THESIS

THE ROLE OF GENRE, IDENTITY, AND RHETORICAL AGENCY IN THE MILITARY

WRITINGS OF POST-9/11 STUDENT-VETERANS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF GENRE, IDENTITY, AND RHETORICAL AGENCY IN THE MILITARY

WRITINGS OF POST-9/11 STUDENT-VETERANS

Since the Post-9/11 GI Bill was signed into law in August 2009, hundreds of

thousands of student-veterans and more than $3.6 billion have poured into college

campuses nationwide. Student-veterans have brought with them incredible life

experiences, maturity, and self-discipline, as well as different learning styles and

stressors that traditional students typically do not face. Recent qualitative research

about this population has primarily been dedicated to their transitions and

disabilities, but relatively few researchers have explored student-veterans'

academic preparation acquired in those formative years in the military, especially

skills in writing. Therefore, in this thesis, two colleagues and I survey and interview

nine student-veterans, representing each branch of service, at Colorado State

University. I explore their past textual production in the military and use those

experiences with writing to shape and inform my discussion about genre use and

theory as put forth by Amy Devitt and Anis Bawarshi. Because almost all writing in

the military is formed within a specific genre, genres are central to the writing

histories of student-veterans. In the military, genres serve not only as formatting

guides but also as sites of cultural capital and rhetorical action, and they have a

profound effect on how student-veterans construct meaning from writing in first-

year composition classrooms. Additionally, I look to Michele Foucault's theories of

constituted identities to explain how student-veterans' beliefs about writing are influenced by the communities in which they participate. The societal stratum in the military of officers and enlisted soldiers greatly determines what student-veterans understand as writing and its relationship to class-bound identities. My findings suggest, however, that as active duty soldiers, student-veterans used many of the rhetorical skills taught in a composition classroom but often have difficulty recognizing what they did as *writing*. Because few composition instructors are familiar with military text production, this thesis provides information about the connections between military and academic writing, identifies ideas about strengthening curricula, and suggests directions for future research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the uniformed service members of the Post 9/11 era who volunteered in a time of conflict, served their duty honorably, and earned the right to a college education. May those of us who are fortunate enough to be your teachers demonstrate an abiding respect for you and for the freedoms that you were willing to protect and defend.

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For Doug and those like him

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Seth Moulton, a former captain in the United States Marine Corps, led relief efforts in Haiti in 2010. Once on the ground, he proposed an idea that the UN was very interested in developing. They invited Seth and his team to Santo Domingo, when Seth realized they needed a business plan. As told to Time, *Seth said, "We had an hour before the meeting, and I just sat down and wrote a five-point action memo. Dave said, 'I knew your Harvard Business School training would come in handy.' And I said to him, 'Harvard Business School! I learned how to do that in the United States Marines.'"*

"The New Greatest Generation," Time Magazine

All writing I had done prior to the Army was school-based and often a collection of other people's ideas. Counseling statements forced me to create my own opinions on soldiers' actions and get them onto paper. This was not easy at first but the more practice I had, the better I became. By the time my five-year contract was over, writing a monthly evaluation was about as easy as talking. The military forced me to write and I am better because of it. I apply this to all of my writing now. I learned how to organize my own thoughts and get them on paper… Before counseling statements I knew what I was trying to say but I just couldn't get it written down… My experience in the Army has made me a better writer than I was before.

Adam Kern, student at Colorado State University
and veteran of the 75th Ranger Regiment

I came to this project by being told I was hard to talk to; I was intimidatingly

direct; I wasn't fitting in to the accepted manner of speaking. The communication

style that had served me so well during my previous ten years as an active duty

Army officer was not working successfully as a brand new graduate student in

Rhetoric and Composition. This puzzled me—never before had I considered that

there was any method of communication other than that which came naturally to

me. As Foucault believes, however, no discourse is ever natural; my writing and

manners of communication have been produced through years of immersion in

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various discourse communities, some more influential than others. I looked to the past—my upbringing, my education, and my career—to fully understand my place in this new community. Shortly after starting my graduate course of study in Rhetoric and Composition, I tried to take notice of how I organize my thoughts and present ideas. Many times, I found that my strategies mirrored those that I have used in the military. While this may have created surmountable hurdles during my time in graduate school, I knew I would return to active duty, where my methods of communication would again more easily align with those with whom I will be working. This is not to say that I will ever revert to a past identity. Since being introduced to a discourse that has left me questioning how I make meaning and examine societal structures, I have changed my methods of critical thinking and have added a new rhetorical appreciation for how I communicate. Moreover, I will continue to move between these different discourse communities—the military and the academy—as I eventually hope to pursue a Ph.D. and apply to return as a permanent professor at the United States Military Academy. My acknowledgement of the boundaries that define these two areas will constantly be in a state of flux, and I appreciate the opportunity to look critically at how the two meet and hopefully integrate.

But what about those who have left the military altogether? What about student-veterans who are transitioning from literacies of the military to literacies of the classroom? As James Gee has pointed out, prior discourses have invariably stayed with all individuals, in one form or another, and provide both a central identity and a continuation point for moving through other identities, in this case as

service members becoming veterans becoming students (Gee 1991). Surely, transition, a problematic term in that it connotes moving from one specific place to another, is more accurately represented in this case as an ongoing evolution, rather than as permanent metamorphosis. Therefore, I write this thesis in an effort to better understand how student veterans communicate in their writing, how their past military experiences have contributed these strategies of communication, how they make meaning in the classroom, and how the military and academic discourses create tension between each other to create not only frustration but also generation and creation. Ultimately, this understanding of how veterans are prepared to enter into higher learning will add to the scholarship of first-year composition pedagogy and will hopefully lend itself to more informed relationships in the classroom across the veteran-civilian divide and, in particular, more successful retention and graduation rates among student-veterans within the context of the many thousands who are expected to make use of the new GI Bill.

As a graduate student and active duty officer in the U.S. Army, I am not a student-veteran. I have not separated from the service and still actively identify myself as a uniformed solider. I do not claim membership in the veterans' population, nor am I able to be a spokesperson for a group quite capable of speaking for itself. I am, however, familiar with the methods of writing and communication asked of all service members, and I understand the challenges of being in a military setting and quite quickly moving to an academic one. For ten years, I have written hundreds of intra- and inter-service memoranda, military evaluations, and operations orders, all genres that I will discuss in this project. As a commander and

battalion staff officer, I vetted innumerable pieces of correspondence written by officers and enlisted soldiers for multiple audiences. As a frequent Air Mission Commander, I briefed flight operations where text-based directions were crucial to and a part of every flight packet for pilots. Now, as a graduate student in Rhetoric and Composition, I find myself in a unique position to understand and critique the necessary adoption of military writing by every service member and the problems it causes, both in the assimilation it requires of individual writers and the complications it causes when one is no longer in the military. Further, as a member of the armed services, serving in the post-9/11 era, I share a generational context, exposure to similar perspectives, a set of experiences, and a long future with these former warriors. Moreover, like them, I have come of age at a time of war[1] and have volunteered my services. I expect a long future of making contributions to society. It is with this in mind, then, that I pose the following research questions:

- *What rhetorical and literacy skills do student-veterans bring to the first-year composition classroom from their previous text production, and how do these skills and values affect their movement to and through academic discourses they encounter in higher education?*
- *As compositionists, how might we build upon the existing rhetorical skills of student-veterans to enact a respectful approach to the accommodation of new literacies?*
- *What are the implications of doing so or not doing so?*

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These questions are especially fitting and timely as thousands of current

veterans and many thousands more to come take advantage of the education

benefits offered by the Post-9/11 GI Bill. As of Spring 2012, more than 523,000

veterans have moved from military posts to campuses of higher learning since the

bill was passed in 2009, and that number is going to grow (Lang and Powers, 2). In

fact, although the Veterans Administration was initially slow to process all of the

post-9/11 benefits requests, as of Spring 2012 they have shortened processing

times by weeks, allowing student-veterans and colleges to concentrate on their

learning relationships rather than their administrative ones. Importantly, that shift

in attention from the office of financial aid to the classroom is one that is going to

expose how much we truly don't know about how student-veterans learn and what

knowledge, preparation, or deficits they bring with them to the classroom. Instead,

research has focused mainly on their transitions. Many factors contribute to

student-veterans' struggles with making the shift from the military to the

academy—years spent in service to their country and away from the traditional

classroom, varied learning styles due to different environments, combat stress and

injuries, mission requirements, and/or a rapid shift from always-working-never-

thinking to always-thinking-never-working, both of which are stereotypical views of

the military and the academy and neither of which is entirely accurate.

While some work has been done to examine the skills with which veterans

come to the classroom, relatively little research has been done on military forms of

literacy. This large gap exists because of the unfamiliarity with and difficulty of

examining military culture. Typically, ethnographies done in a standard classroom

are relatively easy because of precedence, proximity, and accessibility—college campuses are almost always located near K-16 classrooms, and observing these classrooms has been an accepted practice of research for some time. Conversely, studies looking at educational procedures in the military, especially by researchers not in that population, are virtually unheard of, as it would require a full indoctrination into the ideology and network of such a large, yet somewhat closed, society. This is not to say it could not happen—in fact, early studies by Larson (1979) do look at military literacy training—but to fully understand the idiosyncratic requirements of Evaluation Reports, for example, would require time and experience in writing, revising, and collaborating with other soldiers on this specific text, along with being lucky or funded enough to be able to travel to the relatively few military posts in the country. Because I am one of relatively few people who have unrestricted, personal access to both of these communities, I am able to pursue this line of inquiry without significant constraint.

Merely looking at and identifying these forms and strategies of literacy is not enough, however. Using Foucault to explain how discourses exact identities and values from their members, I explore in this thesis how members of the military are socialized into a military form of writing and communication and why the military has embraced a particular discourse into which new members are enculturated generation after generation. I examine why the military feels that it needs all of its members to speak the same language, as well as the methods used to teach an understanding of that language. Additionally, I will consider how specific military genres play into the use of language. I believe the military's reliance upon genres

transcends logistics and uniformity. In fact, I will demonstrate that genres, as rhetorician Amy Devitt has posited, are much more than formats—they insist upon an active response to certain social and cultural contexts. In this way, genres are the overarching, controlling structures of most military correspondence, functioning as much more than simple stylistic instructions, and work to both construct and constitute ideologies, principles, and priorities.

I started this study in hopes of finding early indicators of military genres transposed onto academic contexts. In order to do this, I, along with two faculty members, recruited nine student-veterans attending Colorado State University to help guide my way through this project by way of surveys and interviews. Their voices were crucial because, as I stated before, my personal knowledge of military communication and writing still does not grant my entrance or access to the world of the student-veteran. We speak some of the same language—throughout my interviews, I understood all of their references to acronyms and military jargon—but I do not share their experience. Therefore, I needed to make sure my understanding of genre and military textual production was the same as the study participants, which is where the survey was crucial. It elucidated those texts that I wanted to explore, whether or not student-veterans realized that what they were doing in the military constituted official *writing*. For example, many of the student-veteran participants did not see their daily emails, weekly maintenance logs, and quarterly evaluation reports as writing although, in fact, they put a great deal of thought into how these texts should be written.

Armed with the information from the surveys, we conducted interviews with each participant and delved more deeply into their experience with military writing, probed how they understood writing and, more importantly, how that writing had influenced their short time in college. In some instances, I was disappointed with the lack of information. In other instances, however, I was surprised by what the student-veterans told me. I provide more information about the specifics of my research methodology in chapter three of this thesis.

To contextualize this project, I first present information about the GI Bill and its historical antecedents. I also explore existing research surrounding student-veterans. This thesis topic was chosen because of a personal interest. However, through the research that follows, I demonstrate why this topic is relevant now and why it will impact all campuses of higher learning. I center my research specifically on the composition classroom because I believe this location, more than others, can produce growth and maturation of writers, students, and individuals beyond other locations. Writing transcends disciplines and allows individuals to recognize merit in their own method(s) of composition. It is through writing that instructors can foster an understanding and development of critical thinking and sustained independent thinking. Additionally, writing can be the bridge between activities performed in both military and academic settings. Though the transition from military to academic communities can be difficult, it is made more difficult by the tumultuous reorganization of one's "roles, relationships, routines, and assumptions" (Schlossberg 4). Understanding the similarities in writing activities and emphasizing prior knowledge allows the stark differences of the military and the academy to

seem less important, making the transition easier and the environment not so foreign. Ultimately, if we as instructors know more about this population and their writing preparation, then we can better serve their needs in the composition classroom. It is here where I now begin to address wider concerns about the ways that student-veterans are taught to write.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Historical Context —The GI Bill From Past to Present

Certainly, with those who are currently serving in the military making up

only 0.7% of the population of the United States and the total number of veterans at

only 7% ("Veterans"), it could be rationalized that this group is too small to make

much difference. Not so: with an understanding of the GI Bill program, the most

ambitious initiative of its kind since 1944, and the historical shaping of higher

education through its implementation and impacts, we can begin to see why all

college campuses should be paying attention to the new GI Bill. The benefits

associated with the historic bill have allowed hundreds of thousands of service

members to attend college when they otherwise would not have been able to, but

the program also had a profound impact on the campuses themselves and their

opinion towards married students, class sizes, and even who had the right to attend

institutions of higher learning.

The debate surrounding the proposal of the Serviceman's Readjustment Act

(Public Law 346, 1944), commonly known as the GI Bill of World War II, was fraught

with well- and not so well-intentioned promotion, along with inaccurate predictions,

misinformed politicking, and shameless lobbying. Certainly, in the confusion of

coordinating such a large bill, few were capable of imagining its secondary and

tertiary impacts upon the academic and social landscape. Congressional

representatives debated its merits and costs, and those on college campuses

initially—and for quite some time after—predicted that veterans would be

underperformers who merely attended college to receive the monthly stipend

(Olson 101). Legislators rationalized that if the government were to provide benefits to soldiers, they would be less motivated to find jobs. Moreover, sending combat veterans to college seemed questionable, as college was an experience usually only granted to the wealthy ("Born of Controversy"). Thankfully, the bill had its proponents, even if those proponents, such as sociologist Willard Waller, only advocated its passage because it was the "shortest route to real rehabilitation, whose goal must be to enmesh the solider once more in the communicative process of society, and to restore him to his rightful place in competition" (151). Other proponents of the bill looked at it merely as a way of "maintaining economic health and political stability" and hopefully averting a financial crisis, which foreboding governmental predictions made seem inevitable: "Within the first year of the demobilization process there will exist the likelihood, if not the certainty, of a large volume of unemployed, involving as many as 8 or 9 million" (Olson 1). Whatever the motives, be they philosophical, political, or economic, no one in Washington was willing to see "the man in uniform...go from the battle line to the breadline" (20). Though the debate continued, the proposal was put to a vote. In a political move that changed the lives of thousands of American service members, Representative John Gibson of Georgia was rushed back to Washington, D.C, in June of 1944 to cast the passing vote that broke the deadlocked debate surrounding the first GI Bill. This single piece of legislation that has had such landmark impacts on the country's social, economic, and educational landscape almost wasn't to be.

In fact, a scant 8,200 servicemen took advantage of the GI Bill in its first year; ten years later, when the VA issued its last check for the World War II program,

2,232,000 had attended college under this program (Olson 43). At its peak in 1947, GI Bill beneficiaries made up almost half of all college attendees ("Born of Controversy"). They were pronounced to be "singularly mature…time conscious, industrious, and capable" (Olson 49) by numerous educators, and their surprisingly outstanding performance did much to change the negative perception of the veteran: "In a postwar era filled with disappointment, the record enrollment and academic achievement of the veterans who went to college under the GI Bill must be considered one of the country's pleasant surprises" (56).

More than correcting stigmas, though, veterans under the GI Bill were responsible for significant social and educational shifts, too. Married veterans, of whom there were many, brought their wives with them to school and forced a change in prewar policy that threatened automatic expulsion for students who married (Olson 102). Furthermore, although only 2.9% of GI Bill beneficiaries were women, the bill affected the lives of many, many more. Because of the change in attitude brought about by the GI Bill, getting married and having a child no longer forced women to leave school. Additionally, the deluge of veterans flooding college campuses changed how schools operated—"larger classes, larger colleges, and increased use of graduate students as teachers had accomplished educational wonders for the veterans" (103) and took the number of schools with over 20,000 students from eight in 1948 to fifty-five in 1967. This act marked the "tremendous growth in postsecondary institutions [that] occurred during that era" (DiRamio and Jarvis ix) and was instrumental in facilitating societal acceptance of large universities that has been the norm for the last five decades. The American

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population, as a whole, was also to benefit. In fact, as Edward Humes points out in his book *Over Here: How the GI Bill Transformed the American Dream*, the GI Bill "ripple effect" can be credited with saving millions of lives:

> GI Bill-educated doctors, more than 60,000 of them, flooded…new hospitals and emergency rooms, delivering care to patients, conducting research, devising new treatments—from chemotherapy regimens to heart pacemakers, neurosurgical breakthroughs to instruments for detecting osteoporosis. (Humes 146)

The benefits made available to returning World War II veterans were unprecedented and subsequently influenced not only the workforce of the latter half of the 20th century but also the "collegiate population by making college a viable option for men from a range of sociodemographic backgrounds including minorities, children of immigrants, and children raised in low income households" (Bound and Turner 1). It was through veterans' actions on campus and the GI Bill sponsorship that a government investment in education came to be understood as having "paid rich dividends to society and to the concept of democracy" (Olson 110).[1]

One of the greatest legacies of the World War II GI Bill, though, was the foundation and support for those versions of the GI Bill that followed—the Korean, Vietnam, Montgomery, and most currently, Post-9/11 adaptations. The bill has been revamped several times over the last 65 years as economic climates and costs of living have changed, with the most recent change made in 2008. Signed into law on August 1, 2009, the Post-9/11 GI Bill reflects some of the same benefits of the original GI Bill, but it provides greater resources to veterans, including housing allowances and book stipends in addition to greater tuition assistance, and as of November 2011, $3.6 billion had been allocated to the Post-9/11 GI Bill entitlement

(Lang and Powers 2). The numbers of soldiers taking advantage of this program have been staggering, and of the approximate 300,000 service members that separate from active duty every year, a greater percentage is expected to go back to school because of "the drawdown of troops form Iraq, and an uncertain economic climate with limited job opportunities" (Lang and Powers 2). In my local setting, Colorado State University reported in Fall 2011 that the 702 certified Post-9/11 beneficiary enrollment represented an increase of 18% over the previous year. Notably, this number also included designated dependents of veterans, active duty soldiers, and children of those killed in action, all to whom GI Bill benefits extend.

During the decades between Vietnam and September 11, 2001, which were defined by peacekeeping operations, the excitement surrounding student-veterans was eclipsed by other, more timely subjects. However, interest in student-veterans resurfaced in this post-9/11 era. Research concerning this special population has become an increasingly popular topic in the last three years, especially after the Post-9/11 GI Bill was signed into law in August 2009.[2] We educators, scholars, and administrators once again find thousands of veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) capitalizing on their opportunity to attend institutions of higher learning. College campuses are turning a mostly (but not entirely) well-meaning eye towards the recruitment, development, and retention of this population, and with that have come guaranteed tuition payments, grant money, and publications. Ultimately, in time, we can also hope for increased knowledge of how best to also nurture student-veterans' movement into civilian and academic life.

While conducting my research into this activity, I noticed that much attention was being paid to student-veterans and their on-campus support services but rarely did scholarly reports speak to their past educational preparation and current needs, specifically in writing and communication. Nor did scholarship seek to describe the instruction in language use student-veterans had received and employed in the armed forces. Therefore, this thesis does just that—explores the literacy practices student-veterans retain and employ, the subset of these communication strategies they apply in the writing classroom, why these approaches are used, and how these writing performances fit or don't fit with university expectations for discourse communities.

Though the implications of the Post-9/11 GI Bill are still relatively young and the numbers of beneficiaries are still being counted, one need only look at the impact of the Montgomery GI Bill to understand what this program means. Quite clearly, this population is neither going away nor is it getting smaller, and it is likely that this generation of veterans will influence economic, political, and social innovation just as previous GI Bill recipients did. Having already proven their dedication to the greater good in the form of military service, we can expect them to lend this same service to the cause of the many important cultural problems of our day—regrowth of a global economy, environmental stewardship, and the complicated yet imperative pursuit of national security, to name but a few. It is essential, then, that we as educators and mentors understand as much as we can about student-veterans and encourage their success throughout their postsecondary careers.

Student-Veterans — How This Population Differs From Traditional and Non-traditional Students

While it is reasonable to assume that as veterans separate from the military, their numbers will grow on most college campuses, this isn't just a numbers game—knowing that student-veterans are an ever-increasing population isn't enough. Realizing how these student-veterans got to college campuses is important; moreover, knowing what makes them a special population is crucial. By virtue of the nature of enlistment in the armed forces, all veterans have been exposed to similar teaching and learning styles, and because an enlistment is a long-term commitment, veterans have participated in these styles for at least four years (barring any unexpected separations, such as medical retirements and official Reductions In Force). Therefore, while not every veteran learns the same way or has the same ideals and beliefs about education, their military classroom experience can be grouped together, as each service has a similar way of teaching tactics, techniques, and procedures.

In his article "Documenting the Needs of Student Veterans with Disabilities," Allan Shackelford stipulates that not only do student veterans differ from the typical, college-age student, but they also differ from other nontraditional students (36).[3] In many ways, student-veterans are no different from traditional students in that they are "eager to learn, looking for next steps, and wanting to prepare for the future" (Ward xiii). However, between challenges with "financial aid, transfer credits, educational programs, health care, and classroom dynamics" (Hermann, Raybeck, and Wilson 99), student-veterans must grapple with issues specific to veterans in addition to those affecting most non-traditional students. Another complementary

article by DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell points out that student-veterans do, in

fact, meet qualifications for their own "special needs population" (97) and actions

should be taken to acknowledge their unique learning needs, something that many

college campuses are beginning to do. And though campuses should be applauded

for recognizing that student-veterans do, indeed, have unique learning needs, those

needs cannot be addressed without first exploring the educational foundation from

which those veterans come—both high school, an environment not significantly

different from any other student, *and* the military, an environment very different

from all other students. Their learning styles are not the only things that set them

apart, however. Student-veterans very often have "adjustment difficulties, especially

strained or terminated relationships," and are often feel they have been thrust from

a family-type unit of tight camaraderie in the service to a new environment without

that close-knit support (DiRamio et al. 86). This is especially important because

military culture relies so heavily on team mentality, a point that will be discussed

further in the next section. Student-veterans in this instance are not unlike

traditional students who have just left home for the first time, finding themselves in

search of a support structure and a role into which they fit comfortably. They do

differ, quite obviously, in degree of life experience, some of which was gained in the

crucible of combat and time spent away from an official academic atmosphere.

Runmann and Hamrick go into further detail, explaining that the challenges student-

veterans face are events

> ...such as working through confusing or perplexing expectations in regard to
> personal and social roles; resolving unpredictable disruptions of their good
> standing with respect to eligibility for services or financial assistance;
> ...locating or creating comfortable and supportive environments; or

resuming their life as a student—frequently with greater seriousness of purpose than the student population at large. (30)

It should come as no surprise, then, that studies cite student-veterans' frustration with their traditional 18-year-old classmates who lack the life experience, accountability, and responsibility of their veteran cohorts (DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell 87). Others are frustrated when their professors are perceived to be coddling veterans with relaxed standards, unwanted sympathy, and misunderstandings of how student-veterans should be treated (McClellan).

In a recent training course introducing local faculty to student-veterans in which I participated, many instructors expressed an interest in allowing failing student-veterans an opportunity to regroup and retake their courses—a second chance, given the emotional stress the instructors assumed each veteran was under. The student-veterans on the panel immediately disagreed, wanting the instructors to hold student-veterans to a standard, as this approach was more in keeping with their previous experiences as well as what student-veterans have been taught to value and respect. In fact, an insistence upon a standard serves to motivate student-veterans more than it sets them back. Moreover, normal civilian courtesies like deadline extensions, which are often given and frequently necessary in an academic environment, are often seen by student-veterans as indulging unprepared and immature students. I discuss these specific examples to demonstrate that it is not only classroom material and pace of instruction that affects the way student-veterans learn and interact in the classroom. Much of their impression comes from how leadership and classroom management are handled by the professor, which, in turn, wields as much influence as the material itself. Authority is something one has

because of a position or enunciative mode; respect, on the other hand, is earned and without it, authority is merely an empty formality. Student-veterans expect professors to embody both, while the professors themselves may value these two qualities in an entirely different way.

As previously mentioned, much of the research done to date has been in the field of student development rather than on pedagogical strategies. Many researchers have identified universal elements that have heretofore shown to have a positive impact on a student-veterans' adjustment efforts: engagement efforts, mentoring, peer support, faculty training, community leadership experiences, network opportunities, academic advising, and disability services/accommodations (Branker 64; Cook and Kim, 2; DiRamio, Ackerman, and Mitchell 93; "Serving Those Who Serve" 11; Shackelford 41). College campuses have paid attention to many of these elements. In fact, they have reaped the benefits of being recognized as 'military-friendly' by advancing and improving such endeavors as relaxed residency, accepting military credits, having a dedicated veterans office and support services, and stressing academic help specifically for veterans ("Best for Vets").

However, for as much as campuses have paid attention to the administrative services, they have lingered too long in advancing pedagogical strategies and faculty education. This is, in part, due to the paucity of research that surrounds student-veteran instructional needs. For instance, an unresearched belief exists that student-veterans come to higher education with a deficit stemming from years spent away from an academic setting, from writing, and from learning. My research suggests, in contrast, that student-veterans possess no such deficit as long as we understand—

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and student-veterans themselves understand—the different types of learning and writing that did occur during those years of service. As DiRamio and Jarvis point out, student-veterans "bring life experiences that few traditional-age students or, for that matter, faculty members, campus staff, or administrators can relate to or claim for themselves" (ix). Additionally, it is important to understand that the student-veteran population *is* a relatively educated group that understands the importance of secondary education. A 2011 Pew research study entitled "War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era" reported that 75% of Post-9/11 veterans joined the armed forces because of education benefits (33) and 92.5% of active duty forces have a high school diploma, compared with 82.8% of "comparably aged civilians" (4; see also "Educational Attainment"). Furthermore, by focusing on professional and personal development, with training events such as Sergeants' Time Training and Officer Professional Development, for instance, the military continues to place importance on the role of education long after one enlists.

One issue that complicates this population is the aura of combat disability that surrounds the student-veteran. While this may not seem related to specific literacy strategies, it does give another clue as to why this population is significantly different from both traditional and non-traditional students. Many instructors assume they need to tailor their teaching strategies to accommodate disabilities, when in fact many student-veterans do not have these disabilities or the pathologization is not in keeping with how student-veterans see themselves and their population. Many civilians and laypeople assume a correlation between

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disability and veteran status, but not every student-veteran has been in combat and not every combat veteran has a signature wound of the OIF and OEF conflicts.

That being said, however, the propensity for this population to be affected by Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder/Injury (PTSD/I) is much greater than that of the general U.S. adult population. Church reports that 3% of the U.S. adult population may experience PTSD in a given year, whereas up to 30% of combat veterans will receive a PTSD diagnosis (47). Also, because TBI could take up to a few years for symptoms to manifest and many cases of PTSD/I go unnoticed, statistics tend to vary greatly according to the study. Gregg Zoroya reports that "more than one in four U.S. troops have come home from the Iraq war with health problems that require medical or mental health treatment," a troubling statistic even as a liberal estimate. In order to serve these growing groups of veterans, Burnett and Segoria discuss needed collaborative efforts in three areas: "(a) collaboration between Disabled Student Services (DSS) and Veterans Service Officer (VSO); (b) collaboration within the organizational structure of the academic institution; and (c) collaboration with the community at large" (53). They also recognize the stigma that veterans associate with the term *disabled* and to which they are loathe to admit, further complicating the learning and power dynamic within the classroom. Specifically discussing this power dynamic, Hibbs and Pothier expose a discomfort with a heavy reliance on biomedical classification—a patholigization—of disabilities, emphasizing an "individualized limitation or deficit" (205). This emphasis on the individual will also lead to the individual responsibility of self-identifying, providing current medical documentation, and negotiating his or

her own academic accommodations. It is in this negotiation, too, that the troublesome power structure comes into play, where a student and instructor are thought to have (but clearly cannot have) equal shares of power and bargaining positions (200).

Realizing this to be a symptom of larger societal issues, Dana Cloud insists that what is perceived to be wrong with veterans is definitely not for the individual alone to tackle. Specifically addressing stress experienced as a result of warfare, she advocates that therapists "take care to contextualize the experience of suffering in social and political terms, deflect blame away from the individual patient, and hold responsible structures of power generative of psychological distress" (xix). Indeed, this challenges both the way student-veterans might think of their personal situations and the societal temptation of grouping together all things military.

All of these factors contextualize what has been recently written about student-veterans. To reiterate, almost all of the research on post-9/11 era student-veterans has been that of student development, transition, and disability studies. It is in an effort to better understand this population that I insist we must push farther and know more about their foundation of learning and textual production in the military, rather than solely focusing on their on-campus social challenges and activities.

Theoretical Impact — Constituted Identities and Representations

To understand, then, how student-veterans situate themselves within the classroom, it is necessary to understand the identities with which they are

associating, both those that they have generated themselves and the reaction to those generated for them (i.e., those who see student-veterans as a disabled or educationally deficient population). Drawing on Foucault's notions of constitutive representation, I examine the environment from which the student-veteran has come in terms of how it constitutes an identity of *soldier*[4] and enlisted member of the armed forces and how that identity is being challenged or changed as a student.

It is in initial training—boot camp—that the military seeks the redefine the identities of new recruits into soldiers. The individual, by design, feels lost. Drill sergeants are unusually aggressive, mornings are unusually early, and friends are made unusually quickly. The first few days of boot camp specifically highlight the vulnerability of the individual body and, recognizing their mutual dependence on one another, work to solidify natural bonds between potential soldiers. It is not enough to merely tell recruits that they must work with and trust each other—the system purposefully creates situations where soldiers must rely on one another in order to survive the artificial experience of boot camp so that they continue this practice in the very real experience of combat. Basic training requires of each participant devotion to a team of like-minded, like-trained individuals. The common, yet complicated, belief is that there is no gender or race—only the Army Green of the soldier or the Air Force Blue of the airman. This training seeks to change the individual so that he or she no longer associates with an individual identity but willingly accepts becoming a Deleuzian component of a bigger machine "with no subjectivity…[that] is nothing more than the connections and productions it makes" (Colebrook 55). Thus, performing in his combat function, a Marine infantry

lieutenant is a "guidance system for forty rifles, three machine guns, a bunch of mortars, several artillery batteries, three calibers of naval guns, and four kinds of attack aircraft" (Marlantes 512). Soldiers' actions are merely a part of a system, a much larger system guided, maintained, and directed by a community. However, each rifleman, mortarman, artilleryman, and pilot was once—and still must also be—a husband, a wife, a son, a daughter. Those identities never go away, and the soldier is constantly moving in between, through, and around all of these selves.

However, as recent social identity theory posits, a transformational shift in how one categorizes him or herself must occur in order to attain the group identification and buy-in required of the armed forces:

> ...A person can act as an army officer only to the extent that they define themselves less as a unique individual (e.g. as the conservationist who likes animals and works for children's charities) and more as someone who is categorically interchangeable with other officers and whose behavior is regulated by norms associated with that category (e.g. to wear a uniform, follow orders, and distrust the enemy). (Haslam 44)

This theory of self-categorization means that while James Gee's ideas of a collection of identities may be legitimate, a group like the military demands of its members more of an affiliation than other groups. The military is not just a job or a hobby—it is truly a life choice, one that some make more freely than others, but nonetheless, a choice that requires a change in life habits, beginning on the first day of training.

Further instilled during the training of recruits are the discursively defined values of loyalty, duty, respect for authority and others, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage. New recruits are called warriors, a once-archaic term now used to "evoke connotations of valor, gallantry and honor for the modern military" (Saffire) and to distance representations from the posture of dutiful

following connoted by the term "soldier." Every day, new recruits recite and

inevitably, eventually identify with the Warrior Ethos:

> *I am an American soldier.*
> *I am a Warrior and a member of a team…*
> *I will always place the mission first.*
> *I will never accept defeat.*
> *I will never quit.*
> *I will never leave a fallen comrade.*

This ethos and the structure of power/knowledge embedded in basic

training is what James Gee calls "a sort of 'identity kit' which comes with costume

and instructions on how to think, act, talk, and write, so as to take on a social role

that others will recognize" (Gee 7). Moreover, Foucault argues that it is exactly these

"constitutive and disciplinary properties of discursive practices…[that demonstrate]

how language works to not only produce meaning but also particular kinds of

objects and subjects upon whom and through which particular relations of power

are realized" (Graham 4). It is this constitutive language that gives value to

physicality, the very attributes that Foucault recognizes in "Docile Bodies": "Those

[signs] most suited to this [military] profession are a lively alert manner, an erect

head, a taut stomach, broad shoulders…slender legs and dry feet, because a man of

such a figure could not fail to be agile and strong" (179).

The design of the uniform even goes beyond the physical attributes of the

body with prominent spaces for patches and unit crests, intended to represent "the

natural signs of…strength and…courage" (Foucault 179). The Velcro spot sewn onto

the right shoulder of every uniform remains bare until one has performed in combat.

The patch represents a team who went into combat with a mission; it symbolizes

time spent away from a family unit, given to an organization that has been set up to

protect a belief system which values bodies, histories, and exchange capital formed within an invisible but all-too-influential structure of power/knowledge. It is here that the creation of the soldier identity is, in varying degrees, accepted and adopted.

Another striking and fundamental element of identity in this military system is rank. The entire system is built upon a hierarchy of rank, and each rank has its associated social statuses and stigmas. The most acute difference in rank is that of officers and enlisted service members. Though some soldiers may look upon the other ranks with varying degrees of negativity, the military is successfully employing this hierarchy because it has been shown to work in this particular setting of accountability and responsibility. The relationship between these two groups is complex, but the rank system is designed to be complementary—they are not at odds with one another but work interchangeably with different roles.

To be a veteran, then, is to recognize these values as something once performed, and it greatly varies by individual how much they espouse or still represent these values. Identities are constituted by the discourse of the military, and student-veterans are in a state of flux between recently performing as a warrior, knowing how they should perform as a veteran, and figuring out how that conflicts, if at all, with how they will perform as a student. In fact, identity theorist Arthur Chickering sees "establishment of identity as the core developmental issue with which students grapple during the college years" (Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito 36). When soldiers move from the military discourse to that of civilian, academic, gender, and veteran communities, they may struggle, for a time, to adopt an identity in keeping with new environs. Ideas of self and others have been inculcated and

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internalized; one does not easily turn these off. Hence, as Gee has said, they will never completely make that transformation from veteran to student.

A difficult transition that student-veterans must make is the realization that knowledge no longer comes from an authority but from the self, "based on individual learning and experiences" (Baechtold and DeSawal 38). However, as Foucault argues, knowledge never actually comes from the self anyway, but instead, is constituted from the discourse and structure of power/knowledge surrounding the body. The process by which a body becomes a soldier is rather "discontinuous," quickly breaking "with the ways of speaking and seeing" as an individual, young adult, or civilian and entering into "a whole new 'regime' in discourse and forms of knowledge" (Foucault 54). With this conclusion, then, it is reasonable to expect that a part of their soldier identity will always be a part of their performance, both in identity constitution and in their writing.

The Constraints and Freedoms of Genre in a Discourse Community

An appreciation for why student-veterans and their learning methods are different and important, combined with the identities that the student-veteran brings to and adopts in the classroom, prepares us to address the ways in which student-veterans are familiar with textual production. Exploring the different genres of the military will also offer insight into this pursuit. Genre theory is quite applicable in this context because almost all professional and inter-unit correspondence in the military culture is based not only within a genre, but within a certain strategy of conveying meaning in that genre. However, these genres are so

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much more than merely containers in which to pour information. They are "sites of action" that "do not just help us define and organize kinds of texts" (Bawarshi 17). They actually play a surprisingly important social role in the military context.

In her book *Writing Genres,* Amy Devitt explains genre and its implications as a potentially "trivial and dangerous concept" (4) if not understood in its entirety. Seeing genre merely as a form permanently disassociates it with content. Instead, in a rhetorical sense, genres are "sites in which communicants use language to make certain situated activities possible" (Bawarshi 19). Genre theory has much to offer in its application to the military. Most text-based, literate events in a military setting exclusively rely on "forms and technical manuals" (Larson 79), and it may only be through genre theory that rhetoricians and practitioners can begin to understand military genres as more than numbered documents written in a prescribed writing style. They can move beyond the critiques of genre writing as "formulaic" and "divorced from contemporary understanding of how language works" (Devitt 5) and into understanding them as sites of action.

Since genre theory was introduced, genre has morphed beyond classifying literary, textual events to examining everyday uses of language. It has evolved from a critical, evaluative instrument to one that is more rhetorical and participant-driven, "associated with but not defined by textual form" (Devitt 11), and while it can be and still is used in a classificatory manner, genre theory can also investigate "the linguistic, sociological, and psychological assumptions underlying and shaping these text-types" (Bawarshi 17). Moreover, genres and situations are "reciprocal and dynamic" (Devitt 21) in that a situation might demand a certain genred

response, and a genre, in turn, demands a response in a certain situation. Devitt argues that a definition of genre must take into consideration culture as well as other influences and effects of other genres, stating that the "existence of genres influences people's use of genres" (28). Contexts, genre, and action cannot be separated, and she proposes that "genre be seen not as a response to recurring situation but as a nexus between an individual's actions and a socially defined context" (Devitt 31).

Expanding on Devitt's concept of genre, Schryer, Mian, Spafford and Lingard see genres as "regulated and regularized strategies that social agents use to negotiate their way through time and space" (220), a definition that readily applies to that need for communication within military units across the world. These units may speak the same military language, but not always the same dialect or 'operational speak,' and military genres "provide enough structure and enough shared meaning for participation" from each varying group (Schryer et al. 223).

It may be useful to situate military writing styles and genres within genre theory, as this theory provides a reasonable explanation for much of the data this thesis revealed. Although I will speak to this point in detail later, genred writing in the military is never done without a purpose, an active prompt. In response to missions, be they administrative or operational, all soldiers know to turn to a certain genre in order to communicate a mission requirement. Indeed, all military writing is done as a cultured, social response to a requirement. Each genre used in the military is a "dynamic site for production and regulation of textured, ideological activities" (Bawarshi 18). The "habitual language practices" used in military writing

are born from on-the-job experience and direct guidance from regulations in order

to "enact and reproduce situated relations, commitments, and actions" (Bawarshi

18). No language is neutral—a spark of a previously existing idea resides behind

each word, each phrase. In a military setting—in fact, in many settings that rely so

heavily on genre—it is the "smaller bits of language that alert analysts to underlying

ideas, values, and beliefs" (Devitt, Bawarshi, and Reiff 543). Charles Bazerman notes,

"Genres are the familiar places we go to create intelligible communicative action

with each other and the guideposts we use to explore the unfamiliar" (19), and

when individuals are trying to communicate with the military discourse community

for the first—or the umpteenth—time, genres play crucial roles as "keys to

understanding" (Devitt et al. 553).

Standard genres, though, are not the only ways in which meaning is made in

military communication. Each word—specifically, each acronym, abbreviation,

idiosyncrasy, and direct order—"carries a history of how words have been used"

(Bakhtin 79), and no genre can carry a discourse without the help of the language

used within that genre. Still, though, genre is not merely a place to put words laden

with hidden meaning. Instead, and especially in this instance, "genres are dynamic

discursive formations in which ideology is naturalized and realized in specific social

actions, relations, and subjectivities" (Bawarshi 7). Military genres are not simply

forms or five-paragraph operations orders. They are spaces of communication, of

action and reaction, of "ongoing perturbation and response" (Cooper 437).

I employ genre theory in this thesis for two reasons. First, knowledge of

military writing—only accomplished by understanding the genres located within

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that community—would provide the background that all composition instructors should know about when teaching student-veterans. It is this activity that will better situate them as mentors and facilitators for this group of non-traditional students and provide them with a working knowledge of the preparation veterans received while in the military. Using genre analysis is an attempt to go beyond military discourses and explore the intersection and "[comparison of] academic and professional discourses across cultures and languages" (Swales and Luebs, 137) while still "inquiring into the localized, textured conditions in which cognition and social activities are organized" (Bawarshi 5).

Secondly, in a similar vein, composition instructors can use this knowledge to bridge the two seemingly unrelated communities of the military and the classroom. By pointing out the rhetorical uses within military genres that student-veterans have already performed (though they may not have recognized it as such), composition instructors can "[show] the students the legitimacy of the implicit knowledge and its availability as scaffolding in apparently unfamiliar tasks" (Brown, Collins, and Duguid 38). They recognize what they have done in the military as "authentic activity" and can then transfer that to a different setting, using "their fledgling conceptual knowledge in activity [and] seeing that activity in a new light, which in turn leads to the further development of the conceptual knowledge" (Brown et al. 39). This concept is what Adam Kern noted in the epigraph of this thesis: he "learned how to organize [his] thoughts and get them on paper" in his composition class because of the writing experience he had in the Army. In this way, genre theory applied to military writing goes beyond merely being familiar with a

student-veteran's past textual production. If used correctly, the application of this theory directly supports positive interactions and can result in a highly functional composition classroom setting.

However, one cannot employ genre theory without also understanding its interplay with the discourse community in which it is used. A concept first introduced in composition studies in the early 1980s, the term *discourse community* has been defined, delineated, and derided by many leading composition theorists. Swales defined discourse communities as "sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals" (9). Efforts to group together writing practices caused critics, namely Joseph Harris and Lester Faigley, to highlight the "tensions and discontinuities in the writing practices of any community" (Beaufort 488) and point out how the boundaries of these communities can "[exclude] minority or dissenting voices" (Babin and Harrison 154). While these critiques may be applicable to many discourse communities, I argue that they are less germane when applied to the military. Certainly, military writing has its "tensions and discontinuities," but all writing is expected to be uniform; this is what classifies it as military writing. Minority or dissenting voices are not included, either, as the hierarchical decision-making system of the military does not, in practice, include these voices because of mission expediency. Other venues exist for dissenting voices, but military genre writing is usually not one of them.

Definitions of discourse community, therefore, provide a much stronger connection to the military than do its criticisms. In *Genre Analysis,* Swales offers six characteristics that structure discourse communities, all of which apply to the

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military, particularly the "[utilization and possession of] one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims" and "[acquisition of] a specific lexis…of increasingly shared and specialized terminology" (Swales 26). Necessary for the livelihood of a community is the requirement to pass on knowledge of typified genres and "corpus linguistics" (Bawarshi and Reiff 42) to new members in order for them to also become participating members of a specific discourse. A perfect example of this requirement is boot camp, discussed in the previous section. It is here where the idiosyncratic language of the military is passed on and "the teaching of key genres is…a means of helping learners gain access to…accrued cultural capital" (Hyland 24). The habitual use of genre in the military promotes an environment where "participants…employ common discourse strategies for communicating and practicing…cognitive habits, goals, assumption, and values" (Bawarshi 5). Finally, as Hansen and Adams posit, "Without genre knowledge a person can't effectively participate in the conversation of the community, even if that person has a great deal of subject matter knowledge."

Throughout this thesis, my descriptions and assumptions about the military are in keeping with the above characteristics of a discourse community. Although the term has fallen out of favor with many theorists, I believe that the military embodies this concept more than most academic communities and disciplines because of its communication and mission requirements, all of which will be discussed throughout this project.

Having presented the importance of the student-veteran population and the theoretical impact of both constitutive representation and genre on this group and their textual production, I will now explain the research guidelines that I used in order to pursue this course of study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

With the goal of finding out more about student-veterans' writings, informed by identities and genre, I relied upon surveys and interviews from nine student-veterans with very different military and educational backgrounds but all now attending Colorado State University, a medium-sized R1 public institution. Many students in first-year composition classrooms do not actively think about how they write or what underlies their methods of meaning-making; thus, I needed to explore their histories of writing rather than examine current examples. These two strategies, then—the survey and interviews—proved very useful in the pursuit of this information. Thankfully, at the time I undertook this thesis, I was also employed by two faculty members in my department as a graduate researcher on a larger, longitudinal study of student-veterans' developing literacy skills, understanding of genre, and the integration of literacy skills into their personal and professional lives (Doe, Langstraat, and Hadlock). I was able to weave my thesis-specific questions into those questions geared towards long-term development and understanding, and I used trends found within the survey to address both my thesis considerations as well as those for the longitudinal study. There was no conflict of interest between the two studies—in fact, they complemented each other quite well—but more importantly, I required no more from subjects who had already consented to our already established study.

The student-veteran population at Colorado State University is quite large in relation to other campuses; however, it is still a relatively small population from which to draw participants for a study. Repeatedly asking for consent from the same

students would have certainly been detrimental to our relationship, and I appreciated being able to create a symbiosis between the two studies. It should be noted, however, that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol had to be slightly amended for purposes of adding some questions to the survey and interview that would specifically address my interests. IRB approval for all research instruments was obtained prior to the start of the study. The survey consisted of 38 questions, and the interview contained 40 questions. The interviews were designed to take no more than 60 minutes and all were recorded on a digital recorder and subsequently transcribed. The portion of the interviews pertaining to my interests were approximately 15 minutes or less per interview.

Those individuals who consented to participate in this thesis work were student-veterans in their first two years of coursework at Colorado State University. Represented within the nine participants were all armed services—Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines—aged 24 to 34, and each was given a randomly assigned pseudonym upon entering into the study. No preference was given to those who had earned credits while still in the service, nor to those who expressed more experience with professional textual production.

The survey was used in order to "[establish] foundational demographic, military service, and educational information" (Doe et al.). Additionally, the specific survey questions that we used allowed me to enumerate and distinctly identify those forms of text production with which the student-veterans in this survey were most familiar. Specifically, they allowed us to ask about, in precise detail, the many different types of genres that I wanted to consider for this study, rather than leaving

descriptions open and ill-defined. One question that I referred to frequently asked about the kind of documents the participant produced in the military, listing as options emails, letters, memorandums, charts/visuals, videos, and reports. I also referred to a large chart that required participants to evaluate their greatest strengths as writers, including communicating to a specific audience, organizing ideas, supporting ideas, and offering a clear focus. It was from this chart that I could cross-reference their self-evaluated strengths with what they portrayed in the interviews. Without this survey, merely asking veterans about the types of writing they performed in the military would render answers that gave me the impression that none of them ever wrote anything during their time of service! The survey caused them to consider, perhaps for the first time, that writing practices they engaged while in the military actually qualify as writing. Additionally, the survey allowed me to correlate the type of job performed and length of time a student-veteran served with how profoundly the military may have affected each individual.

Even more significant to this thesis were the hour-long interviews, recorded and transcribed for each participant. It was in these conversations that my colleagues and I asked student-veterans to first identify what types of writing they did during their time in the service, and then we moved towards how they thought these different types of textual production affected their understanding and ability to perform assignments in their college classes (Appendix A).

While the interviews were, on average, an hour long, only some of the information contained therein was relevant to this project, as many of the questions were more relevant to the broader longitudinal study. It was at this point that I

transcribed those parts of the interviews that I thought would shed some light onto my original research questions. Even though this was only a small part of the full interviews, there was still a great deal of information in each of the interviewee's transcriptions. Thus, throughout my analysis of the data, I turned to grounded theory or the methodology known as "constant comparative analysis" to inform my subsequent actions. I drew heavily upon Strauss and Corbin:

> …[grounded theory is] derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through this research process…A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind…Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. (12)

I specifically used this method for two reasons. First, as Husserl explains, the type of research I am doing should be free of preconceptions or notions of what I want to find (135). However, as a member of the very organization that I am exploring, I cannot help but be affected by the "bitter cynicism and fervent belief" (Samet 179) I have for my institution, along with every feeling in between. While I may not have recognized all of my biases, I have at least recognized their potential existence. Employing grounded theory was a logical way of minimizing my personal interpretations and letting the data stand on their own.

Additionally, while I may not have always succeeded, I have striven not to speak for the veterans, but instead, "[represent] it from the perspective of the research participant(s)" (Lester 1). That common themes kept "[recurring] with more than one participant" (Lester 1) gave me hope that what I was finding with these few veterans could be inferences common to many student-veterans. Were I to use their words to support a predetermined argument, I do not feel that I could make that same claim.

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Therefore, using grounded theory method, constant comparative analysis, and, specifically, open coding, I "[opened] up the text and [exposed] the thoughts, ideas, and meanings contained therein" (Strauss and Corbin 102), only transcribing from those interviews information I found to specifically address the exploration of military literacies in light of my research questions. Statements found as such were noted and recorded in a separate file. I then analyzed each phrase unit within the gathered excerpts, while noting and keeping them in their original contexts. Phrase units, as I employed them in this thesis, averaged three to six sentences in length, long enough so that they retained their organic and original meaning but short enough so that I could use them to support specific points in my discussion. Typically, the questions asked during the interview were rather open-ended, and most of the participants provided very informative, long answers coupled with examples and elaboration. In fact, many of these answers took up significant time and space on the transcriptions. Following Strauss and Corbin's guidance, I segmented the answers into "discrete parts" that better allowed for "[close examination] and [comparison] for similarities and differences" (Strauss and Corbin 102). The phrase units enabled me to concentrate on a single, germane point without reducing meaning. For example, in response to the question, "What kind of writing did you do in the military?" one respondent gave an answer that was 410 words long. Of that complete answer, six sentences directly addressed one subcategory, ten sentences addressed another subcategory, four sentences spoke to a third subcategory, and two sentences explored a final subcategory.

Once I gathered all of the phrase units from different interviews, conceptual similarities started emerging from the data, which I grouped together into categories (Strauss and Corbin 102). Because I asked the participants the same questions, and because each service in the military has similar ways of operating, many answers spoke to the same concepts. Naming these concepts allowed me to "group similar events, happenings, and objects under a common heading" even though they all spoke to individual experience and "discrete elements" (Strauss and Corbin 103). Moreover, naming categories allowed me to identify the independent elements of each phrase unit and subsequently describe the action that brought them together. Admittedly, the answers were a direct result of the questions that were asked of these student-veterans, and one might assume that I always had either direct or indirect control over what topics were addressed. However, the open-ended questions were formed "not to generate data but rather to generate ideas or ways of looking at the data" (Strauss and Corbin 90). Furthermore, the codes were created after all of the transcripts were completed. In many ways, then, the patterns emerged organically, rather than as a direct result of questions derived from preconceived themes.

After identifying and separating the phrase units, I created a spreadsheet that included the categories that had emerged from the phrase units (Figure 1). Since the purpose of this thesis is not to present a solution to a given problem, but to explore, describe, and inform, I placed no evaluative judgments on any of the categories. I wanted to let the voices of the student-veterans themselves show me what was most important. I derived six emergent categories from the interviews—officer/enlisted

Figure 1 — Coding matrix

Officer/Enlisted	Genre function			Identity as veteran	Types of military writing	Acute difference of military vs academic writing	Military ways of learning	Miscellaneous
	Action-based writing	Audience-based writing	Writing as "non-writing"					
"The military doesn't really care about your writing unless you're in the officer ranks where you can't afford to look like an idiot. You know, you're expected to, if you're an officer, you're expected to be a capable writer."	"Not academic writing, but technical writing. I mean, writing matters anywhere, you can't get a point across, you can convey in speech wise, but nowadays everything is moving towards, "we want contracts", whether it's an electronic contract or whatever, its still writing. Uh, you have to be able to write those technically to save money, not only for the company, but to save your time. Cause if you're horrible at writing and it takes you a few hours to write a short little email that can written in five minutes, then you have huge time problems."	"...cause if I was talking to a commander, I cannot say what I would say to one of my guys that I would say to him. [So you already had a pretty good understanding of audience?] I had a pretty good understanding"	"That's the problem with composition as a whole—it's a writing class for a bunch of people who aren't writers. (49:35) You don't take your focus writing until two classes later...doesn't it make more sense for me just to take my focused writing in the beginning? If I wanted to take offshoot writing in the beginning, I could do that, but we sit there and force these kids to take basic composition courses where they obviously just don't care because they're not going to be a writer."	"They're out of the military, and the want to be out of the military. And so they understand that anything having to do with the military kind of leads them back to it, but for me, I know I'm out of the military. By me writing about the military, that's not me saying I'm connected to the military anymore. For me, I can disconnect that, but I understand some people can't disconnect that."	"Well, I felt like I was good at technical writing, not academic. Academic writing was a complete difference for me. Writing in this sense was a lot different. But for technical writing, I would say yes, just because you know writing on the test, you write technically, not to an academic audience."			"Um, I think if there is an effect, it might be sort of formalizing how you present information, the way that, uh, you construct an essay for class, the way that, um, you structure an argument or a statement. Um, it might be, sometimes I find myself falling into the same structure and it doesn't always fit, the material or what I'm trying to say."
"But military writing, like I said, it's...unless you're in the officer ranks, you don't do anything pertinent, unless you're a chief master sergeant and you're writing to another officer and of course those guys get the schooling and training to write, you know, to officers and to their enlisted troops. When you're lower ranking troops, you're writing is very limited and expectedly so."	"Because we sit there and celebrate individuality so much, "you're so special", "you need to realize how special you are". No, you need to realize you need to get this math problem done. Because it's the then-and-now you need to be concerned with. But, education now is only thing they're concerned with is the feelings and emotions and self-esteem of our students and how are they going to feel...doesn't matter how they feel."	"Maybe if you know a client better, you can change the tone a bit to a friendlier tone, but you still have to be perceptive about that. That's what the writing classes are the biggest, because they teach you the first thing in academic writing, we talked about you have to designate who your audience is."	"I didn't really think about it as writing too much, until I was doing the survey, and formal reports—I did a lot of this writing, you know, and a lot of times it was more direct steps to perform. (28:15) Torque, bolt this, you know. Instead of really kind of like normal writing, like essays, so it's...at the time I didn't really think about it as writing, but now that I think about it, it is, because you have to write to make sure that everybody understands it and performs it correctly."	"Probably the common form that I did was writing formal maintenance procedures. So, you know, if you needed to replace some piece of equipment, there's a lot of times you would have to struggle through various manuals, making it so that you didn't violate any procedure and making sure the maintenance was done correctly, with the correct parts. And I did that particular job for about two and a half years. [So what percentage of your job was actually spent writing, do you think?] It was probably half and half, researching what I needed to write, and piecing it together, and you, know, sometimes these packages would be twenty pages long, you know, perform this step, perform this step, do this, as well as kind of a general outline of what we were doing, um, sometimes parts or various pieces of research..."	"Technical is, I would say, more fact, quickly. While academic is fact, while explaining that fact. So technical, you don't really care about explanation of that fact, you want the little information about it. While academic, you put out a fact, you explain that fact in depth [and maybe even have multiple perspectives about it] right, and that's why I would say there's where the huge difference is. They both have facts; it's just how much in depth you go into that fact."		"So you write a lot of those types of reports, um, but military writing is...anybody can do it. You take a writers course...my NCO course...we had to take a writing course and it was just, you know, elementary writing. It literally is. Military writing is elementary writing. It's the same writing you learn in the seventh and sixth grade all over again and then you basically learn how to write the topic sentence and you learn the paragraph, and you indent here and put a period here."	
[Did you get a lot of feedback on your writing?] "Um, it was kind of funny because, it would go through different pieces of review, and the other enlisted folks—they would usually be the most technical experts, like, "you're doing this step wrong" or whatever, but then we'd send it to the officers, who were, you know, would have a college degree, and it would come back and they would point out grammatical errors. That happened pretty frequently. At least with the lower officers, and then it would go to the guys who were really responsible for it, and they would understand more of the technical side of it."		"The thing with accident reports or the mishap report is knowing how to, like I said, do the lawyering with it. How to properly present that, you know, this piece of equipment failed and not the guy operating it. So you can save the guy some slack...you know. And if not, it was a disciplinary report. "Why was this guy late?"...Because the guy sucks, like, if your computer broke, you would need maintenance to come in or something, or I'll to come in, and you'd have to write a work order — is that what it's called? — MAFS were work orders. So a pilot would come back and write up a MAF, I have to go fix it and regurgitate what the notes said to a point where you could make it function..."	"I didn't really think about it as writing too much, until I was doing the survey, and formal reports—I did a lot of this writing, you know, and a lot of times it was more direct steps to perform. (28:15) Torque, bolt this, you know. Instead of really kind of like normal writing, like essays, so it's...at the time I didn't really think about it as writing, but now that I think about it, it is, because you have to write to make sure that everybody understands it and performs it correctly."	"It is, and that's the thing about the military—that reality comes at you quick that you're not special. You do not stand out, you come in there and you start all over. You know, they say the military strips you of your individuality; that's not true. They strip you of the concept that you're achievements mean anything, as far as, when it comes to life and death situations, it doesn't matter if you were the valedictorian, if you were the star quarterback; what matters is what you do then and there. What matters is how you took your training and how you apply it to your job. That's what matters."	"the training where I was going through the formal school was more kind of note-taking and um; there was writing. They'd be like, "explain how such and such piece of equipment works". And so you'd have to kind of regurgitate what the notes said to a point where you could make it function. Get your idea across appropriately, but it wasn't quite as in depth as the other procedure writing."	"Writing is writing, and discussion is discussion...I don't feel the impact. I mean, unless someone decided to pay me, I probably would feel the impact a little bit better, I don't know. It just feels like I'm not published; no one else is reading my work other than professors or peers. I don't feel that the impact is there. If I were to write for a mass audience and I would get the feedback form multiple personalities or people who read my work...that would be the impact."	"It's the constant, for the veteran in the military, you don't learn something right off the bat, it's Stage 1, Stage 2, Stage 3. The challenge increases, you know. A challenge increases, but the way you tackle the challenge also increases, so if you need to go to Point A to Point B, and you're an advanced person, now your options are more. You can sit there and take different routes, and I think that's what vets, as far as composition, need as a whole, as a general, they just need a gradual hit in to it."	[Working against that anonymity, working against feeling like a number...] Yeah, absolutely. I made myself a number. I guess I still wanted, maybe I saw the fact that if you got decorated and stuff while you were in the military, that's what gave you your personal, that's what made you stand out above everyone else. But I never got decorated, at least presented a medal.

relationships with writing, action-based writing, self-based writing, writing as "non-writing," identity as a student and veteran, and types of military writing—and was ready to amend these as the data directed. Each of the phrase units, which I had previously highlighted, were placed into one of these codes, identified by a certain color that corresponded with a pseudonym and subsequent personal information, including educational background, sociodemographic history, and military rank and job. The amount of material in each column allowed me to judge which topics held the most promise for exploration, illustrated by Figure 1.

Once I completed open coding of all of the phrase units, my next analytical step was axial coding, an effort to move beyond the "actual words used by...respondents" and into the "conceptualization of these [words]" (Strauss and Corbin 126). I looked at the phenomena that occurred in each category and attempted to explain why events were happening. For example, respondents spoke separately about the types of military writing they did and the purposes of this writing—thus, I grouped these two categories under "genre-function," a concept to be discussed in the findings section of this paper.

This open and axial coding process gave me access to two different types of information. First, I could easily discern which topics were ripe for discussion by the number of phrase units included within each code. As Figure 1 illustrates in the amount of information collected in each topic, the subcategories in columns five and seven were those to which I dedicated the most attention in my data processing. The number of participants in this study was relatively small, but because each unrelated participant spoke independently to certain categories, I based more

validity and reliability in these categories than those addressed by only a few participants.

Secondly, open and axial coding forced me to look at the similarities between groups where I may not have seen a connection before. Because the questions from the interview addressed writing in the military, I knew the answers must somehow be related, even if they did not necessarily address the same specific topics. The development of categories gave me a springboard from which I could start making broader connections and dig for underlying, conceptual explanations of recurrent actions. It was from this coding, then, that fundamental information about student-veterans' writing experiences emerged. I present this in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF GENRE

Several important trends surfaced from the interviews with student-veterans. In fact, despite the variety of job and service experience represented in these nine participants, the student-veterans independently addressed many of the questions I had about writing in very similar ways, verifying the earlier assumption that although each student-veteran had his or her own individual roles in the military, their collective military experiences did yield generalizable conclusions. This is not to say that their experiences were the same—the medic and the ordnance technician, for example, would have great difficulty switching between each other's respective positions. However, of the themes that did emerge from the analysis of the interviews, two stood out as being indicative of and applicable to the experience of the student-veteran—genre and identity. Therefore, the next two chapters concentrate on the evidence and implications of these two themes as they apply to the student-veterans' military discourses, writing histories, and movement into an academic setting. In order to discuss genre, though, I must first define three genres that I use throughout this section.

A Glossary of Military Genres

In the following sub-chapters, I frequently refer to three genres that are used in the military—memoranda, evaluations, and operations orders. This is a very small list of genres used throughout the military, but I purposely explain these three because they are most frequently used; they are familiar to all service members, regardless of occupation, rank, or service; and they exhibit many of the concepts

that were brought up during my interviews with student-veterans. The elements

contained within these genres provide good examples of many of the points brought

up throughout this section, and I will briefly discuss all three in order to provide a

foundation for the subsequent sections.

Evaluation and Performance Reports

The military has a very formal counseling and evaluation system. Each

soldier is formally counseled once a quarter on his or her strengths and weaknesses,

which are recorded on a specific form, called a counseling statement, and

maintained only for the year. For service members who have obtained a certain

rank (all but the lowest four ranks), those quarterly counseling statements are then

referenced in order to write the yearly evaluation[1], a permanent document that is

integral in the promotion and awards process. This document is written by a

soldier's first-line supervisor, usually another soldier, but always someone in a

higher leadership position. Although different services have different names

(*evaluation* reports versus *performance* reports), I employ the term evaluation here

to mean genres used by all services.

An evaluation is a semi-collaborative experience, sometimes involving the

soldier being evaluated and always involving a second, more senior rater. Many

times, both the soldier and the supervisor have input in the counseling statements

and the subsequent evaluation. This is done for the sake of practicality—a rater has

many soldiers under his or her purview, and having a soldier contribute to his or

her own evaluation expedites the process—but it is also done with the intent to

accurately represent one's actions over the rating period. Certainly, a leader should be familiar with the actions of his or her soldier, but having the soldier's input ensures that all strengths are accounted for. Also, should a soldier want to pursue a certain occupational track, the soldier and rater may agree to represent some actions more prominently than others (i.e., a soldier wanting to pursue an information technology job may want to have more entries about technical proficiency than marksmanship).

Once the formal evaluation is written, it goes through several different levels of quality control by higher ranking soldiers. The purpose of this is twofold. First, formatting is tightly controlled on this document—the smallest of mistakes could result in a document's return (i.e., using a capital letter where a lowercase letter should be used), and thus many different experienced eyes are needed to ensure complete compliance. Secondly, all comments on evaluations should address certain points in certain ways: bullet points on performance should show demonstrable action and effect, preferably numerically, and raters should specifically address the "four Ps:[...] peer comparison that includes an enumeration, promotion potential, potential for schooling, [and] potential for duty positions" ("Senior Rater"). It is interesting to note that even though this document originates with one individual, the number of revisions and changes by higher-ranking soldiers typically makes a final evaluation quite different from its original. Many times, these changes make verbs more active or statements of effect more empirical. Because the military places so much trust in the rater's estimation of the soldier under his or her care,

rarely does a senior ranking soldier outside of the rating chain change the intent of a comment on an evaluation, although it does occasionally happen.

An evaluation is a document with which all service members are familiar and have received at some point in their military careers, and any soldier who has been in a leadership position has had to write either a counseling statement or an evaluation, and in most instances, both.

Memoranda

Used for purposes of official correspondence on any topic, memoranda can be for a specific person, they can be addressed through a number of lower levels in order to ultimately reach a higher level, or they can be for a general audience, in the case of a "Memorandum For Record." Memoranda are typically used for inter-governmental correspondence—they translate well within and between military and government services, but when corresponding with civilian entities, other genres are better employed. As in the case of evaluations, the formatting of memoranda is very precise, with an entire regulation dedicated to margin spacing, sub-paragraph enumeration, font guidance, and proper wording. At the very top of a memorandum, a parent agency is defined, as in "Department of the Army, 3rd Infantry Division." Below this, the entity to which the memorandum is directed is identified, as well as the subject of the document, and the purpose of a memorandum is best identified in the first sentence(s). After the body of the text, the writer/originator of the document is identified at the end by name, rank, branch affiliation, and usually, leadership position.

This very convenient genre can be used for many different purposes—from individual requests to general policies addressed to thousands of soldiers—but the formatting and expectation for each memorandum is the same. All soldiers are familiar with memoranda, as, at a minimum, it is a requirement to read the commander's policies of the unit to which one is assigned. Many soldiers will have written memoranda for personnel actions and small unit (i.e., team) requests, and higher-ranking enlisted soldiers will have written memoranda pertaining to larger unit actions and policies.

Operations Orders

Operations orders (OPORDs) are directives from one larger, parent unit to another smaller unit under its command. Each OPORD consists of five-paragraphs—situation, mission, execution, service support, and command and signal—and each of those five paragraphs has designated elements that go into each (i.e., timelines, coordinating instructions, and supply logistics). OPORDs provide instruction and coordination for all missions, from unit potlucks to division combat initiatives. OPORDs are collaborative documents. Because they involve so many parties, individual offices write their applicable paragraphs (i.e., supply, personnel, operations) and send them to a central point of contact who compiles that information into one central document.

Soldiers always receive OPORDs from a higher unit, and they will always have to interpret their smaller part of a mission as outlined in an OPORD. For instance, in the case of a base cleanup—a mandatory Spring event dreaded by all—a

garrison command will issue an OPORD to the units housed on that base that direct them to clean up certain areas. One unit will be in charge of the north half of the base, another in charge of the south. Each of those units, in turn, will issue OPORDs to their subordinates, further concentrating the areas to be assigned until it has filtered down so much that a certain platoon has the particular tasking to weed the parking lot in front of the commissary. Of course, this can go on until one soldier is assigned to certain parking spaces within that parking lot. The point of this example is to show that many elements in the original OPORD are reflected in every succeeding OPORD, only changing with the level at which the OPORD is generated— the garrison commander's intent is to have a pristine base; a company commander's intent is to have a clean parking lot.

For the purposes of this thesis, there are two important elements to remember about an OPORD. First, it is a very strict document that follows precise content guidelines. Any information pertaining to a mission will inevitably fall under one of the many subparagraphs in this document, and I discuss how this is both a benefit and a hindrance later. Moreover, the OPORD transcends jobs, ranks, and services; it is a document that directs the actions of over two million soldiers.

Secondly, and especially important in the context of a first-year composition classroom, student-veterans will have had a great deal of exposure to this document as recipients but hardly any as creators or writers. At most, they may have contributed to one of the smaller paragraphs, but more likely, they would not have written any part of an OPORD during their time in the service. But while writing the OPORD has not been part of their military experience, all soldiers recognize the

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importance and significance of this genre. They have internalized the format and reason behind its creation, so much so that it has shaped the way all service members think about logically situating a document.

"Genre-Function" and How Genre Functions in the Military

It was a common occurrence for the participants in this study to first deny having done any writing in the military, only to follow with a list of the types of writing they did. The responses became generally predictable A common response would be something like, "I didn't do any writing in the military. Well, sometimes I did maintenance reports, and I had to do evaluations of my soldiers. I sent a lot of emails, wrote a few memoranda, and I did a lot of training presentations. But really, I didn't do any writing." Usually, these responses showed that when the student-veterans finally acknowledged what writing they had done, they always defined it in terms of genre. Clearly, another element that was intertwined with these student-veterans' understanding of military writing was that of genre classification.

As presented in chapter two, genres are not just guidelines for formatting or containers for content. They are dynamic, active, and responsive. They act in accordance with specific cultural values and provide sites for activism and subversion through language. Genre theory attempts to redefine and explain why genres exist in a way that places genre squarely in the middle of textual decision-making. Military communication strategies undeniably proceed as a function of genre, as all professional correspondence can be defined in these terms. But it is not enough to just redefine genre in a military and social context; therefore, in order to

expand on genre and its implications in this setting, I apply the notion of genre-function, a concept first explained by Anis Bawarshi and deriving from Foucault's concept of author-function. In the pages that follow, I will first explain author-function. I will then explain how author-function informs genre-function, and finally, I will apply genre-function to military texts.

The concepts of author-function and genre-function share many similarities. Bawarshi explores not only what a genre *is* but also what it is made of in the same manner that Foucault asks, "What is a work? Of what elements is it composed?" (Foucault 103). Although Foucault originally asked this in terms of a work's author, it can readily be applied to genre, as well. Thus, genre "manifests the appearance of a certain discursive set and indicates the status of this discourse within a society and a culture" (Foucault 107). Accordingly, just as Foucault explores the "space left empty by the author's disappearance" (Foucault 105), I ask the same thing in the context of genre—when a text is no longer defined by the genre that guided its creation, what can be said of that work? What are the elements that created it, and where can it be situated in a community? The answer, argues Bawarshi, is genre function.

For writing and text production in the military, genre function is much more necessary and applicable than author-function. For instance, the military is made up entirely of groups of individuals—units—with the smallest unit being a team of approximately 5-7 soldiers. Although the military has been successful with popular recruitment slogans such as "An Army of One" and "You and the Navy, Full Speed

Ahead," the military has never been an organization to recognize ownership or agency in an individual as much as they do in a team or unit.

However, this approach is problematic when certain actions require an individual name, as in the case of memoranda, for example. How does the military resolve the dualism created by this situation? In an word, genre. The individual, in the case of this and other genres, is not the origin of importance. In no way is an "explanation of a work…sought in the man or woman who produced it" (Barthes 2). Rather, the value is placed in the mode of correspondence. It is in its classification as an official memorandum that the text becomes culturally recognizable and worthwhile, rather than as something an individual has created or written. Just as Foucault believes this of author-function, genre-function too "endows a work with certain cultural status and value" (Bawarshi 20).

Furthermore, the military was founded and acts upon bases of uniformity and standardization. The legitimacy of an idea can be linked to the manner in which it is presented, in that the presentation of an idea needs to conform to culturally accepted norms in order for it to garner the merit it may deserve. This is consistent with theories of genre where genre also "frames what its users generally imagine as possible within a given situation, predisposing them to act in certain ways by rhetorically framing how they come to know and respond to certain situations" (Bawarshi 22). This rhetorical frame keeps military actions within a recognizable standard that is necessary for uniformity in an organization of more than two million distinct and diverse people who must be instantly prepared to respond or

act in completely reliable ways to situations that could result in no less than life or death.

Genre does not merely regulate writing and text production, however. Instead, genre constitutes a tangible outcome through the way individuals act, "conceptualize, and experience these situations, predicting their notions of what constitutes appropriate and possible responses and actions" (Bawarshi 24). In this way, genre is a catalyst—an instigator—for action just as much as it is a classification for communication.

If author-function and genre-function are so interrelated, though, there is one place where they differ greatly. Foucault's author-function is based on the status of "[being] accepted as an author" (103) with a "proper name" (105) whose "speech...must be received in a certain mode and that must receive a certain status" (107). Genre function, on the other hand, does not privilege any discourse over another—its application is just as relevant for Shakespeare as it is for a military service member whose name holds no overarching cultural significance. Just as the 'proper name' is a key element to author-function, genre-function also needs a commensurate key element. It turns instead to concepts such as "social commitments, practices, relations, identities, and silences" (Bawarshi 25), all of which can be readily applied to the culture of military writing.

Military genres especially clash with author-function because author-function so heavily relies on the concept of a name. What is a name on a military text? In the case of operations orders, a name is a point of contact, not necessarily of the document's creator although perhaps someone who can field questions to other

sections within a unit. In an evaluation, names are only meaningful in the context of what leadership positions they hold, as their performances in positions are what is being evaluated, not the people themselves. In a memorandum—a text that is almost always created and signed by one person—a name is merely a title that means nothing without an office symbol, a unit code, a rank, and a service affiliation.

One of the most fundamental aspects of genre-function in a military context is how genres are used because of and for actions and situations. It is unusual, then, that such an important factor of action and communication go as unnoticed as it is. Bawarshi provides an explanation:

> The function of a genre only seems like nothing when we, through practice and socialization, have internalized its ideology in the form of rhetorical conventions to such an extent that our invention of a text seems to emanate independently and introspectively, even almost intuitively, from us. (8)

Indeed, this is the case of military texts. The institutional buy-in that the military requires causes one to react to an action with a genre without even realizing the power of that genre. It transcends individuals and units and is indeed a structure of power/knowledge to which everyone conforms. However, the comments of the student-veterans, to be discussed in many of the follow sections, show that just because genre is an ever-present factor of military writing and communication doesn't mean it cannot be subverted or used for individual purposes.

Bringing A Military Definition of Writing to an Academic Setting

In addition to the evaluations, memoranda, and OPORDs defined above, some of the lesser-known genres brought up by the student-veterans in their interviews were very useful in fitting together the puzzle pieces of military writing and genre.

As stated before, each of the participants came from varying occupational specialties, and the job-specific genres they used are not universal to every job. Some student-veterans were combat arms, and others were employed in medical service, ordnance, and intelligence. Each of the military occupational specialties represented in this small group used job-specific genres, many of which were talked about during the interviews. However, even these more unusual genres demonstrate military-wide points about the creation of text in this setting, and they exhibit very interesting trends in writing.

Jacob, a US Navy veteran who served for over eight years, spoke of his experience with writing about and being tested on maintenance procedures:

> ... The training where I was going through the formal school was more kind of note-taking and there was writing. They'd be like, "explain how such and such piece of equipment works." And so you'd have to kind of regurgitate what the notes said to a point where you could make it function. Get your idea across appropriately, but it wasn't quite as in depth as the other procedure writing.

However, once he graduated from his schooling and was transferred to a ship, the procedure writing was quite different:

> ...the common form that I did was writing formal maintenance procedures. So, if you needed to replace some piece of equipment, there's a lot of times you would have to shuffle through various manuals, making it so that you didn't violate any procedure and making sure the maintenance was done correctly, with the correct parts. [So what percentage of your job was actually spent writing, do you think?] It was probably half and half, researching what I needed to write, and piecing it together, and sometimes these packages would be twenty pages long: perform this step, perform this step, do this, as well as kind of a general outline of what we were doing, sometimes parts or various pieces of research.

The stark contrast in the kinds of writing from these two settings is both indicative of how writing is approached in a military school setting, and it also explains the

stigmas student-veterans may have about writing upon entering the writing classroom. Jacob clearly felt that in a school setting, simply rewriting the information in his notes was enough to be recognized as proficient. It wasn't until Jacob reached his actual job, not in a school setting, that he realized the importance of audience (writing procedures for others to follow), research (accounting for other 'various manuals'), and critical thinking (ensuring his procedures didn't violate other procedures).

Other student-veterans also echoed similar experiences with learning and writing in a military school setting. Addressing the teaching of writing in his Air Force NCO course, Will noted,

> ...We had to take a writing course and it was just elementary writing. It literally is. Military writing is elementary writing. It's the same writing you learn in the seventh and sixth grade all over again and then you basically learn how to write the topic sentence and you learn the paragraph, and you indent here and put a period here.

Others more generously described military learning styles as "[teaching] you what you need to know in the quickest way possible" and "[not] dumbed down, but written for... an algebra level instead of a calculus level." Zack, a six-year Navy veteran, talked about his surprise of how much more writing can be than how it was used in the military:

> ...I started running into some of the material that we were taught in the military and it kind of kills me that it's taught this way at this school on these certain things because I've seen it in an easier way, and so it almost goes, "oh, well I actually never thought of it this way compared to this way." I always thought we would do it this way because it was pretty simple. And [the military style] is quickened learning, yet at the same time, it won't go into as much depth, so the thought process for me is just seeing the things in...different perspectives, while in the military, you get one perspective. You get what needs to be done. Even with academic writing, I mean, I wouldn't

have thought of attacking different opinions. Really, the military, other people's opinions don't matter. It's just the military's.

Because of the way student-veterans were taught to write in the military, they better recognize and are more familiar with the limitations and fixed definitions of writing, rather than the creative and unlimited possibilities that writing can offer. If the lesson on writing only ever includes the regurgitation of notes, filling out of forms, indention, and punctuation, later life lessons in audience and purpose will not be as readily associated with their past experiences in writing. Thus, student-veterans often enter a first-year composition class either thinking that they hate writing, possibly based on their experiences with military "writing," or they have no experience with it at all. It should be apparent, then, that student-veterans come to the first-year classroom armed with a definition of writing that was given to them from an organization whose primary interaction with writing is little more than following a procedure and filling out a form.

Action Through Writing and Writing for Action

The popular military cliché "hurry up and wait" notwithstanding, the military aligns itself with action, prompt decision-making, and execution. This is the culture that looks positively upon the term "violence of action" and rewards those who are physically and mentally tough. It should come as no surprise, then, to know that writing in the military also adheres to these same principles. As the subtitle of this section implies, this relationship between writing and action is highly interrelated and follows the flow of *action→genre→action*. In order to best understand this relationship, and especially how student-veterans have interacted with this

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relationship, I will discuss both how action leads to genre and then how genre leads

to action, two crucial points if one is to understand genre-based communication and

text production in the military.

First, genres that are used in the military are, as Carolyn Miller states,

"typified rhetorical *actions* based in recurrent situations" (Miller 159; emphasis

added). For every problem, requirement, or mission, the military has a defined and

accepted genre to which it turns for solving the problem, meeting the requirement,

or executing the mission. There is relatively little leeway when creating text in this

setting—text *must* be created in a certain format in order to properly address the

situation for which it was created. If a unit is planning an ambush mission, an

operations order is created in response to the need. If a commander wants to

change the policy for physical fitness, she creates a Memorandum For Record to be

distributed throughout the unit. Genres, in this case, function as motivators of action,

initiators of accomplishment. Furthermore, every member of this community

understands them as such and expects that military writing will either ask or direct

something, depending on the specific form, direction of movement, or specific words

used. Thus, student-veterans' understandings of the purposes of genre are deeply

rooted in an action-based environment.

Certainly, this sort of standardization has its benefits. In any organization as

large and diverse as the military, methods of communication must be standardized

in order to promote efficiency and orderliness. Without it—and with two million

individuals and their unique responses to problems—chaos would reign over the

flow of information. In fact, as Downs and Ford point out, "[Military] texts must be

read exactly and literally by all, so that all take the same meaning from them; any non-uniform interpretation can be fatal." Having a genre to turn to simplifies the communication process and allows soldiers to consider the content rather than coming up with a way to present that content. Moreover, recipients of text-based content automatically recognize the chosen genre and are familiar with it—almost immediately can author, audience, unit, and purpose be identified. Especially in the case of OPORDs, every soldier knows exactly what paragraph to go to for specific pieces of information. A soldier will always be able to find the mission in its 5W format (who, what, where, when, why) in paragraph 2. It eliminates confusion and allows readers to bypass the level of genre and dive immediately into content that is relevant to the audience. This is critically helpful when time is of the essence during combat missions or time-sensitive taskings. Every soldier, from the lowest-ranking soldier to highest-ranking general, can quickly maneuver through an OPORD.

This insistence upon standardization also allows US forces to communicate with allies, a process described by Charlie, a nine-year veteran of the US Navy:

> Usually, there's a very regimented…vocabulary that we use. The idea is that you want to transmit information as clearly and with the most amount of brevity possible…A lot of information would also be passed through what we called message traffic, which was…form letters that focused on brevity and clarity as well. Extremely, extremely regimented. To the point where if we were communicating with someone who didn't even necessarily speak English would be able to go line by line and know exactly what information we were sending them, based on where it was positioned in the message.

However, such rigidity also has its drawbacks. We in the military become very accustomed to filling the container of genre with exactly what it calls for, and no more. We fill in the five paragraphs of the OPORD while rarely stopping to think about the possibility of a sixth paragraph. Genres then become limitations, strict

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formats with defined, solid boundaries with little room for creativity in thought.

Unfortunately, situations on the ground in a war zone tend not to conform to genres, but many soldiers are doctrinally taught to analyze these exact combat situations in the form of genres. Take, for example, the case of the acronym METT-T (Mission, Enemy, Troops Available, Terrain, and Time), introduced in 1979. Each of these terms contains vital information; under just the Enemy entry, one must consider disposition/ composition of the enemy, its strength, recent activities, weaknesses, possible and probable courses of actions, and reinforcement abilities. For decades, this was a critical planning genre for conventional combat operations. However, as the global population grew and the US military increased operations in urbanized areas, "an increasing awareness of the importance of noncombat aspects of achieving military objectives led to redefining the factors commanders used to analyze the battlefield" (Williams 277). It was not until 2001 that METT-TC was introduced, finally adding a C for the impact of civilian considerations on the battlefield. Although I cannot empirically count how many years civilians were not taken into consideration specifically because they did not factor into METT-T, I surmise it was longer than it should have been, and I lay the blame on the significance and utter reliance the military has placed on genre, as well as our tendency not to look beyond what has been institutionally accepted. This reliance is somewhat understandable in light of Charlie's quote above—different units may not plan missions together but they must all plan missions in the same way. Genres, as sites as action, ensure that uniformity occurs even when communication doesn't.

The five letters in METT-T became our blinders to what else should have been considered. It wasn't until civilian populations started having a profound effect on combat operations that the military altered the genre it had been using since 1979. Interestingly, though it has not been officially adopted by military regulations, METT-TC has been recently altered again to reflect a factor that has been affecting missions since the beginning of humankind—weather. The acronym has been hybridized with an abbreviation, now identified as METT-TCW.

A particular genre with which many of the interviewees were familiar was the evaluation report. Because each soldier's performance has to be frequently evaluated, supervisors spend a lot of time weighing their subordinates' strengths and weaknesses and trying to accurately represent these in written documents. Recalling his time as a squad leader in the Army, Mark looked upon the action of creating evaluations as a function of being a leader:

> In the military...I had to write counseling statements. You had to write how their progression was throughout the year, or throughout the month, each month...You had to sit in front of them and talk through it with them. You had to write it up, and you had to counsel them and say, "Hey, you did good on this," "you got in trouble for this," you know, and you also have to try to come up with stuff for them to improve on and how you're going to help them improve on it...It was part of being a leader, to train your soldiers and take care of them, try to help them progress.

Official writing in the military is always an action performed as a result of an instigating situation. Never is it done as an exercise in thought. Even when writing is practiced, as in the case of official military schooling, texts are written in response to a prompt that represents a real-world situation that soldiers will see in line units. In Mark's comments above, writing the evaluation was done because of several situations. Professional development is an ongoing process in the military. Just as

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soldiers must continue to hone their skills in training, they must receive feedback on how they are doing. Additionally, as a soldier is promoted to a position of greater responsibility, there is a need for his original spot to be filled. Evaluations provide the feedback necessary for continual development as a technical specialist and a leader, and they also contain the information so leaders can best make decisions about who gets promoted and who needs improvement.

Although I doubt Devitt and Bawarshi, along with the many other genre theorists, considered the military in their research, it is this discourse community's texts that perfectly demonstrate Devitt's description of "reciprocal and dynamic" (Devitt 21) genres and Bawarshi's claim that genres are "sites of dynamic action" (Bawarshi 18).

To complete the second half of the *action →genre →action* flow, then, is to realize that all genres demand a certain action as a result of their creation. Military writing is almost always something with an intended outcome, specifically requested, recommended, or directed in the text itself. In this way, a military genre "must be centered not in the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish" (Miller 151) and are "typified by the actions they make happen" (Bawarshi 23). An OPORD has as its intended outcome completion of a mission; an evaluation sends a message to either promote or further develop a solider. Once a document is signed, actions are altered. To write, then, is to expect an action to happen afterwards, and this understanding of what writing is leads to over-exaggerated differences between military and academic writing, both in purpose and style.

It was troubling that even after some of the study's student-veterans acknowledged that they had participated in writing events in the military, they still would position themselves outside of the composition classroom. Asked if the writing he did in the military prepared him for college, Zack answered, "I felt like I was good at technical writing, not academic. Academic writing was a complete difference for me. For technical writing, I would say yes, just because…writing on the test, you write technically, not to an academic audience." During another interview, Charlie expressed disdain for the tendency of academic writing to include qualifiers, as they are indicative of "[signs] of indecision," whereas Paul, a veteran of the Marine Corps, saw the qualifiers as being more about including "multiple perspectives." Regardless of their position, each of these student-veterans drew a distinct line between what qualified as each type of writing—and never did the two meet.

To reiterate, the purposes of military writing are always for a resultant action and do not usually include gathering multiple perspectives or representing indecision. But because such strength of purpose is associated with military writing, it seems inevitable that the opposite must be true of academic writing. Obviously, this is not at all true—academic writing can be just as action-oriented and persuasive, but the distinct genred purposes of each lead to a polarization and a prejudicial value of "doers over thinkers" ("Flying High"). Tom Ruby explains that "it is, after all, important to be technically proficient, and too many thinkers recapitulating and rehashing the same issues is not usually an effective way for a

military force to respond to a challenge" ("Flying High"). This is the writing

environment from which the student-veterans come.

That the *action*→*genre*→*action* flow has such importance in the military has

immediate and profound implications for student-veterans in a first-year

composition classroom. This flow directs all text production up until the point

where they leave the military, and it has everything to do with their expectations of

writing, and thusly, their frustrations when those expectations are challenged.

Those expectations are born out of both action and genre and making the move into

academic writing is very different from action-oriented military writing. For many

of the student-veterans interviewed, experiences steeped in military genres were

significant, albeit temporary, hindrances in the classroom, too. Jacob spoke of his

"growing period" with discernable frustration: "I don't think I quite grasped…It just

took me some time to figure out what they wanted." Jacqueline, a former medic in

the Air Force, had considerable experience in writing memoranda and hospital

records, which provided similar frustrations:

> …Writing forms and everything, or writing memos, I already knew what I
> needed to write. I already know kind of the form, the way I had to write it.
> And when it comes to school, they give you a topic, or you choose a topic, and
> you have to write it, and you have to research it. It's totally different.
> [Interviewer: And it's up to you, and not the Red Cross or the doctor.] Exactly.
> It's up to me, not the form that tells me exactly what it wants to do, I'm just
> like, you know, there's so much that I can write about! Well what are the
> main points? I don't want to make it too general, where I don't have a point,
> but at the same time, I don't want to narrow it down too much that I'm really
> not making a point at all.

Although many of the student-veterans stated they received lower grades than they

would have liked on their first papers, each one did much better on following ones,

stating that they had learned how to navigate the 'academic essay' familiar to many

composition classes. Initial exposure to the nuances and expectations of an academic essay was enough, seemingly, to give them flexibility and confidence to work within that genre and to know how to use genres as solutions to academic problems.

Having eventually conquered genre, however, many still clung to writing as a response to or instigator of action, rather than an abstract concept or activity. Zack, a construction management major, noted that good writing was necessary in contract writing, for example, to "save money, not only for the company, but to save your time, because if you're horrible at writing and it takes you a few hours to write a short little email that can be written in five minutes, then you have huge time problems." A challenge, then, to composition instructors is to delimit writing from the constraints that student-veterans understand it to have. "Good writing" may not be timely; it may be messy; it may have a few too many commas and too few perspectives. But it is in the writing classroom that student-veterans can begin to push the boundaries of what has been expected of them in the military. Good writing may become to student-veterans something they've never considered before. It is here where they can grow.

Experiences in Audience-Based Writing

It is always surprising to me when student-veterans talk about how unfamiliar with writing they are. Their first-year composition classrooms may as well be classes in a foreign language for as much as they claim to be unfamiliar with the rhetorical triangle of text, author, and audience. Yet it's not that student-

veterans are actually unfamiliar with these concepts; many are not taught these

terms in conjunction with writing, so while they may employ these concepts in their

jobs, they rarely hearken back to lessons on writing and put the two occurrences

together. One of the elements most present in the comments of the student-veterans

was that of audience. Although they may not have recognized or given much

credibility to their own experience with this concept, many frequently considered

audience in their creation of many military texts.

Because the military is built upon such a rigid structure of rank, one of the

most obvious differences in audience was that of higher ranking officers. Many

student-veterans in this study said that they would communicate very differently to

their commander and senior officers than they would to their peers and soldiers.

However, understanding of audience could be far more complex than this, requiring

what Will described as "lawyering:"

> The thing with accident reports or the mishap report is knowing how to…do
> the lawyering with it. How to properly present that…this piece of equipment
> failed and not the guy operating it. So you can save the guy some slack…So
> you write technicalities, you write a lot of facts, and you take those facts and
> you know how to tweak them a little bit.

It is in this instance that a soldier must recognize what impacts his or her

presentation of reported facts are going to have and be able to control those impacts

accordingly. This understanding of audience doesn't merely require stylistic

changes in writing; it requires a complex understanding of the relationship between

writing and activity. Furthermore, each of the action reports that Will wrote

required skills in effective argument and logical persuasion, two very advanced

complexities of writing. It is interesting to note that Will, of the nine included in this

study, was the most outspoken of all about his lack of experience and challenges

with writing, when in fact his answers in the interview spoke to the complete

opposite.

Kirk, a Natural Resources Management major and six-year veteran of the Air

Force, used his understanding of audience to become more of a mentor and leader

in evaluation reports for the soldiers he led:

> I had one troop that I was a supervisor for, for a matter of months, and I
> wrote him his initial performance review, which I actually wrote in pencil on
> it, to make it more personal. I didn't want to sit there and type it up and put it
> on a Formflow form; I just wanted to make it personal for him, because what
> other way should it be?

Kirk recognized not only the importance of how his words were received but also

the presentation of his message. Leadership, mentorship, and buy-in were very

important to him, and he adjusted his presentation to his audience to achieve those

results.

Scotty provided an excellent example of his experience with audience in the

form of daily aircraft maintenance procedures: "…most jobs you don't finish in one

shift, so the next guy can come in and see what you did…you have to be able to write

clearly for anyone else to read it and know what you did." He realized the

importance of writing for audience in that another mechanic would read through his

notes in order to continue necessary maintenance procedures. This action has far

greater effects that what might be initially considered, though. Certainly, writing

detailed directions and procedures for someone else to follow is a basic writing task,

taught at young ages. Had Scotty not understood how to consider audience in this

instance, efficiency would have been lost, at best. At worst, a plane might not have

been operational—either on the ground or in the air—and this arguably can be translated into lives saved or lost. Student-veterans' experiences with audience thus far exceed their recognition of them while also preceding the experience of audience in the classroom. This can be beneficial, in that it can be pointed out to these students that they've long understood audience; thus, composition is not so foreign a concept after all.

It is necessary, though, to also recognize in academic writing the same importance found in military writing—essays in critical thinking *do* matter, and while it might not immediately save lives, critical thinking and writing taught in the classroom is a vital life skill that holds great significance for those students' futures. In her essay "Student Writers and Their Sense of Authority over Texts," Carol Berkenkotter acknowledges, "one of the major difficulties most [instructors] face is helping student writers write for a responsive audience other than the teacher-evaluator" (312). Speaking about the impact of writing in a first-year composition classroom, Will, who worked with ordnance in a fast-paced environment, said with frustration, "It just feels like I'm not published; no one else is reading my work other than professors or peers. I don't feel that the impact is there." The challenge to make classroom writing relevant is the same with student-veterans and traditional students but for very different reasons. Typically, traditional students must come to understand a relationship between reader and writer that is more complex than what they have recently experienced in high school. Student-veterans, on the other hand, completely understand—more than most—what a relevant audience is and must come to understand why academic writing matters just as much as what they

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have done during their military experience. Although it may feel like a regression to

them, the first-year composition classroom can actually be a space for critical

examination and a realization of agency.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION ON IDENTITIES OF ENLISTED SOLDIERS AND STUDENT-VETERANS

While student-veterans continuously move to and through many identities in their transition from active duty to student, this section specifically focuses on student-veterans' identities as writers and the factors that influence those writerly identities. Many of the interviewees' comments about writing could be attributed, surprisingly, to social strata within the military system itself. I found that although every soldier has access to the same genres and each individual contributes to the discourse community as a whole, experiences varied greatly based on one's rank, a factor that I discuss in the following section. The influence of social strata did not stop once one separated from the military, either. It continued to affect these student-veterans as they transitioned into an academic environment, as I point out in the second section of this chapter. The final section brings together how individuals in the lower echelon of the enlisted corps in fact exacted great agency in the texts they produced, something quite unexpected upon undertaking this thesis.

How *Writing* Differs for Officers and Enlisted Soldiers

Even though I understood that I was not a part of the veteran community, I still assumed a connection between my and their experience in the service. In doing so, I initially came into this project not paying attention to a crucial aspect of my course of research—how does the group I'm researching even define *writing*? I initially presumed—wrongly, as it turned out—that my experiences with military writing would be very similar, if not the same, to those of student-veterans with whom I was talking, even if our operational experiences were quite different.

However, during the first interview and several after that, I was startlingly

reminded of the chasm that exists between the military experiences of officers and

enlisted soldiers.

At first glance, the differences between the two may not be so stark: all

officers are required to have at least a Bachelor's Degree to enter the service, but

many enlisted soldiers also have degrees and even advanced degrees; officers'

primary responsibility is leadership, but the leadership of enlisted soldiers is crucial

to any mission accomplishment. They are the primary trainers for most things

mission-related, and they are almost solely responsible for mentoring young

soldiers through all things military. The military engine runs on the hard work on

enlisted soldiers. However, as Charlie noted, the differences are all too apparent:

> The military is very much a caste system. You have officers and you have
> enlisted. And no matter how much you know about the job, and no matter
> how much practical experience you have, that division is all-important. So
> you could be doing your job for about four, five, six years and be very well-
> versed in and know what you're doing. And all of a sudden, a junior officer
> will come on board who has a degree in…astrophysics and [be] assigned to
> oversee what we did on the ship. And what she would say would go. Part of
> our responsibilities, especially upper enlisted, was to sort of help them along
> the way. Learn the job so they could effectively lead us. But that division is
> huge in the military…and it's all based on education. It's all based on college.
> That's the difference. I would say that that was something that was
> constantly in my face.

Charlie is hardly the first person to notice this difference. In fact, studies done on the

socioeconomic attainment of veterans have shown that officers positively benefit

from their officer status, perhaps because of the difference in "pre-service measures"

but perhaps more attributable to "status reproduction and selection" (Maclean 684).

Many people reduce the differences between officers and enlisted soldiers to pay

grades, education levels, or responsibilities. In the quarterly *Armed Forces and*

Society, Maclean and Edwards argue that military rank "organizes service members by socioeconomic rewards and job characteristics and is this another measure of social standing similar to education, income, occupation, and wealth" (766). While those could be argued to be generally true, the differences transcend socioeconomic status—they affect even the small details, as I found to be very much the case in what each of these groups thinks of as writing and what the important factors of writing are.

Evidenced by the comments collected, enlisted soldiers tend to concentrate on the content of a document, while they expect their officer counterparts not to be as familiar with the technical aspects as much as the proper formatting and superficial presentation. This is strikingly parallel to the sociological roles stereotypically assigned to each group: enlisted soldiers are the technical experts, with a more vocational focus, and the officers are the managers who are not usually as familiar with the nuts-and-bolts details. That the enlisted soldiers would pay more attention to content in a text would make sense because that is the focus of their specialty. Their expectation of officers knowing "how to write" (many times defined as correcting grammatical mistakes and polishing the wording) plays into the expectation that officers are more educated, as evidenced by Jacob's comments:

> [Did you get a lot of feedback on your writing?] It…would go through different pieces of review, and the other enlisted folks—they would usually be the most technical experts, like, 'you're doing this step wrong' or whatever, but then we'd send it to the officers, who…would have a college degree, and it would come back and they would point out grammatical errors. That happened pretty frequently.

Unfortunately, comments like these demonstrated that many student-veterans

would recognize what the officers were doing as writing and what they were doing

as something other than writing that was associated with just doing their jobs.

During the interviews with the student-veterans participating in this study,

one of the first questions on which I focused was, "What types of writing did you do

in the military?" Inevitably, the participants responded in much of the same way.

They initially scoffed and replied that they had done no writing. They then went on

to explain—almost blind to the irony—what kinds of writing they actually had done.

Scotty, in particular, demonstrated this detachment with writing in great detail.

Upon being asked if he had done any writing in the military, his immediate,

unequivocal response was, "No." When asked to clarify, he continued:

> No, I mean, we wrote, but it was official logbook stuff…We had what we
> called a pass down record book, and we had one for each aircraft, and that
> was literally all the writing I did. That, and MAFs (Maintenance Action
> Forms). So a pilot would come back and write up a MAF; I [had] to go fix it
> and write down in the MAF so there's an official record…I would then write,
> cause…if anything happens to the bird, if it ends up crashing…I'd write full
> detail in the pass down what I did, what we did, what we checked…[That
> sounds like pretty important writing.] Well…it was mostly like one page. I
> mean, I did that every day, but [you] kind of get in the routine and you learn
> the words really fast…so everyone understands you.

Amazingly, while Scotty agreed that what he did was officially writing, he justified

its unimportance by its length (texts that were usually 'one page') and its common

use (writing as a 'routine', using general knowledge ideas and phrases). In fact, this

singular quote shows that a great deal of rhetorical knowledge was required of him

every time he wrote. He implicitly realized that the details he wrote in the logbook

would be crucial in the event of an airplane crash. Especially, the text he produced

constituted an official record that possessed a great deal of accountability and

responsibility—his writing had an immediate, tangible impact, and yet, the connection Scotty made between his actions and writing was tenuous, at best.

This was not a singular occurrence. Jacob reinforced the same initial attitudes about writing, but the survey he filled out in connection with this study provided some enlightenment:

> …I didn't really think about it as writing too much, until I was doing the survey…I did a lot of [formal reports] and a lot of times it was more direct steps to perform. Torque, bolt this…instead of…normal writing, like essays… At the time, I didn't really think about it as writing, but now that I think about it, it is, because you have to write to make sure that everybody understands it and performs it correctly.

Both of these quotations illustrate important writing that enlisted military members performed, so why was it that there existed such resistance to classify what they did as writing? Certainly, many factors contributed to this, but a direct correlation can be made here between writing and education—an education that lower enlisted personnel usually do not have—and this correlation is made possible by the hierarchical gap between officers and enlisted personnel.

According to those interviewed, the "caste system" of the military made wider the writing gap between enlisted soldiers and officers by specifically addressing the act of writing only for high ranking enlisted soldiers and officers in official military schools. Therefore, one might rationalize—and indeed, many do rationalize, as in the case of this study—that if they have not specifically been taught how to write by the military, they must not know how to do it. Will spoke directly to this:

> The military doesn't really care about your writing unless you're in the officer ranks where you can't afford to look like an idiot…If you're an officer, you're expected to be a capable writer… Unless you're in the officer ranks,

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you don't do anything pertinent [with writing], unless you're a chief master sergeant and you're writing to another officer and of course those guys get the schooling and training to write to officers and to their enlisted troops.

The military does not tell its enlisted service members that they cannot or should not write, but rather, writing is understood to be something done by those with certain credentials—credentials that lower enlisted soldiers do not usually have. Therefore, an environment is created where a certain group does not think of itself as writers, certainly not good writers, and those that come from that environment and enter into a college setting continue to repeat this mantra to themselves and their instructors. Not knowing any better and not being familiar with military styles of communication, a composition instructor would reasonably believe this. The evidence that emerged from this study, to be discussed in further detail later, greatly disproves this point.

Two things are important to take away from the lessons that these quotes illuminate. First, it is important to realize—for instructors and student-veterans alike—that just because a student was previously enlisted does not mean that he did not write. In fact, as shown by just these few quotes from this study, enlisted service members frequently participated in very important text production with very real consequences, audiences, and purposes. Secondly, the way enlisted soldiers defined and classified writing is deeply rooted in the identity of the enlisted soldier. For them to participate in the act of writing in a first-year composition classroom is to participate in something that they do not feel that they've done before, as well as to participate in something that has been reserved for those of a different rank. In order for us, as composition instructors, to deal with this dichotomy, we must also

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examine how student-veterans position themselves in the writing classroom. I explore this element in detail in the following section about the identities of student-veterans.

Out of the Military: The Identities of Student-Veterans

Finding themselves on a college campus, searching for a lecture hall at 10:00 AM instead of ruck-marching at 0500, many student-veterans initially wonder how it is that they got there, how it is that they proceed. Older and usually more disciplined than a traditional student, student-veterans quite capably accept the challenges of moving from active duty into a student status and eventually find their ways around a quad, a plaza, and a classroom. One of the challenges of this transition, though, is that of moving through a new social identity. One might assume that the new social identity that proves challenging is that of "student," but it isn't just the academic environment and student identity that prove troublesome (although certainly, they do, a point which I intend to address later in this section). Student-veterans also experience this moment in terms of social mobility—they self-identify as enlisted soldiers but are actively pursuing characteristics they used to associated with officers.

As mentioned in chapter two about identities, the legitimacy and camaraderie of the enlisted corps is constituted for these soldiers from the first day they enter the military. It is a very proud organization, one that instills in its members great respect for integrity and proficiency, among other values. As evidenced by my own experience and especially by the comments made by student-

veterans in this study, veterans have profound respect for the Non-commissioned Officer Corps. They recognize that it has faults, but they also recognize how being a part of that corps of soldiers has had a positive, lasting impact on them. Entrance into the enlisted ranks is not an easy commitment, but once one has been recognized as a soldier, individuals align themselves with the values of that group. In fact, Haslam argues that we cannot understand a group like student-veterans without "[understanding] how social interaction is bound up with individuals' *social identities*—their definition of themselves in terms of group memberships" (26; original emphasis). It is because of this strong group affiliation that I argue the transition of identities in college is made that much more complicated.

The values associated with writing in the previous chapter differed greatly between officers and enlisted soldiers. The values and characteristics of jobs and social structure are reflected in writing values and characteristics—enlisted soldiers constructed content-based texts, while officers were not as concerned with content as they were presentation and effective communication. The student-veterans' comments in their interviews made it clear that they respected more the knowledge of content; the details insisted upon by the officers were often seen as trivial and frustrating. As Charlie stated before, "It's all based on education. It's all based on college." And now, those student-veterans—those former enlisted soldiers who strongly aligned themselves with their caste, their group, their class—are pursuing the college education and a writing style they formerly only attributed to officers. Admittedly, this group of veterans is not pursuing membership in the officer corps, but pursuing a college education can understandably be seen as a move towards a

class once symbolized by the officer corps. Writing, for student-veterans, is a true gateway to a new life and elevation out of a lower caste or class. It is in a writing class where this transition is made palpable, for it is where they have to stop concentrating solely on technical content and start to realize the importance of rhetorical strategy, presentation, and compositional methods. This is where it is so crucial to understand that these things are nothing new for a student-veteran; it's just the first time they've considered their experiences as such.

The other identity shift with which student-veterans must grapple is that from active duty soldier to full-time student. The lifestyle of the military permeates everything one does—from requesting permission to leave town for the weekend to requiring one to leave family and friends for deployments—so that change from military to civilian is quite severe. When that dominant identity of the military is removed, "the individual is forced to again redefine who she is as a civilian, a veteran, a female, and a student" (Baechtold and De Sawal 40). In many ways, the transition into the military is quite easy, and there is little time to consider what changes in identity are occurring. By the time a new recruit has finished his or her training, a structure of identity has already been built for them; they either fit into it, or they don't. The transition into college, then, is quite independent in comparison.

In an attempt to explain the psychosocial development of college students, Arthur Chickering defined seven vectors that address their progressive maturation, some more applicable to student-veterans than others. In fact, his fifth vector of "Establishing Identity" (Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito 68) applies quite readily to student-veterans, as Will explained:

> Well, every vet's different. Some vets are hard core ... [they] jumped out of airplanes; they're Rambo. They bring back that Rambo mentality, you know, these guys were driving multi-million dollar vehicles. They're doing things that people dream of, and now, they're in a writing class. And now, what do I do? Where do I go? You know, what do I write about, do I sit there and write about killing? Do I sit there and write about the actions [I] did in the military?

The writing class that Will spoke of is far away from the environment that he is used to, both geographically and metaphorically. In this example, Will was explaining that one doesn't have to look far in the military to realize the implications of one's actions or the nature of one's identity. However, in this passage, he expresses a clear sense of being lost when it comes to his role as a student, especially as a student in a writing class. His student identity is on shaky foundation, one without "a clear self-concept and comfort with one's roles and lifestyle" (Evans, et al. 68). What's more troubling in this example is the feeling that he is nothing outside of the military—he considers that he doesn't know what to write about other than that which he has been trained to do. His scope of what he has to offer begins and ends with "the actions [he] did in the military."

Interestingly, however, it was only shortly after this apparent frustration that Will answered another question with a bit of optimism:

> …The greatest thing…you can take out of the military is the story. The memories and stories are the greatest things you'll take because they're all yours, they're all unique. The medals [don't] mean anything unless there's a story behind it…And some vets are willing to put those stories on paper. You're going to get some excellent reading material.

Perhaps this is an example of Will opening the door to other possibilities of writing. Though he talks about writing in this case in terms of 'reading material,' he at least acknowledges the value in writing that is not exclusively action-oriented or of less value because of its position in academia or potential for creativity. Through this

comments, he may begin to realize the lessons and learning that can come from a well-constructed writing assignment in a first-year composition classroom.

Charlie, however, explicitly understood how writing could be used to situate one's understanding of self and place:

> …I think everything I wrote [this semester] had something to do with the transition, because it was either dealing with my status as a veteran or not dealing with it; and when I was not dealing with it, it was sort of in an effort to get away from it… My military experience has taken up over a third of my life. It's very much a part of who I am, but then at the same time, I guess just like any other group, whether it's women, minorities, religion, veterans, you know, you kind of want to be like, "yeah, I'm a veteran…but I'm also all these other things."

The above quote demonstrates two things: veterans cannot just be classified as veterans, and writing can be a powerful tool in confronting and dealing with transitions and challenges that they face every day. The underlying message, Charlie points out, is that a writing assignment doesn't even have to address military experience for it to have relevance and purpose.

Rejecting the Stereotype: Soldiers as Agents

One of the prevailing beliefs about the military is that it turns out automatons—mindless, thoughtless fighting machines that obey every order with unquestioning discipline. The military is also famous for its group-think, as well as the notion that it is an environment of *doing*, not thinking. Unfortunately, the main reason that these beliefs exist is because they are perpetuated by the military system itself. For example, as directed in *Basic Military Requirements* (NAVEDTRA 14325), Naval service members are told, "The only proper response to an oral order is 'Aye, Aye, sir/ma'am.'… 'Very well' is proper when spoken by a senior in

acknowledgement of a report made by a junior, but a junior never says 'very well' to a senior" (9-17). Clearly, directions like these give little flexibility for individual interpretation. The military has historically been—and in many instances, continues to be—an environment "that rarely [calls] for soldiers' thoughtful intellectual input" (Downs and Ford). Certainly, there are exceptions: massive operations are typically planned by officers, but small strike team operations do involve the minute-to-minute decision-making skills of individual soldiers, especially since the upsurge in non-linear warfare since 2001. I am loathe to say, though, that the military has earned its reputation honestly—the voices of enlisted soldiers are not those that are heard over the voices of officers, unless it is an uproarious "Sir, Yes Sir!"

What was surprising, then, were the unexpected and numerous examples of agency in writing that the student-veterans talked about in their interviews. Agency is a tricky topic in this environment, an environment that doesn't operate on the individual level but yet requires individuals to accomplish broader actions. In her essay "Rhetorical Agency as Emergent and Enacted," Marilyn Cooper explains this dichotomy:

> Agents do reflect on their actions consciously; they do have conscious intentions and goals and plans; but their agency does not arise from conscious mental acts, though consciousness does play a role. Agency instead is based in individuals' lived knowledge that their actions are their own. (421).

In light of the previous discussion about action-based genres, what better place to situate agency in action than in this military setting, especially since this is a place where "the decentering of the subject…signals a crisis for agency" (Miller 143)?

Moreover, I argue that the military *must* be a place of agency and rhetorical richness born from the individual—while this organization may want uniformity through action, word, and yes, uniforms, the existence of a superior military is only possible through the individual skills that a volunteer force brings. They publicly stifle individuality and privately accept it under the guise of leadership and responsibility. Elizabeth Samet asks an important question on this very topic: "Where, within a culture that insists on and often receives unquestioning obedience, could one carve out a space for the independence that out national principles encourage, even demand?" (124).

Indeed, this machine of the military only runs efficiently on the becomings that it fosters—"[agents] change themselves through these interactions and at the same time instigate changes in others with whom they interact" (Cooper 428). In order for soldiers to act as agents, they must overcome genre (their words are only as valued as the genres in which they are presented) and role (an individual is only identified by rank, unit, or position), as well as the "poststructural, postmodern, and posthumanist versions that deny that a subject can 'have' agency" (Cooper 423). This is troublesome, obviously, as one of the ways I argue soldiers enact their agency is through writing, dependent on language and thus already shaped by semiotic, cultural, and political forces inherent in the medium. In an effort to explain this predicament and separate agency from subjectivity, Herndl and Licona offer the theory of "agent-function" (yet another play on Foucault's author-function): "the postmodern subject becomes an agent when she occupies the agentive intersection of the semiotic and the material through a rhetorical performance"(141). In the

context of the military, one may occupy this agent-function by embracing the semiotic and material constraints of military jargon and genre and subverting them to fit "the temporary and contingent conditions of possibility for rhetorical action" (Herndl and Licona 138).

These "rhetorical performances" were what many of the student-veterans talked about in their interviews when asked about military writing. Curiously, while they did not seem to accept what they did as *writing*, they did recognize their own "rhetorical performances" in the form of subverting genres for their own purposes.

During one interview, Scotty was particularly proud of himself for completing a difficult maintenance procedure and especially for the way he represented it in his writing. After being challenged on his ability to repair a part in an airplane, he made sure to show in his writing the obstacles he had overcome: "I…wrote that in the pass down [record], very professionally…'Despite ordnance's gesture to the contrary, I redeemed myself.' I wrote it all out so people read it; it was definitely professional, but they could tell. I didn't back down." What is important here is not this story, specifically, although it was fun seeing Scotty's laughter and excitement in recounting this episode. The significance of this event is that many years later, Scotty remembered exactly what he wrote. And it wasn't his wording that was necessarily memorable but rather his agency; the fact that he manipulated and subverted standard military jargon in a prescribed genre to communicate his individual story is an incredible tool to have upon entering a first-year composition classroom.

In another example, Will spoke of affecting the promotion and awards process:

> When you write performance reports, you know a kid's a good kid. He deserves a promotion. He deserves a medal. I'm gonna write to get that person that medal. I'm gonna write to get that guy that promotion. And even if he's not that good, or someone struggles in an area, I can sit there and lessen that impact of the areas he struggles in and heighten his strengths.

In the case of evaluations, the first-line supervisor is the leader who has worked with and best knows his solider. The purpose of evaluations is to accurately represent the performance of an individual. However, this is also a site for leaders to exercise the agency that comes with their responsibility. Leaders must weigh how heavily they value the strengths and weaknesses of their soldiers—unquestionable integrity is certainly more important than promptness, but each must be considered on the evaluation. It is up to the supervisor, then, to decide how to manipulate the language to show the distinction that he or she thinks should be represented. In this way, "the subject [acting in the role of 'leader'] attempts to control the object/other in order to escape being controlled" (Cooper 423).

Will was also the one who spoke of "lawyering" in a previous section: "The thing with accident reports or the mishap report is knowing how to…do the lawyering with it. How to properly present that…this piece of equipment failed and not the guy operating it." This action represents an incredible amount of agentive activity, which directly conflicts with the stereotypical view of military service members as automatons and followers of scripts.

So how can we resolve this contradiction between robotic action and active agent? I argue that there is no better, perhaps easier, place to start than writing.

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Examining the ways in which student-veterans have been agentive in their past textual production allows them to take ownership of their actions and their writing and to recognize how their writing has served—and can continue to serve—as "important forms of action in the world" (Hesse 1257). By this, I mean that in a writing classroom, they can be taught to accept their writing, be confident in what they're saying and how they're saying it, and be flexible enough to stretch their meanings and play around and outside of genre. Not everyone does this automatically, naturally, or easily, and composition instructors with "the lens of research and reflective practice" (Hesse 1260) are particularly able to open writing up to those who don't yet realize they can own it.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

Upon considering what topic I wanted to pursue for this thesis, I knew I wanted to work with student-veterans. My own experiences with soldiers in previous assignments have instilled in me a profound respect for soldiers who volunteer in a time of war. Moreover, my success in the Army has only come about because of those enlisted soldiers with whom I worked, those who taught me how to be a leader, and those who showed me just how thankless the job of a soldier can be. I wanted to give something back. But as many a graduate student has discovered, having a broad topic like "student-veterans" is not at all helpful in guiding research until there is a specific question underwriting that interest. It was in my own personal intersection of being a writer, graduate scholar, and military professional that I found this calling. And although this thesis was never designed to provide specific solutions to pedagogical challenges, I hope to shape the design of teaching student-veterans in a writing classroom and offer ideas for future research.

With this in mind, then, the evidence and information I have presented is intended for instructors of composition who want to make their writing classrooms spaces of rhetorical richness and to play an important role in bridging the gap between military and academic environments. As I have pointed out, textual production in these two settings isn't quite as different as usually presumed, and the military writing experiences of student-veterans easily translate into academic writing assignments. In fact, the entire premise of a first-year composition classroom offers great promise in the student-veteran's "quest to find or rediscover purpose and meaning" (DiRamio and Jarvis 113). However, this requires of its

instructors an accommodation and understanding of new literacies. This thesis is a step towards understanding the environment—writing and otherwise—from which student-veterans come. After understanding, then, comes application.

In attempting to apply this knowledge to a writing curriculum, I do not intend to advocate that writing must address wartime service. Certainly, as Marian MacCurdy states, writing can be therapeutic in "[moving stories] from a narrative that skims the top of [students'] experience to one that unearths it" (161). However, much work remains to be done in exploring how personal narrative assignments can best be used with student-veterans, as well as the role that instructors play in this very delicate method. Additionally, writing experience in the military is quite different from writing *about* experience in the military. To connect with student-veterans, an instructor does not need to tackle issues of combat and wartime trauma usually associated with veterans, perhaps issues that neither she nor the student-veteran may be ready to address. The information in this thesis, however, does allow instructors to address military service in a way that can be comfortable and generative through knowledge of military writing experiences. The focus on past textual production for which this thesis accounts is a bridge between the two settings that frees composition instructors from having to delve into specific combat experiences. A student-veteran is not only a student-veteran—they do not need to write about the military in order to derive meaning from a composition class. As Kirk stated at the end of his interview, "When I got out of the military, I really detached from the military." A writing assignment that forces him to write about a past from which he has detached himself would negate the intended outcome of

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such an assignment. What would be helpful for his writing instruction, though, is to know how the elements taught in a composition class are expansions of ideas to which he has already had exposure. I insist that a writing classroom serve as a setting where student-veterans can elicit meaning from their military experiences and use that "information to develop his or her sense of values"(DiRamio and Jarvis 82). The beauty of what I propose here is in its broad applicability to student-veterans and its focus on occupational knowledge.

While the specific examples I've provided here are the particular experiences of these interviewees, the concepts are quite general. Moreover, all veterans of any service have inevitably had involvement with military methods of communication. One cannot participate in the military without some degree of exposure to the genres that I outlined. Information in this thesis is relevant to every student-veteran who decides to return to an institution of higher learning, and it is especially relevant to those instructors who are in a position to facilitate the movement from military literacies, through an academic discourse, and eventually to one that a college graduate may employ in future endeavors.

In order to do this, I challenge writing instructors to expand upon student-veterans' experiences with writing by using the findings in this project. Instructors must first redefine what writing is and what it can be; they must make fluid the boundaries that so rigidly define what writing is for student-veterans. Furthermore, it is imperative that instructors take the time to demonstrate why a writing classroom has relevance beyond just learning how to construct a paper. The transition from tanks and adrenaline to books and coffee is very difficult. Many

student-veterans may not readily make the connection between the relevance of their military writing and that which they are learning in a first-year composition class. Also, recognizing that writing is not a class-based skill nor is it something that belongs to a certain educated group is another step in opening up this field to student-veterans. This will pay dividends in the endeavor to redefine "good writing" and to appreciate all writing can be outside of action-based initiatives. It is in this way, too, that student-veterans can come to realize how they can exercise agency as citizen and individual beyond subtle subversions of genre. Additionally, identifying how genres can function as rhetorical strategies and responsive actions is to draw a solid connection between the writing classroom and previous military practices.

To acknowledge the practices of military writing, then, is to validate the experience of the student-veteran in a way that allows for the growth and change sought after in postsecondary education. Addressing one's service can be rife with unintended emotion and implications. Many student-veterans expect the occasional anti-war sentiment in what tends to be a liberal environment, but even the dutifully repeated "thank you for your service" can be seen "somewhere between an afterthought and heartfelt appreciation" and perhaps even as a "degree of absolution from the collective responsibility" ("On War"). To recognize a student-veteran's prior knowledge, through their experiences with past writing, is to focus on the individual talents and skills that one has, rather than focus on just the identity of *veteran*. It is to help them move from that identity of being part of a military team into embodying the identities of student, civilian, individual, and agent.

Like boot camp, a first-year composition classroom can be effective in constituting identities. Certainly, as Foucault would argue, an institution of higher learning can be just as much a structure of power/knowledge as the military. However, a writing classroom offers the space to identify and examine those structures that constitute identity. In writing about wartime experiences, as Will considered doing, or purposely not writing about the military to deal with his transition, as Charlie explained, a writing classroom provides an ideal area for examination and personal reflection more than any other space on a college campus. It is here that student-veterans can take guided time to explore how they can become veterans, students, men and women, and agents, as well as the societal structures that surround each. Writing is the common tool that student-veterans used in the military and will continue to use in the academy and beyond.

What I have presented here is in no way a complete analysis of student-veterans' experiences with writing. I have discussed only two elements of what they have encountered in military writing; so much more can be done to answer the question of how academically prepared student-veterans are when they separate from military service and enroll in college classes. However, I do think that the concepts that I have outlined here can be pedagogically useful in designing curricula specifically intended for student-veterans, perhaps by revisiting those elements of writing with which they are most familiar and eventually reinventing concepts of writing and agency. Further research in this area could include more in-depth examination of how student-veterans produce texts in their first year of college. What military writing skills do they call upon as they compose papers for first-year

composition classes? How might they respond to writing assignments in other classes without established genres? As researchers learn more about how student-veterans negotiate the transition between military and academic writing, first-year composition classrooms can become sites of extraordinary change and support.

Student-veterans are an extraordinary group of individuals with incredible talent, worldly experience, and a potentially untapped reservoir of rhetorical knowledge. Because of this, I call upon higher education to recognize their role as one of outreach, not merely one of educating students. This singular location, more than any other, has the opportunity to not only initially welcome student-veterans back to a civilian environment but also to ease their transition into that environment. While the government and the Veterans Administration have done a commendable job in helping student-veterans transition out of the military, these organizations are still rooted in past experiences. Higher education is the gateway to a promising future for each student-veteran. I ask that this happen not as an act of conscience but as the responsibility of a community that cares about those who volunteered for military service in a time of war. Higher education has the ability to demonstrate with this population the very principles it espouses: education and support in the service of culture, community, and the stewardship of citizenry. Through writing and informed writing instruction, student-veterans can fully appreciate their inherent rhetorical knowledge and can use that knowledge to successfully transition to and through an academic discourse, perhaps even gaining insights and perspectives on their military experience. Higher education can

facilitate the movement from military service to productive citizenship. It is here

that we can truly make a difference in people's lives.

ENDNOTES

Chapter One

[1] I refer here specifically to OIF and OEF, beginning on September 11, 2001, which happened only eight short months before I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the US Army.

Chapter Two

[1] It is not my intent with this section to whitewash the GI Bill. I present this information here in order to demonstrate how the GI Bill has changed the social dynamic of an educated class and college campuses as well as to attempt to justify the exigence of studying pedagogical strategies for student-veterans. However, many studies show that the GI Bill has disenfranchised many populations in its implementation, as well as helped many who were already disenfranchised. For more information on the shortcomings of the GI Bill, I refer readers to Christopher Loss (2005).

[2] Once researchers started realizing the implications that an influx of veterans on campuses might have, proactive scholars started publishing qualitative and quantitative studies on the most common issues of veterans' transitions and, especially, what campuses could do to better serve them. Notably, most have focused on student services and development, rather than on the troubling marriage of veterans and war injuries, though Thomas Church published an exceptional, non-stereotyping article entitled "Returning Veterans on Campus With War Related Injuries and the Long Road Back Home" (2009). Few articles, however, specifically address the student-veterans' classroom preparation and interactions with peers, professors, and material. Where they do address this, most rely on anecdotal evidence and experience from their own classroom experiences to share best practices, and while well intentioned and appreciated, we must move beyond anecdotes to scholarly research.

[3] I use Horn's (1996) definition of non-traditional students here to describe any student who postpones enrollment in college, attends college part time, works full time, is financially independent, has family responsibilities, and/or does not have a high school diploma ("Nontraditional Undergraduates"). Student-veterans most

often meet at least one of these requirements, but have additional special needs due to their veteran status.

[4] For the purposes of this paper, I intend the concept of "soldier" to be that of a member of any of the armed forces subject to and working within the cultural discourse of the 21st century United States military organization. For more information about the language surrounding terminology of service members, see "Warrior" by William Saffire.

Chapter Four

[1] Evaluations are not just written at the end of a year. They can also be initiated because of a change in duty assignment or change in rater, for example. For a complete list of reasons to initiate an evaluation, refer to service specific personnel regulations. Here, I refer only to evaluations done yearly for simplicity, and the concepts that guide the production of evaluations are the same, regardless of the initiating factor.

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APPENDIX A:

STUDENT-VETERAN'S LIFE STORY INTERVIEW FOCUSING ON EDUCATION AND

WRITING

APPENDIX A

1. What were the most common forms of writing you did while in the military, and how effective do you believe these forms were? Did that writing help improve your communication skills as you prepared for college, or did you feel constrained by the types of military writing you did? Why or why not?

2. Can you describe any particular family or cultural (i.e. military) attitudes toward reading and writing?

3. How did your time in the military influence your ideas about education? What were a few of the most important things you learned in the military?

4. Relate one of the most significant experiences you have had with writing. This could be an experience in which you wrote something with great pride or that had great effect. It could also be a time when someone else's writing affected you.

5. What are some of the differences between the kinds of reading and writing you did as a high school student vs. when serving on active duty? What are some differences between the reading and writing you did on active duty vs. the reading and writing you are doing as a college student?

6. What do you expect /or what are you finding to be the greatest challenges as you transition from "combat to campus"? (Finances? Relearning study habits? Making time for family, work, and studying? Etc.?)

7. How do you feel about writing about veterans- and military-related topics? If you were asked to write an open essay about such topics, what might you write about?

8. What difficulties, if any, did you have in understanding assignments, and

   what could faculty and programs do better when considering the reading and

   writing needs and abilities of student-veterans?