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REVEILLE

A General, a Howitzer, and a Cadet

I'm sitting alone in the executive conference room on the fifth floor of US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) headquarters at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Building 950. My hand reaches to feel my smoothly shaven cheek, an odd feeling after years of facial hair. I tug awkwardly at the suit jacket I put on for the occasion. Nine black leather chairs surround the brown rectangular conference table, four on each side and one at the head. Mics are scattered around the middle of the table, and a large camera sits above the LG flat-screen television that faces the head of the table, with two desktop monitors off to the side. The blinds are shut tight.

I'm seven hundred miles from home, waiting to interview General Stephen J. Townsend. He is one of just eighteen four-star generals in the US Army, a military branch with over one million active-duty, reserve, and national-guard soldiers. He serves as commanding general of TRADOC, which, in a talk at the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) annual meeting, he described as being "the president of the Army's university." Townsend oversees the training of over five hundred thousand servicemembers each year. He oversees US Army Cadet Command (USACC). The Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) falls under USACC. ROTC operates with an \$800 million annual budget for the training and support of roughly thirty thousand senior (i.e., college-level) cadets. Outside the TRADOC headquarters sits a large rubber mat on which TRADOC's logo is spelled out in white letters against the black background: Victory Starts Here!

Back in the executive conference room, a red LCD displays different time zones: Hawai'ian, Pacific, Central, Eastern, Zulu, German, Iraqi, Korean. In the television's reflection, I see myself at the head of the table and the display behind me. The TRADOC insignia, the descriptor (Headquarters US Army Training and Doctrine Command), and the motto again, Victory Starts Here. This time the logo comes sans an exclamation mark.

A dry-erase board hangs on the wall perpendicular to me. A doodle—maybe the floor plan of a room?—is in green marker. An orange marker sits in the tray on the board. The space reminds me of

the many video-teleconference rooms I have sat in for department meetings at my five-campus home institution. But the different time zones remind me of the global focus of this space, and the large padlock on the door, accompanied by an emergency alarm button, reminds me of the security of the space.

The interview was to begin two hours ago. In the days leading up to the interview, Townsend's executive scheduler changed the time of the interview three times. I wonder whether this interview will be cancelled. Last evening, I received a text from the executive scheduler with another change to the start time.

I wait, checking and double-checking my digital recorder and the recording app I downloaded as back-up. I wait, fidgeting with my suit jacket and wondering whether I should ask for the Wi-Fi password. I wait, checking my interview transcript, IRB consent document.

A GENERAL . . .

Two men enter the room dressed in the occupational camouflage pattern (OCPs): Colonel Adam Nestor, executive officer to the commanding general, and Colonel Michael Indovina, chief of public affairs, who notes aloud that I am in the general's seat. I blush, make a clumsy attempt to relocate, but the two men are already seated around me. We talk preliminaries. They then usher me into Townsend's large corner office. Townsend, standing in OCPs, introduces himself (*Steve Townsend!*) and directs me to a seat on a brown leather sofa. He takes an armchair perpendicular to me. Nestor moves to stand behind me at Townsend's desk and takes out a pen and paper. Indovina take a seat in an armchair next to Townsend and clicks on two digital recorders. I fumble for my digital recorder, turn it on, and then turn on my recording app. No small talk as I fumble, just the loud, direct introduction and firm handshake. Townsend watches and waits.

I hit record, twice. Indovina hits record, twice. And I talk with the president of the army's university for thirty minutes about college writing instruction, Army writing standards, the unique relationship between the Army and higher education, and why he prefers grid paper.¹

Townsend smiles easily. His tanned, youthful face belies his age. He close-clipped hair is tinged with gray. When he listens, he squints his eyes, raising the corners of his mouth into a tight smile.

Townsend knows why I am sitting in front of him. I pitched my research to Nestor before Townsend gave a talk at the AAC&U annual meeting. Townsend was on a panel with the chancellor of Rutgers

University–Camden talking about civic engagement. Before the talk, I approached Nestor with my business card and asked, “Can I interview the general for my book project?” I think it helped that I teach at Townsend’s alma mater and that Townsend gave the commencement address the previous year. Nestor was open to the idea and told me to sit next to him during the general’s panel. “After the panel,” Nestor said, “I will introduce you.” He did. I made my direct ask again to the general, and he loudly said, “Let’s do it.” Then he walked off. Two weeks before the scheduled interview, I sent a one-page letter of intent to Nestor. The letter read much like a document for human-subject research review—short, direct sentences; clear purpose and background; lacking disciplinary jargon and extensive citations. I included my brief bio statement and an article I coauthored with an Army major about cadets in civilian first-year composition courses (Rifenburg and Forester 2018).

As I prepare to voice my first question for Townsend in TRADOC’s headquarters, I see a folder open in front of Indovina; I see my letter of intent, bio statement, and the article I coauthored. Then I talk.

I ask Townsend about his experience as an undergraduate at what was then North Georgia College, now the University of North Georgia (UNG). He starts by telling me about his college writing professor, Professor Guy Lail. Throughout our thirty-minute interview, he will mention Lail by name ten times. A four-star general, reflecting back forty years to his first-year writing professor. When I return to campus, I will head to the library archives, dig up a yearbook from 1980, and find a picture of Lail, one of just a handful of English-faculty members then at UNG. Townsend says,

He [Guy Lail] taught me how to write an argumentative essay designed to argue a point, convince. There was a sort of fairly simple template with your introduction and thesis and then you gotta discredit the opposition, what the opposition is going to say. Then you get one to three points in support of your argument, and you conclude. And it was so effective that I still remember today what he taught me. That has held me in good stead throughout my Army career.

I keep my eyes on Townsend as he speaks, but I try to steal glances at the space. Typical military decorations on end tables and walls: plaques, pictures, flags. I offer a question about his experience with Army writing, specifically focusing on what he remembers writing as a young cadet and what he finds himself writing now as a general. He entertains my question but doesn’t agree with the underlying assumption that cadets and generals are writing different genres for different purposes:

The whole purpose for writing is to inform or convince, right? You either want to inform someone so that they know what you know. Or you want to convince someone to do something you want them to do. I think, really. That is what it boils down to, why are you writing? . . . In the military, you are trying to inform someone and convince a decision maker to decide something. I see this as a continuum of writing. I see this as a continuum. And you are up and down the continuum all the time.

Townsend returns to his college writing professor:

For me, the continuum started in college. . . . But Professor Lail, I just got what he was trying, he communicated in such a simple way that I got it. And his point was your writing should be simple and clean, and if you follow a general organization then you will kinda get all the key points across in a style that flows logically and convincingly. That just resonated with me . . . I find that writing to inform and writing to convince . . . that I learned first from Professor Lail in 1979, 80 . . . that writing has stood me in good stead, and I employ those things I learned 36, 37, 38 years ago, I employ them almost every day in this job.

I grab a glance at Nestor behind me. He is behind Townsend's standing desk. I see two monitors and a keyboard. On the desk perpendicular to the standing desk, I see a laptop. A large television hangs in the corner of the office. Later, when posing for a picture with Townsend, we stand behind his desk together. The television is and muted. It's turned to Fox News with coverage of Michael Cohen's testimony regarding his relationship with then-president Donald Trump before the House Oversight Panel.

I have eased my way into the interview and now ask him about the tools he uses when he writes. With a laugh, he reaches for a pocket on his left ankle and pulls out a small black notebook held together with a black string. He tells me he has been carrying this notebook since he was a second lieutenant (the rank one receives upon graduating from college and commissioning). The notepad contains grid paper, which he used extensively earlier in his Army career. Though he no longer needs grid paper, he still prefers the boxes and lines. He then pulls out a writing device: a pen and pencil in one.

"But I am also a modern soldier," he tells me with a grin and reaches for his right ankle pocket in which is a black iPhone, "so, I also have my electronic device. And sometimes I take notes on this and I write. Actually, it is easier to disseminate if I write on here [holds up his iPhone] than if I write on here [holds up his notepad]. But this [holds up his iPhone] has its uses, and I never expect to find myself without it. This [holds up his notepad] also has its uses. But there are times when I prefer this [notepad]. Between these two things, this is how I communicate."

We exchange a few remarks about our sloppy penmanship and why we both prefer blue ink. I notice the four stars arranged vertically on the center of his OCPs. When we conclude, Townsend agrees to a picture, after which I depart. I spend several minutes debriefing with Indovina, the chief of public affairs, who will serve as the point person for any writing I seek to publish based on my interview with Townsend. Indovina then escorts me down the hall, to the elevator, and to the ground floor of Building 950, where I turn in my visitor's badge in exchange for my driver's license. Before I step into my rental car, I take the sign off the orange cone in front of my reserved parking sport. The sign fits nicely in my bag; it reads RESERVED PARKING DR. MICHAEL RIFENBURG 27 FEB 2019.

As I take a left onto Jefferson Avenue, headed toward Washington Avenue and the Newport News airport, my mind returns to the University of North Georgia, where Townsend developed his writing skills, graduated, and commissioned. My mind returns to the seven hundred plus senior cadets at UNG. In my bag, I have two audio files with Townsend's voice describing his writing maturation, his views on the purposes and tools of writing. Townsend's words provide a bird's-eye view of Army writing instruction. But he is far removed from the classroom, far removed from the cadets I work with at UNG.

I have a late flight back to Atlanta. From my view thirty-five thousand feet in the air, I see the sun falling below the horizon. In a few short hours, driving to campus, I'll greet the sun again, this time as it pushes above the Appalachian Mountains and spills across the UNG campus, ushered along by the sounds of reveille. I'll greet the cadets coordinating the raising of the flag and the shooting of the howitzer. I'll greet the one cadet, Logan Blackwell, who, over the course of four years, will walk me through how the ROTC at UNG teaches the Army writing standard and common army genres. To better understand how the army teaches writing to cadets, I need to sit with those being taught.

. . . A HOWITZER . . .

Army Training Circular (TC) 3-21.5, *Drill and Ceremonies* (US Army 2021), provides doctrine for reveille and retreat. This doctrine composes one of the shorter chapters in the roughly three-hundred-page TC, but it still exhibits the exacting specifics one expects from Army writing: proclivity for passive voice and masculine pronouns, crisp sentences stripped of adjectives and adverbs, all caps for verbal directives. Over two hundred words of doctrine dedicated to a daily exercise on all Army posts and any school campus where the Army has a presence. This is a daily

choreographed exercise undergirded by the Army writing standard. Section 13-6, “Reveille Sequence of Events,” reads,

The sequence of events for conducting reveille are discussed herein:

The unit is formed facing the flag 5 minutes (if possible) before the sounding of reveille. Four minutes before the sounding of reveille, the adjutant or other appointed officer (normally the duty officer) takes their position centered on the line of troops, commands the unit to ATTENTION, and commands REPORT.

All subunits (companies, batteries, or troops) report in succession from right to left, “Sir or Ma’am, _____ Company, all present or accounted for,” or “Sir or Ma’am, _____ Company, _____ Soldiers absent.” Salutes are exchanged with each report.

The adjutant commands Parade, REST and then assumes Parade Rest themselves. If a band is present, about 30 seconds before reveille, the adjutant commands ATTENTION, directs SOUND REVEILLE, commands Present, ARMS, and then faces about. The adjutant’s Salute is the signal for the band to sound reveille and to fire the morning gun. When reveille is sounded by a recording, the call ATTENTION is sounded about 30 seconds before reveille. This ensures that the adjutant has sufficient time to command the units to Present, ARMS before the first note of reveille.

After the last note of reveille has sounded, the adjutant terminates their Salute, faces about, commands Order, ARMS, and then directs TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR UNITS. The adjutant returns all Salutes with one Salute. This terminates the ceremony.

On UNG’s Dahlenega campus, I watch five cadets stand at attention in preparation for reveille. Two cadets stand astride a 75mm Pack Howitzer cannon. The cadets check their watches, adjust their earplugs. Three more cadets wait by the flagpole ready to unfurl a US flag. At 0700 hours, one cadet signals. In response, another cadet yanks a cord attached to the howitzer; the howitzer coughs up a full-throated *bang*. Three cadets raise the flag. Speakers blast reveille. The few civilians on campus stand still. Cars driving through campus stop, as do the shuttle buses, the lawnmowers, the service vehicles. There is a calm in the air with familiar music bouncing around the mountains, campus buildings.

Another day at UNG: a regional multicampus public institution enrolling roughly twenty thousand students and classified as Carnegie Basic Classification of Master’s Colleges and Universities (larger programs). UNG is one of six federally designated senior military colleges (SMCs). Norwich, Citadel, Texas A&M, VMI, and Virginia Tech are the other SMCs. This designation comes from the National Defense Act of 1916, signed at the height of the First World War and establishing the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) at select colleges and universities through Title 10 2111a(f). Now, over seven hundred schools—SMCs, military junior colleges, civilian colleges—offer ROTC through other

sections of the law. US military historians Allan Millett, Peter Maslowski, and William Feis (2012) write that the 1916 NDA “represented the most comprehensive effort to organize a land force structure for future mobilization” (307). This act, along with the Naval Act of 1916 that provided plans and budgets for the construction of additional fleet, “culminated two decades of unsteady but consistent growth and modernization of the American armed forces” (308). The early decades of the twentieth century laid the foundation for the current structure and size of the US military, particularly the Army.

Since the 1916 NDA, ROTC has shifted its role and scope, but the general purpose remains the same: establish a process by which colleges and universities train commissioned officers for the armed forces. In this book, I look at Army ROTC, operating with an FY18 budget of \$821 million for the 29,775 senior cadets in 925 total army ROTC programs at US colleges and universities. I look at one of these 30,000 cadets, who attended UNG for four years, received his commission from UNG, and now serves as a first lieutenant in the Chemical Corps.

The *Corps* is the colloquial umbrella term for the Army presence on UNG’s campus. During an average academic year, the Corps comprises over seven hundred cadets, about 35 percent of the university’s residential student population. Unlike cadets at four of the five federal service academies, cadets at SMCs are not required to commission following graduation.² Most UNG cadets do not; 106 UNG cadets commissioned in the 2019–2020 academic year. However, if cadets do commission, they enter the Army as officers at the rank of second lieutenant and are placed into a branch of the Army such as artillery, Chemical Corps, Signal Corps, or military intelligence.

In accordance with the 1916 NDA, cadets take military-science classes each semester. These classes include a physical-fitness lab and leadership-lab components. One key portion of these military-science classes is preparing cadets for the doctrinally defined Army standard of writing and common Army genres that animate the work of an Army officer. The Army writing standard is doctrine found in a variety of Army publications. For example, Army Regulation 25-50, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence* (US Army 2020c), defines this standard: “Effective Army writing is understood by the reader in a single rapid reading and is clear, concise, and well-organized” (1-38). This standard informs Army genres. One common genre cadets learn through the ROTC curriculum are the operations orders (OPORDs), which, are written and orally delivered directives issued down the chain of command in preparation for executing an operation.

As faculty at a SMC, as a teacher who works with cadet writers in required first-year writing courses, and as a researcher invested in how writers develop, I approached the construction of this research project and book with a single research question: *How do cadets leverage the resources offered through the ROTC curriculum to learn the doctrinally defined Army writing standard and key Army genres with which they will engage upon commissioning as an officer in the Army?* This question rolled around my head during the four years I worked with one cadet, Logan Blackwell, and in the two years I spent analyzing my findings and drafting and revising my findings and argument. Logan is the representative case study for my research question. Therefore, I narrowed my research question by focusing on Logan: *How does Logan Blackwell leverage the resources offered through the ROTC curriculum to learn the doctrinally defined Army writing standard and key Army genres with which he will engage upon commissioning as an officer in the Army?*³

Pursuing an answer to this question has taken me inside military-science classes, drill fields, and commissioning ceremonies. I spent two days with the First Brigade, 25th Infantry Division at Fort Wainwright in Alaska and participated in morning physical training with officers there in the arctic morning air. I slept in base housing at West Point. I toured and led a workshop for English-writing instructors at General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military University of Land Forces in Wrocław, Poland. I delivered a lecture at the New Mexico Military Institute and, following the lecture, found myself to be the only civilian in a sea of cadets at the mess hall. I shaved off my beard and cut my hair multiple times in advance of meeting with Army generals, colonels, majors, captains, and even cadets. I pitched my research to busy distrustful colonels in hopes of gaining access to military classrooms. I surveyed over seven hundred cadets and sat down for one-on-one interviews with a handful. Cadets at UNG yelled at me for accidentally walking on the grass; cadets at Clemson yelled at me for wearing a hat inside the barracks. One hot summer night, I drank beer with cadets at a private club reserved for fourth-year cadets at West Point. I coauthored a paper on cadet writing with an Army ranger who served as an instructor of political science at West Point. I heard then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld deliver a commencement address. I heard General Townsend deliver a commencement address and listened to General Mark Milley, then-Army chief of staff and current chairman of the Joints Chief of Staff, reflect on the nature and character of warfare. I talked with cadets and soldiers worried over Obama's decreased defense spending and calmed by Trump's increased defense spending.

As Elizabeth L. Angeli (2019) writes at the beginning of her immersive study of emergency medical services, published scholarship tends to start with a literature review, “but the literature is often not where research projects begin. They begin with people—and these people have stories” (2). Like Angeli, my interest in and entrance into Army writing began with the varied people and places in the paragraph above. Angeli reminds us these people and places carry stories, some of which I account for in these pages and some of which I am still trying to understand. But through these varied people and places, I tried, though a civilian, to enter the Army community over the course of almost two decades. These experiences shaped how I approached my conversations with Logan, how I watched and thought about military-science instruction, and how I approached the Army’s never-ending quest to teach critical thinking and literacy—goals I, as a writing teacher/researcher/administrator, share but just with a broader student population.

When relaying my experiences and findings, I’m careful about disclosing too much information about the when and where of Army movements and training. Army Regulation 530-1, *Operations Security* (US Army 2014b), provides guidance on how and when to disclose places and locations related to Army operations. These regulations are directed to soldiers and cadets but also to contractors and consultants. The locations and timings of Army operations are prized information for enemy forces. When I wrote an article on the writing practices of active-duty soldiers within a brigade headquarters (Rifenburg 2019), I had to run a draft through an Army public-affairs office. The public-affairs office asked me to remove specific dates and locations of a training the brigade was preparing to undertake. I complied. With this book, I focus attention not on current soldiers but on cadets. Because of my close reading of *Operations Security*, and my conversations with multiple stakeholders within the Army, I feel legally and ethically and morally comfortable including specifics about cadet training because cadet training is transparent and uniform. What I mean is that all cadets who plan on commissioning attend Advanced Camp at Fort Knox through USACC, which runs an active twitter feed and YouTube channel dedicated to pumping out promotional material showing cadets jumping, climbing, shooting—all the soldiering that might entice a high schooler browsing YouTube to sign up. My writing that Logan attended Advanced Camp does not provide a foothold into Army operations for our enemies. Now that Logan has commissioned, I aim for caution and elide dates and locations. As I draft this paragraph, Logan is three years into his Army career, has already received his first promotion, and is no longer an eighteen-year-old college student taking ROTC classes

between trips to Walmart and PlayStation games and general education classes. His movements, in line with the movements of the other roughly half million soldiers in the Army, are designed for readiness and cloaked in security measures.

I engage with *Operations Security* in these two body paragraphs and not in an endnote because the ways we—researchers on writing and literacy and rhetoric—make decisions about how we collect data and analyze data, how we build and maintain relationships with all the stakeholders in our research, affect the work we do. These are choices we all make—or are asked to make—but these choices and the reasoning behind them are often dropped from publications. I believe strongly in foregrounding the ethical and moral and legal and spiritual decisions we make as researchers and in not dropping these decisions from publications or relegating them to ancillary notes. The research I undertook with Logan, and the research Logan and I offer in these pages, is filtered through our interaction with each other and our engagement with Army doctrinal publications and regulations that govern this over two hundred-year-old government-sanctioned force.

As we follow Logan through his college career, I am aware that, as a colleague told me, I have an *n of 1* study. I'm only looking at one person in these pages. I dig into my reasoning and my data collection and methodology later, particularly in my Intersections and conclusion, but my *n=1* study pushed me to think about what it means to offer findings filtered through the eyes of just one researcher and one participant: What do I lose from *not* interviewing his instructors? His peers? What do I gain? I do balance my findings with the words of General Townsend. I also offer excerpts from cadet Robert "Trent" Morrell's unpublished memoir in which he reflects on FROG week, the orientation week for incoming cadets. But the main voice is Logan's. At its heart, this is a book about Logan's literacy development. I make the bold assertion that a rich, sustained portrait of one learner can carry a book.

To situate my understanding of Logan, I draw from three layers of material. The most immediate layer is the qualitative data I collected on Logan: hours of in-person interviews over the course of four years; Logan's hand-drawn pictures of his writing space; images of Logan's commissioning ceremony and various pins and ribbons on his uniform; Logan's middle-school, high-school, and college-writing outputs (curricular and extracurricular) and class syllabi; my observation notes from his military-science classes and commissioning ceremony.

I pair these data with a second layer: primary and secondary material pertaining to, among other issues, Department of Defense

budgetary allocations, Army organizational planning, and the relationship between the Army and civilian educational institutions. Some primary documents I reference in this second layer are Army Regulation 25-50, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence* (US Army 2020c), Army Cadet Command Regulation 145-9, *Cadet Command Reserve Officers' Training Corps Branching, Commissioning, and Accessioning Regulation* (US Army 2016), the *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* (US Dept. of Defense 2018), and the 1916 National Defense Act. For secondary material, I draw from Michael Neiberg's (2000) *Making Citizen-Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service* and Donald Downs and Ilia Murtazashvili's (2012) *Arms and the University: Military Presence and the Civic Education of Non-military Students*. I look to these resources because this book engages with questions broader than just Logan's literacy development and with the uniquely US phenomenon of civilians working with soldiers to develop future Army officers.

The final layer of research from which I draw comes from rhetoric and composition/writing studies (RC/WS).⁴ This book responds to previous book-length longitudinal studies of writing and writers (Beaufort 2007; Carroll 2002; Chiseri-Strater 1991; Gere 2019; Herrington and Curtis 2000). However, these studies approach writing development linearly, which is understandable when we study writers moving through an undergraduate course sequence: we follow writers as they progress from year 1 to year 4 or 5 and then graduation. Our school curriculum is sequenced, so our studies of writers within these curricula are sequenced accordingly. As Kevin Roozen (2020) writes, when we view writing development along well-structured schooling pathways, "development is depicted as a fairly straightforward process of taking up the already-established genres and identities available within the well-policed borders of an already-made social world" (227). To balance this "straightforward" approach, I follow the lead of Roozen and attend to the dynamic phenomenon of writing development across time and space. As Roozen and Joe Erickson put it in their ebook (2017), writers are constantly "historically developing persons." Writers are always *becoming*—as the subtitle of this book suggests. Writers are fashioning identities along a trajectory of engagement with text across their lifespans and lifeworlds (Bazerman, Applebee, and Berninger 2017, 2018; Dippre and Phillips 2020; Ivanič 1998; Prior 2017; Roozen 2020). I follow Logan beyond his "well-policed" (Roozen 2020, 237) academic pathways and turn to his cocurricular and extracurricular literacy practices. I look at Logan interacting with artifacts, people, spaces, and practices across time and space. I look at his literate becoming—stretching from essays

he wrote in sixth grade to emails we exchanged two years after he graduated and commissioned. I look at how his identity as a writer is shaped by his steady engagement with literacy practices inside, alongside, and outside the academic classroom. In the aggregate, these three layers place ROTC in a historical and contemporary context within higher education and provide readers an analysis of how Logan developed as a writer over four years, with particular attention to the various literacy activities in which he engaged that formed his identity as an Army writer.

The research question at the heart of *Drilled to Write* is timely. As I wrote the first draft of this book, the Trump administration was adding more soldiers across all branches of the armed forces. According to an *Army Times* news article (Myers, May 7, 2018), the army alone was looking to add eighty thousand more soldiers in 2018 to support a return to conventional, force-on-force warfare expressed in the 2018 National Defense Strategy. The 2018 National Defense Authorization Act (US Congress, National Defense 2018) signaled the Trump administration's dedication to military might through increased defense spending. ROTC is a prominent source for meeting the new staffing demands placed on our armed forces; therefore, just as US higher education is experiencing a rise in student veterans in the wake of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, we will also experience a rise in cadets. As I make edits to the final draft of this book—roughly two years after finishing the first draft—the United States has moved through another presidential election cycle, and the Army has a new chief of staff. New leadership leads to changes. The Army is experiencing one of its largest transformations in forty years: modernizing major systems and capabilities, developing new doctrine, standing up whole new organizations, and reforming how the Army manages talent (i.e., the Army Talent Alignment Process). In an October 2020 Army press release, with the author noted as simply “US Army,” we read that the Army's chief of staff announced a new priority: people first. This priority emphasized leader development, and, more broadly and simply, taking care of people. The article states, “We are prioritizing People as the #1 Army priority” (US Army 2020a). New national-security strategies emerge. New national-defense strategies emerge. New internal challenges arise. But the emphasis remains on people.

Though my focus is not directly on our student veterans, my thinking about cadets crosses into scholarship on student veterans animating RC/WS. Responding to the growing enrollment of student veterans and cognizant of the unique literacy practices student veterans bring with them into a writing class, RC/WS endorsed a position statement on supporting student veteran writers (Conference on College Composition



Figure 0.1. Cadets train on UNG's drill field as two helicopter circle above. Image by UNG's University Relations. Used with permission.

and Communication 2015b), published articles and edited collections, and launched new journals. I take this important scholarship into account in the following pages. I add to this scholarship by inviting readers to consider a writer at the *beginning* of a military career, not at the end, as is the case with scholarship on student veterans. RC/WS has produced little work on cadet writers, which I find surprising considering the field's long history of student-focused pedagogy and advocacy. As Patricia Bizzell (2014) states, "We in this field want to know who our students are" (442). Therefore, instead of asking how writing teachers can create an inclusive writing space for student veteran writers, a question currently discussed, I ask a slightly different question: How does one cadet move through a federally established military-science curriculum and prepare to write as an Army officer?

Back on the Dahlonega campus, the speakers finally fall silent as the flag reaches the top of the mast. Reveille ends. Civilians and cars continue again. Cadets march away. In the words of TC 3-21.5 (US Army 2021), "This terminates the ceremony" (13-3).

Another day begins. First-year cadet Logan Blackwell steps out of the barracks and into the sun.

. . . AND A CADET

I met Logan during the fall of his first semester as a cadet. He enrolled in an honors section of English 1101 I taught. Our class met in a space with a long wooden table, roller chairs, and a glass wall. An aged brick fireplace, spared during recent renovations and signaling the university's Appalachian heritage, sat opposite the glass wall. Above the fireplace hung an oil painting of a prominent white male from the university's past. Two flat-screen televisions decorated the two other walls.

One-third of the students in the class were in the Corps of Cadets. These cadets, like all the students in the class, were authoring thoughtful analyses of their own writing processes and musing on the definition of writing and the rhetorical power of such a definition—all assignments taken from our class textbook, the second edition of Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs's *Writing about Writing* (2014). However, these cadets were also taking their first steps into an Army discourse community. This community is infused with reading and writing practices defined and codified in Army doctrinal publications. These cadets were faced with the dual challenge of honing college-level writing knowledge and skills while also gaining the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in the textual world of the Army, a world populated with a codified writing standards and common genres. Additionally, as Chris Anson and Shawn Neely (2010) show in their webtext on military writing, these doctrinally defined writing practices stand in contrast to writing practices espoused in traditional first-year composition courses. Challenging literacy development, indeed.

By following Logan over the course of his four years at the University of North Georgia (UNG)—as he moves from a cadet private during his first year to commissioning as an officer in the Army following his graduation—I show how he leveraged resources offered through the ROTC curriculum to learn the doctrinally defined Army writing standard and key Army genres. My many years working with Logan, teaching at UNG, writing with an Army officer, and observing Army officers write from their desks at forts around the country has shown me the centrality of written deliverables for getting Army work done. These written deliverables manifest as a wide variety of text: PowerPoint presentations, synchronization matrices, memos, OPORDs, WARNOs, FRAGOs, 9 Line MEDEVAC reports, counseling forms, recommendation for award forms, and countless other texts grease the wheels of Army readiness, communication, and execution. As I sat in on military-science classes at UNG, the class content of that day often directed itself back to a written deliverable. For example, I observed a class focused on cordon and

search techniques: how to secure an area and conduct an efficient and safe search of the area in hopes of securing a high-value target. Cadets brainstormed and then delivered an operations order (OPORD) to the class instructor outlining their course of action. Another class focused on awards soldiers can receive. How does a soldier receive a new ribbon for their rack? Answer: Department of Army Form 638 (US Army 2017). The class ended with an overview of this form. Operations at all levels—from securing high-value targets through cordon and search techniques to recommending a ribbon for a subordinate—hinge on text. The life of an officer is often more clerical than gladiatorial. As Logan told me once with a wry smile, most of the word *officer* is *office*.

Logan is my representative case into ROTC's writing curriculum and cadet literacy development because of his love of literacy. As we formed our research partnership, Logan provided me with a thumb drive of his writing in middle school and high school; he brought with him a deep desire to write, authoring bylaws for student organizations he either joined (a fraternity) or started (ballroom-dance club), spending hours honing a short story for pleasure, submitting essays to our local college magazine and winning an essay contest run by the magazine. I also focus my study on him because he entered UNG with a signed agreement to commission. When I began piecing together this study in my mind, I saw Logan as a student immersed in multiple layers of literacy, a student who entered UNG with a singular goal of commissioning into the Army.

Drilled to Write offers a qualitative, longitudinal case study. I bounded the case study temporally (four years) and spatially (the University of North Georgia). I focused on a single case: *How does Logan Blackwell leverage the resources offered through the ROTC curriculum to learn the doctrinally defined Army writing standard and key Army genres with which he will engage upon commissioning as an officer in the Army?* My data collection included hours of in-person, audio-recorded semistructured interviews with Logan. I conducted all interviews in my campus office, and I transcribed all the interviews. Our ongoing and long conversations allowed Logan and me to have “cyclical dialogue around texts over a period of time,” which Theresa Lillis (2008, 362) argues is crucial for understanding how people develop as writers. I triangulated this data by observing Logan's military-science classes and reading over any syllabi and writing (curricular or extracurricular) Logan shared. Through putting in conversation his words on the page, his actions in class, and his comments during our interviews, I paint a rich portrait of Logan as he moves through the ROTC curriculum. I attend to how he develops the Army writing standard and writes common army genres.

In total, I gathered the following textual data written or drawn by Logan. Logan completed all written artifacts during his four-year enrollment as a student at UNG:

- 62 documents from middle and high school. These documents include traditional research-based essays, letters of recommendation for classmates, lecture notes, annotated bibliographies, outlines, and poetry
- 5 pieces of self-sponsored fiction
- 26 curricular essays
- 2 PowerPoint presentations
- 2 memos
- 1 cover letter
- 1 resume

To this textual data, I add

- 16 syllabi from Logan's classes
- 13 interviews with Logan.
- 45 images, 41 of which I took and 4 of which Logan took
- 2 hand-drawn images by Logan: 1 of his writing space and 1 of army echelons

Logan's voice is the prominent voice in my data collection. However, I do invite readers to hear the voices of other key stakeholders in cadet writing development. I climb high up the Army chain of command and offer an interview with General Stephen J. Townsend in the chapter that serves as the prologue for this book. As I write in this chapter, Townsend was a four-star general, who, at the time of our interview, served as commanding general of the US Army Training and Doctrine Command. No one sat higher on the Army chain of command regarding training future and current soldiers.⁵ Just one of the many Army components falling under his purview was US Army Cadet Command (USACC) stationed at Fort Knox, and a portion of USACC is ROTC at UNG. I also offer the voice of cadet Robert "Trent" Morrell.⁶ I introduce Trent in more detail later, but when word went through the campus that a professor was writing a book about ROTC, I received periodic emails from cadets. One email came with a Word attachment. The email and attachment came from Trent, with a note asking me to look over and provide feedback on a memoir he was writing about his experience in ROTC. We exchanged emails. I asked to use an excerpt in this book. He agreed. The excerpt I provide is self-sponsored writing in which a young adult works through his experiences in honest prose. I am honored to include his voice detailing an experience I—as a civilian—can

only begin to understand. Finally, I include my experience at General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military University of Land Forces (MULF) in Wrocław, Poland, where I led faculty-development opportunities for the instructors who oversee English writing and speaking classes for Polish cadets. UNG and MULF recently signed a memorandum of understanding, thus establishing a relationship for cadet and faculty exchange. This partnership is bearing fruit. As I collected data for this book, two Polish cadets attended UNG for a semester. The intersection of higher education and military preparedness is not a US-only phenomenon. Other countries, too, have developed productive models for training future military officers. By expanding my perspective beyond one student at one US institution, I aim to add much-needed nuance to not only our understanding of how students develop as writers but also how writing curriculum is intertwining with cultural needs.

What I purposefully elide in this book are the direct quotes from Logan's civilian and military instructors. I didn't ask his instructors about his performance or ask instructors to help me better understand their assignments and their feedback on Logan's work. Though I use the verb *triangulate*, Logan is largely the angle in all three points of this data collection: I collected his writing; I collected his voice; I collected his actions in a classroom and on the drill field. I am offering an *n of 1*. I'm aware of the limitations I face with such an approach and the dismissive comments such an approach may solicit. However, a result of the rise of the neoliberal university is greater attention to big data analytics (Scott 2017) to often justify labor casualization and more privatization and outsourcing of student life and academic services (Scott and Welch 2016). We witness more initiatives designed to get students in college and out of college faster. Again, these initiatives, like Complete College America, while admirable for their stated goal of keeping student debt low and streamlining pathways to graduation, lead to our forgetting individual student experiences and privileging big data analytics. We don't see students as single mothers juggling classes and homelife or older adult males coming back to school after years working as mechanics. We see students as DFWI rates, one-semester persistence rates, degree-to-completion rates. Big data and predictive analytics can flatten student experience and misrepresent authentic student learning, as we saw with the reactionary and controversial findings in Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa's *Academically Adrift* (2011). I fall in line with Michele Eodice, Anne Ellen Geller, and Neal Lerner, who, in *The Meaningful Writing Project*, push against findings from large-scale studies on student learning and inject life into staid US higher education narratives about

literacy deficient students (2016). They counter these narratives with student voices and student experiences. Instead of reading stats, we hear voices, student voices.

To be fair, I find benefit in big data. I find benefit in Kristine Johnson's (2019) corpus of over 2.3 million words taken from articles published in *Writing Program Administration* between 1979 and 2017. I'm fascinated by Benjamin Miller's (2014) use of heat maps to document thousands of dissertations and David West Brown and Laura Aull's (2017) corpus-based analysis of higher- and lower-scoring Advanced Placement exams. Our field benefits from Dylan Dryer's (2019) analysis of keywords in 13.9 million words of RC/WS published scholarship. I hold in high regard university programs, like the University of Michigan's joint PhD program in English and education, which trains students to aggregate and then make sense of large data corpora. I find benefit in large-scale surveys coming out of the Center for Postsecondary Research at the University of Indiana and the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. I am particularly interested in the aspects of these large-scale surveys on student writing when placed alongside what RC/WS scholars see as effective writing practices (Anderson et al. 2015).

But in this book, I go small.

I want, for just a moment, to put aside narratives about retention, and one-semester persistence rates, and conversations with local offices of institutional effectiveness and committees on general education assessment. Just for a moment, I don't want to worry about accreditation guidelines and site visits and quality-enhancement plans. As important as these narratives as for our material livelihood, for putting food on our tables and keeping our kids clothed and our homes heated, and even for pedagogical import, I want to place them on hold. I want to hear, and I ask you to listen to, the voice of one student. This is Logan's story. I want his writing and his voice to tell it. I want to slow down the hectic pace dictated by more accountability, more assessment, more accreditation visits, more system- and university-level initiatives. I want to find a bench in the shade on campus, maybe under the ancient live-oak tree near my office, sit down, breathe, and hear the story of a student, of our students. And I want to sit in this story for a moment as these pages unfurl into the literate life of a learner.

When doing this listening, I'm careful with how I write about student voices and how I document our students' voices when they talk about their educational experiences. Alison Cook-Sather, Cathy Bovill, and Peter Felten (2014), influential voices in the scholarship of teaching and learning discipline, rightly point out the dangers of faculty believing students

have a voice to lend to conversations about teaching and learning simply because faculty allow students such a voice (136). I do not want to give the impression that I—a tenured, white faculty member—am allowing Logan the chance to speak, that the only reason Logan has a voice is because I, a privileged faculty member, gave him this opportunity. Abbi Flint and Hannah Goddard (2020) contributed a chapter to an open-access collection on students as partners, an international movement with roots in SoTL that reimagines the role of faculty and student as coresearchers, coinquirers, coconstructors of knowledge. Like Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, Flint and Goddard focus on student voice in higher education research. They distinguish between “acting as a ‘voice for’ students and presenting the ‘voice of’ students” (81). They see “voice for” as the “collective role of a representative” and “voice of” as reflecting “the individual voice of that representative student” (81). I’m thankful Logan trusted me with his words, that he allowed me to offer the *voice of* Logan in these pages. Logan and I built a book that captures how we understood his writing development through ROTC at UNG.

I also want this book to speak to issues larger than just how Logan and I understand his literacy development; the unique stories all of us carry are caught up in larger stories. In chapter 1, I establish broad connections between US higher education and the US military. A central premise of my thinking in this book is that US higher education and the US military are inextricably linked, and for English studies, this link is most notably seen in the importance the Army attaches to critical thinking exhibited in literacy, broadly, and writing, specifically. To unpack this premise briefly, I draw from primary and secondary material to detail this broad link between higher education and the military and the role literacy and writing skills play in this link. The implications that come from zooming in on Logan can help readers in English studies, curriculum development, student affairs, and education history understand better the role higher education plays in national defense and the role literacy and genre acquisition play in preparing our citizen-soldiers—our students.

Drilled to Write unfolds in sections, each section devoted to one year of Logan’s undergraduate experience. Within each section, I offer chapters divided into three areas: findings, curricular writing experiences, and extracurricular writing experiences. These divisions are artificial. Self-sponsored writing informs academic writing; curricular writing tasks inform the extracurricular. My chapter divisions are not representative of theories of literacy development but are designed for ease of access to the research Logan and I offer. I hope readers interested in extracurricular

experiences can find relevant material. Those interested in the first-year composition through the eyes of a cadet can easily find this material.

Each section opens with my research finding for that academic year of Logan's undergraduate experience. These findings collectively answer the overall research question driving this book: *How does Logan leverage the resources offered through the ROTC curriculum to learn the doctrinally defined Army writing standard and key Army genres with which he will engage upon commissioning as an officer in the Army?* To foreground these findings for readers, I offer them in bullet points below, return to them in more depth in each respective chapter, and return again to them in my conclusion:

- During his first year, Logan dipped a toe into the doctrinally defined Army writing standards and genres with which he would soon engage as an Army officer by learning what they are *not*.
- In his second year, Logan, encouraged by the ROTC Order of Merit List, turned to self-sponsored nonschool writing, which, in turn, helped him develop a writerly agency he brought to bear on his curricular writing.
- During his third year, Logan offloaded the cognitive challenge of authoring operation orders onto tools provided by ROTC and tools Logan developed himself.
- As a senior and preparing to graduate, Logan learned the doctrinally defined Army writing standard and key Army genres with which he would engage upon commissioning by gaining knowledge of a specific critical-thinking heuristic (i.e., the military decision-making process [MDMP]) and receiving his branch assignment that would, in a few short months, provide a more nuanced approach to applying the MDMP to his future writing tasks.

Logan's writing development is evidence of cross-domain learning transfer. He integrates and synthesizes and rearranges writing knowledges and practices refined in curricular, cocurricular, and extracurricular spaces. His ultimate goal, and the ultimate goal of the broader UNG ROTC curriculum in regard to writing, is to develop strong Army writing skills for future use as an Army officer. But this goal is a shared endeavor at UNG because writers develop through a confluence of forces—some academic, some not. Logan develops as a writer through general education classes; through his business management major classes; through authoring blog posts about his time in Rome; through writing bylaws for a dance club, letters for his fiancé, and fiction for himself. He develops strong Army writing skills by moving through the nicely sequenced MILS classes. He develops strong Army writing skills by immersing himself in writing inside and outside the classroom. My broad research question addresses how Logan leveraged resources offered by the ROTC

curriculum to strengthen his Army writing skills. This book largely focuses on ROTC, but Logan moves into other academic spaces that exist alongside ROTC. At UNG, and at other SMCs, the ROTC curriculum exists alongside the non-ROTC curriculum. Logan's ROTC classes and his non-ROTC classes collectively pushed him to strengthen his Army writing knowledge and practice. As we zero in on my findings for each year of Logan's undergraduate experience, we see the importance of non-ROTC classes during Logan's first year; we see the importance of extracurricular writing during Logan's second year; and we see both self-sponsored literacy production and ROTC-sanctioned literacy production as important to his third year. Finally, during the fourth and final year, we see the importance of the ROTC curriculum foregrounded as Logan nears the end of his undergraduate experiences and prepares for life as an Army officer less than a month after graduation. In sum, the findings I offer here are further testament to what we know about how people develop as writers: that writing development occurs as a result of a confluence of forces across time and space. We can add structure and a tidy throughline to writing development by tracing it against the four-year undergraduate curriculum sequence. To be fair, I do so in this book. But writing development is messy; it does not follow the tidy path our university administrators, local, state, and federal politicians, accrediting bodies, and even faculty members value. As Roozen (2020) writes, when we trace writing development within *just school*, we risk "an overdetermined, incomplete, and ultimately very confusing account of the pathways for disciplinary development" (230). Therefore, I look beyond Logan's academic writing experiences. I trace Logan's development, his *becoming*, across multiple settings. I look at how his essay in seventh grade anticipates his future immersion in ROTC. I look at how his business-writing class figures into how he authored bylaws for a student club he founded. I look at self-sponsored fiction he wrote late at night while listening to jazz, and I conclude with him reflecting on letters he wrote his fiancée while he was deep in the woods for Advanced Camp. These artifacts, written across various times in his writing development, collectively constitute and give rise to Logan's becoming a cadet writer.

In the Intersections, I offer implications about methodology and data collection for longitudinal research on writing and writers. I labor in this broad area of research methods in response to specific exigencies I feel in my own research-teaching-service life as a dad/tenured faculty member at a predominately white institution/husband/faculty fellow of my university's Center for Teaching, Learning, and Leadership/citizen/coeditor of an open-access book series. Instead of opting for the conclusion that

speaks to pedagogical implications of this study, I take on the task of understanding how my positionality influences how I collect, analyze, and circulate my findings. I want to foreground the flesh and bones and spirit of who I am and how these things constructed *Drilled to Write* in ways I see, am beginning to see, may never see. For one, it's not lost on me that I gained a foothold into the Army world because I can run four miles. A brief explanation: I received funding to travel to Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks, Alaska, to observe the writing practices of an Army major who invited me to join him for two full days. His days started at 0500 hours with coffee and exercise. So, there I was, lacing up my Brooks running shoes and taking off on a four-mile run with an Army officer. It is not lost on me that my physical ability to run, my financial ability to afford running shoes, and my living situation that afforded me time to exercise helped me gain introduction into this community and led to my first publication on Army writing (Rifenburg 2019). Who we are is what we know.

As important as pedagogical implications are, as necessary as discussion about thesis statements and transitions and rhetorical moves are for supporting the student writers with whom we labor, I want to step back for a moment and think about how the research we undertake—the research that informs our pedagogy—is tied up physically with who we are and what we believe and know and feel. I return to these issues in my conclusion but here state that my positionality and my varied (visible and hidden) identity markers constructed this book.

I draw on the work of Leigh Patel (2019), Amy Stornaiuolo, Gerald Campano, and Ebony Elizabeth Thomas (2019), and Tukufu Zuberi and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2008) to bolster my thinking about how our methods and methodologies reflect our own positionality. I draw attention to three parts of the research process, what I call *getting there*, *staying there*, *leaving there*. I see these three parts as representative of the research moments we have.

Looking to autoethnography (see Sanchez 2021) and inspired by scholarship that brings the researcher more directly into the narrative, research design, and argument (see Angeli 2019), this book, then, is the journey of a researcher and participant, a teacher and student, learning together about how writing drives the Army.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise noted, my use of *army* throughout this book refers to the US Army.
2. The five federal service academies are the Air Force Academy, the Coast Guard Academy, the Merchants Marine Academy, the Naval Academy, and the United

- States Military Academy at West Point. Graduates of the Merchant Marine Academy are the only ones not required to commission upon graduation.
3. The name Logan Blackwell is a pseudonym chosen by the research participant. When Logan signed the human-subject informed-consent paperwork during his first year at UNG, he self-elected for me to use his real name. His real name remained in this manuscript during our four years working together, during my first draft of this book, and in the draft of this manuscript that made its way to reviewers. The anonymous reviewer feedback encouraged me to consider Army Operation Security (see US Army Regulation 530-1, *Operations Security* [2014b]), which forbids the disclosure of timing and locations of Army operations. I emailed Logan, who was then a first lieutenant stationed in the southeast United States, about whether he preferred his real name or a pseudonym. In his email response, Logan selected this pseudonym: Logan Blackwell. Informed consent is fluid, ever changing, not complete once the ink dries on the signed consent form (see Bivens 2018). Logan changed his mind seven years after signing the form.
 4. My use of rhetoric and composition/writing studies (RC/WS) as a disciplinary descriptive is taken from the National Center for Education Statistics' "Classification of Instructional Programs" (CIP) (2019). This broad descriptive includes professionals who research, teach, and administer literacy-related fields. CIP 23.13 (rhetoric and composition/writing studies) captures the following: "writing, general; creative writing; professional, technical, business, and scientific writing, rhetoric and composition; rhetoric and composition/writing studies, other." In using this term, I follow the lead of Edward White, Norbert Elliot, and Irvin Peckham (2015) and Derek Mueller (2017).
 5. At the time of this writing, Townsend serves as commander of US Africa Command.
 6. His real name. Trent provided me permission to use his real name when he first passed along this writing. Two years later, during the revision of this book, I emailed to ask, again, if he preferred his name or a pseudonym. Again, he preferred his real name.