’s personal account of writing as identity creation, Corrine Hinton, Michelle Navarre Cleary, and Kathryn Wozniak all interviewed veterans to suggest ways that writing teachers might use veterans’ experiences to help negotiate a veteran’s identity in academia (Hinton; Cleary and Wozniak). Recognizing a disconnect, Darren Keast suggests a method for building composition courses to make them “veteran friendly,” a term that is not clearly defined (Keast), and in two separate pieces by Mariana Grohowski and Lydia Wilkes, the authors suggest ways to allow veterans’ voices to be heard in our classrooms, a distinction that is made by Grohowski between merely “listening” and actually “hearing”—an important distinction that will help us in our discussion on intercultural dialogue.⁴

Among all of the scholarship, with the exception of the work of Travis Martin, William Doe, and Liam Corley (who are unsurprisingly, and significantly, veterans themselves), few of

⁴ Aside from the classroom, Eileen Schell discusses the makeup and procedures of three veteran’s writing groups, offering suggestions on building and sustaining such groups (Schell). In a separate article published for the *New York Times* “At War” blog, author and former veteran Matt Gallagher writes about veteran’s workshops, suggesting that writing workshops should focus less on being a veteran and more on the writing itself (Gallagher). This veteran workshop phenomenon, and those who participate in it, are starting to move beyond the “broken veteran” model, which, in my opinion, is a healthy move.

the authors address intelligible and legitimate resistance from veteran students to academic culture as such. Instead, as Thompson and Hart discuss, the assumption seems to be that veteran students' troubles in the classroom are largely due to "signature wounds" like PTSD or TBIs (Traumatic Brain Injuries) or other personal problems (one article references a student's battle with alcoholism and divorce). In other words, the troubling implication is that if veterans are not doing well in our courses, something must surely be wrong with *them*. While Grohowski and Wilkes identify ways in which scholars fail to "hear" veterans, it is still readily apparent to me as a veteran that while the the scholarship largely "listens" to us, it does not "hear" us. Veterans express time and again, myself included, a reticence, or even outright hostility to and from academic culture, and this resistance is rarely, if ever, acknowledged or discussed by our civilian professors and colleagues.

Still, I believe as a veteran, that it is time, and there is room in the discussion for talking about the ways that military culture itself places veterans in an ethical and ideological space of resistance to academic ways of thinking that could also be a barrier to those veterans, like myself, who want to become part of this culture. Why, for instance, is the college completion rate for veterans is only 51.7% (by branch, my own Army and the Marines fare lowest on average at 47% and 45% respectively) (Zoroya)? Or why do veterans overwhelmingly choose business, social sciences, homeland security, law enforcement or firefighting, and computer and information services, rather than humanities, let alone composition and rhetoric (Zoroya)? Why does Corley's pain begin *after* his return from into a culture he was presumably already a member? I suggest that this is a manifestation of his cultural exclusion and exile from a culture that does not value the ethos of military culture. Of course, it's not enough merely to suggest it. We will have to see how this might, in fact, be possible, and if it is, how it might also

demonstrate not merely a failure of military culture, if this is true at all, but perhaps a failure of academic culture to hearing other voices. Additionally, I suggest that the beginning of answering these myriad questions is to begin with a view of the typical veteran student, his or her military induction experience, a preliminary definition of what might constitute a “military culture,” as well as an “academic culture,” and ways said military culture establishes a mode of thinking that becomes apparent most painfully when veterans encounter a community of scholars. Most importantly, and more specifically, I will offer suggestions for composition scholars to help veterans bridge that gap between academic culture and military culture, without the violence inherent in divestment of a veteran's ethical commitments, “divestment” being a type of ideological and ethical divestiture unnecessarily required of a veteran to create his or her academic identity.

CHAPTER 3

PROFILE OF A VETERAN

Looking closely at the 2011 study conducted by the Pew Research Center, we can begin to understand the lives of Post-9/11 veterans. Perhaps professors envision short-cropped haircuts, or tight pony-tails, with aggressive attitudes and trim bodies. Or perhaps they imagine the unkempt, graying American Legionnaire with yellowing teeth and disposition, who cannot quite remember where he slept last night and forgot to brush the alcoholic stench from his mouth. They are disciplined, we think. Or perhaps they are undisciplined and prone to bouts of anger. Whatever our conception, according to the Pew study, a significant “gap” exists between civilians’ and veterans’ perceptions of military life and the experience of being a veteran (*The Military Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era*). In this chapter, I will build a profile of the typical veteran in college to upset some stereotypes and to help explain some others.

The Pew report asserts that "84% of veterans believe American public has little or no understanding of the problems that those in the military face" (*The Military Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era* 8). Whether the veterans believe this, and whether it is, in fact, true, is worth discussing, but we can at least begin to get a sense of the felt alienation most veterans experience upon transition to civilian life from military life. It is perhaps also significant that 84% percent of veterans have not been in combat, which means that of those who are in the military feel that the public does not understand the life they lead largely irrespective of combat experience. In other words, combat veterans do not necessarily “count” as the group that feels

the most alienated from civilian life. Those who have never deployed nonetheless still feel alienation from their civilian peers. Careful attention to this fact should dissuade us from considering writing as a form of therapy for all veterans, which is why the scholarship almost overwhelmingly focusing on signature wounds can be frustrating. While the use of writing as a therapeutic tool is valuable, veterans who struggle with writing in academic contexts are more than likely dealing with an issue other than PTSD or TBI.

In addition to revealing the existence of this gap, independent of combat service, we want to get an idea of what types of difference veterans think they perceive between themselves and civilians. To do so, we must recognize, again, that seeing combat does not account for this misperception, but rather, as I will argue later, the very culture of military life. If the culture of the military differs enough from an admittedly quite patriotic general public, how much more, we might ask, might the military culture differ from the typical culture of a college campus? Without identifying, at this point, what these differences are, it is enough if I point out that, as a veteran myself, entering college life was “violently” disorienting. Granted, that is just one perspective. Yet, if we want to get a picture of the types of students we face in our classrooms, however, we are going to need to narrow down this diverse group of veterans to those who, like myself, elect to attend college post-service life.

Our first distinction among veterans is rank, or rather, to understand our future students, we have to understand the difference between officers and enlisted service members (see Fig. 1 & 2; Fig. 2 on next page). The difference between a member of the enlisted ranks, and a member of the officer ranks is akin to the difference between professors and their students, but the comparison breaks down quickly. The vast majority of enlisted soldiers will rarely talk with the officers placed over them face to face. The strictly hierarchical culture means that if one is a

member of the lower ranks (say E-1 through E-4), your primary contact will be with your immediate (next in rank) non-commissioned “officer” or NCO (E-4, corporal, through E-9). For the following discussion, it would be helpful to refer to Fig. 1.

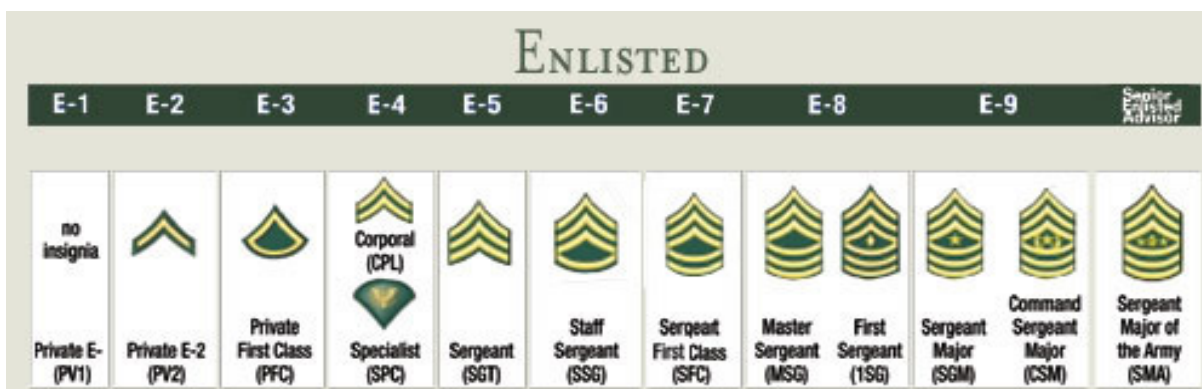


Fig. 1. Rank structures of enlisted personnel in order by pay grade and title. “US Army Ranks.”

[www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil/symbols/armyranks.html). Web. 11 Feb. 2016. <<http://www.army.mil/symbols/armyranks.html>>.

While the hierarchy does not seem significant, the implications are staggering. This rigid hierarchy is quickly internalized by everyone in the service, and is ubiquitously reinforced. For example, ranks are worn on the lapels, shoulders, and hats (called “covers”) by all personnel, so one has little doubt about the rank of each person that one meets. It is required by law that all enlisted personnel render a salute while outside to any officer no matter the rank. Failure to do so is a punishable offense under Article 89 of the U.S. Code and the Uniformed Code of Military Justice. Additionally, to further differentiate enlisted members from officers, the uniforms of officers include their rank on their covers, while enlisted personnel use their unit insignia, which means that E-1 through E-9 are virtually indistinguishable by their cover alone, at least by rank, though their units are readily identifiable (*Uniform and Insignia: Guide to the Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia*) (see fig. 3 for an example of unit insignia, in this case taken from my last duty station in 2005). To further emphasize hierarchy, and to

differentiate time in service, “service stripes” are added to the sleeve of all military personnel, one stripe for every three years in service (*Uniform and Insignia*).



Fig. 2. Rank structures of officers in order by pay grade and title. “US Army Ranks.” *www.army.mil*. Web. 11 Feb. 2016. <<http://www.army.mil/symbols/armyranks.html>>.



Fig. 3. Shoulder patch and special unit insignia for the 10th Mountain Division at Ft. Drum, New York. “10TH MOUNTAIN DIVISION.” *Institute of Heraldry*. *www.tioh.hqda.pentagon.mil*. Web. 11 Feb. 2016.

To provide some context, I will quote Doe and Doe at length, since their explanation is comprehensive:

At Basic Training, from the moment new enlistees step off the bus, they are immersed in a world that explicitly signals who is who by virtue of military rank, drill instructor hats, and leadership badges associated with military uniforms. Recruits quickly learn about the organizational structure and hierarchy of the military service via organizational charts, written rules and regulations, standard operating procedures, and unit signage. They are

taught the ceremonial protocols of the culture such as how to respond verbally to superiors, when and how to salute, when to come to “attention,” and other formalities. We will deal with these implications more at length in the next chapter, but we can already see how quickly the parallel between professor and student breaks down. As a former enlisted soldier, not only did I rarely interact with my commander (O-3), but I *actively avoided* any encounters with anyone with a rank higher than E-6. This was, frankly, driven by fear. Social interactions were unlikely, uncomfortable, and formal. In other words, in military culture rank *is* identity. Those authority figures quite literally had the power to make my life absolutely miserable (and they often did), and in the case of combat, to send me on missions that might lead to my death. In both cases, this responsibility was understood and taken seriously. While I will expand on this dynamic a bit later, readers may now begin to understand how uncomfortable it can be for a veteran to interact with a professor, since many veterans think of their professors as equivalent to officers, and not immediate non-commissioned officers.

Of these enlisted personnel, including senior non-commissioned officers (E-7 through E-9), many who have been in military service over 20 years or more, only 4.1% are college graduates (*The Military Civilian Gap* 85). Additionally, the unemployment rate for veterans as a group is much higher than non-veterans; again, the large majority of those unemployed are from the enlisted ranks, with a reported 74% of officers being employed full time, while only 51% of enlisted personnel are employed full time (*The Military Civilian Gap* 57). Consequently, one would expect that of the veterans that are entering college as freshman, the vast majority are going to be from the enlisted ranks (57). Also according to the study, enlisted personnel and officers show a marked difference in feelings of wellbeing post-service life, the report indicating that while 58% of commissioned officers report being “very happy” with their lives. A vast

majority are already college graduates, but only an appalling 21% of enlisted members report the same thing (*The Military Civilian Gap* 18), keeping in mind, again, that only about 15% of all veterans have been in combat.

So what can we glean regarding the types of students we will face as teachers of composition? First, as mentioned above, they will very likely be derived from within the enlisted ranks. Consequently, we can expect that at least half, or perhaps well over half, of the veterans in our classes will be fighting feelings of dissatisfaction with their lives (18). Again, according to the study, only 21% will report as being “very happy” with their lives (18). Nearly half of all enlisted personnel reported having “experienced frequent bouts of irritability or anger,” while about a quarter of all enlisted personnel report “that they didn’t care about anything” (*The Military Civilian Gap* 51).

Secondly, we can expect that over half will also be struggling with the transition from military to civilian life. That is, approximately half of all veterans report that their adjustment to civilian life has been difficult, and based on the data so far, we can expect that the percentage is much higher among enlisted personnel whom we are more likely to encounter in our classes (*The Military Civilian Gap* 10). We also know that “only half of pre-9/11 veterans (51%) say their superiors made them feel comfortable seeking help for emotional issues” (*The Military Civilian Gap* 54), no doubt due to the strict hierarchy, which should be obvious. This means that military culture has trained veterans not to ask for help, emotional or otherwise, even when it is necessary or needed, which is backed up by my own experience. Moreover, adding to this, most veterans will not feel that their professors understand the problems that veterans face, probably furthering the unwillingness of veterans to ask for help. We can also expect to find that most veterans who are entering college are facing unemployment at rates higher than their classmates, while the

likelihood of veterans having families is higher, suggesting that occupational or pragmatic motivations for entering college are far more pressing for them (further suggesting a resistance to the culture of many colleges—especially the humanities, or the “impractical” degrees, which we will discuss later).

Returning, then, to the question that Thompson and Hart posed to Valentino, whether “any barriers to communication based on training and culture, the academic culture and the military culture,” we are now presented with a definitive affirmation of the differences between veterans and their professors with regard to their openness to many of the assumptions we make as academics, especially within our field of composition, despite even the diversity within the field itself.⁵ Aside from their age (most veterans will be older than their peers by a few years when they first enroll—making them non-traditional students, with all the additional challenges that this implies), veterans exhibit quite a few distinctive characteristics, including attitudes and work habits, that we can use to generalize them as a group. Additionally, if we want to identify the ways that the cultural differences marginalize veterans from college in general, and the humanities more acutely, we will need to build a profile both of military induction and how that profoundly affects, and is even constituted by military culture, which we will do in the next chapter.

Clearly, from this data, while veterans as a group are diverse, a significant portion of these enlisted veterans are coming to college with serious emotional baggage, strained personal lives, a debilitating sense of disconnection between the culture of the military and the college culture, and an unwillingness, perhaps even fear, of asking for help. Couple that with the fact that almost 40% of veterans are minorities (*The Military Civilian Gap* 4), and we realize how much

⁵ We will need to discuss a particular example to see how this could manifest, which I will do in a later chapter.

instructors of writing need to learn in order to better care for this group, and how vital this mission becomes if we seriously desire inclusivity.

Before we move on to the military induction model, I want to address one prevailing stereotype that while based on legitimate examples, nevertheless fails as a model in itself. That is, we should not see all of these things that veterans bring with them as liabilities, or what we will call the “deficit model.” According to their report, Thompson and Hart point out that whenever discussion of veterans arise in academic journals, conferences, and on campuses, academics often assume that veterans arrive on campus with deficits. In other words, faculty and staff use what Hart and Thompson call the “deficit model” to frame their interactions with veterans (Hart and Thompson, “Ethical Obligation” 12). By deficit, Hart and Thompson mean that faculty and staff assume that most veterans suffer from the “signature wounds” of the battlefield, or the stereotypical issues faced by combat veterans like PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) and TBI (Traumatic Brain Injuries).

As they also point out, the problems with “deficit” model are manifold. For one, veterans offer quite a few substantial benefits to colleges and the classroom. Some of the ways professors in Thompson and Hart’s survey describe their veteran students include high achievement, initiative, professionalism, leadership, and integrity (Hart and Thompson, “Ethical Obligation” 4). They maintain that these positive characteristics are partly the result of their non-traditional status, but are also the result of broad experiences with diverse cultures and maturity developed in some of the most stressful situations of any occupation in the world. Also, while the impulses for applying the deficit model are good natured, many faculty and staff do not realize that by a vast majority, veterans consider their service an integral asset to their identity, and most would do it again if given the choice. In other words, while it might be true that some of them do have

signature wounds, and while it is true that, as we will see, military culture makes transition to college life much more difficult, nearly all veterans are proud of their service, even if they do not self-disclose as veterans (I think due largely to the stigma of the deficit model), since they report willing to be a service member again if given the chance (*The Military Civilian Gap*). Oddly, even those who report dissatisfaction with their lives as a whole still report that their military service is something of which they are proud (*The Military Civilian Gap*), even though it is likely that their dissatisfaction might be directly a result of their service.

Accordingly, while Hart and Thompson maintain that veterans, as a federally protected class of citizens, “warrant some explicit considerations that many faculty members may only associate with gender, race, or ethnicity” (Hart and Thompson, “Ethical Obligation”), a veteran’s identity as a veteran should not be considered by faculty to be deficient *tout court*. Instead, faculty should be looking for ways to help veteran students succeed by translating college culture for them, so that they can put on the identity of a student, without having to abandon their identity as veterans. I will attempt to provide a model for that very thing.

This is not to say, obviously, that a veteran’s experiences in higher education, even barring the deficit model, do not present some problems. For one, without a doubt “the veteran learns that their connection to the violence inherent [in their occupation] is not a valuable asset, and the veteran is forced to keep matters of this nature to themselves [sic]” (Whitaker 163). The fact that many of the professors were also around during, and participated in, anti-violent demonstrations toward the veterans in the Vietnam era is not lost on veterans either.⁶ While this may seem outmoded, and is frankly wrong on some level, it is not entirely so, since bias against veterans is the primary reason we are a federally protected class. We must first admit that

⁶A recurring story among enlisted members during my own time in the service said that college students, and now professors, are unappreciative of our work, ignorant of their need for it, and while they denigrate us for protecting our country, we nevertheless do so proudly, so that they have the freedom to hate us.

discrimination against veterans does exist. For example, in the workforce alone, veterans consistently earn less than their non-veteran peers (Swaggert). In essence, veterans can feel marginalized in a classroom merely because of the perceptions of the nature of their jobs, which may be merely a perpetuated set of stereotypes through the stories that veterans tell each other, stereotypes students have of them, or stereotypes that faculty and staff have of them. In any of those cases, even the potentiality of these preconceptions can still affect a veteran's ability to perform in college or even in class.

To bring this chapter to a close, I need to add that despite the signature wounds of combat veterans, despite the outdated stereotypes of veterans and civilians, despite the lack of services, support, and attention to veterans, there is still one core disconnect that veterans are yet challenged by, and which presents a massive obstacle to their success in higher education. Veterans confront very real cultural gaps between military service and college life—and it is not enough for college faculty to merely expect veterans to conform to academic culture. As I will argue, we need to do more than make allowances for their perceptions and values, but give their values the same respect we give all voices in academic debates. But before I can make that case, we need to get a sense of those cultural differences. I will be using some of my own personal experiences to frame the discussions moving forward, hopefully providing a sort of cultural backdrop from which we can attempt to build a case for a veteran's expectations in college. My hope is that as a discipline, we writing teachers can learn to develop an understanding for veterans' points-of-view to allow them to have an understanding of our point of view, which I will argue is mutually beneficial. It is a theoretical construct and a practice I will cheekily call “taking the hermeneutical hill.”

CHAPTER 4

RESIDENCE, IDENTITY, AND IDEOLOGY

"[A] soldier's induction and service involve the internalization of a narrative of meaning around the twin responsibilities of action and responsibility."

My fellow recruits and I were all suddenly woken up by an unusually calm but troubled cadre of drill sergeants who herded us into a conference room. They seemed preoccupied with their own troubles, demonstrating an unusual and worrying calm, more terrifying than the usual overt and loud bravado, intimidation, and urgency. Then from behind us a sudden outburst from our captain broke the unnerving silence (a superhuman figure, remember), "At ease, Drill Sergeants! You have two weeks!"

Our gazes frozen and our anxiety rising, this group of army recruits normally hushed during classroom training sessions, are suddenly confronted with a circumstance extraordinarily far out of the ordinary. This time, we heard nothing but the footsteps of our captain moving to the front of the room to address us soberly, displaying a frightening lack of formality.

"This morning," he began, "about 2 hours ago, 0230 hours, the North Koreans began shelling major military bases in South Korea, as well as highly populated areas in Seoul and its surrounding area. Reports are conflicted, but there is an estimated casualty count into the thousands as of thirty minutes ago." Gasps erupted from my fellow recruits. Whether from the anguished sounds of my peers, or from my own shadowy reminiscences of *Apocalypse Now*, I cannot recall ever feeling so powerless, so empty, and so afraid.

“Due to this unprecedented act of military aggression,” he continued, “the president has authorized a significant ground force increase to deal with this threat. As a consequence, your basic training will need to be accelerated to conclude in two weeks’ time, eliminating all but marksmanship, close-quarter combat, and small squad movements. Additionally, excluding the women, all of you will be reclassified as MOS eleven-bravo [Military Occupational Specialty—Infantry Soldier]. Your drill sergeants will be out-processed and transported directly into the combat zone within a week and a new cadre will take their place to facilitate the expedited training.”

Remembering that vivid event is agitating, and describing it is taxing. I remember screams from my fellow recruits, one person actually passing out with a cry. I heard someone say behind me, “I have a cousin in Korea.” And another, “I don’t want to go.” This event forced us to confront a reality that our recruiters downplayed to an unethical extent. Most of us, myself included, signed up for military service not out of a sense of patriotism or duty, at least not before September 11, 2001. Rather, at that time, and at least for me and about half of the other recruits, the Army offered an escape from poverty or generational crime. For some of us, not only were we offered the Montgomery G.I. Bill, but a college bonus on top of this. It was difficult to pass up when my mother told me frankly that college would not be an option for me, and that if I wanted to make something of myself, the military was the way to do it. I was hardly alone in this.

Thus, that day I faced the realization that death for my country was possible, was real, and was my sworn duty. I had not even considered it when I raised my right hand, repeated an oath, and signed my name in Oakland, California one summer in 1999. Aside from some skirmishes in Kosovo or Kuwait, our military was not really involved in any heavy conflict. I

suddenly realized, in that moment, that I was not just in another job, albeit a well-paying one. I was part of a military force. This revelation washed over me like a malaise. I felt simultaneously cold, after the realization that my life no longer belonged to me, yet I was relieved, burning with possibility. I do not know how else to describe the feeling of being a cog in a righteous machine, feeling justified and proud to be part of, in their words, “the greatest military force the world has ever seen.” Enraptured comes close.

My personal significance came not from my identity as an individual, but by my place in a vast machine made up of willing volunteers who counted on each other. I realized that I was learning marksmanship to protect my fellow soldiers and to protect myself, to protect my family at home, to protect my country as a whole, and perhaps, from my point of view, to protect the world. I realized that I would have to shoot other human beings, and I would be setting up Claymore mines to kill people and those same people would be setting up explosive devices to kill me, but that I was on the right side of history. We were tasked with the awful responsibility of protecting an ideal and a way of life. More importantly, my death was insignificant, and my life was not my own. To put it another way, just as suddenly as the terror washed over me, resolve came with it. Now I realized and felt overwhelming obligation to the person next to me. If we were going to live, I would need him and he would need me. I was responsible for his safety and he was responsible for mine. The better he could shoot, the safer I would be. The better I could run, the safer he would be.

This realization that began that day has never left me since (even now that I have no “battle buddies” to defend, no objects to requite my camaraderie, and a justifiable skepticism of some of the overwrought machismo), and even as they revealed to us the next day that North Korea had not actually attacked, and that it had merely been part of our training, and as the next

day, when our platoon drill sergeant made a speech about how we needed to evaluate where our loyalties were placed, we all knew, after that day, that we were soldiers, not because of ourselves, but because of each other. The things we were learning were more than hypothetical—they were things that we would be asked to do if necessary, and the better an individual could do those things, the likelihood of everyone's survival increased.

All this flashed through my mind in that moment. I was terrified and regretful, vaguely agitated and timorous. I wanted to escape, to run away, and I suddenly missed my family. I thought of my enlistment contract, that paper document dictating my future, my life, and my death, which had been my promise that for at least five active years, and eight years of reserve obligation (which meant, in the words of the contract, “based upon the needs of the Army,” I could be involuntarily called back to active service), I was expected to put my life on the line if need be. I did not escape, however. I did not run or try to finagle my way out. In other words, despite my fear, and despite my personal insignificance, I had only been there a few short weeks and I already understood two core values that while practically unstated, nevertheless permeated military culture from its creeds to its field manuals: responsibility and action.

This dual sense of action and responsibility took on a different form just a year and a half later into my service. What had caused me great fear in basic training took on a far different form. In the morning of September 11, 2001 in Monterey, California, with a cup of coffee in hand, I asked my fellow soldiers, “What are you watching?” They stared at a smoldering building on the television in silence, and I realized that my life would change dramatically (even for a soldier). As a representative of the American armed forces, the feeling of responsibility not only kept me from going AWOL (“Absent Without Leave”) on that day, it awoke in me an even stronger sense of camaraderie and, yes, even patriotism. I was no longer in a peacetime army,

and when some of my friends would go to Iraq or Afghanistan, only to die, it was the sense of responsibility that kept me, and us, engaged with temerity.

Looking back over my time in the military, I am surprised by how short it really was. Five years is not very long in contrast to my time in college and graduate school (it will be ten years as of the summer 2016—twice the length of my military service). Yet, my identity is still heavily empowered by my military life. I still value the overt exhibition of “professionalism,” which made what you wear (a service uniform or otherwise) a key indicator to others of your discipline, integrity, and intrepidity. While I do not wear my battle-dress uniform, or my class-A or -B dress uniform, I still make it a point to ensure my shoes are polished and my “gig line” is straight. I still make it a point to say “sir” or “ma’am” to those who I view as being in positions of authority, or use their titles (“Doctor,” “Sergeant,” “Professor,” etc.) when addressing them. To do otherwise seems incredibly disrespectful or at least uncomfortably familiar and brazen. When I began to teach courses at my alma mater, my former professors insisted that I use their first names, and I just could not do it.

It may make more sense then to hear, according to the report by Doe and Doe, that the ideologies of military life are not merely “used” by veterans in the course of their service, but are “internalized” by them: “They construct and change each person, and as such become a significant factor in identity formation, not simply a four- or five-year stint in the woods or onboard a ship” (Doe and Doe). To put this another way, service members internalize the values of military service in a way that leaves an indelible impression on their self-narratives and identities. What becomes of this commitment when a service-member completes her service obligation? Even those veterans who have served as little as two years will identify themselves

as veterans for the rest of their lives, rather than merely stating that “I was in the Army,” or “I was in the Marines.”

The same cannot be said of my time in college or graduate school. While higher education has improved my knowledge and my ability to evaluate the cogency of arguments, and increased my healthy skepticism, and even in small but meaningful ways changed my worldview, there has been no massive tectonic shift like that which I experienced from my time in the Army. Why this is the case is valuable as a comparison to the college experience. Why, after all, in such a short period of time, do veterans forever cling to that short period of their lives as self-defining moments? How is this significant and incredible ideological commitment accomplished in such a short period of time?

Doe and Doe offer a good place to start. Their study of military training compared to civilian training help them to “identify the key factors that contribute to viscosity, bottlenecks, or sluggish movement into and through civilian systems” as compared to military systems. I want to bring to light some of these differences so that the backdrop of cultural misunderstandings can stand in clearer contrast. Also, for the purposes of this study, I want to identify some of those differences before we can move on to addressing them. We will use these differences to illustrate the ways in which, according to two separate pieces by Mariana Grohowski and Lydia Wilkes, writing teachers may know how to listen to veterans, but they are not actually “hearing” them. I also hope to reveal the uniqueness of military culture and its conflicts with academic culture (for example, the inevitable cringe that comes whenever an academic hears the word “patriotism,” as I did so many times above) so we can begin to consider ways to help ease the transition for military members by first understanding ourselves.

Doe and Doe attempt to provide a useful metric to approach the question of differences between military and college training systems: viscosity. Using the theoretical frame of “residence time,” a term borrowed from engineering, earth science, and fluid mechanics to describe “the speed and relative ease with which an object moves through a system,” Doe and Doe maintain that a significant relative difference in speed exists between military and civilian training time (Doe and Doe). This concept of viscosity helps to explain the difference:

[R]esidence time can help us to explain why time, effort, and intensity are factors in transition, but also why the medium of the container, its viscosity or resistance to the motion of the immersed object (or person), is a major factor. The clearer and less viscous the medium, the faster the flow. In the case of military induction, where the flow rate, or the speed of transition, is necessarily fast, viscosity is very low and clarity very high, ambient conditions that have been distilled through the centuries-long refinement of military induction processes. Civilian organizations will only rarely be able to reproduce such conditions of transition.

In other words, in order for the military to accomplish its needs in such a short period of time—turning undisciplined and independent civilians into soldiers, sailors, or marines ready to fight for their country in cohesive units—training needs to be optimally unambiguous and streamlined. Standards must be clearly articulated, meaningfully transmitted from the top of the organization downward, and unambiguously applied. This allows the military to effectively react to changing environments while maintaining a cohesive unit structure. In this context, a strict hierarchy makes utmost sense. Also, clarity provides for both stability and flexibility.

On the other hand, the “mission” of colleges and institutions is not to create cohesive units, nor is it particularly interested in optimization. One could even argue that keeping students

at colleges *longer* is incentivized by the economic structure of higher education (i.e. the Army pays its soldiers, the university is paid by its students). Consequently, a college or university's mission can be quite ambiguous, perhaps even differing widely between disciplines, its authority structure can be highly decentralized, and its flexibility can be, and is notoriously, elephantine. This creates a training environment that is far from efficient, since there is no unambiguously defined mission that can be said to apply university- or college-wide, creating, in contrast to military training, low clarity and high viscosity.

The opposite training situation is created in the military, on the other hand, from day one. Standards and procedures are clearly delineated and articulated, and military training consists of the continual practice of learning to apply those comprehensive and severe rules to complex and indeterminate situations. In other words, the rules are clear and unambiguous, and do not exist for their own sake, and additionally, the varying circumstances in which a service member must apply those rules are ambiguous, uncertain, and often hurried. Veterans internalize military values because it allows them to navigate new waters with clear directions.

Another difference between military and civilian training provides a clue toward identifying why military training leaves such a lasting impression on veterans' lives: training never actually ends. Even after basic training is over, service members must move on to more specialized training (called AIT, or Advanced Individual Training, in the Army), when they learn the specifics of their particular occupation (called an MOS, or Military Occupational Specialty, in the Army). Once this training is completed, service members move to their first duty stations, where their units will also frequently perform exercises of various types to mimic wartime scenarios (the most famous being an FTX, or field training exercise). In addition, there are numerous schools that one must attend in order to advance up the ranks. For an enlisted member,

one must attend PLDC (or the Primary Leadership Development Course) in order to be promoted to a leadership role in the enlisted ranks (called NCOs, or Non-Commissioned Officers, E-5 to E-9), as well as accumulate a certain number of promotion points through courses geared toward military tradition, military practice, and military theory. In other words, “the project of developing combat literacy also extends beyond the artificial end of the formal induction period and is never really finished” (Doe and Doe). Everything is regulated, from exercise, to personal travel, to marriage, to food.

In contrast, colleges and universities, let alone other systems of induction like business internships or new employee orientations, will rarely be able to match the speed, efficiency, intensity, and ubiquity of military induction. As an example of the increased viscosity of civilian training as compared to military training, while college lasts upwards of four years or more, military training is famously short, intense, and pressurized (hence the fame of Basic Combat Training or BCT which lasts nine to fourteen weeks, depending on MOS). The result is a measurable and astonishing difference between veterans and civilians regarding everything from political beliefs and fiscal practices to ideological commitments. College, on the other hand, is a gradual process with massive breaks between sessions, that leads to infamous summer and winter “slides.” College serves as a means to an end, and many college students know that college will come to an end at some point, and that college itself is not an end in itself (despite what graduate students hear from clever family members).

It is easy to see now why veterans will naturally apply the same rules and matrices from military service to their college life, with its lack of a clear, unified, and centralized mission. Since the great majority of military veterans report pride in their service, and couple that with the success of that service oriented towards values measured by action pursued toward some type of

social responsibility, many veterans will assume, and from personal experience this bears out, that education is first intended to provide knowledge and skills for accomplishing concrete “missions” in the “real world.”⁷ In other words, the *telos* of any occupational choice, including the veterans’ choice of college courses, serves either to further a military career (civilian courses help with promotions), or adding lines on a resume to help secure a post-service occupation. As a more apropos example, perceptions of the purpose of writing classes are almost unanimously cast in functionalist terms for veterans, even to the extent that those terms seek even to undermine functionalism’s self-conceived purpose of writing. For example, my own introductory composition instructor focused on the mechanics of writing (the so-called “current-traditional” method) which appealed to my regimented military mind.⁸ I could only appropriate the encounter as my having a fault in my ability to express my ideas (and that my ideas were generally faultless and worth saying, but my writing ability hindered this), and that to get better at writing was to improve my technical skills (vocabulary improvement, learning “grammar,” mastering MLA, and the like). Consequently, this can result in the irony that while a veteran will often look for rules to follow, in an environment as ambiguous as college, when it was shown that he or she do not follow those rules often seemingly capricious rules, will often reject the imposition of those rules as bureaucratic nonsense.

It is important to remember the twin mindset of action and responsibility. For action, a veteran will ask, did the writing accomplish its purpose? For example, one of the more

⁷ “Whether or not the soldier is ever asked to undertake combat, these values are internalized and made ready for use. Hence, the induction process involves not just physical preparedness but an internalized understanding of preparation’s importance” (Doe and Doe).

⁸ Ironically, those current-traditional concerns manifested as red pen marks on my early writing, frustrated me because they pulled me away from the “ideas” I wanted to express, and forced me to attend to the form of my writing, despite my expectation that form is what I came in to learn.

infuriating bureaucratic hurdles in the military is the submission of paperwork. It can take months or years to award service medals to members of the military, even though they were clearly earned, because of the wording on the paperwork itself. This is a problem because Army regulations do not dictate precisely the punctuation and vocabulary of every form, but new incoming commanders do. And since commanding officer turnover is quite high, the standards are constantly in flux, and up rise the source of the infamous military bureaucratic frustrations. Those who claim an antagonistic relationship with writing, as many enlisted service members do for the above reason, almost always define writing, then, in terms of grammar and mechanics, usually while also admitting that grammar is merely based on the whim of the persons in positions of power. In other words, a common objection for me at the time is that “You get what I’m trying to say. Why does it matter that there is a sentence fragment?” It is just capricious power exerting its force. Communication for veterans, then, is often pragmatically oriented toward “getting your point across,” with the understanding that failure to attend to the structure of language is matter of power dynamics. In other words, one sees a simultaneous resistance to “mere convention” and to class-consciousness. Central to student veteran’s perceptions of writing instruction is that writing is as close to purely functional as a subject can get. Writing instruction is not “transformative.” It is tangential to vocational training.

It is now appropriate to talk more directly about the prodigious cultural differences between the military and college. First, I need to identify the one glaring similarity which is a necessary condition for my argument anyway. Military life and college life at least both exhibit nearly homogenous cultures. This will require some justification, since I just stated that the “mission” of most colleges is decentralized and ambiguous. Nevertheless, the meaning will be clear. While the military generally has a culture of conservatism (Pew Research Center), it is

well known the college campuses are overwhelmingly both culturally and politically liberal (Jaschik). Moreover, within that framework of the infamous college liberal atmosphere, college life is (intentionally) disciplinarily diverse, with a plethora of heterogeneous disciplines. The reason is natural, since while the goal of the military is to establish a common set of values for all of its members, the goal of many research institutions and liberal arts institutions is to develop students as critical thinkers and to induct students into a variety of disciplines. The requirement for this diversity is naturally the liberal framework, though this point is certainly up for debate. So let us take the Army as an example to illustrate the difference.

On the first day of basic training, the Army begins to inscribe the values it wants all soldiers to share, shorted by the acronym “LDRSHIP.” It stands for Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage (“Army Values”). For a recruit arriving at basic training, he or she will be issued a “Soldier's Handbook” outlining essential aspects of military life, and will be required to memorize the contents of this handbook over the course of his or her training, including this acronym. From my own time in the Army, over ten years ago, I can still recite those values immediately and flawlessly. By contrast, each college discipline abides by its own set of guiding norms, with its own language, which can often be mutually exclusive of other disciplines. For example, the humanities are only just beginning to embrace multiple authorship, while the sciences accept it as a matter of course. Yet, most disciplines value the characteristic of probing problems and questioning assumptions. If the difference can be summarized too simplistically, military culture is interested in preservation, and college culture is interested in deconstruction (though there are massive exceptions in both domains).

Because of the overarching values of the college environment, veterans will take what they know from military life and apply it to the familiar aspects of college life which most

resembles their everyday experience in the military, while simultaneously recognizing a fundamental mismatch between their guiding mores and those of their new institution. One powerful example is hierarchy and power. As previously mentioned, veterans respect authority, and as described by the Pew Research Center, veterans are also suspicious of those who do not have the experience of military life. Consequently, and for example, as a veteran entering college for the first time, I was deeply ambivalent about the academic enterprise as being too removed from the realities of life, too insulated to really “know” what is considered relevant and important. Nevertheless, I had a deep respect for my professors merely by virtue of their credentials. This is not an unusual attitude among veterans, and the military hierarchy is to blame. Let us look even closer to see how and why.

Not only is the hierarchy reinforced and internalized, as previously discussed, but ignorance or willful rejection of that hierarchy has drastic consequences. Failure to obey orders is a punishable offense by the UCMJ (Uniformed Code of Military Justice), and something as simple as failing to show up on time to morning physical training, using disrespectful language to a superior, or leaving before being given permission could result in demotion, discharge, or even jail time. Even small offenses have strict procedures.

When I was stationed at Ft. Hood, Texas in 2003, I remember showing up to morning exercise muster (called “PT formation”) one minute late. Ideally, I was supposed to be there ten minutes early, so showing up one minute late is actually incredibly egregious. For me it was terrifying. My entire company of about eighty to one-hundred people, standing in rigid rank and file in the middle of the ball field, faced the only entrance to that field, and they all watched me running in late.

The punctuality of the military is infamous. Should a platoon or squad fail to appear at the appointed time for a military maneuver, an entire military campaign might be in jeopardy. A squad that was four minutes late to a rendezvous point might just take a grenade or have mortar rounds blow them to pieces. In other words, lack of punctuality is an egregious offense with potentially serious consequences, so when soldiers are not at war, as part of the ubiquitous training environment, consequences for lack of punctuality must be equally severe. One minute late meant that my unit had already started exercising, which meant that I had to run in front of them, which meant that I had to find a place at the end of my squad and join in with what they were doing. This sounds innocuous enough, but my company commander (Captain, O-3) and his enlisted advisor (Company 1st Sergeant, E-8), my platoon leader (Lieutenant, O-2) and his enlisted advisor (platoon Sergeant, E-7), and my squad leader (Staff Sergeant, E-6) and team leader (Sergeant, E-5) all saw me “stroll in late” (their words—they view nothing as accidental)—and I let my company, my unit, and my country down as well. I hope the crushing rigidity of military culture is becoming clear.

This meant that I would get a “counseling statement” from my team leader, which would be signed by my squad leader, passed up through the chain of command to my company commander, who would store it in my file for reference. It would remain on my record for the remainder of my time in that unit, affecting my eligibility for specialized training, promotion, vacation time, performance review, and regular time off. This document recorded my failure to obey orders, my failure to adhere to military standards, and my lack of professionalism. Additionally, the document also outlined the necessary punitive measures for my breach of unit discipline. This was usually decided by the squad leader or team leader, but in my case it meant that I would have to arrive thirty minutes early to *every* formation for the next month. I would

also be required to do “extra duty” on my weekend for that week—eight hours on Saturday, and a “half day” on Sunday. Finally, if I failed to either fulfill my punitive tasks, or I showed up late again to anything within the next month, it would be my commander who issued me an “Article 15”⁹ (*U.S. Code*), which could follow me for the remainder of military career.

While the types of punishments vary, they usually include fourteen days’ restriction to the base, fourteen days of extra duty, reduction in pay, reduction in rank (which also results in additional reduction in pay), and an oral reprimand. While this is considered non-judicial punishment, should I decide that it was undeserved, unwarranted, or unfair, I would have the option of electing a trial by court martial instead. From my experience, almost nobody takes that route, for obvious reasons.

A soldier who feels like his direct supervisor (usually a squad leader) is acting unfairly has unbelievably few options for recourse. While there are a few options for cases like rape, where a soldier has the right to seek council through the JAG (Judge Advocate General) office, there is little else a soldier can do but obey the orders he or she is given (as recent investigations have revealed about the underreporting of rape of subordinates by senior leaders in both the Air Force Academy and at Army bases).

Not only did this absolutely central official hierarchy exist and exert unimaginable force on my life, both personal and professional, but numerous other unofficial hierarchies, which could include service medal recipients, different job classes, and different qualifications weighed on us also. For example, all service members earn ribbons and medals during their time in service for achievements of various kinds. The most famous and prestigious, as an example, is the Congressional Medal of Honor. These awards are prominently displayed just above the breast

9

(a reference to the U.S. Code, Title 10, Subtitle A, Part II, Chapter 47, Subchapter III, Section 815, Article 15 which provides guidelines for nonjudicial punishment by commanding officers)

pocket of all soldiers in their class A and class B dress uniforms, with the most prestigious being displayed topmost and centermost and right and down from there (*Uniform and Insignia*). An informal tradition exists that Medal of Honor recipients, even if they are enlisted personnel, are rendered salutes from all other military personnel, even those of a higher rank, including officers. Such demonstrates the significance of the simple gesture of even a salute.

Furthermore, different qualifications and the completion of different military courses also entitles one to wear insignia. For example, if an enlisted service member serves as a drill sergeant, he or she wears the drill sergeant crest just below the breast pocket (*Uniform and Insignia*). Infantrymen wear an infantry badge just above the breast pocket (with three levels of qualification). All soldiers wear marksmanship badges, but are differentiated by the levels of qualification, ranging from lowest to highest: marksman, sharpshooter, and expert. All military personnel wear their unit patches on their upper left arm. Combat veterans, on the other hand, are entitled to wear a unit patch on their right shoulders, indicating which unit they served with during combat (*Uniform and Insignia*). Finally, even having a conversation with those higher in rank than you require a certain set of protocols. If one is addressing officers, it is required that one end sentences with “Sir” or “Ma’am.” For Warrant Officers (ranked above enlisted personnel, but below commissioned officers), it is “Mister” or “Miss.” Enlisted personnel call one another by their ranks: e.g., “Sergeant Jones,” or “Specialist Weaver.” Calling an officer by only their last names, or not using “Sir” or “Ma’am,” is a serious breach of conduct and could result in punishment (such as an enlisted member saying “Yeah” instead of “Yes, sir.”). Failing to address a higher ranking enlisted member by his or her rank could also result in punishment, usually of the corporal variety, but depending upon how high the rank, it could possibly be punishable by the UCMJ.

In addition to the rigid ranking system, “military practice embeds continuous evaluation of the performance of both individuals and units, and these assessments are documented in the form of counseling reports, evaluation reports, and remediation plans” (Doe and Doe). As previously illustrated in my anecdote, a counseling statement includes remediation and subsequent evaluation of the remediation. But performance evaluation is not limited to infractions. The military is continually evaluating and reevaluating all of its personnel. If a military unit is not deployed, it is preparing for deployment, even if there is no active conflict. Rank and file soldiers are evaluated by their team or squad leaders. Squad leaders are evaluated by their platoon sergeants or leaders, and so forth all the way up to the Chiefs of Staff. Such evaluations allow military personnel to be aware of how they might improve on any aspect of military service, from professionalism to job-specific performance.¹⁰ In fact, evaluation and training is so pervasive and ongoing that one soldier remarked on his time in Iraq, “upon receiving my first casualty in Iraq, it was the on-the-job training provided by my seniors and supervisors that allowed me to make the necessary life-saving interventions for the patient, not the instruction from the post-induction institution” (Whitaker 159). Constant assessment and training is the order of the day.

Now that a basic understanding of how members of the military live, and what type of culture they come from, we are in a better position to look at a few of the ways that the college environment can be detrimental to veterans, *notwithstanding* war trauma like PTSD and TBIs. Pointing these out will allow us to begin to look at ways that cultural differences can be appreciated, so that we can provide better access for veterans to our classes and to academic culture at large.

¹⁰

For example, since a good portion of my job in the Army was classified “secret” or “top secret,” many of my evaluations were also classified as a result.

Leaving an environment like this and entering the veritable anarchic college environment incredibly shocking—and that is clearly an understatement. As Doe and Doe argue so well, “it should be clear by now that these civilian induction processes bear little resemblance to the intensity, rigor, and meaningfulness of military induction and subsequent military experience” (Doe and Doe). Among other things, the college experience is imminently impractical, it is far less rigorous, it doesn’t attempt to change anyone’s core identity, it makes no pretense of attempting to change one’s value system or personality, the hierarchy is very thin or nonexistent, there is often a lack of mentorship, especially since professors are unapproachable from a veteran’s point of view, teamwork is laughable, and as a result of all of this, veteran college students are often isolated, alone, and frustrated. From personal experience, and from connecting with other veterans in college while I was a student, veterans are restless, abandoned and alone, without guidance, and without a trustworthy cultural structure of support.

In relation to writing classes, what I hope should be coming into focus is, first and foremost, the necessity for directness. According to Whitaker,

veterans are trained for clarity throughout their time in service so, often, clarity is what is expected from the civilian world. Clearly defined expectations for the writing that faculty expect students to produce was correlative to the Marine student veterans’ positive perceptions of composition faculty whereas ambiguity or subjectivity were often correlated with negative perceptions. (164)

In the military, if you make a mistake, you know about it in clear and direct ways—either through punishment or through reprimand or through more official channels. This directness affects not just mission-specific tasks, but also personal conduct, to include how one dresses, one’s physical appearance and fitness and grooming habits. In contrast, for a veteran entering

college for the first time, academicians are frankly, in contrast, passive-aggressive or prevaricating, indirect and deferential, and often far too polite to offer corrective feedback except through the most indirect means. Most of the feedback that does take place occurs when credits and grades are on the line. Rather than, for example, providing room to make mistakes, nearly all of the assignment are “for credit,” which means that a veteran will feel that a he is being asked to complete a task that he has not been trained to accomplish, which is at best frustrating, and at worse, out of touch and ineffective.

Secondly, veterans feel quite alienated and abandoned in college. The directness that veterans are used to receiving almost always go only in one direction. Most soldiers get their needs met through the structure of the military hierarchy, and more often than not, it is comprehensive enough to actually provide everything the service member needs. Nevertheless, when a service member does need something, the connection with his or her immediate superior, usually one rank above him, in appropriate circumstances, is the outlet. In contrast, there is no central point of contact for a soldier in college, and a service member is left to his own devices to ensure that all of his needs are met. In the words of Whitaker, “outlets by which to share a once collective experience become limited and the veteran is left to make an interpretation based on previously established hierarchies that may become convoluted through the transition process” (163). For example, feedback is rare (see Thompson and Hart), and professors do not consider it their responsibility to ensure that students study or do well—at least individually. A student’s success, in other words, and in contrast, has no effect on a professor’s success. Professors often see many students fail, and have learned to accept that as a matter of course. This falls in line with Doe and Doe’s observation that, “supervisors and professors may be less mentor-leaders than manager-facilitators, and the veteran may express disappointment with a ‘command

climate’ in which expectations are loosely defined or self-determined and thus may seem low, even if they are not.” As a result of this loosely defined and self-determined culture, college professors and students (generally) also often suffer from the Dunning-Kruger Effect, noted by psychologists as making it difficult for professors to articulate what they are asking for. As a consequence, veterans “may convey impatience, disengagement, and disapproval for what they see as unstated expectations” (Doe and Doe).

Adding to veteran isolation is the lack of real collaboration in academia, since grades are assigned to individuals, not teams, and since many veterans live off campus and often have families, creating a physical distance from college as well. But neither physical distance nor collaboration are the only reason veterans are isolated. As Doe and Doe point out,

inductees go through these processes in cohorts, forming bonds of friendship that help them survive the process and learn the one universal axiom of military service: everything is about accomplishing the mission through teamwork while taking care of those on your left and right.

In striking contrast, Gregory Samenza, in his book *Graduate Studies in the 21st Century*, which is highly lauded by quite a few faculty in my graduate career, advises that to be successful, a graduate student should avoid his peers, since more often than not, they engage in “self-sabotaging behaviors and would like nothing more than to bring others down with them” (Semenza). This same behavior, I sheepishly admit having heard from many senior faculty whom I respect, takes place among faculty as well, though this clearly differs from department to department and university to university. And of course, this is just one opinion, though, it seems surprisingly common.

In my own personal college experience, while less so as a graduate student, I was often struck by how many of my peers were in college but did not study. This exercise in shelling out thousands of dollars and spending thousands of hours sitting in classrooms but not studying felt ludicrous. Yet, not only is student behavior often baffling, but the behavior of faculty is no less strange, most often identified through the strange assignments we are given. At least in the humanities, the work done by veterans is meaningless with respect to what is usually considered time well spent (in other words, their jobs in the military, even if imperfect, are still “mission critical” and identifying the importance of a particular activity is fairly obvious). This perception by veterans of academic work is in large part due to the mission of academia, which is not necessarily inquiry leading to concrete solutions, but inquiry for its own sake, or for the sake of more inquiry. Even worse, most undergraduate writing is hardly considered by academics as professional research, and the suggestion that the tasks undergraduates are assigned is real research is laughable—veterans and students know it. Consequently, veterans, more than any other student, will feel that while they will do what is asked of them, writing papers is about as meaningless of a job as sweeping rocks or looking for “chem light batteries.”¹¹ Here is what Doe and Doe say,

Hence, veterans, whether combat veterans or not, whether part of the tooth or the tail of the military, may struggle to develop an appreciation for a company or an institution of higher education, in part because they do not know what the mission is or, if they can fathom it, why it matters.

¹¹ A notorious joke pulled on soldiers entering a new unit. They will often be asked to look for some item that, while it sounds real due to their inexperience, is in fact nonexistent. Chem lights are just tactical glow sticks, which are activated by bending the stick, which breaks a small glass vial of chemicals mixing the content and creating phosphorescence. Another classic is having a new soldier take an “exhaust sample.” Many good laughs have been had watching a soldier hold a jar up to a running Humvee’s exhaust pipe to “catch” the sample.

While it is true that most of our students often articulate having difficulty understanding why, for example, philosophy courses matter to a biology student, the staid character of most military occupations makes writing a paper that nobody except the professor will read far less important than remembering how to disassemble an M-16 in case of an accidental jam in the heat of battle, or how to properly classify a document so that espionage units from other countries will not have an avenue to exploit the security of our country (either through electronic attacks, economic sabotage, or any other quite serious consequences). Once again, in the words of Doe and Doe:

This commitment to ongoing learning and training and its corollary, individual and organizational assessment, are the hallmarks of military training's sweeping efficiency and durability. Military induction, as a subset of this larger training mission of the military, draws attention to the fact that combat preparation involves the highest of stakes, which helps to explain why learning is accelerated.

Finally, not only do veterans face difficulty merely by virtue of being non-traditional students, with all of the complications that entails (Hart and Thompson, "Ethical Obligation"), but also "recruits come disproportionately from the disadvantaged, which enables the broader culture to distance itself from this sector and its issues" (Doe and Doe). This is especially true of the most recent batch of student veterans. As Doe and Doe identify, "at the peak of the OIF and OEF wars (Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom), force numbers were so low that recruitment standards waned and waivers were granted to many who would not today qualify." If we are truly interested in increasing minority representation in the academy, veterans are not a bad place to start.

Despite what sounds like quite dire circumstances, we are not without hope. Doe and Doe suggest one way in which we can improve veterans' access to higher education. In their words,

“one area where universities and employers might focus their efforts is in values articulation.

Laid out clearly, explained meaningfully, and then reinforced regularly, new values can replace

or supplement old, just as military values replaced the service members’ pre-service values.” I

think it is important to modify this charge, however. What I will attempt to do with the following

chapters is to provide a conduit through which both veterans and faculty members can clearly

articulate their values, with academics and veterans alike respecting the values of the other and

ideally both growing from them. For us, it is not enough to thrust our values upon veterans, like a

rucksack stuffed with bricks, but to allow veterans’ voices to be heard in our academy, allowing

them to speak to us as well.

CHAPTER 5

“AT WAR” WITH ACADEMIC VOICES: READING, RESISTANCE, AND RELATIVISM

"In understanding the disruption—and in addressing an adequate strategy for absorption of veterans into the academic discourse—it becomes evident that today's veterans have knowledge to share but are received by an academic model that does not know how to listen"
(Whitaker 162).

Having made it this far, if I am to begin to offer this way forward, I want to make clear some of the ways that veterans are forced to repudiate their core values, since many will need more than just anecdotal pronouncements from a single veteran to really see how veterans are being forced to do this. We will look first at ways in which the writing disciplines fail to hear, in general. Then, we will look at composition teachers' failure to hear veteran voices in particular. Afterwards, I will address some of the more easily implemented policies to help veterans feel part of the community, before finally, in the last chapter, articulating the hermeneutical framework that will begin our hopeful futures.

For many media outlets, since at least the publication of *Why Johnny Can't Read*, though I suspect much earlier still, doomsday is always perpetually upon us. Today, doomsday sounds something like this: American college students cannot write . . . and it is only getting worse. Responding to Peg Tyre's piece in *The Atlantic* entitled "The Writing Revolution," an article that describes a curricular reform at New Dorp High School intended to improve dropout rates for students through the introduction of a type of writing-across-the-curriculum program, the editors of the magazine introduced a debate section entitled "Why American Students Can't Write"

(Tyre). The positions in this debate section exchanged blows between the virtues of roughly types of expressionism over types of expository writing, but all of the interlocutors agreed on one premise: student writing is in a “crisis.”

The teaching company, Teachthrough, LLC, an organization claiming to provide teachers with “data-driven” solutions for educational problems (“helping smart teachers teach smart”), attempted to provide at least twelve reasons why there exists a “crisis of poor writing in America” (“12 Data Points Detailing The Crisis Of Poor Writing In America”). Three of these reasons were matters of students’ attitudes: high school seniors do not feel like their writing has improved, most students prefer texting to writing, and writing is not “fun.” Additionally, the most recent report card from the National Center for Educational Statistics in 2011 claimed that only three percent of eight- and twelfth-graders could write at the “advanced” level, and only twenty-four percent at the “basic” level (“The Nation’s Report Card”). According to the report, “basic” level represents the ability to write with “partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills . . . for proficient work at each grade” (“The Nation’s Report Card”). Irrespective of what these pundits might mean by “crisis,”¹² the reality is undeniable that student writing abilities do not for the most part represent a population that is well suited for the rigors of a college curriculum. That is, we want the majority of our students to write at least at a basic level when they graduate from high school, not a paltry one quarter. Something, anything, seems like it might improve this dire situation—nay, crisis!

Most of the calls to improve our writing programs focus on K-12 instruction, admittedly a formative period for developing skills of any kind, including writing, and consequently the calls to correct this imbalance (disproportionally affecting minorities, women, and the poor,

¹² perhaps the perpetual state of having important things to worry about.

which includes many veterans), usually place the blame on primary and secondary schools. But as David Jolliffe argued, even college writing instructors who find students showing up on our course rosters lacking the skills needed to survive in college, let alone their own courses, should nevertheless “teach the students [they] have in front of [them]” (Jolliffe 473). The *raison d’être* of composition scholarship is the teaching of students how to write, even if that teaching means covering ground that ideally should have been covered in primary and secondary school.

I bring this up not to add my voice to the talk of crisis, but to point out that whether or not there is a crisis in writing, or if only twenty-four percent being able to write at a “basic” level is a crisis, we can still trace a disconnect with our goals of developing college students into confident writers able to navigate a variety of genres and conventions and the realities of our students’ abilities to meet those ideals. Perhaps the talk of crisis reveals that there are cultural forces at work with make our jobs more difficult, or at least increases the distance between where they are and where we want them to be.

Whatever the case, along with writing, reading is also described as in a state of crisis. Oddly, some composition instructors still consider this out of their jurisdiction, though thankfully this seems to be changing. In an article published by *Rhetoric Review* in 2010, “Alternate Readings: Student Hermeneutics and Academic Discourse,” author David Brauer argues that composition scholarship all but neglects the issues involved with textual reception (70). In 2003, Marguerite Helmers makes this same point: in the field of composition, reading is “not part of the common professional discourse in composition studies” (Helmers 4). Moreover, David Jolliffe insists that while the teaching of reading skills “sticks in the craw of many college-level instructors,” we are obliged to teach it to a generation of students that come to us with very poor skills in that area (472). In response to this dearth of scholarship, a group of scholars have

recently begun in the fall of 2013 a new publication, *Literacy in Composition Studies*, with the professed aim of “sponsor[ing] scholarly activity at the nexus of Literacy and Composition Studies” (Glascott).

While one of the editors of *Literacy in Composition Studies* identifies literacy as “linked to interpretation,” there have yet to be any articles addressing both the ethical obstacles to student engagement with academic discourse prefaced with the more basic obstacle of poor reading skills. Thus, while discussions of reading are not entirely absent from the scholarship (see also Helmers above, or Wendy Bishop’s *The Subject is Reading*), there is little attention to the way in which student readers hermeneutically encounter the text within writing classes, or outside, both in terms of ethical resistance to that discourse and as a means of offering a type of critical pedagogy that exploits the theoretical and methodological tools of hermeneutics to help those with poor reading skills. I consider this necessary for a few reasons, so I propose to argue that as writing instructors, we need to recognize the fundamental relationship that exists between the composition of texts and the reception of texts, and that the latter has a type of logical priority over the former; only then can we begin to construct a pedagogy that avoids violent divestitures of identity, like that of veterans.

To begin, the pivotal vision that new writing instructors conceive of the beginning writer’s task of becoming a scholarly voice is through David Bartholomae’s “Inventing the University.” It is well known that this text has come to represent a compelling response to both the expressivism of the 1970s and the so-called “current-traditional” method of composition instruction prior to that period. The debate between expressivism (sometimes personified in Peter Elbow) and Bartholomae’s impetus to create little academicians is worth discussing, but for now it enough to recognize that while many students we teach will not become professional scholars,

the case especially being true of veterans who, we have pointed out, overwhelmingly elect not to major in the humanities, I do believe that giving students the tools to enter into this conversation will perhaps bring more veterans into our discipline.

To begin, then, I would like to complicate the Bartholomae metaphors of “entering in/to” and “trying on,” which dominate Bartholomae’s project in “Inventing the University.” Bartholomae uses those metaphors to describe the experience of students, strangers to academic voices and ideas, as they are becoming members of a community by “trying it on” and writing through its terms, whereby eventually learning to think through those terms, and that ideally those students will eventually make those terms their own. The logically prior lynchpin for Bartholomae’s vision is naturally acceded to writing (it is composition pedagogy, after all). Students write to learn the language of academics. I think, however, that for his vision of writing as the tool for becoming a specific type of writer to be fruitful in any sense, then something more is required beyond merely writing, a way to enter into this semi-closed system from the outside. A personal anecdotal example will help us problematize this logical priority Bartholomae gives to writing.

Rereading “Inventing the University,” I had just come through a crisis of sorts (a common occurrence among new graduate students) where my feeling of trying to tackle an academic leviathan of a topic seemed insurmountable. When does one stop doing research and start writing? I had been searching for my topic and after spending a few days downloading articles and winnowing them, I found myself feeling like the background for this discussion would take years to learn before I could say anything meaningful, again a common sentiment. Most of the advice I received for writing any protracted document was to continue to write along the way, since no one can ever read all that has been said. Gregory Semenza’s book, *Graduate*

Study for The 21st Century, for example, attempts to offer advice for similarly struggling graduate students, but his answer is revealingly placed in his section on writing a dissertation, not the section on seminar papers (Semenza 180). It is significant because this suggests, at least in format, that he considers existential markers of discovering when one's research is complete for both seminar papers and doctoral dissertations similar. In other words, his actual advice is that a writer should not separate the writing and the reading process, and that by doing all of one's research in June and July, and attempting to write in August and September, one will have forgotten everything that has been read (180). This section's ostensible purpose is to address the unsettling feeling of many of his students that there is always more "out there" to read, but his answer acknowledges that, yes, in fact, there is always more out there to read (180). His solution is fairly practical then—get to writing, or you will never finish. In other words, just write it, even if you do not have all the pieces, and it will come together. This formulation ("eventually . . . it will happen") mirrors Bartholomae's claim that by trying on academic writing, eventually the language of academic discourse will become one's own, with one caveat: it is the logically required step.¹³

Let us consider another text, Peg Boyle Single's *Demystifying Dissertation Writing*. Single's book reveals the significance in clearer terms, and is a bit more helpful for newer graduate students. She offers a way for budding academics to enter an ongoing conversation as an absolute newcomer. First, she suggests you read a few general reference guides or textbooks in the field (35). With this introductory foray, you find sources from that article to guide further specialized research into the topic, from review articles down to more key journal articles in the field (Single 36). "Through this process," she declares, "you entered into the discourse,

¹³ The most revealing note about Samenza's text is that while his advice is most generally for all graduate students, the sections dealing with writing are written primarily for the Ph.D. student who has gotten through her comprehensive exam reading list and already have a fair idea of the dominant conversations in the field. In this case the logical priority goes to reading, not writing.

commentary, and conversation in your specialization” (37). When helping my own students learn to do research, I often give them the same advice, since many of them will choose to write about issues that they already know (and avoid entering new topics), and avoid having to deal with the academic voices on the subject. Consequently, in order to force my students to attempt their first forays into more scholarly conversations about the subjects they are interested in, I encourage them to read with the method that Single suggests. As I often tell students, and what experienced academics know implicitly, reading and writing are like grist and mill. We already see that prior to any writing in any field, one must learn the language of that field through encounters with texts in that field. Those encounters are primarily encounters through reading. In other words, and I say this with considerable confidence, entering into a field is accomplished first through reading, and then through writing. After that, the recursive process can begin.

Now, I want to make clear, the prevailing wisdom here articulated well by Bartholomae, that to learn to use the voice of an academic, according to Bartholomae, one must “enter into” that conversation by “trying on” the voices of that discourse, or by writing in that voice, is not wrong, but it does not properly prioritize the logically prior lynchpin of reading. Hence, for student veterans, professors who dare veterans “to speak [the academic voice] or carry off the bluff, since speaking and writing will most certainly be required long before the skill is ‘learned’” (Bartholomae 524), is asking veterans to complete mission-critical tasks with no training, no experience, and no justification for its necessity. Like all beginning student writers, veteran students are forced to try on the academic voice, the academic words, to try to become the voice of the scholarship they are trying to enter, without really having the wherewithal to even hear those voices. It is like asking my students to draw a picture of an animal that only I have seen.

To be equally clear, then, teachers who are concerned that students develop a voice that is both their own and not their own, they must take care to teach them both how to produce texts, but also how to make sense of texts that will become the context of what they produce. While even students who are considered competent readers will still have trouble understanding most academic texts, students who are not competent readers will find the practice nearly impossible. Veterans as a class of students, as we previously identified, will not have been required to read complex texts for their day-to-day jobs, and considering that veterans have traditionally come from lower socioeconomic classes, military training cannot teach them how to read due to time constraints, most texts a soldier, sailor, airmen, or marine will encounter take the form of field manuals and SOPs (Standard Operating Procedure Guides). This is not to say that they cannot read more complicated texts, no more than it is to say that writing students in general cannot. Nevertheless, the ability to read complex works is just as much of a problem for veterans, perhaps more so, than it is for civilian students.

To complicate the disconnect a bit more, while it is reported that as little as twenty percent of students complete the assigned reading anyway (Burchfield and Sappington),¹⁴ undermining our desire to produce good readers and adding to the previous difficulties, the academic voice as a social construct exists both inside and outside of the individuals that use them. In other words, one must make the academic voice one's own, and yet no one writer or text owns that discourse (Bartholomae 524). To layer and reinforce this lack of ownership, I need only point out that this insight is not new to Bartholomae, since de Saussure's restricting of the science of linguistics required as its precondition the recognition that linguistic systems are "not a function of the speaker," but exists as a collectivity separate from an individual's will, and that,

¹⁴

I suspect that veteran compliance is much higher.

more importantly, it “always eludes the individual or social will” (Saussure 17). In other words, the existence and maintenance of linguistic systems cannot be consciously changed through human agency, or at least conscious human agency. For example, even if we say that Bartholomae’s “Inventing the University” is not making the conscious choice to use de Saussure, we cannot say that this insight from de Saussure is not part of the language of Bartholomae’s own discourse, perhaps so much that he unconsciously pulls from it to manifest his moments of “eureka.” Nevertheless, in a real sense, the insight of language being a socially constructed island cannot belong to anyone either.

This is significant because this “belonging” to a discipline needs to be more carefully examined. Belonging involves more than writing in the words of a discourse. Somewhere within the language of the discourse students are trying to inhabit, students had to have first entered through reading, same as seasoned scholars. Unstated in this belonging is an encounter with reality (with Being, with “the world”) refracted through a linguistic paradigm *differently* than the one in which a reader began before “belonging” to that system. Ultimately, for my argument, the paradigm of military training and culture is the starting point. Let me explain further.

For understanding to occur, for instance, how to drive a car, a person first (implicitly) must realize that there is a car, and there exists a conscious person who wants to use that car, and there exists the need to “drive” this “car.” This is not deliberately considered, of course, but is a precondition for understanding—a practical “situatedness” (in Heidegger’s words) that makes possible the ability to “learn” to drive a car. Reusing Heidegger’s idea of “fore-structure” of understanding, Gadamer argues that this situatedness is a type of “prejudice.” Now this prejudice is not pejorative. Indeed, the prejudice is merely the assumption that what is only understood partially (“car,” “drive,” “self,” for example) *can, in fact, be* understood as meaningful.

This “enabling prejudice” makes it possible to understand anything at all, since it must first be believed before understanding is even attempted. Keep in mind that to understand is always provisional. Just as one can learn to drive a car without understanding the principle of the internal combustion engine, one can similarly understand the concept of “car” in a sense that allows you to learn to “drive” it, without fully understanding what a mechanic means when he says “car” or a NASCAR driver means when he says “drive.” That is, the enabling prejudice predisposes you to the belief that what can be *talked about* by you can be *understood* by you, and, this is key, that your understanding can be modified when encountering with new information (Being, “the world,” text).

Additionally, adding to the idea that prejudice is a prerequisite for understanding, so too is the effect of history upon the understanding, or what Gadamer calls “historically-effected consciousness.” Since understanding depends upon a type of practical fore-understanding (the enabling prejudice), it is obvious that this fore-understanding is largely dependent upon the history leading up to that practical set of reasons—primarily linguistic. A “car” is the result of the history of machines and automobiles and horse-drawn carriages and wheels and rubber and hydrocarbons and more besides. That one can understand “car” at all is a result of the individual’s own historical situatedness, of living in the time and place where the car and the word “car” are possible (as demonstrated by the simple thought experiment of imagining how an ancient Roman might experience a Volvo “in the wild”—how would he or she even begin to make sense of it?). Consequently, in the simplest terms, understanding is both practical and historical—and all understanding is provisional. What makes up your view of things, your entire composite set of concepts and understandings, can be called your “horizon of understanding.” To

change your understanding, to “change your mind,” requires the meeting of other horizons of understanding through the shared medium of language—or communication: reading and writing.

Returning to Bartholomae, “belonging” requires meetings and moments of contact between the language through which one thinks, and the language through which another thinks. Before one can “try on,” one must at least have encountered enough of the phenomena to have an example of what to mimic. Where does one encounter it? Again, the act of writing in a voice different from one’s own requires being faced with a voice that is not one’s own. Thus, writing can never begin before an encounter with another. At least in the case of Bartholomae’s “Inventing the University,” he does not acknowledge that presupposed encounter. In Bartholomae and Patrosky’s *Ways of Reading*, they at least recognize that “a reading course is also a course in writing,” offering excellent reasons why “harder” texts are more appropriate for teaching what an “expert” reader’s experience of reading might be (e.g., expert readers must continually reencounter difficult texts) (Bartholomae and Petrosky iv). Nevertheless, along with his “Inventing the University,” the act of reading and the act of writing are not connected in a way that might suggest how reading provides phenomenological encounters to discourses alien to one’s own. Bartholomae and Patrosky approach it very nearly when they say that the reason for the selections in *Ways of Reading* stem from the desire to offer texts that “open up the familiar world and make it puzzling, rich, and problematic” (iv). While this does suggest that reading presents a picture of horizons of understanding as it manifests itself differently to others, it still fails to argue in any way how the reading/writing binary is problematic when discussing how one learns to inhabit the voice of the scholar.

In fact, their introduction suggests that an “expert” reader manifests his reading expertise by degree, rather than establishing any difference in kind. To put it another way, expert readers

know how to “work on” a text “piecemeal,” reconstructing sections into meaningful relations, recognizing their reading selves as always provisionally reading, while amateur students chase the chimera of idealized understanding. In the case of a veteran, the reading of field manuals presents no problematizing of understanding, since they are primarily instructions, not theoretical discussions, and modifies the understanding only insofar as it clarifies procedure, rather than modifying conceptual frameworks. The failure of Bartholomae’s view is that he doesn’t recognize that understanding itself requires both the stance of provisionality *and* the prejudice of idealized understanding. That a reader both understand her limitations and still hopes, in the end, to understand anyway.

Perhaps it is a difference in attitude and expectation only: “We learned that if our students had reading problems when faced with long and complicated texts, the problems lay in the way they imagined the reader” (Bartholomae and Petrosky iv). To put it yet another way, provisionally, the difference between student writing, non-expert writing, is more than a difference in degree. Many student papers on “global warming” or the “homosexual marriage” might have narrowed their scope to better focus their research, but the language, attitude and expectations must be “rewritten” and rethought through the language particular to the humanities, the social sciences, economics, or ecology to be considered acceptable in the academic community. Immature writing cannot be merely revised; it must be refigured through a linguistic system that is not student language. Veteran writing cannot be merely revised; it must be refigured through a linguistic system that is not military writing. In other words, academic scholarship and veterans’ freshman composition papers are different in kind, not degree. Moreover, moving students outside of this closed circle requires reading as the primary entry into the field, fields which may be foundationally at odds with military ideology and culture.

These seemingly incompatible horizons are at issue then. We are now in a position to discuss what I have only been hinting toward: resistance.

Resistance manifests itself in students' ethical rejection of academic voices in academic texts because of pragmatic and foundationalism's ethical interpretive assumptions. Both reading and resistance, what I will call intellectual and ethical "barriers," are two sides of the same hermeneutical coin. I hope to demonstrate later that a type of cultural literacy will help proscribe much of the reading barriers for veteran students. To that end, I hope I have made clear that our veteran students' social realities present two obstacles that make the teaching of writing more difficult: reading reception and ethical resistance.

Before concluding the chapter, I want to make a point to establish and clarify a few working definitions. For the purposes of this paper, "reading" stands for the necessity of textual reception as a prerequisite for textual production, which in turn stands as a barrier because so many veteran students lack a cultural vocabulary for the requisite reception of the type of texts we expect them to produce: academic texts. Since I am primarily arguing for a particular type of bottleneck, namely an ethical and ideological bottleneck, it is now appropriate to provide a preliminary workable definition of what I consider to be "ethical resistance." I will argue that it serves as one of the central viscosity-increasing factors that prevent veterans from equal access to academia. We will also need to define the term ethical resistance.

"Ethical resistance" is the resistance that arises due to the decision-making apparatus available to ethical decision makers as an interpretive conflict or mismatch to a community into which the ethical decision maker wants to enter. It is also important to note that by using the term "ethical resistance," I am discussing neither civil disobedience nor activism, neither passive non-violent activism nor violent revolution or demonstration. In all cases, while those forms of

resistance are due to ethical commitments, in which one feels compelled to enact physical violence or at the very least, commitments are primarily enacted through the use of physical means for affecting physical, political, or social change. Inversely, ethical resistance as I define it is a resistance that is veritably passive, used defensively, or as an ideological barrier preventing the encroachment of discordant and irreconcilable discourse communities. It is not an attempt at affecting any physical, political, or social change, but serves primarily as a defense to the encroachment of incompatible discourses.

To further clarify this point, it is helpful to note that traditionally “morals” and “ethics” are distinct terms. Morality primarily refers to a code of conduct, usually defined by a discourse community, whereas ethics can be defined as the meta-discipline interested in determining normative moral prescriptions based on rational principles. Thus, in this sense, the object of ethical study is the determination of moral codes of conduct. Nevertheless, it is certainly true that generally morals and ethics are interchangeable terms. Consequently, for this study, defining what I mean by the word ethics will help to prevent any equivocation or misunderstanding. Therefore, by “ethics” I mean what is traditionally defined as the “ethics of belief,” or in the words of Andrew Chignell, “norms . . . governing our habits of belief-formation, belief-maintenance, and belief-relinquishment” (Chignell). I use this meaning of ethics because the primary formative practice of academia, as I have just pointed out, is the modification of the understanding (of beliefs) as a prerequisite to entering into the communities of academic discourse. The types of resistance that I am referring to, then, when I talk about “ethical” resistance, to modify my definition, is the resistance that arises due to the interpretive differences between the respective ethics of belief. It is an interpretive conflict or mismatch between the

ethics of belief of an individual and the community in which the ethical decision maker wants to enter in.

As we are now on the same footing regarding my meaning of “ethical resistance,” it is appropriate to restate my thesis once again. From personal experience, and from the research I have just laid out, through the differing political and ideological commitments, many veterans feel forced to abandon their identities in college because of the differences between their deeply held identities and the ideologies of academic discourse. For many veterans, their educational journey is made much more difficult in disciplines that are more ideologically irreconcilable with military culture. Personally, as a veteran, my educational journey so far in the humanities has also been one of moral and social divestiture. While many might object that such is necessary to become part of academic culture, I argue that perhaps there is a way where we can approach the writing and “entering in” of academic communities without the violent demands of divestment. In other words, it is possible to create an environment where “academic” and “veteran” need not be mutually exclusive labels.

CHAPTER 6

TAKING THE HERMENEUTICAL HILL: HERMENEUTIC FOREGROUNDING IN WRITING PEDAGOGY

Since students will need to read academic texts, we should think about discourse itself. Considering the types of writings that are required of veterans in service, complicated by cultural misunderstandings between military culture and academic culture, we now see the significant gap indeed between the expectations of college writing and the types of writing required in military service, in some cases the only writing that veterans have had to create for years. Although many explanations could account for that distance, I would like to approach this distance from two starting points, hoping to show how hermeneutical pedagogy will help to address the distance, at least as it is represented by these two starting points.

Many of my veteran peers and I, as well as even a larger majority of my veteran students, encounter resistance from many quarters, not least of which is our own nagging questions regarding not only the “truthfulness” of the conclusions of much of the scholarship we read but also the guiding assumptions of academic specialized discourse. With the pride in our service comes a self-assuredness in its ideals, which brings up barriers that might question those ideals; though this is not a problem unique to veterans, the effect of military induction makes this a particularly thorny problem.

Additional resistance to appropriating academic voices, or humanities voices in particular, comes from family (“what is the use of what you do?”¹⁵), shameless capitalistic culture which has reduced scholarship to a commodity, competing academic voices who may or may not share the same common assumption (which makes the hermeneutical appropriation even more difficult), popular modes of discourse (e.g., technical terms vs. everyday language), and the differences in discourse genres (like texting, Facebooking, Googling, poetry slamming, and too many others). I want to suggest that this linguistic social reality comes to be the nexus of both student resistance and the central problem this thesis attempts to address.

Both as a personal barrier, but also representative of a majority of veteran students, the very idea of discourse communities seems to fly in the face of pragmatist and foundationalism’s paradigms. That is, academic discourses present an interpretive problem for both those who hold to a foundationalism’s epistemology and those who have not overcome the uncritical careerist *telos* of education in military culture. Before we discuss why this is a problem, it is important to acknowledge that such resistance does exist. This resistance might be reflective of the cultural, perhaps largely populist American problem of anti-intellectualism in general, or at least the dominant capitalist and instrumentalist paradigms of higher education’s purpose. It does at least exist in military culture through its emphasis on action and responsibility, as we previously discussed. Or, as Henry Giroux points out in regard to critical pedagogy, whose pedagogical paradigm can represent some the “dangers” of the culture of academia, and which equally applies to the very conceptualization of discourse communities, it is dangerous to “evangelicals, neoconservatives, and right-wing nationalists” because it turns students into “active questioners”

¹⁵ Samenza addresses this in the last chapter of *Graduate Study in the 21st Century*: “For years, we in the humanities have spoken of the ‘intrinsic value of the liberal arts’ and of other similar Renaissance ideals which, whether we believe in them or not, no longer carry weight within the current higher educational paradigms . . . We must seek, in short, to reaffirm our place in a larger conversation that so badly needs our collective voice” (287).

(Giroux 1). Active questioning for veterans, as should be clear by now, is anathema. Another personal anecdote should propel the discussion forward.

In terms of ethical resistance, my own personal philosophical issues with the enemies of a haunting foundationalism, and the subsequent inability to come to terms with discourses outside of it, started when I entered an evangelical Christian liberal arts college from the military (both linguistic and structural institutions of epistemological and social conservatism). At this school, fundamental to its self-designation as an evangelical college, it offered as a benefit of its curriculum to its incoming students a “biblical worldview.” By this phrase was meant, implicitly or explicitly, that the environment was steeped in a culture of evangelical bibliophilia, and that their approach to knowledge was at least ostensibly in line with common evangelical beliefs about the core principles of evangelism, foundationalism, pietism, and other cultural commonplaces of evangelical culture. “Biblical worldview,” I think, hides the cultural capital that this phrase requires, that the linguistic structures required a certain degree of “trust” and uncritical acceptance of approved authorities, not much different from military hierarchies. In fact, my own search for colleges prior to this stage was primarily a practice in attempting to identify an institution that I could trust to uphold the values of the military in particular and conservatism in general. Nevertheless, the institution lacked the critical apparatus necessary to decipher what might constitute the “biblical” and conservative modes of knowledge reception and knowledge construction.

I want to give some examples of this worldview, since it helps to draw some parallels between religious experiences and the mantras of military induction, especially since 70% of all military personnel report some form of Christianity as their religion (*The Military Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era* 25). Some core tenets of this “biblical worldview” are

that “Truth always has a capital T,” or to use Kantian, terms truth is necessary *and* universal, that the Bible is “life’s instruction book,” and the common Christian, in some ways Thomist, insistence that the way we see the world is either through general or special revelation. Nevertheless, just as Thomas Kuhn’s idea that scientific communities contain within them paradigm-breaking anomalies, this evangelical paradigm revealed its own paradigm-breaking questions, since even within the school, conservative philosophical and theological discourse assumptions were threatening to undo the terms of its own discourse. For instance, even as an English and philosophy major at this school, in the higher-level classes of philosophy and critical theory, while learning about German Idealism, Logical Positivism, and Pragmatism, the theories were simultaneously present to me as “enemies” of the “biblical worldview,” most importantly the poststructuralist theorists (and most pointedly, Derrida), who proffered “logically untenable positions by uttering totalizing statements that disavowed the possibility of totalizing statements.”

The devil term was “relativism,” and “anything goes deconstructionism.” Yet, exposure to this material was required if the institution wanted seriously to consider itself a place of higher learning, but the “biblical worldview” ensured that any encounters with the text carefully avoided playing Peter Elbow’s “believing game.” This fear of losing one’s religion translated into my own inability to make sense of most academic writing, since I was simultaneously required to both “guard my heart” against the enemies of the faith while critically questioning principal assumptions. This questioning avoided trying on any discourse that threatened to subvert my ethical commitments. This made it impossible to encounter any texts in ways that helped me to enter into the discourse of the community of scholars. Never once, until I entered graduate school, did the notion that writing is about entering into an already established

discourse ever occur to me (either through direct instruction, reading, or reflection). For those types of students, all discourse is on an even plane, competing for the same conceptual resources, and talking within the same field of discourse.

The discussion so far represents resistance on two levels—resistance to a closed linguistic system that is ethical and practical. By ethical, for many students, as we have seen, the very existence of pressing doubt, and systematic suspicion, suggests a divisiveness that might either “attack my beliefs,” or pragmatically “waste my time.” Thus, while even “critical thinking” or doubt is allowed to be cast as a conceptual tool to get at some more subtle truth that lies hidden, pressing doubt, to use my student’s language, “only gets you so far.” At some point, they say, you have to “do something.”

Additionally, it is frankly hard to suspend one’s beliefs, which one considers essential for making sense of the world and the way one interacts with it (which is required to read the vast array of discourses even within the academic community). As is a guiding assumption in composition scholarship, to appropriate a new discourse is to embrace a set of guiding assumptions, which themselves cannot be proven syllogistically through a development from premises, and which do not allow for the sustainment of one’s own ethically committed community (as Thomas Kuhn so popularly identified). A Christian student attending a Christian liberal arts college, for example, might find it hard to start with the assumption that all knowledge is a human construct. Their conceptual (but by no means totally homogenous) community would hardly allow the attendant conclusion from this premise that God is also a human construct. Adopting the language of the academy suggests a lack of faith, or an embrace of “vain philosophies.” It feels wrong either because of the inherent complexity of the world (or, in Heidegger’s terms, “Being is never fully disclosed to Dasein”) often clashes with the easily

digestible homiletically perfect three points offered in many of the evangelical pulpits, or because many doubts do not “help me find a job.”

I am not the only one to have identified this fear of losing one’s ethical commitments. Steven Mailloux identifies the insuperability of many controversial debates over the future of higher education in the public sphere and “problem of relativism” in *Disciplinary Identities* (Mailloux). The issue of relativism is still alive for Terry Eagleton as well, who expostulates at length about what he believes to be the bankruptcy of the academic community, arguing that “if the relativist is right, then truth is emptied of much of its value” and that “if truth loses its force, then political radicals can stop talking as though it is unequivocally true that women are oppressed or that the planet is being gradually poisoned by corporate greed” (Eagleton 109). Eagleton, as many veteran students, see instrumental problems whose moral value derives from their status in a linguistic system and whose terms become unintelligible outside of that system. And what prevents students who are savvy enough to enter into those discussions at odds with their own systems is that they discover not only that all linguistic commitment assumptions are not provable between systems, but it also raises the question of what, then, offers any incentive to enter into such discourses when they offer no moral guidance about the system that is most valuable to them, and makes different assumptions about the world than academic culture? In other words, why should students want to solve academic problems when those problems do not “do anything” in their “real worlds”?

Both modes of resistance present themselves through the practice of reading as well as writing. Since practical reasons for resistance to the academic community are primarily in regard to its function, all writing projects and reading assignments that do not address the vicissitudes of life seem pointless. Attendant with this is the vague feeling that academic writing is also

pointless for the same reason. Why should I need to know about the uses of Iambic Pentameter in Shakespeare, since this knowledge will not do much for me outside of the assignment in question (and the skill is so difficult to master, that I could spend my time doing other, more “high impact” things)? For that matter, what good is Shakespeare? How does his high-flown verse help me make more money or graduate from this school? For many of those students, Shakespeare or Derrida is an annoying obstacle.¹⁶

This problem is not merely idiosyncratic and personal. In my own classroom, I notice that my students are resistant to my academic ways of seeing as irrelevant to their practical commitments. The academic discourse community is thoroughly dependent upon the assumption that knowledge is created, and thinking is thought, through communities. If we are teaching them to be thoughtful members of their communities, why have them learn to enter into a discourse that even advanced students have difficulty entering? In other words, unless they are going to be professional academics, why invest their time? Additionally, why should veterans want to become part of this community at all, when so much of it seems to undermine their identities? Why should religious students, for that matter? Not only is academic reading and writing frankly hard, as we have seen, it can threaten the epistemological assumptions of a vast majority of discourse communities outside of the academy.

Pair all of the previous, the problem of resistance to entering into a community of discourse which requires exposure to that discourse, with the same constraints affect inhabiting a voice that is not one’s own, and with the problem, as Jolliffe argues, that we do need to teach students how to read “strongly,” because they just cannot: “many students cannot understand the

¹⁶ It might be a fruitful investigation into whether student’s own class consciousness might play into this rejection of the elitist culture, that Shakespeare presents one more marker of the “haves” and “have nots” which they unconsciously reject.

assigned texts with a level of insight that goes beyond the transparent and superficial” (Jolliffe 472). What this means, in the end, is that for reasons of resistance, or inability, or incomprehensibility, both because they read superficially, and because they are outside of the discourse they are expected to enter, students, veterans or otherwise, are spectators. They have difficulty internalizing what they hear, especially when it is not in a voice they frequently inhabit, and the discourse of the text does not appropriate the discourse that they inhabit and appropriate. Accordingly, the previously discussed resistance manifests itself, not on the level of writing so much as primarily with student encounters with academic voices in the reading. One example will be illustrative, and then I will attempt a paradigm-breaking solution.

The previously mentioned David Brauer used poetic interpretation as an apropos example in his article “Alternate Readings: Student Hermeneutics and Academic Discourse.” In it, Brauer mentions a class session in which he was discussing Robert Frost’s “Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening.” Brauer found himself defending the “academic reading” of Frost’s poem against a student’s misunderstanding of it as a reference to Santa Claus. After all, the speaker’s horse restlessly shakes its “harness bells,” and the speaker “has promises to keep, / And miles to go before [he] sleep[s].” In his article, Brauer acknowledges that students resist academic interpretive assumptions (Deborah Brandt’s “sponsored literacy”) relatively consistently (70). Brauer acknowledges that he was uncomfortable with the position of academic interpretive apologist, but while defending it anyway, the discussion led the class session into the topic of the intricacies of hermeneutics rather than dealing primarily with his “sponsored literacy” (70).

Guiding Brauer’s own pedagogy was the attempt to help students understand those same academic assumptions that guided his interpretation of Robert Frost, not so that the student’s ways of reading could be intelligently legitimated, but so they would come to see why sponsored

literacy in fact better represented the way Robert Frost should have been read. It appears as if there were no choice but to bring students into accepting the guiding assumptions of the sponsored literacy if they want to become contributing members of that community. This is the central issue of veteran resistance for my argument: *the site of resistance for many students is their understanding of this need*. How, after all, are they to make sense of the discourse without first agreeing on what it means to make knowledge within a set of discourse communities and conventions?

As a consequence of this, their relationship with academic discourse is often antagonistic (Brauer says that “my [students] displayed subtle but insistent resistance to the interpretive assumptions of English professors”), and this antagonism appears as a place in which their “liberal” professors are trying to indoctrinate them into a politically subversive worldview that threatens their beliefs (Christian, conservative, veteran, or otherwise). Additionally, this existential encounter is antagonistic because students experience this exposure to the guiding assumptions of their professors as dominating (a common refrain of some not-so-well-meaning students is that they failed a paper because “my professor disagreed with me”). For such students, communication is nearly impossible.

Their reading and writing is conceptualized, for them, as all inhabiting the same world, arguing with the same vocabulary, competing for the same ears. Academic jargon for them, then, is threatening and inscrutable at best, or it is a waste of time at worst. Moreover, as an instructor myself, I have had similar difficulties translating the discourse assumptions of the academic community into terms they can understand. Convincing students of the relevance of textual art, learning to write like an academic, and even the necessity to learn reading are fraught with difficulties from within a dominant pragmatic paradigm where they believed that they had gotten

along without it just fine. To those students, I could appeal to them pragmatically that one must learn to write and to read in order to get a better job. Likewise, there are no lack of pragmatic appeals for poetry or literature as enabling the development of more empathetic human lives, though that is still hard to justify “art for art’s sake.” But these appeals can be seen, and in my view *should* be seen, as merely a way for teachers to abandon the possibility of providing students the tools to be academics.

All of these observations are preliminary reflection on the problems that still persist for us as teachers of writing, and more importantly, teachers of writing who make grand claims about what our writing instruction should do. To solve this, I want to reframe these communication problems as essentially hermeneutical. If we are to make any headway as teachers of writing, we need to address the issue of communication across discourse communities (both academic and non-academic). We need to learn to overcome the prodigious gaps between student expectations, commitments, and ethical stances and the expectations, commitments, and ethical stances of the academic communities that students want to inhabit, and hopefully we want them to inhabit.

Returning to a previous point, the initial problem that we noticed is that students reject the assumptions that academic voices require. They are necessarily antagonistic of assumptions that threaten their ethical commitments, and that fail to see writing instruction as anything that challenges their discourse paradigms. Additionally, we see that the teaching of reading, essential to our mission even in the writing class as students enter into the academic conversation, is the frontline of student encounters with the academic voices. So how have some suggested we get past these barriers? There is very little scholarship on this topic. The scholarship that does exist often offers idiosyncratic suggestions to idiosyncratic problems, rather than the more

fundamental resistance discussed here. In one example, Ashlie Sponenberg argues in “Course Theme and Ideology in the Freshman Writing Classroom,” that student’s resistance in classroom discussions (and writing assignments) can be alleviated if “controversial” material (which she believes to be detective fiction) is substituted for less controversial material (which she believes to be dystopic fiction) (Sponenberg 548).

Brauer’s suggestion is more helpful and will allow us to use this as a beginning. He suggests that teaching students hermeneutics offers a way for them to see their own ethical commitments by foregrounding their own hermeneutical assumptions. This presents a way for us, as academics, to help them to develop the skills that will allow them to see the community that we see, and to enter into that community in the way we enter into it. He argues, rightly, that by getting past ethical resistance, they can embrace the way in which academics approach dissensus, through the maieutic of discourse (84). Moreover, I would like to argue that by taking David Brauer’s call to teach students hermeneutics, we can use Steven Mailloux’s conceptualization of hermeneutics as “enactment history” to serve as the conceptual tool for introducing students to what it means to use their own language to become part of the language of a discourse whose presuppositions they may initially disagree, which both avoids the oppression that comes with silencing our students voices through making their reading practices “wrong,” but also avoids the violence of appropriating discourse “from the inside,” as argued by Diane Davis. I’m going to argue that “enacted history” becomes critical pedagogy of a type that provides rhetorical invention strategies not classifying students’ initial commitments as “aberrant,” but as the necessary conditions for “entering in.”

In David Brauer’s article, he suggests that we foreground hermeneutical awareness as essentially an ethical encounter, so that students can see where they are “resistant” to the

readings through trying to “preserve” their ethical frameworks (80-81). As we saw previously, some students resist academic discourse because of the commitments that hold them to the paradigms of conservatism and instrumentalism. It is clearer, then, why reading is important to our discipline. While it is possible that our textual encounters make student reading "aberrant," where failure to read like us excludes them from the discourse, Brauer suggests that we raise awareness of the hermeneutical process to our students as essentially acts that they are already committed to (78). Brauer has students identify "pressure points" in the texts that serve as sites of ethical encounters, to reveal a student's ethical orientation as "passive or agonistic, rigid or inflexible" (81).

This ethical encounter is one that recognizes first and foremost that reading, as textual dialectic, involves empathy (not domination or refusal) (80), that the spaces where students meet a text are spaces that acknowledge an other, and that listen. According to Brauer, students both appropriate a text to understand, but also allow for productive encounters through a Ricoeurian distanciation (78). When students attend to their own hermeneutical practices, they come to understand their own biases and the biases of the texts they encounter, so that they can negotiate meaning with a text (80). In other words, encountering their own moral presuppositions, and emphasizing the alterity of a text, encourages both the "appropriation" of the ideas in the text and the simultaneous distanciation of the text as other.

Hermeneutical encounters with text, reader, and context brings into relief the difference between a reader's subjectivity and the text's linguistic possibilities, showing the difference in order for the reader to have a non-solipsistic encounter. This is, really, a Gadamerian "merging of horizons" such that the reader's subjectivity and the text both are changed. This distanciation makes possible the conditions for both self-understanding of ethical orientations within

hermeneutical meeting spaces, but also makes possible the conditions for understanding of the other (Brauer 78).

This approach also allows us to recognize two things. First, while we need to reveal to our students that discourse communities circumscribe interpretive possibilities (which proves to demystify their biases), we can still acknowledge that a student's ways of reading a text are not aberrant, but rather, that prior ethical commitments are necessary for understanding to begin. In other words, we need to acknowledge a Gadamerian "fore-understanding," which recognizes "enabling prejudices" that are prerequisites for any type of appropriative encounter. This will offer a way out of student reading challenges, without oppressing a student's agency. Teachers can make students aware of how to make reading an "organic" process of symbiotic meaning-making in which their own textual (reading and writing) practices fit within that larger conversational community.

The idea of appropriation is not without debate. For example, Steven Mailloux posits a theory of rhetorical hermeneutics that calls all encounters with texts rhetorical hermeneutics. According to Mailloux, "We always make inside sense of the outside" (Mailloux, "Enactment History, Jesuit Practices, and Rhetorical Hermeneutics" 27). That is, for a student to appropriate a new academic voice, for the student to make that voice her own, she must use the starting point of her own language to make sense of it. Again, there is an act of translation that takes place for the students. Just as a student learns a foreign language through a roughhewn one-to-one correspondence set of vocabulary words (*dunamis* = power), so too must a student appropriate concepts she already knows to make sense of and understand the foreign discourse.

On the other hand, Diane Davis argues in *Inessential Solidarity* that "making inside sense of the outside" is violent and appropriating, and thus, we must look "deeper" into a preoriginary

ethical encounter that is prior to the hermeneutical appropriative encounter (Davis 67). Davis insists that there exists "a nonhermeneutical dimension of rhetoric not reducible to meaning making, to offering up signs and symbols for comprehension" (67). In other words, Davis insists that prior to meaning-making exists an encounter with the other that is not meaningful in the sense of comprehension; it is firstly just an encounter. Whatever comes after the encounter must presuppose that encounter. This encounter is what Davis means by "preoriginary." Davis claims that the Darmok encounter (a reference to the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode) is an example of cooperation without understanding (an act of appropriation). She concludes that understanding is not a prerequisite to cooperation. Nevertheless, Mailloux maintains that even basic cooperation is itself hermeneutical and appropriative (e.g., Darmok and Captian Picard not agreeing), even a type of "practical understanding" ("Enactment History" 29).

Despite Mailloux's objection, Davis's view suggests that cooperation and understanding are not self-same categories, that cooperation as an act or orientation is possible without appropriating the language of one text to another. It is the fundamental orientation of a subject that it encounters the foreign, but that appropriating the foreign requires "violence." Moreover, she maintains that this preoriginary fundamental openness is itself both ethically significant and prior to ethical choices. This offers us a way of seeing "seeing" as having ethical significance for readers and writers of texts, since encounters with Being, with "the world," is significant because significance itself is disclosed to us through language, and in turn Being is significant because it is presented through language, but that a Levinasian call to attend to the other as it presents itself to the self circumscribes resistance.

Still, I would argue that students' encounters with academic texts, especially the more difficult or ethically challenging ones, present a problem in which students both encounter texts

as significant and simultaneously refuse to allow its significance to manifest itself within their own systems. This refusal to appropriate becomes a refusal to understand—a misunderstanding. In this way, students both understand and misunderstand academic texts. To put it in Heideggerian terms, while the thrownness of *Dasien* necessitates attentiveness to others, the appropriative opportunity still offers the possibility for misappropriation.

One possible explanation for student refusal to appropriate a text might be that academic writing's own self-understanding as a discipline can serve to undermine the types of discourse communities we want to create in them and that we want to bring them into. That refusing to “make inside sense of the outside” is a refusal to bring academic selves into a discourse that presents itself as a refusal to make “outside sense of the inside,” to understand the Other of student's textual encounters within the subject of academic discourse. In other words, academic discourse misappropriates student discourse in the same way student discourse misappropriates ours. If we want to bring student voices and academic voices together, we have to start with how either makes sense of the other. Failure to attend to those interactions impoverishes everyone.

How might we approach teaching writing through reading that respects the students' ethical commitments while providing for them the theoretical possibility that enables them to encounter texts with charity, rather than the false binary of “dominate or be dominated” (Brauer 75)? I will argue that Steven Mailloux's conception of a hermeneutics that serves as “enactment history” provides the conceptual paradigm for students' encounters with texts. This does not necessarily change, in practice, what students might do in a classroom, but it does change the conceptual tools that allow students a non-threatening encounter with alien texts whose ethical commitments differ from their own. This might also help to alleviate the issues raised by Peter Elbow's “Being a Writer vs. Being an Academic” against Bartholomae's (I believe correct)

assumption that we are training students as potential scholars, though this paper is not addressing that debate primarily.

As we argued earlier, Diane Davis maintains that prior to any hermeneutics, there is a preoriginary encounter with the other that is ethically significant (Davis 65). I suggested that this could offer a schema for moving beyond the ways in which students present ethical barriers to reading and writing texts. I also argued that despite this preoriginary ethical encounter, the appropriative possibility of misappropriation is still a concern. In this sense, then, it would be fruitful to make use of Mailloux's observation that Davis's preoriginary encounter provides for no positive ethics or politics ("Enactment" 28). That even if we grant the preoriginary ethical encounter as circumscribing inattentiveness, student appropriations of texts might still be a misappropriation. To put it another way, the preoriginary encounter does not circumscribe appropriative resistance. In order to address this student resistance, we need a hermeneutical, but nonappropriative encounter that, in the words of Steven Mailloux, still "makes inside sense of the outside" ("Enactment History" 27).

To that end, starting from the late Heidegger, Mailloux distinguishes between enacted-history and object-history (39). For Mailloux, using Heidegger's explication of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, object-history, a type of appropriative history, removes the observer from the framework of understanding, and appropriates the past into the "present-day, object-filled framework for sense making" ("Enactment History" 39). Heidegger argues, though, that object-history is not how Paul advises Christians to grow in their faith, but rather through the enactment of Christian religiosity, Christians do not appropriate faith so much as enact it (Mailloux, "Enactment History" 30).

Christian dogma arises not from idealized objects to be appropriated, but rises out of Christian lived experience (Mailloux, “Enactment History” 30). Mailloux maintains that hermeneutics must envision itself as an enactment history, which resists appropriative “object-history” in favor of “actualize[ing] the other's past experience in the dimensions of one's own sense making” (“Enactment History” 39). Enactment history is, then, a way to encounter texts that avoids the untenable expectation that we should remove ourselves from the act of reading to “get at the true meaning” as if the true meaning manifests itself without our having to read it. While this does not exactly overturn Diane Davis’s objection, it does make the contrast “between appropriation and nonappropriation [tend] toward irrelevance” (Mailloux, “Enactment History” 31). In other words, rather than appropriating a text by “bringing it into a present-day, object-filled framework for sense making,” doing history, and I will argue, reading texts, “actualize[s] the other’s past experience in the dimensions of its own sense making” (Mailloux, “Enactment History” 39).

Therefore, instead of framing the practice of students entering into academic discourse through appropriative encounters that too often manifest themselves as resistance, we need to conceptualize that act of reading in the composition classroom as the mode of historical-enacted, not object-historical appropriative, entering into of the language of academics. If we take this conceptualization of what it means for students to enter into the academic discourse, we can also re-envision other pedagogical staples of the writing classroom as equally moments of enactment-history, like peer-review, self-revision, or even “critical thinking.”

The way I propose we envision reading instruction as a mode of entering into the discourse of academic writing is not only through instruction in the methods of hermeneutical praxis, but also instruction in the theory of what it means for students to have a hermeneutical

encounter. According to Michael Hyde, hermeneutics is both a methodology and a fundamental human orientation, both of which are especially interested in arriving at "truth" (Hyde 329). This offers students who are foundationalists (for example, at the Christian liberal arts college student, or the veteran) reasons not to feel threatened by enacting the language of the academy.

If we want to see what form this enactment might take in the classroom, we can begin with a Gadamerian insight into what a hermeneutical encounter might look like as a conversation. Gadamer offers the model for humanistic education by casting human knowledge as a conversation, a conversation where two people are talking about something they want to know more about, meaning that the conversation is open ended, and also that both voices serve as maieutic to one another (Marshall 191). These conversations start with, from Gadamer's model, students recognizing that their voices "matter," and that all encounters begin with one's own ethical commitments. By providing students the conceptual tools to first make sense of what they do when they read, we also offer them a non-threatening possibility of enacting texts the way Heidegger offers the encounter with Paul's letter, not by

placing the letter writing in the context of Paul's first missionary trip right after his arrival in Corinth," as object-historical, but by "writ[ing] the letter along with Paul," asking such questions as: "How does Paul, in the situation of a letter-writer, stand to the Thessalonians? How are they experienced by him? How is his communal world [emphasis his] given to him in the situation of writing the letter?" (61; qtd. in Mailloux "Enactment History" 39).

Rather than setting up students as encountering texts that are alien to them, we offer them a model that describes what it means for human beings to encounter others. This model reframes that tendency in some composition scholarship to make the classroom space a "place for

resistance" or a place the antagonistically "resists domination." Instead, we offer students a model of reading that provides liberation by giving them the conceptual tools to make sense of texts in ways that do not threaten their own ethical commitments so much as bring those commitments before them, as voices to be heard, in order to highlight the utter alterity of the texts they are reading.

It is fruitful to note that even Schleiermacher called textual production (hence rhetoric) foundational to hermeneutics, or rather it presupposes hermeneutics; but for hermeneutics, says Schleiermacher, the audience must be critically (rhetorically) receptive (Hyde 329). Thus, a measure of rhetorical competence is the prerequisite of textual understanding, which is part and parcel to our professed aims in composition (Hyde 329). We can hardly call ourselves composition scholars, or even teachers of writing, unless our rhetorical competence also rests in our ability to create a space that allows for rhetorical/critical receptivity. In the words of Hyde:

The project of philosophical hermeneutics is dedicated to getting to the heart and thus to the truth of some matter. With time and changing circumstances, this truth may disclose itself to people who are better prepared to receive, understand, and express it in a rhetorically competent manner such that others, too, can put its meaning to good use (335).

Training students how to read texts as well as how to produce them will require, consequently, rhetorical and hermeneutic education. This requirement is all the more pertinent, since the most recent volume of *Rhetorical Society Quarterly* includes "The Mt. Oread Manifesto on Rhetorical Education 2013," in which authors William Keith and Roxanne Mountford argue for the creation of an organization whose mission would be "to advance scholarly and professional engagement on rhetorical education" (Keith and Mountford 4). Additionally, the manifesto "seek[s] a world

in which . . . instruction in writing and speaking serve primarily to offer *rhetorical* education” (Keith and Mountford 3) [emphasis mine]. Part of that rhetorical education should be instruction into the dynamics of textual reception. Only then can we learn to respect veteran voices, learn to hear them, and circumscribe so much resistance to each other’s culture. Ultimately, over time, I hope that the field I am in now will not feel so lonely anymore.

WORKS CITED

“12 Data Points Detailing The Crisis Of Poor Writing In America.” *TeachThought*. N.p., n.d.

Web. 19 May 2014.

“Army Values.” N.p., n.d. Web. 10 July 2015.

Bartholomae, David. “Inventing the University.” *Cross-Talk in Comp Theory: A Reader*. Ed.

Victor (ed. and preface) Villanueva and Kristin L. (ed. and preface) Arola. xxii, 899 pp.

Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English, 2011. 523–553. Print.

Bartholomae, David, and Tony Petrosky. *Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers*. Boston,

MA: Bedford/St. Martins, 2011. Print.

Bauman, M. Garrett. “Crossing the Fine Line between Teacher and Therapist.” *Chronicle of*

Higher Education 48.44 (2002): n. pag. *Gale*. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

Brauer, David. “Alternate Readings: Student Hermeneutics and Academic Discourse.” *Rhetoric*

Review 29.1 (2010): 69 – 87. Print.

Carroll, Andrew. “Operation Homecoming: A Guide for Writers.” 28 May 2009. Web. 15 Apr.

2015.

Chignell, Andrew. “The Ethics of Belief.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Ed.

Edward N. Zalta. Spring 2013. N.p., 2013. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Web.

27 May 2015.

Corley, Liam. “Reconsiderations: ‘Brave Words’--Rehabilitating the Veteran-Writer.” *College*

English 74.4 (2012): 351–365. Print.

- Davis, D. Diane. *Inessential Solidarity: Rhetoric and Foreigner Relations*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010. Print. Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture.
- Doe, Sue, and William W. Doe III. "Residence Time and Military Workplace Literacies." *Composition Forum* 28 (2013): n. pag. Gale. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.
- Eagleton, Terry. *After Theory*. New York: Basic Books, 2003. Print.
- Gallagher, Matt. "How to Run a Successful Writing Workshop for Veterans." *At War Blog*. *New York Times*, 9 Sep. 2013. Web. 15 Apr. 2015
- Giroux, Henry A. "Lessons from Paulo Freire." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 57.9 (2010): B15–b16. Print.
- Glascott, Brenda. "Constricting Keywords: Rhetoric and Literacy in Our History Writing." *Literacy in Composition Studies* 1.1 (2013): 18–25. Print.
- Hames, Jacqueline M. "Owning Your Story: How Writing Helps Veterans Heal." *Soldiers* 67.2 (2012): 17–17. Print.
- Hart, Alexis, and Roger Thompson. "An Ethical Obligation': Promising Practices for Student Veterans in College Writing Classrooms." *Urbana: National Council of Teachers of English* (2013): n. pag. Print.
- . "From the Editors." *Composition Forum* 28 (2013): n. pag. Gale. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.
- Veterans and Writing [Special Issue].
- . "War, Trauma, and the Writing Classroom: A Response to Travis Martin's 'Combat in the Classroom.'" *Writing on the Edge* 23.2 (2013): 37–47. Print.
- Hart, Alexis, Roger Thompson, and Valentino, Marilyn. "Reacting Responsibly to Veterans in the Writing Classroom: An Interview with Marilyn Valentino." *Composition Forum* 28 (2013): n. pag. Gale. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

Helmets, Marguerite. *Intertexts: Reading Pedagogy in College Writing Classrooms*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2003. Print. xviii, 251 pp.

Hemon, Aleksandar. "Operation Homeland Therapy." *Slate* 13 Oct. 2004. *Slate*. Web. 15 Apr. 2015.

Hyde, Michael J. "Hermeneutics." Ed. Thomas O. Sloane. *Encyclopedia of rhetoric* 2001: n. pag. Print.

Jaschik, Scott. "Survey Finds That Professors, Already Liberal, Have Moved Further to the Left." *Inside Higher Education*. N.p., 24 Oct. 2012. Web. 5 Aug. 2015.

Jolliffe, David A. "Learning to Read as Continuing Education." *College Composition and Communication* 58.3 (2007): 470–494. Web.

Keast, Darren. "A Class for Vets, Not by a Vet: Developing a Veteran-Friendly Composition Course at City College of San Francisco." *Composition Forum* 28 (2013): n. pag. *Gale*. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

Keith, William, and Roxanne Mountford. "The Mt. Oread Manifesto on Rhetorical Education 2013." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 44.1 (2014): 1–5. *CrossRef*. Web.

Mailloux, Steven. *Disciplinary Identities: Rhetorical Paths of English, Speech, and Composition*. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 2006. Print.

Marshall, Donald G. "Paradigms, Conversation, Prayer: Liberal Arts in Christian Colleges." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 10.1 (2010): 183–200. Print.

Saussure, Ferdinand de. *Course in General Linguistics*. LaSalle, Ill: Open Court, 1986. Print.

Schell, Eileen. "Writing with Veterans in a Community Writing Group." *Composition Forum* 28 (2013): n. pag. *Gale*. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

Semenza, Gregory M. Colón. *Graduate Study for the Twenty-First Century: How to Build an Academic Career in the Humanities*. Rev. & updated 2nd ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.

Serving Those Who Serve: Making Your Institution Veteran-Friendly. American Council on Education, 2008. Print.

Single, Peg Boyle. *Demystifying Dissertation Writing: A Streamlined Process from Choice of Topic to Final Text*. 1st ed. Sterling, Va: Stylus, 2009. Print.

Sponenberg, Ashlie K. "Course Theme and Ideology in the Freshman Writing Classroom." *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture* 12.3 (2012): 544–549. Print.

Swaggert, Nick. "Veterans Become Protected Class: A Double-Edged Sword." *The Huffington Post*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 July 2015.

The Military Civilian Gap: War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era. Pew Research Center, 2011. Web. 3 Apr. 2015. Social & Demographic Trends.

"The Nation's Report Card: Writing 2011." N.p., 14 Sept. 2012. Web. 19 May 2014.

Thompson, Nancy. "War Stories in the Classroom." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 52.46 (2006): n. pag. *Gale*. Web. 27 Feb. 2015.

Tyre, Peg. "The Writing Revolution." *The Atlantic* Oct. 2012. *The Atlantic*. Web. 19 May 2014.

Uniform and Insignia: Guide to the Wear and Appearance of Army Uniforms and Insignia. N.p., 2015. Web.

U.S. Code. N.p. Web. <<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/815>>.

Valentino, Marilyn. "Serving Those Who Have Served: Preparing for Student Veterans in Our Writing Programs, Classes, and Writing Centers." *WPA Writing Program*

Administration: Journal of the Council of Writing Program Administrators 36.1 (2012): 165–178. Print.

Whitaker, Devin. “Veteran Literacy: A Case for Veteran Identity Theory in Composition and Literature.” *Anthós* 6.1 (2014): n. pag. Web.

Zoroya, Gregg. “Study: Recent Veterans Are Succeeding in College.” *USA TODAY*. N.p., n.d. Web. 8 July 2015.